



المركز الفلسطيني لأبحاث السياسات والدراسات الإستراتيجية - مسارات  
The Palestinian Center For Policy Research and Strategic Studies - MASARAT

The Palestinian Centre for Policy  
Research and Strategic Studies  
(Masarat)

# Basic Principles and Programmes

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Masarat Centre  
Basic Principles and Programmes

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# Basic Principles

## Identity and Role

- Masarat Centre is an independent **non-profit Palestinian organisation** that specialises in qualitative strategic and political studies in the field of politics, and their social, economic and cultural dimensions. It has been registered with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education since 2011 in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Higher Education pertaining to scholastic research centres.
- **Masarat Centre defines its identity** as a centre specialising in strategic thinking and proposing policies in a manner that transcends diagnosing the Palestinian situation and that seeks to formulate policies and provide practical suggestions to deal with that situation.
- **Masarat defines its role** as combining its contribution of studying past experiences, such as the experience of the Palestinian national movement, with studying the Zionist

project and working to influence the current situation to guarantee progress.

- **The Centre adopts the thesis of change** by acting as a link between knowledge and policies, while focusing on the new space in which the youth and others are active through novel forms of action. It does so by providing knowledge and formulating policies based on such knowledge with the aim of influencing the decision-making process, raising awareness of national strategic issues and political alternatives within a democratic space that allows popular participation in the context of a comprehensive national vision.

## “Masarat” and the Thesis of Change

Masarat Centre’s strategic plan is based on a thesis of change that underpins the implementation of action programmes that employ a participatory methodology to produce knowledge and policies and that invest in the new space in which various forms of action relating to struggle, politics, society and culture occur, and in which young people take the lead outside of the traditional system of Palestinian political action. Moreover, the centre seeks to exert a bottom-up influence on the decision-making process in a manner that is not limited to upper echelon decision-makers, but that is wide enough to include all parties concerned, such as political and academic elites, popular organisations and civil, academic and media institutions.

In a relatively short period following its establishment, the centre has been able to gain recognition of its role, to open horizons for political and intellectual dialogue amongst interested parties, to include a sector of young people in its activities and to produce many peer-reviewed studies, working papers, policies and situation appraisals. It has also provided a platform for democratic debate by means of many forums, workshops and debating meetings in several Palestinian communities at home and in the diaspora, in

addition to the centre's annual conference.

The centre is a go-to destination that provides young researchers of both genders with the skills necessary for analysis, the formulation of public policies and strategic thinking through an innovative training programme at the Palestinian and Arab levels. The centre has a distinctive ability to interact with individuals and entities from across the intellectual and political spectrum in Palestine and the diaspora, and to network with several experts in various fields and with local and foreign research organisations.

An analysis of the centre's immediate environment and the SWOT analysis appearing in its five-year 2016-2020 plan shows that the strategic context of Masarat's work must be responsive to internal and external challenges through building on its strengths and developing them in order to overcome weaknesses, and that it must benefit from available opportunities to overcome challenges and threats.

The most salient challenge is how to achieve change in a political environment in which decisions are made in the absence of political democracy and of effective and democratic national institutions, and in which new forms of struggle, political action and expression of identity and opinion develop outside the traditional system of Palestinian political actions (the PLO, the National Authority, parties, unions and professional associations). This requires focusing on emerging forces that are at the forefront of these new forms, despite their dispersion and disparate nature, particularly since they are considered to be the powers forming the third stream which can forge the path of change within the framework of the liberation struggle and the internal democratic process if it materialises based on a democratic national vision.

## Strategies for Action

- Commitment to a scholarly research system and a methodology of peer review of research and studies and to forming research and focal groups and teams.
- Use of audience analysis methodology and of indicators to measure performance and outputs.
- Provision of a forum for public debate of the research and policy papers, influencing the national debate agenda while focusing on the audience and working from the bottom upwards.
- Investment in the new space in which political action and expression of identity opinion occurs by focusing on young people in the centre's programmes to boost effectiveness and provide elements that will encourage the emergence of a strong third stream.
- Enabling the participation of Palestinian youth in the production of research and the preparation of working and policy papers.
- Designing and implementing training programmes in the field of drawing up public policies and strategic thinking.
- Networking with other organisations to encourage the participation of researchers in research and policy programmes, particularly amongst the youth.
- Enhancing the centre's independence and diversifying its funding and financial resources by depending mainly on Palestinian sources.



