



Muwatin: Annual Report 2009

MUWATIN, THE PALESTINIAN INSTITUTE FOR THE
STUDY OF DEMOCRACY

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Overview of the year:

Conditions in the Occupied Palestinian territories show the increasing fragility of the Palestinian political system. The split between both sides of the Palestinian political order, Fatah and Hamas, despite attempts at reconciliation has only widened; the unity talks themselves, held under the aegis of Egypt, serving only to underscore the division around strategies and political alignments between the two. Both Fatah and Hamas now seem frozen in their respective strategies, despite an obvious failure of both to achieve their stated aims. The entrenched positions of both parties around the split, while clearly unviable from a strategic political viewpoint at the national level, points to the emergence of entrenched sectional interests among the elites in both parts.

The political split between the West Bank and Gaza remains a major stumbling block to effective national politics. The more the split between the two deepens the more regressive political features take root, which is certainly a long-term danger to the very fabric of a democratic system. Foremost here is the increased domination of a security approach to politics, which has seen waves of political repression in both parts of the Palestinian polity. While originally targeting members of the other's competing group, (Hamas and Fatah) the repression is spilling over into the wider arena of civil society. Paradoxically what may militate against the sway of the security apparatuses in both parts is the increasing loss of legitimacy of both regimes among the wider public.

In the West Bank the debacle surrounding the PA's handling of the Goldstone report contributed greatly to a visible loss of legitimacy of the regime, thus further limiting the ability of the PA to manoeuvre between the pressure of many sides to keep the 'peace process' floating, all the while that a new and more rightwing government came to power in Israel. In Gaza, Hamas has become ever more encircled while its inability to begin the task of rebuilding after the Israeli war last year only highlights this. The narrowing of the scope for action for both has meant that the political system itself is coming under increasing pressure without being able to offer the prospect of change. The only avenue for change had been the elections. The continuation of the split has ruled out the possibility of holding election for both the presidency and the PLC; political institutions that have now entered into a grey zone, neither totally illegitimate nor totally legitimate, but that much more vulnerable.

Aims of Muwatin's program:

- To initiate a full and wide ranging debate on democratic issues and options and to provide a public space for debate on the need for a democratic transformation of Palestinian political and civil life.
- To actively intervene in the reform of the Palestinian political system through policy directed research and public education campaigns on governance issues such as reform

of legislation, the separation of powers, reform of political parties, and issues concerning transparency and accountability.

- To identify the actual or potential actors in the transition to democracy in Palestine including political parties and mass based movements, and to engage them in debate and provide them with intellectual assistance and critical resources, in the belief that such engagement could have real impact for the transition to democratic life.
- To help build a strong research community in Palestine that will produce original research including policy oriented research, thus building a knowledge base on the processes that affect democratic transformation in Palestine, and that can influence policy formation at the highest level.
- To actively engage in the practical dissemination of democratic ideas and culture through its series of publications, targeting specific audiences such as teachers and students at both the university and school level.
- To help rebuild the intellectual links between Palestinian and Arab thinkers, links that have been adversely affected by long years of isolation imposed by the Israeli occupation.

Muwatin's program consists of the following core programs:

1. Research and policy studies program

The production and accumulation of knowledge around democratic processes both in their general aspect as well as in specific case studies are vital to producing an informed citizenry and is the cornerstone of Muwatin's mission. The institutional growth of Muwatin at the research level has been reflected in the growth of the research pool cooperating with Muwatin; the initiation of major long-term research projects, and a dramatic increase in its publication program.

2. Reform and Governance program.

Work on reforming different legislations that affect the nature of the democratic process and the system of representation and rights is a major focus of Muwatin's work in the Reform and Governance program. To advance this Muwatin has established a policy research group that conducts in-depth examination of different laws, produces draft laws and policy recommendations and actively advocates for the reform of existing legislation.

3. Seminar and Conference program

An extensive outreach program to open a public space for debate around crucial issues facing the Palestinian political system. The seminars explore various issues that can facilitate or hinder democratization processes, developments in the political process in Palestine and Israel, as well as address the need to explore different possible strategies in the struggle for democratization.

