

Anti-Annapolis in Madrid

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In two weeks, a social forum will be held in Madrid that is devoted entirely to the political situation in the Middle East. This Forum for a Just Peace in the Middle East was organized by the social movements of Madrid, including social organizations, solidarity movements, human rights organizations, women's groups and the trade unions. More than 200 organizations were invited from Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and other places in West Asia. The goal of the Forum is to conduct a deep and wide discussion on the political situation in the region, the danger of the upcoming war and also to speak about a joint strategy of struggle against occupation, colonialism and war. In this sense, it is possible to define the social forum of Madrid as anti-Annapolis. If the target of Annapolis is Iran, and in a wider perspective the Muslim world, our own targets in Madrid will be the neoconservative global war, the war of Ehud Olmert and George Bush, and the ideology of the clash of civilizations.

However, it appears that in addition to our primary targets, we will be forced to deal with an additional one: the attempt of the Peres Center for Peace to integrate into the Forum, with the active assistance of the Spanish Foreign Ministry.

The involvement of a government ministry in a social forum is, in and of itself, a serious violation of the Porto Alegre charter, which established the absolute independence of the social forums from the government. Yet the problem is not only statutory but absolutely political: what are bodies that openly support neoliberalism and the war doing with a conference that is entirely in opposition to neoliberalism and the war?!!!! This is not the first time that this quasi-governmental entity attempts to sneak into a conference of non-governmental organizations, and we have reviewed other attempts in the past (see, for example, "The Case against Palestinian Normalization with Israel" and "Peace NGO Conference in Florence: A Fraud and a Mystification"). However, this time the matter is more serious, as a majority of the participants perceive the forum in Madrid as being anti-Annapolis, and it is unacceptable that blatant supporters of Annapolis will be present to seek converts for their plan of war, a plan being created right before our eyes.

The social forums do not make political policies, but rely on international law, UN decisions and human and peoples' rights as defined in international conventions. As such, they support the realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people—the right to self-determination, the right of return—with no conditions and with no exceptions. Any attempt to trade the right of return for the right to a state, sovereignty for settlement blocs, withdrawal to the borders of pre-1967 in return for "sovereignty in greater Jerusalem" contradicts international law and the spirit of the social forums.

This is not to close the social forums, including the thematic social forum of Madrid, to any organization, on condition that it truly is a non-governmental organization and not a political party, but it must be clear that this is not a supermarket in which all opinions, including those supporting war and annexation, are legitimate. In order to ensure that the Palestinian and Arab delegations do not feel that we set for them a trap, the organizing committee of Madrid's social forum published a reference document, in the name of the forum, which amongst other things determined that "the Oslo Process and the Road Map which followed ignored the basic requirements of justice and therefore failed in establishing peace, security or prosperity in the Middle East...The basic requirements for justice are only possible with an end to the Israeli occupation and colonization of

the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem; the recognition and facilitation of the rights of Palestinian refugees, including their right to return to their lands (in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194 (III)); and end to the system of racial discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel..." (for the full reference document, see "Forum For a Just Peace in the Middle East: Madrid, a Space for Peace—Reference Document").

Only a position founded on these principles can ensure a just peace in our region. It is the polar opposite of the spirit of Annapolis and the declaration of principles that will be published—if at all—in its wake.

Within the framework of this absolutely clear position of the Forum in Madrid, everyone is welcome.

P.S.

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