## Outputs and Influence

**Recognition:** Recognition by official, national and academic institutions and by Arab and international institutions of Masarat Centre's positive and effective influence.

**Horizons:** Widening the horizons of political and intellectual dialogue by interested parties in all Palestinian communities.

**Outcome:** Production of many peer-reviewed studies, policies and situation appraisals.

**Forum for Debate:** Influencing the national debate agenda by providing a continuously open platform for democratic debate within Palestinian communities at home and in the diaspora, in addition to annual conferences.

**The Youth:** Providing young researchers of both genders with the skills needed to analyse and formulate public policies and engage in strategic thinking through an innovative training programme at the Palestinian and Arab levels.

**Interaction:** A distinctive ability to contact and interact with all members of the intellectual and political spectrum in Palestine and the diaspora.

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# Programmes

## Introduction

The five-year strategic plan of the Palestinian Centre for Policy Research and Strategic Studies (Masarat) 2016 – 2020 constitutes a framework that governs the centre’s performance at the levels of both institutional development and programming. The centre is committed to its vision, its message and its role as guiding principles of its work throughout the years covered by the plan. The centre is also committed to analysing changes to the external environment in terms of opportunities and threats and their impact on the centre’s work, and it continuously remains abreast of changes to elements of strength and weakness in a manner that enables it to achieve the strategic and secondary goals included in the plan.

The plan is based on the thesis of change that involves implementing work programmes that are characterised by a participatory methodology to produce knowledge and policies. It prioritizes investing in the new space in which various forms of action relating to struggle, politics, society and culture occur, particularly by the youth, outside of the traditional framework of Palestinian political

action. It also prioritizes influencing the decision-making process from the bottom up in a manner that is not limited to upper echelon decision makers, but also encompasses all parties concerned, including political and academic elites, popular organisations and civil, academic and media institutions.

The centre's executive plans are governed by the regulatory framework defined by the strategic plan, such that its various programmes encompass a group of activities designed to link and integrate strategic goals, secondary goals, outputs and the desired effects, particularly with regard to the programmes aimed at developing the capabilities of young men and women, encouraging their initiative and enhancing their political participation.

The annual executive plan includes a package of detailed activities and outputs that are relevant to each programme, as well as indicators to measure performance, outputs and desired effects.

## **Firstly: Research and Policy Programmes**

These programmes include research and papers on policies and situation and strategic appraisals that are produced under the supervision of the centre's policies committee. They also include peer-reviewed papers that are submitted at the centre's conferences. The programmes focus on issues and developments relating to the Palestinian people and its national cause, particularly its political, economic and social dimensions. They also focus on reviewing the Palestinian experience; drawing lessons and morals; studying the circumstances and needs of Palestinian communities in historical Palestine and the diaspora; analysing the effects of Arab, regional and international changes on the Palestine Cause and studying developments and transformations relating to the Zionist movement and its colonialist settlement project.

### **Programme of Palestine Studies**

The programme focuses on producing and publishing in-depth peer-reviewed scholarly, strategic studies, situation appraisals and policy analysis papers. It also focuses on providing those concerned with specialised analysis and advice, and on the best use of the media and social media to magnify the centre's efforts to enrich and improve the Palestinian decision-making process and to provide a forum for public discussion of the outputs of the centre's research and policy papers, concentrating on the audience and adopting a bottom-to-top approach.

A large number of policy research and strategic studies were produced, reviewing the experience of the national movement and drawing lessons and morals. The studies also reviewed Palestinian political thought, the national project, the national charter, the goals and forms of the struggle, rebuilding national unity, the situation and needs of Palestinian communities in historical Palestine and the diaspora and youth movements and initiatives at home and in the diaspora. They also examined the forms of action springing up

in the new space and how to incentivise the emergence of a new strong democratic national stream.

