



**PAPER BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. HUBERT VÉDRINE AND
HIS EXCELLENCY MR. ANDRÉ AZOULAY ON THE
ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

1. The HLG works under the auspices of the United Nations, without formal, diplomatic or institutional constraint. This freedom of thinking, of proposing, is a **decisive advantage that creates for each of the members of the Group a duty and a collective responsibility that must be innovative and useful.**
 - It is an **advantage** *because*, being designated *intuitu-personae*, the members of the HLG *can make decisions without* taboo or censorship, animated only by the desire to go directly where the Governments are not able or free to go.
 - It is a **duty** because the topic of reflection proposed to us, namely the **relations between Islam and the rest of the World, determines and conditions** the international order of our times. It is with this reality that **imposes itself to us increasingly every day** that the International Community is confronted and in which, to date, it has been incapable of offering a credible and efficient scenario to get out of the crisis.
 - It is a **responsibility** because the answer to this impasse is partly the role of the HLG, which has accepted this mission for the Alliance of Civilizations, **with an ambitious and committed program**. In this perspective, this High Level Group has created, and rightly so, **expectations and hopes** that command us to show **truthfulness, creativity, pragmatism and daring** in our recommendations.
2. The objective of the HLG is to **enforce an Alliance of Civilizations against all those who, in Islam or in the Western world, by ignorance, fanaticism or ideological choice, give prevalence, on the contrary, to a logic of division and confrontation.**
3. In this perspective, the HLG must resist the temptation of basing its proposals on the single logic of a univocal answer to a **collision of Civilizations or Religions** that would be the **shrinking and grotesque mirror** of all our problems. The HLG must **reject the fatality and centrality** of this collision in connection with the challenges that concern us. In this sense, it would be useless and dangerous to argue or build heavy and complex strategies in order to answer or face a problem whose existence is not denied by the HLG, but concerning which it must suggest that **its impact is a consequence and not a cause.**

The HLG must not **fall into this trap** and owes it to itself to go directly to the **objective facts (historical and political) that determine the reference values, the thinking, the choices and the commitment of hundreds of millions of**



Muslims, from Mauritania to Indonesia to Senegal and Nigeria, and reaching as far as China or India.

4. These facts are dated and have **a name and an origin**. They are named **Palestine, Israel, Iraq, Afghanistan or Chechnya**. The members of the HLG are aware, from this point of view, of the persistence of the weight of the heritage from the colonial era on the mentalities, behaviors and representations of the Western and Arab-Muslim populations. It keeps up and fuels passionate anti-Western reactions, from one end of the Muslim world to the other, from Morocco to Sinkiang among the Uigurs. And in the Western countries, a confusion, in spite of the declarations and careful claims to the contrary, between Muslims, Islamists and terrorists, and a persistent and widespread fear for their security. Extremists of all kinds are busy widening this divide, which serves their purposes. In this context, the **HLG owes it to itself to make** Westerners understand why, for example, in these cases, **a Moroccan reacts with the same passion and the same determination as a Chinese Muslim whom he does not know and whom he will never meet**.

This sounds **irrational and improbable** to a Cartesian Westerner, **but it is a fact**. By stating it, the HLG gets to the core of the problem submitted to it, whose **components** are at the same time **strategic, political, religious, historical and cultural**.

5. The members of the HLG do not claim to believe that they have **miracle** solutions to resolve all these tragedies caused by a history that is both long and recent. **Yet this does not lead them to stop making proposals and recommendations in the fields of education, media and the youth**, in order to tackle the logic of confrontation and prevent the risk of a clash. But they affirm that they will be especially effective if the governments and the multilateral institutions concerned decided to make an unprecedented international political effort to fight the political causes of the current Islam-West antagonism.

To make a long story short, the HLG must assume the responsibility of dealing **with the Palestinian case as a priority**, which nobody can deny these days is decisive in the relation between the West and Islam. This case is **complex, painful** and it represents the **sum total of all the difficulties and all the risks**, but it is central.

Sixty years after the 1948 United Nations resolutions that organized and validated the creation of Israel, **the Community of Nations expects, hopes for and desires a fair and durable solution, without any more delays**.

