

“Israel has an excessive sense of power and a surfeit of fear”

A seminar that discussed the existing and potential tools of political actions available to Palestinians within the Green Line was held at the initiative of Mada al-Carmel – The Arab Center for Applied Social Research, and Ibn Khaldoun – The Arab Association for Research and Development. A group of speakers took part in the seminar, which was moderated by journalist Wadi’ Awawdeh. Mr. Awawdeh opened the discussion by raising a set of questions, and pointed to the need to examine the political experience of the Palestinians within the Green Line, to reconsider their overall objectives and political practices, and to investigate the appropriateness and effectiveness of tools of political action.

Dr. Fawzi al-Asmar spoke about the experience of the Land Movement, of which he was a founder. He emphasized that the movement was a popular revolution that enjoyed broad popular support and had a powerful impact on Palestinian society. Furthermore, its clear political trajectory – and especially its position on Arab nationalism and unity – alarmed Israel, prompting it to ban the movement. According to Dr. al-Asmar, the fundamental questions to be raised are what the main goal of the current struggle is, and whether we have a comprehensive and clear plan.

Next to speak was Dr. Raef Zreik. Dr. Zreik stressed the importance of the tools of political action because they are clear, specific and direct, and argued that such tools were the touchstone of political action. At the same time, however, he warned of the danger of sanctifying these tools, and criticized what he termed the “insensitivity of the discourse of Arab members of parliament to the Israeli public in Israel.” Dr. Zreik further stated that there was an enormous gap between political practice and the discourse adopted, emphasizing the need to “raise the level of practice and lower the ceiling of discourse.”

Attorney Abeer Baker discussed the legal aspect of the issue. She argued that part of the success of Adalah – The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel could be attributed to the impotence of political action, “which has compelled people to rely on legal advocacy.” She also stated that there was an “over-dependence on the judicial aspect,” before reviewing a number of models employed during her work as a lawyer in Adalah.

The final speaker was Dr. Mohammed Abu Nimer, who compared the struggle and situation of the Palestinians in Israel to the struggles of other groups of indigenous populations in the world, including the Philippines and United States. In his lecture Dr. Abu Nimer discussed three main means that can be employed by minorities, namely parliamentary action, civil society, and civil resistance.