

Thumbnail Image:



Nov 04, 2016 by **Ilan Manor**

Evaluating Palestine's Digital Diplomacy ^[1]

From a diplomatic perspective, Palestine represents a puzzling case study. On the one hand, Palestine has been recognized as an independent state by the UN General Assembly. On the other hand, it is not a full member state of the UN. Additionally, in some countries one may find a Palestinian embassy while in others one may only find a Palestinian Office of Interests.

The level of representation differs as some countries recognize Palestine as an independent state while others regard it a semi-autonomous entity. As such, Palestine exists in a state of diplomatic limbo.

The issue of Palestinians' diplomatic representation is also complex, as Palestinian diplomats do not necessarily represent Palestinian citizens. For instance, Palestine is represented in the U.S. by a Palestine Liberation Organization mission. Yet the PLO does not govern the lives of Palestinians living under the rule of Hamas in the Gaza strip. Since Hamas and the PLO do not fully recognize one another's sovereignty, Palestine exists in a state of internal limbo as well.

The Presentation of Palestine Online

The complexities of Palestine's diplomatic standing have not prevented its diplomats from migrating online. Like most foreign ministries, the Palestinian ministry operates a plethora of social media accounts at both the embassy and national level. An evaluation of content published by these accounts suggests that the Palestinian digital diplomacy strategy focuses on three aspects: demonstrating international recognition of Palestinian sovereignty, seeking digital recognition and presenting Palestine as a "state in the making".

Demonstrating International Recognition

Many Palestinian embassies focus their efforts on demonstrating international recognition of Palestinian sovereignty. For instance, in the tweet below the PLO delegation to the U.S. informs followers that Algerian geography school books have been recalled, as they failed to label Palestine on maps. As such, the mission informs followers that Palestine does indeed exist as a sovereign state with internationally-recognized borders.



PLO Delegation to US
@PLODelegationUS



Following

Algerian geography books withdrawn after labelling Palestine as Israel



Algerian geography books withdrawn after labelling Palestine as Israel

The Algerian Ministry of Education ordered the 'immediate' withdrawal of a secondary school geography book yesterday, due to a printing error that labelled...

middleeastmonitor.com

The Facebook post below, published by the Palestinian Embassy in Zimbabwe, also portrays Palestinian sovereignty by informing followers that the Palestinian flag shall soon be raised at the UN headquarters in New York. This again attests to the international recognition of Palestine as an independent state.



Embassy of the State of Palestine / Zimbabwe shared a link.

September 10, 2015 · 🌐



Vote to allow Palestine flag to fly at UN headquarters ✓

General Assembly expected to pass resolution allowing flags of Palestine and the Holy See alongside full member states.

WWW.ALJAZEERA.COM

Additional content published online seems to portray Palestine as a state like any other. For instance, the tweet below includes a message of condolence from Palestine to the people of France following the terror attacks in Nice. Notably, the image included in the tweet begins with the words "State of Palestine". This tweet may be seen as an attempt to portray Palestine as an integral part of the international community, a state like any other that stands shoulder to shoulder with other countries in times of tragedy.



Palestine PLO - NAD

@nadplo



Following

#Palestine firmly stands in solidarity with **#France** in this painful time.

State of Palestine

Palestine Liberation Organization

July 15, 2016

PLO Secretary General Dr. Saeb Erekat on Heinous Terrorist Attack in Nice, France

We condemn in the strongest terms the heinous terrorist attack that took place last night in Nice, France. Palestine firmly stands in solidarity with France in this painful time, we extend our sympathies and condolences to the families of the deceased and wish a speedy recovery for those injured.

RETWEETS

48

LIKES

32



Lastly, Palestinian embassies also emphasize the fact that global powers now acknowledge Palestine's standing as an independent state. The tweet below, published by the PLO's negotiations bureau, suggests that France recognizes that Palestine has the same rights, and responsibilities, as Israel. Thus, this tweet portrays Palestine as Israel's equal rather than a quasi-state.



Palestine PLO - NAD

@nadplo



Following

Saeb Erekat on French Peace Conference:
Palestine seeks the same rights and
responsibilities enjoyed by other states



Saeb Erekat: Paris peace summit will equalize power between Israel and Pale...

Secretary General: 20 years of bilateral negotiations have failed. The international community must compel Israel to accept its responsibility as the occupying force ...

haaretz.com

Seeking Digital Recognition

In addition to seeking offline recognition, Palestinian digital diplomacy focuses on obtaining digital recognition of Palestinian sovereignty. For instance, in the tweet below Palestinian officials demand that PayPal expand its services to Palestine. The accompanying image is important in its own right, as it depicts a Palestinian national leader sitting in front of the Palestinian national flag, thus demonstrating yet again Palestinian sovereignty.



Palestine PLO - NAD

@nadplo



Following

Dr. Ashrawi calls on [@PayPal](#) CEO Dan Schulman to extend service to [#Palestine](#) dci.plo.ps/EN/index.php?o ...



RETWEETS

30

LIKES

29



Similarly, in the tweet below the PLO mission to the U.S. called on its followers to sign a petition demanding that Palestine be clearly labeled on Google Maps. At the moment, Google Maps only marks the borders of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip without labeling them under the name Palestine.



PLO Delegation to US
@PLODelegationUS



Following

Google, Inc: GOOGLE: Put Palestine On Your Maps! - Sign the Petition! change.org/p/google-inc-g ... via @Change



Google, Inc: GOOGLE: Put Palestine On Your Maps!