Within that context, the centre has achieved the following since its establishment in 2011:

- **Published 39 books** in the fields of scholastic and political research.
- **Produced 345 papers** that included situation appraisals, policy analyses, strategy appraisals and working papers for the centre's conferences.
- **Over 200 researchers**, both men and women, at home and in the diaspora contributed to the books and papers, and **over half of them were young people**.
- **Organised 260 workshops**, seminars and dialogue meetings in Palestinian communities in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the 1948 territories, several Arab and European countries and the United States. They included dialogue workshops in which hundreds of students from Palestinian universities participated.
- **Organised 14 conferences** dealing with issues of interest to the Palestinian people and its cause. Hundreds from the West Bank, Gaza and the 48 territories participated in each conference.

## **Abdul Muhsin Qattan Programme to Study the Zionist Project**

The programme was initiated at the beginning of 2016 in response to the need to study the Zionist project and the nature of the Israeli state and society, and the need for a national vision for the Palestinian liberation movement in the face of the Zionist movement and its colonialist project. The programme focuses on

studying the strategies and policies employed by the Zionist project to impose racist, colonialist systems of control and settlement on the Palestinian people, its land and resources. It also focuses on putting forward strategic Palestinian policies to oppose that project.

The centre has formed a research supervisory team to oversee the programme. It includes the following persons: As'ad Ghanem, Jamil Hilal, Alaa al-'Azza, Awad Mansour and Lina Mi'ari. The team is tasked with monitoring the programme, evaluating its output, offering advice on research lines and names of researchers, defining the programme's research priorities and nominating research topics.

The centre has to date produced five studies, four of which were prepared by young researchers. Ten other studies are currently being prepared.

### **The Annual Conference**

The annual conference is one of the centre's most important programmes, and its main topics are worked on throughout the year, with peer-reviewed papers being prepared for discussion at the conference, which is attended by hundreds of personalities from the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the 48 territories and the diaspora. The conference constitutes a forum for public discussion of the main issues that pertain to the Palestinian people and its national cause.

The centre held its sixth annual conference in 2017 under the title "Palestine .. Strategic and Political Visions." It was attended by around 500 politicians, academics, activists, young people and civil society members. It was also attended by several former ministers, members of the PLO Executive Committee and of the national and legislative councils and officials from various Palestinian political forces and factions. A speech on behalf of the president of the Palestinian Authority was delivered at the opening session.

The centre's seventh annual conference was held on 11 and 12 May 2018 under the title "Towards a Renaissance Plan to Confront

the Risks Besetting the Palestine Cause” amidst an escalation of settlement and annexation plans and the risks posed by the US president’s plan, known as “the deal of the century”.

## **Programme to Rebuild National Unity**

This is one of the main programmes that the centre has been implementing since 2011. It aims to provide practical and realistic scenarios and proposals to end the state of internal division through informal dialogue with the participation of politicians from the main factions, independent personalities, civil society and women representative at home and in the diaspora. The dialogue centres on the steps and mechanisms that are necessary to rebuild national unity at the level of PLO institutions, the PA, unions and professional associations. Hence, it is a programme that supports official national dialogue since the reconciliation agreement was reached in Cairo in May 2011.

Within the context of this programme, several documents were produced on rebuilding the institutions of the PLO, practical scenarios for the national political programme and the government programme, and practical mechanisms to reunify and merge the security services, formulate a draft for the police commission Act and offer suggested mechanisms for unifying and activating popular unions and professional associations.

In addition, a book entitled “The Cost of Division and its Effects on the Palestinians” was published. A large team of Researchers and research assistants worked on producing it. The book deals with the cost of division in the political, economic, social, cultural and human rights spheres as well as the effects of division on Palestinians in the 48 territories and the diaspora.

The efforts made as part of this programme were crowned by the National Unity Document, which was the outcome of a widespread process of dialogue in historical Palestine and the diaspora. It includes a comprehensive vision on how to end the division and rebuild national unity. A follow-up committee was formed to support the document by organising a series of activities and



meetings. It includes representatives of the most prominent forces and groups that are actively opposed to the division.

