

## 1996 DIPLOMATIC

### **7 January**

*Meeting with Ms. Susan Moir, Deputy Director of the Middle East Division in the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

**Topic: The Assassination of Yahya Ayyash / The Political Environment in the Palestinian Territories**

### **SUMMARY**

Susan Moir inquired what impact the assassination of Yahya Ayyash may have on the upcoming Palestinian elections and the negotiations with Israel. She also asked about the state of affairs regarding the relationship between Arafat and Hamas.

She was briefed that Arafat was caught between the sympathy of the Palestinian people for a martyr of the struggle and the pressure of the Israelis to dissociate himself from the Ayyash case and Hamas in general. It is expected that although the assassination may lead to a lower voter turnout and some candidates may withdraw from the elections, they will go on as scheduled. Hamas, despite its boycott of the elections, is preparing extensively for the municipal elections, which it sees as the real key to governing.

As for Israeli redeployment, it was important not to exaggerate the impact by calling the areas "liberated." The redeployment, however, should be regarded as a positive step by Israel in moving toward autonomy and possibly independence for the Palestinians.

During discussion of the role of academics and intellectuals in the current phase, an observation was made that there is a certain amount of hypocrisy among those who criticize the PNA but at the same time stay remote from the difficulties on the ground and enjoy a comfortable life elsewhere. With regard to the final status talks, it was said that the role of Jordanian-Palestinian cooperation will be crucial and of great influence.