4. Educational Reform and Development program

Another element in the program that has emerged in the process of Muwatin's work was the recognition of the urgent need for educational reform and research capacity development of the younger generation of Palestinian researchers. As mentioned earlier Muwatin views the production of knowledge around democratic transformations and the agents who can carry the democratic project are key to the process itself. Muwatin has conducted much research into the educational deficit within Palestinian society; the shortfall of the university system; problematic aspects of the new Palestinian curriculum; and gender bias in the school system.

More recently Muwatin has extended this program in two ways, setting up a research-training program for junior researchers from both universities and policy NGO's. Secondly building on the MA Thesis grant awards program, which began in the nineties, Muwatin has recently initiated a MA series within its publication program in which the best of the MA theses produced at Palestinian universities would be published. In this way Muwatin intends to both develop research capacities and extend recognition to young researchers.

5. Publications program: Publication of major research and policy oriented studies. Most of the publications are based on the research funded by Muwatin which has eight different publications series. More than forty of Muwatin's publications have been used as reading material within different courses at Palestinian Universities.

6. Resource Library project: A specialized research library to support research and study projects in Palestine. The books represent the most up to date literature on a broad range of topics covering democracy, civil society, nationalism, gender studies, modernity and post-coloniality, cultural and political theory, anthropology and philosophy, as well as issues and case studies connected to Palestine, the Middle East and the Third World.

7. Networking program. Local, regional and international networking to advance Muwatin's research agenda, promote international research collaboration and advocate policy reforms at different fora.

Program Activities 2009

1. Research and policy studies:

Muwatin's research program has three major components:

1. Strategic Studies: Palestinian Political Developments, and issues of democratization
2. Political Islam and Democratization
3. Democracy and Politics in the Contemporary Arab World

1. Research program: Strategic Studies: Palestinian Political Developments, and issues of democratization

a. Transformations in the Palestinian political order post Arafat. Two studies were commissioned, one dealing with the West Bank and the other with Gaza to examine the changes taken place among the political elites in the post Arafat period as well as to map the concomitant emergence of new socio-economic elites that provide a social base for these political transformations.

b. The second research project is a comparative study of the different approaches and understandings and deployments of the concept of "security" between Fatah and Hamas, and its impact on political developments. How are the political programs of each party impacted and shaped by its security discourses and practices, and what impact has Israel as the major external player had on their development?

2. Research program: Political Islam and Democratization

Building up on Muwatin's research projects on Political Islam, this program has been developed in more than one direction.

a. **Islamist Movements and Political Participation in the Middle East:** This research project has two components. A panel on the "Future of Political Islam" has been organized at WOCMES 3 and has been accepted to the final WOCMES program by the Scientific Committee of the conference. The panel will deal with different aspects of Political Islam at the regional level, with papers on Iran, Turkey and Palestine as well as the Arab region as a whole. Secondly, these papers will form the core of the book which will also cover other countries in the Middle East. Contributions from experts on Political Islam in the region will be solicited and Muwatin will approach Routledge London for publication in English.

b. A study of the international relations of Hamas and their impact on its political developments: although there have been an increasingly large literature on Hamas, its emergence and political trajectory, scant attention has so far been given to situating the movement regionally and internationally. It is well known that Hamas emerged out of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and that it has had intimate ties with the brotherhood in both Egypt and Jordan. However the rise of Hamas within a distinct Palestinian national framework has meant a change in the nature of its relations with these movements, as well as introducing it as an independent player at the regional and international level. The study examines the multi-layered nature of the location of Hamas within a network of regional and international relations, some of which are more vital for its political development.

c. Building on the shared expertise in this field CMI and Muwatin have been successful in their application to the Norwegian research for a joint research project on “Party Politics in Palestine: Hamas and the Politicization of Resistance”.

d. The final research project is on another Islamist movement that is growing in Palestine and that is Hizb-at-Tahrir. This party has long been present in Palestine but has only recently begun to be publicly active. Although its establishment was rooted in post-48 Palestinian developments, it is a trans-national party with active presence in many Islamic and non-Islamic countries. The research attempts to map the changes that are taking place within this long established movement that has recently witnessed an increase in numbers, outreach and popularity, and with a more vocal public presence. The study will also test whether the changes taking place within this party shows a transformation in its political ideology or is a more pragmatic opening towards taking a more pro-active political role and challenging both Fatah and Hamas.