The centre will continue its work during the coming phase to implement several activities and dialogue events, with a particular view to avoiding the possible negative ramifications of the convening of the recent National Council session, such as an escalation of the division at the level of the PA into a conflict over the legitimacy of national representation. This requires a focus on preventing deterioration, keeping the path to unity and dialogue open and seeking to organise a conference similar to the one that produced the National Unity Document within the context of mobilising national and political positions that would press for an end to division and demand the achievement of national unity.

## **The Strategic Thought Forum**

The centre seeks to institutionalise and regularise the work of the Palestinian Strategic Thought Forum and to activate its role, providing an opportunity for the participation of an elite group of Palestinian researchers, intellectuals and activists, including young people and women. The goal is to build an awareness of the issues and challenges confronting the Palestinian people and to put forth policies, choices and mechanisms that will facilitate taking appropriate decisions by activating available instruments through the Strategic Thought Forum to influence the decision-making process and the target audience.

A focal group from the homeland and the diaspora has been holding brain storming sessions since the beginning of 2018 regarding the strategic questions facing Palestinian political thought in preparation for presenting them for discussion within the Strategic Thought Forum, with the participation of an elite group of intellectuals, academics and activists from various Palestinian communities in historical Palestine and the diaspora.

## **Secondly: Programmes to Enhance Youth Capabilities and Initiatives**

The aim of these programmes is to prioritise investment in the youth, by means of raising youth awareness of Palestinian national and societal issues in the homeland and the diaspora. The aim also includes strengthening the strategic thinking capabilities and skills of young researchers, both men and women, and their abilities to analyse and draw up public policies relating to the Palestinian context in its regional and international dimensions. The programme also aims to strengthen the contribution of young researchers to politics and their influence on the decision-making process at various levels, and to enhance the democratic political role of young people, particularly women, by encouraging youth initiatives and enhancing interaction and networking amongst Palestinian youth in historical Palestine and the diaspora.

### **Programme for Strategic Thinking and Public Policy**

This programme was designed and implemented to develop youth strategic thinking skills through training a group of young researchers, both men and women, about the analytical skills needed to prepare public policies, think strategically and formulate and promote strategic action plans dealing with various issues.

The programme is considered as the first of its kind in Palestine, particularly given the way in which it presents the concepts of public policies, strategic and future thinking, collective planning, audience analysis and drafting fact sheets. It also familiarises researchers with examples of international centres specialised in public policies and the phases of developing, analysing and evaluating public policies. This helps to develop a culture of strategic planning and thought, instead of the haphazard and improvisation that pervades large sectors of Palestinian action, both at the official and popular levels.

The centre is implementing the programme for the fourth

consecutive year in 2018, with the delivery of 300 training hours under the supervision of a specialised team. To date, sixty-five young men and women from the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the 1948 territories have graduated from it. They will be joined by another 28 young people, who are expected to graduate in the summer of 2018. In addition, the centre organised a special training programme for a group of graduates to enhance their abilities to work alongside those enrolled in the programme as assistant developers of position papers and policies.

The first three batches of graduates produced 44 position estimation papers and policy analysis papers that covered several political, national, social, educational, cultural and economic issues, as well as Arab and international issues relevant to the Palestinian cause. They were published by the media and are available in special books published by the centre, and on the centre's electronic website.

The centre also organised a training programme comprising ten sessions entitled "An Introduction to Strategic Thinking and the Preparation of Public Policies" for eighteen employees from various PLO departments at the request of the PLO's Culture and Information Department.

Within the same context, the centre organised a similar programme for a group of young men and women at the request of the Nabad youth group.

### **Palestinian Youth Forum for Policies and Strategic Thinking**

The forum was established by the centre in 2017 in support of an initiative by graduates, and its membership includes all graduates of the training programme. It is an independent and permanent Palestinian youth forum specialised in strategic thinking and public policies and it seeks to influence public policies relating to the national cause and economic and social issues. Its mission is to contribute to the enhancement of Palestinian youth participation through suggesting, producing, developing and publishing policy

analysis and position estimation papers in various fields that are related to the Palestinian cause in all its dimensions; to provide a forum for all active official, national and youth parties from various Palestinian communities to debate the policies produced by the forum and to activate instruments that influence those concerned with the decision-making process.