The country of Palestine does not appear on Google maps. Why not? Israel, established on Palestinian land, is clearly designated. But there is no mention of Palestine. According to Google, Pal...
change.org

RETWEETS

3



7:55 PM - 9 Aug 2016



Palestine's embassy to Japan also took to Facebook to encourage followers to sign a petition demanding digital recognition of Palestine in Google Maps. The post (seen below) also includes an image taken from Google Maps that clearly labels Israel but not Palestine.



Embassy of Palestine- Tokyo

August 24 at 9:06am · 🌐

<https://www.change.org/p/google-inc-google-put-palestine-on...> ✓



Google, Inc: GOOGLE: Put Palestine On Your Maps! ✓

The country of Palestine does not appear on Google maps. Why not? Israel, established on Palestinian land, is clearly designated. But there is no mention of Palestine. According to Google, Palestine does not exist. The omission of Palestine...

WWW.CHANGE.ORG

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

The Palestinian Embassy in Copenhagen took a different approach, by publishing a video containing historical maps that all recognized Palestine prior to the establishment of Israel. This video, seen below, asserts that Palestine has always been recognized offline and must now also be recognized online.



Mission of Palestine - Denmark

August 6 · 🌐

(Palestine in the global historical maps)

Every global and historical maps centuries ago. It mentioned the name of Palestine as the name for our homeland Palestine. Did not mention Israel's name never!!!!



107 Views

Like Comment Share

4

A State in the Making

The third aspect of Palestine's digital diplomacy strategy focuses on portraying Palestine as a *state in the making*, one that has created the institutions necessary for statehood. For instance, the Palestinian Embassy in Japan recently published a Facebook post informing followers of investment opportunities in Palestine. The information in the post was authored by the Palestinian Investment Promotion Agency, a national institution tasked with laying the financial foundations of the Palestinian state.



Embassy of Palestine- Tokyo added 2 new photos.

March 15 · 🌐

Investment Incentives in Palestine



The brochure is titled "Investment Incentives in Palestine" and features the logo of the Palestinian Investment Promotion Agency (PIPA) and the Ministry of Economic Affairs. It includes a QR code and contact information for PIPA. The main content is divided into two columns: English on the left and Arabic on the right. The English text lists investment incentives, including a 5% exemption from corporate income tax for investments in specific development areas, and a 25% exemption from corporate income tax for investments in specific development areas. The Arabic text provides the same information in Arabic. The brochure also mentions that investments that increase their local content will be exempt from customs duties, and that investments in foreign or local investors, and financial resources out of the country which accepted by the government, will be exempt from customs duties.

Investment Incentives in Palestine

5% Exemption
Period of 5 years commencing from the date of making profit that not exceeding 5% years reference to make:
الفترة خمس سنوات تبدأ من تاريخ تحقيق الربح بما لا يتجاوز 5 سنوات كمرجع.
years commencing from the end of the will be, thereafter, calculated based on the tax-effect percentages and segments.
لدى 5 سنوات تبدأ من نهاية الفترة التي يبدأ بها 5% من الأرباح.
مالية الشؤون.

Investment Criteria

25
Exemption for any investment employee or add at least this number of salaries;
ممن لا يقل عن عدد موظفي الاستثمار أو يضيف على الأقل هذا العدد من الأجور.

70%
local content: Any that use local content more than this rate.
المحتوى المحلي: أي التي نسبة المحتوى المحلي من هذه النسبة.

Investment Promotion Agency (PIPA)
Box 1984, Palestine
191, Fax: + 970 2 2988793
1800 250 250
@pipa.gov.ps
www.pipa.gov.ps

مستثمر فلسطين
Palestinian Investment

Conversely, the Palestinian embassy to Kuwait published a post notifying followers that the Palestinian Supreme Court has decided to halt preparations for the Palestinian municipal elections. The importance of the post arises from its mentioning of the Palestinian Supreme Court and Palestinian municipalities, thus demonstrating that Palestine has created the national institutions necessary for self-rule.



Palestinian Embassy Kuwait

September 8 at 3:18pm · 🌐

<https://www.facebook.com/MaanNewsAgency/posts/10154591189954456>



Palestinian Supreme Court halts municipal elections in the West Bank, Gaza Strip 🟢

<https://www.facebook.com/MaanNewsAgency/posts/10154591189954456>

WWW.MAANNEWS.COM

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share



Write a comment...



Lastly, an important component of Palestinian digital diplomacy is sports. Palestinian embassies throughout the world routinely highlight Palestinian sports achievements, such as winning an Olympic medal. Such content is important as it demonstrates that Palestine is indeed a state in the making, one that has a national soccer team, a national Olympic committee and a national Olympic team.



Palestine PLO - NAD
@nadplo



Following

Good luck to our national team! [#Palestine](#) V/S [@fft_official](#) today at 5:00 PM [#Palestine](#) Time in [#Dura](#) [#Hebron](#)



RETWEETS

44

LIKES

51





Palestine PLO - NAD

@nadplo



Following

Alf mabrouk! Congratulations Mary Al Atrash for making it to the finals! You make us proud!
[#PLE](#) [#RioOlympics2016](#)



RETWEETS

163

LIKES

227



9:08 AM - 13 Aug 2016



163



227





Conclusion

This post attempted to analyze Palestine's digital diplomacy strategy. At the moment, Palestinian embassies seem to employ social media in order to demonstrate international recognition of Palestinian sovereignty and portray Palestine as a State in the Making. Notably, Palestinian embassies also seem to advocate digital recognition of Palestine. At a time when states occupy both physical and cyber spaces, online recognition may be just as important as offline recognition.

Photo by Carlos Capote | CC 2.0