3. Research program: Democracy and Politics in the Contemporary Arab World:

a. **Media and politics in the Arab region:** This research project focuses on the central role of the media and its impact in the Middle East region. There has been a proliferation of new media in the past decade from satellite TV to internet based media, to bloggers and email networks. What has been the political and social impact of these new media in reshaping public discourse and political sensibilities? Can one talk of a unified Arab public sphere being formed under the impact of the major satellite TVs, or of multiple public spheres that intersect sometimes, in opposition to each other?

This project will have two specific outputs: A panel organized at WOCMES 3 in Barcelona July 2010, and a book with 8-10 contributions from scholars in the field. The presenters at the WOCMES panel will form the core contributors to the book.

b. The Political Economy of Democracy: this study reposes the questions regarding the failure of democratization in the Arab region. But instead of focusing on the usual questions regarding Islam and tradition as the impediments to democratization, the study explores the social and economic conditions under which democracy as a form of rule has become hegemonic in the West, comparing it to the situations in different Arab countries to see whether conditions for the achievement of such hegemony obtain.

2. Reform and Governance Program

(Funded by Oxfam Novib, HBF and Ford Foundation)

This program has two components:

A. Parliamentary Horizons Newsletter:

Two issues of Parliamentary Horizons were issued this year. The first issue covered the 6th Fatah party congress in depth asking whether the congress succeeded in reuniting a party that is deeply fragmented and lacking in strategy vis-a-vis the challenges it faces as the traditional carrier of the national movement. The issue also examined the issue of settlements as a stumbling block to the negotiations as well as Netanyahu's endorsement of an economic peace as the way to bypass the impasse of the peace process. The changing nature of the Palestinian elites, the economic interests they carry and their relation to the political establishment was another focus of the issue. Commentators pointed to the clear emergence of class differentiation in the West Bank, and the rise of a limited middle class dependent on credit and aid for their lifestyle thus constituting a social base for the political order. In Gaza likewise, new economic interests arose in the wake of the siege on Gaza, which practically destroyed the traditional economic elites whose projects came to a standstill, opening a space for new groups tied to the 'tunnel economy' as well as to the current political regime.

The second issue of Parliamentary Horizons examined the impact and ramifications of the Goldstone report and asking how far a juridical strategy based on international conventions can be successful in limiting Israeli violations. The major topic of the issue was a discussion with leading figures of Palestinian political factions on the impasse in the political settlement and an exploration of political options and strategies in the face of such an impasse. Other issues covered were the dangers of postponing the presidential and parliamentary elections of the legitimacy of the system as well as social issues such as the high rate of unemployment among the refugee population, and the increasing incidence of violence in the family and a rise in the number of suicides.

B. Policy Research Group

Muwatin is working on a new two year program with two components both aiming at securing citizens social and economic rights. The first project focuses on securing social

and economic rights for the population at large, especially for at-risk populations. The second project aims at correcting gender bias in the work field through promoting equal access and pay for women workers.

This program aims to establish a benchmark in terms of specific provisions in draft laws and according to specific criteria that can provide a legislative basis for the institutionalization of these rights that will help counter the democratic deficit within Palestinian society, and ensure a basic level of security for people as a *right*. There will be a sustained work to incorporate a gender perspective into the analysis and proposed reforms. Muwatin aims to institute institutional mechanisms to ensure equal access to jobs and equal pay for women.

A Background Paper titled "The Palestinian Experience in Social Security. The paper reviews and evaluates the legislations and the different programmes of social security provided by various providers to Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza "A Comparative Study of Social Security Systems" (Budget Item # A2)with a focus on Israel, Jordan, South Africa, and Sweden was produced. Countries were carefully selected on the basis of their diverse representation of different models that have salience for the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Policy Paper on Principles Governing Social Security" was developed by the Policy Reform Group. Based on the findings of the background paper and the comparative study mentioned above, the paper establishes a 'rights' based approach to the issue of Social Security and outlines the kinds of social security provisions that need to be provided

Work on a "Draft bill on Social Security" was begun by the Policy Reform Group.