It will be based on **three realities** that by now are **irrefutable**:

- a. **The legitimacy of the National Palestinian Movement** about which we now know that **neither the wear of time, nor force nor money** will ever



defeat its **determination** to build a dignified State, respected and equipped with all the means of sovereignty.

- b. **The legitimacy of the National Jewish Movement** that found its achievement in Israel, in part of Palestine, and about which it is equally known that it will not be defeated **either by terrorism, or by wars, or by international pressures**.
- c. **The Will of all**, and first of all of the majority of **Arabs, Palestinians**, of the **Israeli people** and of the **Jews** throughout the world, **to accept and support any solution that is dignified, fair and ethical**, that gives a true chance to the coexistence of two States, Palestinian and Israeli.

6. Sixty years later, the HLG can try to draw conclusions, and speak the truth.

The HLG can tell the Israelis the nature and the reasons for the **missed opportunities of this half century, their price, the scars they left and their consequences**.

The HLG can also **do the same for the Palestinians**, without complaisance.

The Israeli and Palestinian nations among whom an immense majority **aspire to live in peace, security and dignity** are ready to share this logic. But it is not enough; overcoming the current step back requires a **daring vision of the future**, and courage on the part of the **Israelis, Palestinians** and all the influential countries, starting with the **United States** and the other permanent members of the Security Council.

In this perspective, the HLG can offer an **essential contribution** that consists of **shedding light "objectively" and "serenely" on the Israeli-Palestinian landscape** by giving priority to the inventory and analysis of the parameters which have weaved over the years a drama **that has given a platform to the hard liners and artisans of the divide**.

7. Today, the United Nations, which were a main player in 1948, can **tell the Israelis, the Palestinians, the Muslims, the Westerners and the others** the **lessons** and the **reason** for these sixty years of confrontation, of blood, of humiliation and of largely shared fears.
8. This **statement of facts** will lead to a **refocused scenario, calm and non-partisan**, of **reconstruction** of the peace between the **two States nourished by the same legitimacy**, equally established and validated.



Two States for which the same **requirements of dignity, respect and justice** would be recognized, as for **two nations** finally accepted as **equal in rights and duties** by the Community of Nations.

9. It is vital for the Palestinians and for the Israelis to understand **an approach and a discourse** that express both their **respective responsibilities for the failure** and the current **awareness** of the International Community, on the one hand concerning the **objective reasons that led to this failure**, and on the other hand of the **inevitable conditions** of the solution that imposes itself on all.
10. It is essential for the Palestinians as well as for the Arab-Muslim world in general to **understand and assimilate the fact that now WE, the HLG, KNOW AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR LETTING EVERYONE KNOW THE PRICE AND WEIGHT OF THESE SIXTY YEARS OF MISUNDERSTANDING, STIGMATIZATION, OF HIDDEN OR MISUSED TRUTHS.**

If this threshold is passed, the stakes can be fundamentally changed. It can be the **first step on the road to recovered dignity and newly found credibility** in order to restore the meaning and reality of a process that is likely to finally lead to peace.

12. Equally, this **level-headed and rational analysis** of the history of these sixty years can substantially contribute to **exorcise the fears in Israel** and reconcile the Israeli people with its **founding** values. Resolving the Palestinian problem will obviously not make all tension disappear in Islam-West relations. But not resolving it will nullify any effort to eliminate these tensions.
13. This **exercise in truth** (pedagogical and ideological) initiated by the United Nations will restore all their meaning and all their chances to the **rebuilding and normalization of the relations between Islam and the rest of the world**. Each party will get satisfaction, and only **the extremists and fundamentalists will see their legitimacy weakened or even contested**, because they will no longer be the champions of a cause or causes appropriated by them by default or by infraction, taking advantage of a **story not told and voluntarily and deliberately ignored** for too long by the Community of Nations.

The recommendations of the HLG may contribute to **defuse the situation** by making available this white paper to all decision-makers concerned. This white paper can become a true **platform for setting new foundations for peace** between the Palestinians and the Israelis gathered around a history, their own history, written without complaisance, and which would have the fundamental and unprecedented merit of seeing the Community of Nations **treating both parties as complete equals, for better or for worse.**

