

Q & A: Nabil Kukali, Palestinian Center for Public Opinion

August 20, 2007



Dr. Nabil Kukali is director of the [Palestinian Center for Public Opinion](#), which he founded in 1994. The center, based in Beit Sahour, studies Palestinian opinion in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. He spoke with WPO via email.

Palestinians generally express strong support for allowing the UN Security Council to use force to protect people from genocide—and even believe it has the responsibility to do so—and for its right to intervene militarily in a variety of situations. But there is a notable exception: they do not support UN action to stop proliferation. Why?

The UN tolerates that Israel comes in possession of many hundreds of nuclear heads, which might be carried to and dropped on any Arab capital, or on Teheran, by the Israeli air-force. This fact is known to everybody. On the other hand, the UN, under the US pressure, denies this right of possessing WMD to Iran. Why? The reason, [Palestinians] argue, is simple: Israel is a strategic ally to the United States in the Middle East, whilst Iran is pursuing a policy of national interests adverse to that of the United States. The Middle East with its oil reserves is a vital region for the US. Are the Americans really concerned about the democratization of the Middle East, with Iraq as the leading democracy model? The answer is definitely: No, they are only concerned about the Iraqi oil. Why did the UN keep silent as other more powerful countries than Iran, like India or Pakistan, were decisively working to be nuclear powers? The answer, once again, is simple: Pakistan or India are not so important for the US oil interests and don't "threaten" the US interests, as Iran allegedly does. How can the Palestinians trust such a super power, which measures with two different scales?

Despite Palestinian support for a UN Security Council with the right to act militarily in a variety of situations, Palestinians do not feel particularly warmly toward the United Nations (58 degrees). How do you explain this apparent contradiction?

[Palestinians] are concerned about the diminishing role of the UN, which is losing weight to the credit of the US and its allies. Iraq is the best example for that. The UN failed to prevent a US invasion of Iraq, and the UN inspectors did a bad job there. Palestinians think that the UN, at least in the last few decades, is to a great extent dominated by the United States of America.

Palestinians, like most publics distrust the United States, but unlike most they do not simply want it to cooperate more with other countries—they want it to withdraw from world affairs. Please comment on this.

Palestinians don't trust the US-administration and its policies, particularly in the Middle East, because they are clearly biased in favor of Israel. The US, Palestinians argue, is misusing its role in the world as a super power.