3. Seminars and Conference Program

(Funded by HBF)

a. Seminars, symposia and workshops:

Seven events were held during this report period:

1. " The political aftermath of the war on Gaza". Speaker was Moiuin Rabbani, of the International Crises Group, and also chief researcher and analyst for the group in relation to the Middle East with particular reference to Palestine. Rabbani argued that the war on Gaza has weakened the Palestinian Authority (PA) politically since it was not able to do much to ward off the invasion of the Gaza Strip. The fact that there were many civilian casualties, in fact a majority of them were civilian, has galvanized Arab and Palestinian public opinion. The problem the PA suffers from is that it is not able to achieve credible political results and appears to be in a state of paralysis while Gaza is being invaded. Ultimately, the fate of the PA will depend on credible political progress towards its declared objective which is the two-state solution. 28-2-2009

2. "Observations on the Cairo talks". Symposium was led by Hani al-Masri, who attended the Cairo talks that began in March 2009, and continued for several sessions after that to try to bring a settlement between what came to be known as "Gaza" and "Ramallah". He was one of several independents who were invited to observe the talks as representing "civil society" given that the talks were not only of importance to Hamas and Fatah but to all Palestinians since the rift between them galvanized Palestinian political society as a whole. The gist of his comments were that both sides are not yet ready for a reconciliation given that both sides have forged alliances that are of a regional and international nature, which influence their decision-making and options. He did not expect that the differences will be bridged any time soon since they are tied to the conflicts and alliances in the region. 21-3-2009

3. "Observations and conclusion from the elections in Lebanon". Two speakers took part in this symposium: Dr. Helga Baumgarten of BirZeit University who was an observer on behalf of the Carter Foundation, and Dr. Taleb Awad a specialist in elections who represented Muwatin in observing elections, and does training on behalf of Muwatin in various Arab countries. The elections in Lebanon were for a new Parliament and were held in the beginning of June, 2009. They noted that the degree of organization was high and the possible infringements not too many and in general the elections went well given the deep divisions in Lebanese society of a political and confessional nature. The fact that the results were accepted by both sides was not insignificant since in emerging democracies often elections prove to be a cause of strong contestation, sometimes even violent. 20-6-2009

4. "Europe and the Middle East after the Election of President Obama". Speaker at this symposium was German Green Part head CemEzdimir, who is also a member of the European Parliament with an interest in foreign policy in relation to Germany and Europe. The speaker was on a brief tour of the region and was introduced by Mr. Joachim Paul, Director of the Regional Office of the H.Boell Foundation. The speaker outlined briefly the position of the Green party and also Germany on the conflict in the region. He maintained that the security of Israel is of importance to the Party and to German policy in the region, but at the same time Germany is for the two-state solution as was announced on more than one occasion by Chancellor Merkel. Some grounds for optimism exist already but realism is still needed since the positions of both sides in the conflict still remain far apart. 1-7-2009

5. "Of women, resistance, and perception in Western writings". Speaker was Amira Silmi, a graduate of the Women's Studies Institute at Birzeit University and based on her book which was published by Muwatin. She is now doing a Ph.D at the University of California at Berkeley. The speaker was critical of many writings by Palestinian and Arab women scholars which she also classified them to fall in the Western mode, including

some works by Birzeit university writers. The presentation generated a spirited discussion since several participants thought that her thesis was too strong and that cultural aspects should not be underestimated as hampering the emancipation of women. August 6, 2009.

6. "Emotions, values, ethics, and politics." Speaker was Dr. Raja Bahlul, a Muwatin researcher, formerly of Birzeit University, and at present at the University of the Arab Emirates. The presentation is based on a book he is writing on the subject as part of his affiliation with Muwatin. The speaker argued that the substance of ethics is values, but as an activity engaged in by thinkers throughout history, it attempted to lay a rational foundation for values, as opposed to mere emotions. Even if human being in different cultures are emotionally predisposed to respond in similar ways to specific valuational situations, this does not defray the need to ground such emotional predisposition in a rational foundation. The speaker argued that Kant's ethic continues to be the most relevant as offering a rational foundation for ethics, especially his Universalizability principle. This he argued also applies to politics as behavior can be judged in terms of applicability by others without leading to chaos or the collapse of the political order, since there would be one rule that applies to all normatively regulating political behavior. August 20, 2009.