## **Programme to Develop Youth Political Participation**

This is one of the most important programmes that the centre began implementing in 2018. Its duration is four years.

The programme is undertaking a study that focuses on models of political participation by the Palestinian youth under colonial conditions in a manner that enhances the nationalist and political role of young people. A leading researcher is supervising a group of field research assistants working in major Palestinian communities at home and in the diaspora to prepare papers on the situation and needs of young people. A programme will subsequently be designed and implemented based on the outputs and recommendations of the research with the aim of developing the capabilities of the youth in the field of suggesting policies, taking initiatives and networking.

## **“The Youth Wants” Programme**

The programme aims to encourage young people to engage with their responsibilities relating to various political, social, cultural, educational and economic issues. Palestinian youth from various communities (the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the 48 territories and the diaspora) participate in the programme. It focuses on establishing a Palestinian youth network drawn from all communities to interact with one another and coordinate their activities based on a national youth vision to be created through a wide process of dialogue amongst young people of both genders and from various intellectual and political backgrounds.

## **Programme to Support the Capabilities of the Youth in Marginalised Areas**

The programme aims to enhance the steadfastness of Palestinians in marginalised areas that are threatened by settlement, the separation wall and forced eviction plans. Moreover, it aims to develop young people's capabilities to link the defence of their local community issues with the defence of general national issues. The programme got underway in 2017 in the Hebron governorate (Karmah, Sikkah, al-Koum, Abdoh, Amreish, al-Samou' and the Old City of Hebron) by building the capabilities of the youth in those areas and enabling them to develop initiatives to protect their communities and enhance their steadfastness in the face of Zionist policies of control in those areas.

Five initiatives were developed within the context of this programme based on suggested policies and supported by fact sheets to deal with the problems faced by Palestinian communities in marginalised areas. Advocacy campaigns have been designed, and work to implement them is underway since the beginning of 2018.

## **Thirdly: Programmes to Enhance Women's participation and initiatives**

Concomitant with Masarat Centre's focus on an active role for women in the centre's various programmes and activities, programmes specifically aimed at women are intended to contribute to the enhancement of women's participation at all levels of decision making, full equality between men and women and highlighting the need for women's equal participation in national and societal dialogue.

Current programmes focus on achieving two main goals:

Firstly: Facilitation of the constituent elements of consensual feminist discourse on several issues, most important of which is how women can practise their right to active and equal participation in national and societal dialogue and in defining its agenda. Another such issue is enhancing women's participation in decision-making at various levels and within national institutions and political parties, in line with UN Security Council resolution 1325, the national plan to implement that resolution and the principles of partnership and joint action within women's organisations and institutions.

Secondly: encouragement and support of women, particularly amongst the youth in the homeland and the diaspora, to put forward creative initiatives of a societal nature, and to provide models of successful feminist experiences.

### **Women's Peace Table Programme**

The purpose of organising women's peace tables is to provide a platform for women and men to discuss the role of women during the conflict and its aftermath, in situations of conflict and military occupation as is the case in the Palestinian context, as well as to discuss peace-related issues from a feminist perspective.

Palestine participated in organising three women's tables under the

supervision of Masarat in cooperation with “PeaceWomen Across the Globe (PWAG)” during the past three years (2015-2017). Participation by women and men from the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the 1948 territories and by refugee women from Lebanon was high. A wide-ranging process of dialogue led to the emergence of a document in 2017 that included the main issues of a feminist discourse that was agreed amongst women of various intellectual and political affiliations and trends. The document will be presented for public discussion in 2018.

### **Peace Innovation Challenge Programme**

The programme aims to encourage and support women particularly those belonging to the younger generation, at home and in the diaspora to put forward creative initiatives of a societal nature, with each initiative being proposed by a team that includes both men and women and focusing on developing the role of women. The main purpose is to stimulate the creation of solutions that strengthens women’s participation in dialogue for peace in the Palestinian context.

A team of experts comprising men and women will focus on choosing the best initiatives, subsequently working to help develop them and supporting the implementation of the best initiatives. The implementation process of this program will begin in mid-2018.

