



The 60th Annual Ramallah Convention

Resolution at the Closing Ceremony of 60th Annual Ramallah Convention



Ramallah – The closing ceremony of the 60th Annual Ramallah Convention was held at the Millennium Hotel in Ramallah city on July 7th, 2018. The ceremony witnessed many key elements that emphasized the importance of this event and the concerns of its organizers.

These activities included honoring a number of the leaders and active members of the AFRP, including the new president and vice-president of the federation.

Many key figures attended the ceremony including the PLO Secretary General, Dr. Saeb Erekat, in addition to the Mayor of Ramallah Municipality and Head of the Convention Steering Committee Eng. Musa Hadid, the former president of the AFRP Dr. Hanna Hanania, the current president of the AFRP Mr. George Habib the Head of the Medical Unit in the Federation Dr. Rajai Khoury. The organizing partners were also represented by the President of the Ramallah Convention in the United States Mr. Bassam Eweis, the President of the Ramallah Convention in Ramallah Mr. Adnan Farmand, as well as the President of Ramallah Federation Society- Palestine Ms. Amal Daoud, and the President of Sareyyet Ramallah Mr. Faiq Khoury.



During the closing ceremony, Erekat paid tribute to the Ramallites living in the diaspora who participated in the convention, and praised the amount of commitment to their homeland. He believed that their arrival from abroad to participate in the convention, represents their loyalty and the concept of nationalism. He added, "We are one people, Palestine and Jerusalem are more important than all Arab and Muslim capitals."

In regard to the political aspect, he said that the Palestinian people and their leadership did not seek to clash with or confront the US administration, while stressing that the Palestinian position is consistent with the establishment of an independent state on all the occupied territories in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

He pointed out that the US administration recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of the occupying relocation of its embassy in Jerusalem, has led to disqualifying itself and its role as a patron of the peace process.



He also emphasized that no one has the power to impose anything on the Palestinian people. Furthermore, that Jerusalem will remain the eternal capital of the Palestinian State, indicating that the American actions and attitudes towards it is not accepted.

Dr. Erekat reviewed some of the national developments issues, including Palestine as a “non-member observer state” status in the United Nations. He believed that the Palestinian people were never closer to achieving its objectives than it is now and stressed the need to achieve the reconciliation, pointing out that there will be no state without the Gaza Strip, and that Gaza will not be a country on its own.

Mayor Hadid talked about the keenness of the AFRP to organize the convention in Ramallah, pointing out to their success in hosting more than 1000 expatriates. He also said that Ramallah experienced in the presence of the expatriates a distinctive festive atmosphere, which shows that the Palestinian people are alive, and are able to create moments of joy even in the darkest circumstances. Moreover, he urged the expatriates to return to their homeland every year in order to work on creating a positive change, especially among the American public opinion.

Mayor Hadid praised the sponsors of the convention and their roles in the success of the convention, stressing that the municipality will always strive to achieve the best for Ramallah.

Dr. Hanania stated that the establishment of the convention in Ramallah again represents a milestone in the Federation path. He also pointed out that the importance of the last session of the convention, entitled: Jerusalem, the Capital of Palestine, is a confirmation to the rejection of the American stand on Jerusalem. He condemned the American position on Jerusalem, by saying that it became an additional motive for the Federation to organize the convention here.

On another note, Dr. Hanania praised his successor, Mr. Habib, appreciating his administrative abilities and his contribution to the advancement of the Federation.

Mr. Habib expressed his happiness with the success of the convention, pointing out the vital role played by the Federation. He also said that as the new president of the Federation, he will work on developing the federation

through proposing to implement a new project to count all the Ramallah expatriates in the United States, and later on to expand the project to include all Palestinians in the United States.

He also urged the implementation of the project to count the Palestinians worldwide while thanking the federation and its members for giving the trust and support.

Mr. Eweis praised all the organizers and the efforts made to accomplish a successful convention, and thanked those who took the initiative to travel to Palestine in order to participate in the convention. He urged to increase the involvement to a wider range in order uphold the name of Palestine and its cause. He also pointed out that the establishment of the convention in Palestine under the experienced difficult circumstances represents a very important issue.