7. "Fatah's sixth Conference: A reporter's observations." Speaker was Muhammad Daraghmeh, correspondent of various wire services including also Al-Hayat Newspaper, published in London and Beirut, a major Arabic daily. He reported of Fatah's sixth conference having been held twenty years after the fifth conference, and a long awaited event. The speaker argued the mere fact that the Conference was held has to be considered an achievement of sorts given the internal splintering of Fatah. Nevertheless, the Conference was marred by various infringements including adding several hundred delegated during the last two days of the Conference. August 28, 2009.

b. Conference:

Muwatin's Annual Conference this year explored strategic options faced by Palestinians in their struggle for national rights and statehood. The central question raised concerned what tasks does the Palestinian national movement face beyond the well rehearsed arguments concerning the two state or even one state solution which dominate Palestinian political discourse today. This necessitated a look at the nature of the Palestinian conflict and the Israeli state that it faces, as well as the kind of strategies that need to be addressed, and the forms of constraints that they impose. The conference was held over two days with six panels and was widely attended.

4. Educational Development and Research Training Program

(Funded by Ford, HBF, CMI and Cordaid)

a. Graduate Student Research Award Program:

Muwatin is continuing this program of awards in order to actively promote research at the university level. These awards are granted to postgraduate students at the MA level. The awards are meant to encourage investigation of issues relating to democracy and will be granted to students at the thesis writing stage. Selection of award recipients is on a competitive basis and is chosen by a committee. Three MA grant awards were made this year:

MA Thesis awards:

1. The first thesis was on the problematic of producing feminist knowledge in Palestine under conditions of occupation. The women's movement in Palestine has gone through many stages and faces the dual challenge of an internal neo-patriarchal system overlaid by an entrenched system of occupation. How has the women's movement coped with this dual challenge and to what extent has it succeeded in producing its own indigenous knowledge? Is it able to escape the forms of knowledge produced by feminists of the centre which are not always sensitive to the issues and forms of oppression that third world women in general and Palestinian women in particular labour under?
2. The second MA thesis awarded was an investigation of Islamic authoritative political discourse and its effects on political practice. The thesis explores the indeterminacy in the authority grounding Islamist political practices in Palestine: is it religious or political? And how are the two woven together? Under what circumstances is one or the other authority invoked as the ground justifying these practices? This indeterminacy provides a wide margin for the sacralization of this discourse with a concomitant loss in political clarity and in the ability to pursue political goals at a political level.
3. The Third MA thesis awarded was on Elections and the Opposition in al-Maghreb. The thesis is a study of the record of opposition parties in Morocco with special reference to Islamic parties taking part in elections at various levels. The reformist approach of such parties is in contrast with more radical Islamist groups who seek more radical and extremist methods. The essential question relating to the future of reformist parties is the degree of share in power they are allowed to have to see results in reformism and not be pushed towards extremism.

b. Research training program: In 2008 Muwatin initiated a thorough going evaluation of its research training program with different educational and academic experts. The recommendations for the redesign of the research-training program so as to provide close personal supervision of research work by students were successfully implemented this year. Academics with experience in research methodology training were recruited to train students in small group meetings. The emphasis was on guiding students through the process of writing research essays with detailed feedback being given by the tutors. Throughout Muwatin closely monitored this new tutorial system with the trainers so as to further develop and refine it.

c. Educational workshops on Palestinian factionalism

Since the Hamas Fatah split and its institutionalization in two political and governing structures the problem of factionalism has come to dominate public discourse. It can be argued that the history of the Palestinian national movement has historically been plagued by factionalism which has seriously impacted the ability of the movement to achieve its national aims.

These workshops are aimed at young social activists, student activists, media practitioners, editors, and journalists. It is these groups who are most caught up in the divisive effects of the polarization of Palestinian politics. While the population at large is rendered a-political within such a sectarian environment, feeling powerless to impact the situation, in part due to the securitization of the regimes in the West Bank and Gaza, it is young activists who run the risk of being mobilized and locked into these factional struggles. It is they too who can play a role in initiating a genuine national dialogue that can bridge the gap between the factions at the lower levels.

d. Policy-oriented study: *The efficacy of civic education in the Palestinian curriculum.* Although there has been an extensive and ongoing review of the new Palestinian curricula, to date no review has been made of the civic education curriculum. Using national assessment criteria this study measures the effective impact of civic education across grades one to eight, since early learning is thought to be crucial in instilling democratic norms and behaviour. The study focuses on two inter-related issues: testing for how successful civic education has been in teaching pupils the concepts and knowledge of citizenship, and the second to measure pupils' reception and acceptance of such norms, and to what extent they see it as relevant to their own lives. The study ends with policy recommendations on how to improve civic education taking into account the many criticisms of the curriculum that has been submitted by the school communities themselves.

