

“Gaza and the Dream of the Palestinian State”, Dr. Rula Hardal, *A Land for All*, 4/9/2025

Introduction

Hello everyone, and welcome to *Eyes on Gaza*, our daily gathering that is a combination of protest and learning. How do we imagine a future out of despair, out of terrible and unimaginable violence, and out of destruction and extermination? We don't really know the answers to these questions. But today, to close the eleventh week of *Eyes on Gaza*, we host Dr. Rula Hardal, co-director of *A Land for All – Two States, One Homeland*, which is a joint Palestinian-Israeli political organization (<https://www.2s1h.org/ar/en>). She will try to speak with us about such a future. The title she gave to her lecture is “Gaza and the Dream of the Palestinian State.” Rula will speak for eight minutes, and afterwards we will leave time for a short discussion. I remind everyone who wants to ask a question that you can do so through the chat. Hello Rula, *marhaba*, and thank you so much for coming to speak with us today. The floor is yours.

Talk

Marhaba. Hello everyone, hello Ayelet, and thank you very much for the invitation. And let me repeat what I said before we began: this is another one of those moments when I don't know what to say — although I speak constantly, in several languages, about the situation both before October 7th and the war, and afterwards. But truly, I don't know what to say for several reasons. One is personal, and I will share it. In recent weeks I have returned to levels of anxiety and fear very similar to those first weeks at the beginning of... I will use the phrase “war on Gaza” even though I don't like it— both the word “war” and the word “Gaza.” Perhaps we will return to this later. The second reason is that *A Land for All* — and I, as one who tries to convince Palestinians, Israelis, and the world of this political vision — cannot imagine a future without Gaza.

Why does this make things so difficult? Because I see that the plan of the current government regarding Gaza is exactly the plan we always knew would come. At least I knew — I said it and was interviewed about it already on October 7th and 8th — that Gaza will not be Gaza. The project of the extermination of Gaza — and here I insist on using the word ‘extermination,’ despite the difficulty of doing so — is now very present. There is systematic extermination: of the Palestinian human soul, of infrastructure, of life, of modernity, and of the very possibility of modern human existence in the future.

What I understand, from observing everything that is happening, from all the declarations, from investigations and international reports, and from my deep familiarity — as one who has taught for years about Israel, Zionism, and the changes shaping Israeli and Palestinian society and politics, both in Palestinian and German academia — is that we know the ideology guiding the current Israeli government. This ideology was not shaped in the last two or three years. Its roots run deep, in many sources — political, ideological, even religious — of the people and groups who today form the coalition. Because of this, it feels impossible to imagine a shared future. Even the future I dream about and work for together with many others in *A Land for All*, is based on two states. Mainly two states — though not the old paradigm of separation, but one of partnership, of living

together, of recognizing bi-nationality, of individual and collective equality, and of reconciliation. But at the end of the day, it rests on two states.

The Palestinian state we imagine is a state on the 1967 borders — not because we love those borders, but because they are the internationally agreed borders. Yet the borders would be, I would say, “breathing” — open and flexible. But if there is no Gaza, if ethnic cleansing takes place there — and it does not have to be massive or all at once, and it does not have to follow the very elaborate political imagination that Trump and others outlined, or that some in the Israeli government envision — it can also emerge as a status quo — a reality where there is no political settlement, no peace, only the continuation of a certain kind of war. And then, ethnic cleansing will unfold.

My last point is that this project is not only about Gaza. I have been living in recent years in the West Bank, in Ramallah. I see with my own eyes what is happening — not just reading about it or hearing it secondhand. I speak with people, I witness events. The project there is similar — not identical, but similar. And we hear what the government is planning.

So, how do we still manage to imagine a future? In short — in very short — we must think together about how to stop the extermination in Gaza, the project of expulsion and annexation, and the wider project that I call “the extermination and the effort to prevent the continuation of Palestinian national collective existence”. Ultimately, it is an effort to prevent the establishing of a Palestinian state. This is what we must all think about together: what are our ways, our strategies, to prevent what I have just described in these past eight minutes.

And the second question is this: if we succeed in stopping it, how do we — Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, in this homeland, in this place between the Jordan and the sea — succeed in speaking together again? How do we agree on a shared future? And what kind of shared future?

Thank you very much.