Mr. Farmand noted the remarkable success achieved by the convention, expressing his happiness with the huge participation of the expatriates. He also talked about the obstructions that many Ramallah people living in the diaspora faced by the Israeli occupation authorities while entering the country to participate in the convention, and thank fully all entered.

Mr. Khoury said that the convention represents an event to unite the Palestinian efforts worldwide, while pointing to the affiliation of our people living in the diaspora and their love for their homeland. Moreover, he affirmed that the life of the Palestinians is not easy, but stressed the need to continue clinging to the will of life, and work to improve the homeland.

In addition to the speeches, the ceremony included honoring the organizers of the convention, as well as the sponsors, followed by the oath ceremony for Mr. Habib, which included receiving the Federation flag from the former president, Dr. Hanania.

The ceremony began with the entry of the Sareyyet Ramallah, carrying the Palestinian flag, before playing the national anthem.

The 60th Ramallah Convention was organized by the Ramallah Municipality, the American Federation of Ramallah-Palestine, and the Ramallah Federation in Palestine Society and Sareyyet Ramallah under the slogan of “Yalla Ala Ramallah”.



Despite its Institutional Character

The Political Dimension Imposes itself on the Convention's Agenda

Ramallah – The Ramallah Convention is not a political event as much as it is a dedication to an annual tradition that has been taking place for six decades. However, the last convention carried a clear political message as it came in the wake of the recent American decisions and actions regarding the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of the occupying state, before relocating the U.S Embassy in it.

The American Federation of Ramallah-Palestine (AFRP) and the various organizations in the 60th convention condemned the U.S administration and their decisions, and held their sessions during the convention entitled “Jerusalem, the eternal capital of Palestine”.



Former president of the AFRP, Dr. Hanna Hanania, stated several times throughout the convention events, his rejection to the American standpoint regarding the Holy Land, as Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine. He also stressed that the organization of the convention in Ramallah became of a greater urgency after the American decisions and procedures, indicating that Palestinians will not surrender their rights in Jerusalem.

Mr. George Habib, the new President of the AFRP 2018-2018, also confirmed his rejection to the American position, pointing out during the closing ceremony of the convention, that what is happening now is a test for the Palestinian people. He added. “We are going through a difficult test, and our existence as Palestinians is being threatened to disappear on this land. Therefore, the Federation has to keep going and maintain their great role in resisting.”

Many parties voices their concerns that organizing the convention in Ramallah was a challenge on many levels. According to Chairman of the Convention in Palestine, Mr. Adnan Farmand, there were some suggestions and recommendations towards not organizing this convention in Ramallah, in order to avoid new problems within the Palestinian-American relationship politically.

He discussed their concern of having a low participation but fortunately, this concern did not stop the organizers from wanting to host the convention again in the homeland. Moreover, Farmand said that the former President of AFRP, Dr. Hanania, insisted on organizing the convention in Ramallah, especially since many of our people in the diaspora return to their homeland annually, and it is their right of return as well.

Dr. Hanania said that as long as there are many Ramallites and Palestinian residing in the USA and do visit their homeland annually, they should commemorate this tradition through organizing the convention in Ramallah, once every four years. He added, “From the very beginning, I said that it doesn’t matter if we had 10 people or 100 people, the convention must be organized in Ramallah, but what we found out was that there was a large turnout of more than a 1000 persons. That resulted in imposing great pressure on the organizing institutions and committees as well as on the city. Around 280 Hotel rooms were fully booked, while some participants stayed at their relatives or rented apartments for a longer stay.”

Furthermore, Dr. Hanania talked about the great pressure that the AFRP faced during the registration process and expressed their willingness to host participants of the convention who came from different countries besides the United States such as Canada, Australia, Chile, and the UAE in their homes, as a way to emphasize on the importance of this event.



Many Described it as “Magnificent”

The 60th Annual Ramallah Convention Starts with a Public Commencement Ceremony Featuring an exceptional 3-D Lighting Show



Ramallah - The 60th Annual Ramallah Convention exceeded the ordinary with its public welcoming ceremony events held at the Ramallah City Hall Park and was described as magnificent by the public.

One of the highlights of the evening was a spectacular 3-D lighting show, which shed light on the most prominent periods throughout the history of the Ramallah city and its cultural heritage thus drawing the attention of many international organizations to the uniqueness of this place.