5. Publications Program

(Funded by HBF, CMI, Ford)

1. History of Democracy in Europe: an Introduction, by Abdelrahman Abdelghani

A detailed study of the history of the struggle for democracy in European history, and the most important forces that shaped that struggle.

2. To be an Arab in these Times, by Azmi Bishara

An analysis of the political dilemmas that beset the Arab political system, and the possibilities for democratic change, including a long section on the current Palestinian crises and its historical roots.

3 Gradus for Opening the Episteme, by Esmail Nashif

An analytic study of the condition for the production of knowledge in Palestine and the issues, theoretical and methodological, which constrain such production.

3. Of Women and Resistance, by Amira Silmi

The book deals with the writings of Western women on Palestinian women. It argues that most writings are condescending towards Palestinian women given the explicit or implicit assumption that not only they are backward but that the model for development is the West.

4. Women, Judges and Law: An Anthropological Study of the Shari'a Court of Gaza by Nahda Younis Shehada

A critical study of proceedings in the Gaza Sharia court attending to the “the making of the law from above and the dynamics of its remaking from below”, where the court marks an arena for contestations that reveal dynamic negotiations between customary practice, codified law and multiple claims of the different actors involved.

5. Palestinian Labour Migration to Israel: Labour, Land and Occupation, by Leila Farsakh

This study provides the first comprehensive analysis of Palestinian labour mobility over the past 40 years following the occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967 and tracks their development through the Oslo period. Theoretically, the book seeks to bridge the gap between an economist rationalist approach to the analysis of Palestinian labour mobility and a political structural understanding of Israeli occupation. The research highlights the interdependence between Israel's confiscation of Palestinian land and the use of Palestinian labour, an interdependence that led, by default -if not by design-, to the destruction of the basis of any eventual Palestinian State.

6. Resource Library Project

(Funded by CMI, Ford Foundation)

Every year Muwatin acquires the latest academic books within the fields that have relevance for a broadly based humanities and political science research library. The library services the circle of Muwatin research fellows as well as the broader research community in Palestine. This includes Palestinian university students at both the BA and MA levels. Cooperation with advanced Studies programs at the universities includes maintaining Reserve Shelf Books for particular university programs and courses. Recently, with the acquisition of main server and office network, Muwatin's library database has been made available online via the internet in order to facilitate access for students and researchers.

7. Networking Program

1. Sari Hanafi travelled to Bergen in February 2009 where he spent three weeks to finalize the editing jointly with Are Knudsen on the book *Exodus to Exile: Palestinian Lives in the Levant* that will be published by Routledge in 2010. The book is based on the proceedings of an international workshop jointly organized by Muwatin and CMI in Bergen on Palestinian refugees, their lives and struggles, and the different legal regimes to which they are subject.

2. Muwatin was invited by the Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections to be a member of the Arab monitoring team overseeing the fairness and transparency of the 2009 Lebanese parliamentary elections. Given the history of the last four years of civil discord and sectarian tensions in Lebanon in addition to the 2006 war Israeli war on Lebanon with its destructive aftermaths, it was crucial that the 2009 elections should be fair and should be seen as being fair, hence the importance of objective monitoring of the whole process. Muwatin nominated Dr. TalebAwad to represent it in the Arab monitoring committee. Dr. Awad is an expert on elections and electoral systems and has participated in numerous electoral reform initiatives in the Arab region as well as in elections monitoring in various countries.

3. Muwatin is an elected member of the Steering Committee of PNGO, a network of 130 institutions in the West Bank and Gaza. In view of the elections for a new steering committee to be held in early 2010, a one day evaluation workshop was held by the steering committee in October 2009. Muwatin was asked to prepare a working paper outlining the main task of PNGO and clarifying direction for the future of the Network along with three other papers covering specific topics. Muwatin attended the workshop and played a leading role in clarifying future direction in three basic tasks: coordination among member institutions, influence on governmental policies and legislation to

insure a democratic direction in government and social justice in policies, and enhanced role at the regional and international level in support of Palestinian issues primarily the end of occupation and self-determination for Palestinians. Muwatin has been an elected member of the steering committee during more than five rounds of elections and in all but one received the highest number of votes.