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Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung!

We would like to invite you to take a glance at the new edition of the quarterly magazine Seyasat. Issued together with our partner organization, the Institute for Public Policies (IPP), the new edition offers an insight into debates recently held in and between Palestinian civil society and Palestinian politicians.

The beginning of the year was marked by another shake-up of the Palestinian educational system. On February 10th, 2016, teachers started not only to address the current politics of the Ministry of Education in public, but also to speak out against the leadership of their own trade union.

According to Abdul Ghani Salameh, author of this issue's article on the topic "Teachers' strike, the whole story", the uprising was not surprising due to the miserable conditions teachers work in: since Palestinian politics do not promote the potential of schools for society, pressing needs are not met, and budgets are allocated inadequately.

Along with this goes the "government's double standards approach" towards public civil servants, resulting in a huge gap between the very low salaries of employees in the educational sector and other public servants in ministries or government institutions.

The final catalyst of the protest was the remarkable boost of salaries for veterans and engineers, whereas the teacher's union only attained a salary increase of 1.5%. For some teachers, this is not more than 20 NIS a month.

Hence they did not accept the agreement and demanded a basic salary of at least 3000 NIS and a stable retirement plan, among others, as a sign of justice and dignity.

Disregarding the appointed union leadership, which did little to support the teachers' demands and hastily agreed on the government's positions, the teachers' called for a democratically elected union leadership.

Their claims were accompanied by protests and general strikes by thousands of teachers and supportive community members in Ramallah that could not be stopped by the PA, who made a remarkable effort to keep teachers away.

The strike was resolved in mid-March with a raise in the teachers' salaries, however, experts doubt that a real change in the Palestinian educational policies will take place.

At the same time, the teachers' strike is only one, although one of the largest, public uprisings against the Palestinian Authority, which enjoys less and less support by the population. The strike should therefore be seen in the context of a general dissatisfaction with the work of the Palestinian Authority.

Huda Awad, author of the article "Challenges to Palestinian education", focuses on concerns of quality and accessibility of the education sector: in order to be ready for the job market, but also to be responsible citizens, students need to be introduced to critical thinking, logic, philosophy, research methods and questions regarding freedom and rights, equality and social. The author claims that this does not sufficiently take place in Palestinian schools and universities.

At the same time, the lack of funding for institutions of higher education imposes heavy burdens on students and their families who can hardly bear the tuition fees.

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The author sees this as major obstacle for higher education in Palestine.

Both authors conclude that it is crucial to make politicians understand the importance of the educational system for the future Palestinian society – only then the allocation of resources towards education will happen, which will finally allow for a better educational system.

Another significant issue Palestinians are facing this summer is the water shortage. The shortage has reached a new climax for Palestinians all over the West Bank.

However, the author of the article “Legal dimensions to Israeli violations of joint surface watercourses” Ekram Omar, highlights that it is by far not only a result of high temperatures.

Rather, a major source of the problem is the Oslo Accords, which awarded Israel the lion's share of the natural aquifers on Palestinian territory.

Palestinians only have access to 20% of the aquifers, while Israel controls the remaining 80%. Under quantity restrictions set up by the government, Israeli companies then sell the water back to Palestinians.

Further, Palestinians in area C can barely exploit the 20% of aquifers designated to them: the obstacle of obtaining a building permit by the Israeli Authorities for wells and water structures is nearly impossible to overcome.

In light of the discussion over the naming of Al Haram Al Sharif versus Temple Mount in a UNESCO-resolution condemning the Israeli practices on the compound, the displacement of Palestinians and Palestinian history from Jerusalem is debated in the article “Islamic Sites in Jerusalem and Israeli Judaization”.

The author, Bakr Abu Bakr, observes that the Israeli narrative dominates the historical sights of Jerusalem, stressing the Jewish link to the monuments while neglecting their embeddedness in Palestinian history.

Additionally, immediately after the annexation of East Jerusalem following the 1967 War, excavations started in order to prove the Jewish roots of the city.

Often, the tunneling and digging is illegal under international law and creates major tensions within the city. As an intended side effect, Palestinian land is grabbed while undertaking the excavations.

The municipality also aims at restricting Palestinian influence in the city in terms of population: the “Jerusalem Master Plan 2000”, officially declared by the municipality in 2004, includes the goal of the population being “30% Arab and 70% Jewish”.

This aim is to be reached by violating the rights of so-called “Jerusalemites” – Palestinians from Jerusalem - in several ways.

First and foremost, Jewish settlements are built on confiscated Palestinian land in East Jerusalem. Furthermore, many areas where Jerusalemites lived or owned land were turned into national parks. Building permits for Jerusalemites are harshly restricted.

Since 2004, Jerusalemites can lose their residency permits if they cannot document with proves such as phone and electricity bills that they physically live and work within the Jerusalem municipality borders.

When looking at the tremendously high housing prices, it becomes obvious why this turns out to be a major obstacle for Palestinians in Jerusalem: According to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, 75% of the Jerusalemites live below the poverty line.

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For many families, the only option to afford housing is by moving outside of the city's borders to the West Bank.

The new Seyasat edition also highlights how Palestinians perceive the actions of the international community.

Palestinians are worried about the standing of the Palestinian needs in the international community.

Atef Abu-Seif, Editor-in-Chief of Seyasat, concludes that the Israel-Palestine conflict has lost its relevance for the big international players: other conflicts evolving unrelated to the Israel-Palestine confrontations, such as the emergence of ISIS, and instability in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, are of more relevance to the international community.

Furthermore, the international community understands that the conflict is no longer an Arab-Israeli conflict, but rather a conflict between Palestinians and Israelis over

the humanitarian and economic needs of the Palestinian population.

New regimes that arose after the Arab Spring even try to improve their political standing in the region by ameliorating their relation to Israel instead of being allies for the Palestinian cause.

Atef Abu Seif concludes that Palestinians need to develop a new form of diplomacy in order to ensure that the Palestinian question finds its way back to the top of the political agenda.

With this insight into the Palestinian perspective on the international community, we invite you to read the full edition of the Seyasat magazine in Arabic or its summary in English.

Both are available on www.ipp-pal.ps and we are looking forward to coming back to you with the next Seyasat edition soon – which will focus on social security law.