The 3-D lighting show was designed to cover the whole City Hall building and was accompanied by musical pieces. The public praised and admired this show especially as some excerpts accompanied it from poems by the late Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish.

As for the municipality, its “magnificent” show was not limited to the 3-D artistic lighting show. The evening was accompanied by the new musical fountain performance, which is one of the most remarkable projects recently accomplished by the municipality.

Moreover, one of the astounding characteristics of this ceremony was the participation of a large number of

citizens, including representatives of different institutions, key government officials, and international delegates.

Mayor Musa Hadid stressed in his speech- during the ceremony- that the organization of the convention is a special event for the city and its people and that having a great turnout is a moment of pride.

He also considered that the organization of the Convention in Ramallah, is a response to the declaration of the US Administration for considering Jerusalem as the capital of the occupying state, and the recent relocation of its embassy in Jerusalem.

On another note, Mayor Hadid praised all sponsors and supporters of the convention, while highlighting the benefits and the special ambience that this event has added to Ramallah.

Former president of the American Federation of Ramallah-Palestine, Dr. Hanna Hanania, talked about the federation’s beliefs regarding the importance of hanging on to the homeland and their keenness to contribute to the development in Palestine.



In addition, Dr. Hanania said that the convention reflects the federation's willingness to communicate with Ramallah organizations, especially the Municipality, while praising its roles at various levels.

He also explained that the organization of the convention in Ramallah was a challenge for the Federation and other organizers as well, and expressed his happiness about the size of the turnout.

According to the president of the Ramallah Convention in the United States, Mr. Bassam Eweis, the participation of our people in the diaspora from several states in America, as well south America, UAE and even Australia, is a proof of their attachment to their homeland. He also pointed out that the Palestinians will not give up their rights regardless of the difficulties and challenges. Its their right of return.

Mr. Azmi Shunara, the representative of Sareyyet Ramallah referred to the 56th convention that was held in Ramallah four years ago. He explained in his speech that the success of that convention has led the participants to decide on organizing it periodically in the city, once every four years. On another note, he pointed out to the diverse activities that were included in the convention, were one of the highlights that characterized this convention.

The President of the Ramallah Federation of Palestine

Society, Ms. Amal Daoud, praised the role played by the members of the Palestinian community in the United States and their attachment to their homeland. She also believed that the Ramallites in America are contributing to build a better future for their city and homeland, emphasizing the importance of living in Ramallah and the resilience of its people.

The General Director of the Bank of Palestine, Mr. Rushdi Al-Ghalayini, expressed his happiness about the partnership with the AFRP, which has started in 2011. He also indicated that the bank will continue to develop this partnership during the coming period. It's a strategic partnership that will last on all levels. Mr. Al-Ghalayini talked about the convention's outcomes especially in terms of creating economic growth and social movement during the past few days.

Governor of Ramallah and Al-Bireh, Dr. Laila Ghannam highlighted in her speech the great role-played by the Palestinian living in the diaspora in developing their homeland. She believed that the organization of the convention in Palestine is as a form of resistance.

At the end of the event, the participants marched thru the streets of Ramallah old city to the headquarters of Sareyyet Ramallah, where they enjoyed the rest of the evening with an organized reception of traditional foods and delights and a musical concert.





The Investment File was One of the Top Priorities during the 60th Annual Ramallah Convention

Ramallah –The investment file was one of the hot topics discussed during the latest Convention held in Ramallah recently. Although the concerned parties and specialists advised not to expect quick results, yet they believe that the wheels are turning and will not turn back.

In this regard, the investment coordinator for the 60th Annual Ramallah Convention, Mr. Bashara Dabbah, said that this convention is the starting point for an investment process that is irreversible, but he did warn against expecting immediate results.



He added, "The convention cannot provide the solution, but it gave many of our people in the diaspora and businessmen the opportunity to discuss several proposals regarding the establishment of an investment fund or private company. Moreover, different issues were discussed such as legal breaching related to issuing bonds. This is therefore a vital process, but the results will certainly not be quick.

Mr. Dabbah pointed out that the convention discussed around 10 projects, of which a large part of these projects target individuals who excel in information technology, stating the uniqueness of each one of them. He added, "one of the most remarkable things noticed in the convention is the enthusiasm shown by the our people in the diaspora about investment in this country. However, he stressed that the call for investment is not a matter of patriotism but rather a belief in its importance and the existence of great opportunities to achieve rewarding returns.

