

Mada's Ongoing Events

The role of the Palestinian intellectual in the current situation

In June 2010, Mada al-Carmel held a seminar on the role of the Palestinian intellectual in view of the current political situation. The seminar was held against the backdrop of the dangerous escalation of political persecution, incitement, and attempts at intimidation witnessed within the political sphere. These trends have come to present an existential threat to the Arab leadership and public. The topic of the seminar was a book entitled *Building the Nation Anew – Palestinian Intellectuals in Israel* by Dr. Huneida Ghanem, General Director of Madar – the Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies.

The seminar was opened and moderated by researcher Mtanes Shihadeh (Mada al-Carmel). Mr. Shihadeh posed a set of questions relating to the book about the role of intellectuals and how they comprehend and analyze the current political situation. Dr. Ismael Nashef (Lecturer, Faculty of Social Sciences at Ben-Gurion University in Beer el-Sabe) emphasized the importance of not reducing thought about politics to its direct meaning, particularly since the Palestinian political context is itself part of the crisis. Next he gave a critical reading of Dr. Ghanem's book, linking it to the role of the intellectual, and remarked on the book's important achievement. Dr. Ahmed Sa'adi (Lecturer, Faculty of Political Sciences at Ben-Gurion University) also gave a brief reading of the book, focusing on the role of the contemporary intellectual. He discussed the role of the intellectual in various eras and through different ideologies. He contrasted the role of the intellectual in the classic Arab-Islamic context as combating oppression with its role in the Third World as shaping national consciousness.

Adding further depth to the analysis, Dr. Huneida Ghanem explained that "the boundaries of the issues that have occupied the minds of intellectuals, and the boundaries of speech, are themselves the boundaries of the crisis. The space within which the Palestinian intellectual moves is within boundaries that are governed by the master-slave relationship." She further stated that the book did not address the Palestinian context or the Palestinian intellectual after the year 2000.

The discussion that took place between the participants centered on the role of the intellectual, particularly within colonialism. The discussion also touched on the balance between the intellectual's professional, analytical role and his or her practical role in changing reality.