Dabbah said, "We do not want expatriates to make donations but rather to invest for a higher return investment." He also assured that the investment environment here needs some additional work, "I think that banks should facilitate investment processes and projects development, and that Ministries should provide incentives and maybe exemptions for executive and supportive parties for such projects."

During the convention the Bank of Palestine, the strategic partner of the Ramallah Convention hosted a special meeting to discuss many issues related to investment in Palestine. There was also a visit to the Palestine Monetary Authority, where attendants learned about challenges and opportunities and discussed many of their concerns and way to address them.

Chairman of the Ramallah 60th Convention in Ramallah, Mr. Adnan Farmand believes that the investment and economic aspects are one of the main objectives of this convention. He suggested that participants can purchase property, buy a share in local companies, or partake in a collective investment through creating partnerships to establish investment companies with the private sector. He also believes that one of the most important pillars of investment is through entering in partnerships with the Ramallah Municipality to implement some projects, in particularly in the field of infrastructure.

Mr. Farmand added, "There are many ideas in the investment file, and what has been achieved so far is encouraging but certainly needs to be followed up." Furthermore, he stressed the need to increase the investment in the hotel sector and the establishment of exhibition shows in Ramallah. "Although, there were around 1200 expatriates from the United States and other counties participating in the convention, it was not possible to host more due to the lack of hotel rooms. Moreover, the shortage of exhibition lands equipped to host thousands of people has become one of the essential requirements which we lack, hence urging for investment in this aspect as well."



A Rich Program Including a Variety of Events; 4 - 7 July and beyond



Ramallah – The nature of activities that were included in the 60th Annual Ramallah Convention were many; they reflected the extent of care and efforts the organizing partners exerted in order to satisfy the various tastes, whilst targeting the different groups. The program comprised of many activities; political, economic, socio-cultural, artistic and others.

The Chairman of the Ramallah Convention 60th in Ramallah, Mr. Adnan Farmand, stated the fact the diversification of the program was intentional to simulate the needs and aspirations of the participants, including those who visited Ramallah for the first time.

Prior to the commencement of the convention, during the Official press conference launching the convention which was held in the town hall, Mr. Farmand explained that the organizers of the convention were keen from the very beginning to deliver a rich program with diverse events.

The convention activities were started by a public reception organized in the Ramallah Municipality Park, which included official welcoming speeches, artistic shows, and Dabkeh performance. In addition to a stunning performance for the first musical fountain in Palestine which was held before a festive march through the city that was led by the Sarriyet Ramallah with participation of other city scouts troupes.

On the following day, an official opening ceremony was held under the auspices of His Excellency, Prime Minister Dr. Rami Hamadallah, who gave a speech on behalf of President Mahmoud Abbas. Following the official ceremony, a reception was held at Al-Birweh

Park - Mahmoud Darwish Museum to honor the guests. In parallel, many field trips were organized which included visits to the different monuments of the city; like the old city, the Yasser Arafat Museum, Palestine Medical Complex and the Am'ari Refugee Camp, as well as visits to Birzeit University, the Palestinian Museum and Shepard's Beer company.

A sports day was also organized by convention activities committee in Sarriyet Ramallah where family members of all ages took part in. Several children's youth activities took place within the city vicinities as well.

In relevance to the economic situation, seminars were held regarding the Palestinian economy and investment opportunities. Major speakers included for the political aspect, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, member of the executive Committee of the PLO, highlighting the consequences and drawbacks of relocating the American Embassy in Jerusalem.

Moreover, PLO Secretary General, Dr. Saeb Erekat was hosted as the keynote speaker at the closing ceremony of the convention which was attended by many participants.

Regarding arts, the convention also scheduled the screening of the movie "Na'ila and the Intifada", in addition to different arts performances and activities, including the festival of "Wein A Ramallah".

After the convention meetings, Several trips took place to Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Jericho and the Dead Sea, Haifa, Akko, Nazareth, Tiberias, and others. A regional trip to some of the most famous tourist attractions in Jordan was also organized.

The Ramallah Convention 60th left its participants with a lot of joyous homeland memories at all levels.

