

Building Ownership in Palestinian Security Sector Reform

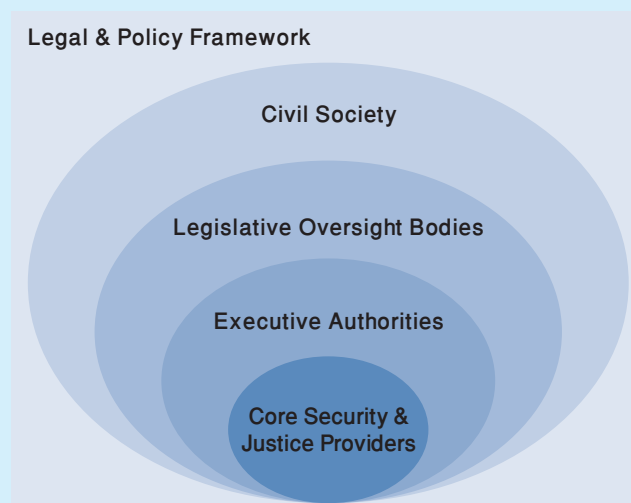
A large number of international actors are currently assisting Palestinian security sector reform (SSR). In 2009 alone, donor countries supported the development of Palestinian core security and justice providers (see box on the right) with more than USD 100 million.

In 2005, most of the current donor countries signed the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Through this declaration, the signatory states commit themselves to respecting the principle of local ownership in development assistance (including in security sector reform). The massive influx of donor funding into the Palestinian Territories and the implementation of projects by different donor countries raise the question of Palestinian ownership in security sector reform.

Against this background, DCAF and the Palestinian Centre for Security Sector Management (PCSSM) launched a project to assess challenges to local ownership in Palestinian security sector reform. Between May and December 2009, DCAF and PCSSM organised a series of working group sessions in Ramallah and Jericho to determine ways to improve Palestinian ownership in the current reform process. Participants represented different stakeholder groups, including the Palestinian security forces, the Palestinian National Authority, the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), political parties, as well as civil society groups. They discussed international standards in security sector reform, such as the *OECD Guidelines on Security System Reform and Governance*, and their application in the Palestinian context. Participants also discussed donor practices, aid dependency, the role of civil society in building ownership, as well as internal and external constraints to achieving ownership of Palestinian security sector reform.

This issue of DCAF Spotlight summarises the main findings of the PCSSM-DCAF working groups on ownership in security sector reform. It shows how Palestinians assess Palestinian ownership in security sector reform and how it could be improved. The views expressed in this Spotlight are those of workshop

What is the Security Sector?



The security sector consists of the core security and justice providers and their management and oversight institutions. The legal and policy framework regulates their tasks, authorities and structures.

Core security and justice providers:

- ◆ Security forces (armed forces, police, intelligence and security services, but also liberation armies and insurgency groups)
- ◆ Justice and law enforcement institutions (courts, prosecution services, prisons, traditional justice systems)

Management and oversight institutions:

- ◆ Executive management and oversight bodies (Presidency, Council of Ministers, ministries of defence, interior, justice and finance)
- ◆ Legislative management and oversight bodies (Parliament and its committees, ombudspersons)
- ◆ Informal oversight institutions (civil society organisations, media, research and advocacy organisations)

participants and do not necessarily represent the opinion of DCAF.

What does ownership in SSR mean for Palestinians?

According to participants, ownership means that Palestinians, rather than donors, should design, implement and review security sector policies and programmes.

Setting policies and leading implementation:

- ◆ 'Ownership means that we set the security sector reform plans, and we execute them.'
- ◆ 'We do not want the security forces to be influenced by any particular state.'

Control over aid disbursement:

- ◆ 'Ownership comprises three elements: a plan, funds, and control over disbursement.'
- ◆ 'Palestinians have no control over aid disbursement. Because of the political division and the paralysis of parliament, the donors directly control spending.'
- ◆ 'Our problem is that we do not have money. Who has money, also has power.'

What constraints to ownership?

In the view of Palestinians, the Israeli occupation and the internal political division hinder ownership in security sector reform. Some participants felt that it would be impossible to achieve ownership under occupation. Participants identified the dependency on foreign aid and the lack of effective Palestinian coordination as additional obstacles.

Israeli occupation:

- ◆ 'Assistance to the security forces is meaningless under occupation. We will not benefit from donor support if the occupation does not end.'
- ◆ 'Reform cannot take place under occupation.'
- ◆ 'We are in an eternal construction phase. Israel destroys and we build. Since the establishment of the PNA, we either build or rebuild.'
- ◆ 'Not only is there a lack of ownership on the ground but the political agreements themselves are imbalanced.'

Palestinian political and institutional division:

- ◆ 'The security sector is developed in two different ways, one in the West Bank and another one in the Gaza Strip.'
- ◆ 'Do we need security forces as part of the resistance, or do we need forces committed to the political agreements to end the occupation?'
- ◆ 'The national dialogue should deal with the issue of ownership in security sector reform. Instead, it only focused on restructuring the security forces.'
- ◆ 'The security forces should not be used to deter resistance. As long as there are internal divisions, there will be no ownership.'
- ◆ 'We as security forces must be committed to the political agreements because the international community supports us.'
- ◆ 'Reconciliation among ourselves is important for Palestinian ownership in security sector reform.'

Dependency on foreign aid:

- ◆ 'If there is no foreign aid in Palestine, we cannot pay the salaries of government employees. Our economy is weak. More than 50% of our state budget consists of donor aid.'
- ◆ 'There is a feeling that we cannot say no to the donors. We are afraid to lose projects.'

Politicisation of aid:

- ◆ 'Reform is not a new issue in Palestine. But it is linked to the agendas of the donors. We are not partners in this process.'
- ◆ 'Donor aid is linked to political agreements, not to our priorities. Donor states have their agendas that they try to impose on us.'

Lack of coordination between Palestinian stakeholders:

- ◆ 'The Palestinian National Authority must organise itself before it can coordinate with the donors. We must define our agenda and set our national plans.'
- ◆ 'When I was the commander of a security force, I did not have any instruction on how to deal with the donor countries.'

How do Palestinians assess donor support to SSR?

While perceiving donor support as critical for the success of security sector reform, participants expressed dissatisfaction over donor control of the planning and implementation of reform projects.

Willingness to learn from best practices:

- ◆ ‘We need to benefit from other experiences. This is not a shame because we are still new to this process. Security forces in donor countries have been working for decades.’
- ◆ ‘No country can undergo security sector reform without international support. We have to depend on partners.’

Lack of control over cooperation between donors and security forces:

- ◆ ‘How can a country allow its security commanders to contact donors directly? This is unacceptable.’
- ◆ ‘The issue of coordination between our security forces and the donors needs to be discussed seriously. If the donors go directly to the security forces, the process lacks transparency.’
- ◆ ‘The donors should not deal directly with local officers, but go through the Ministry of Interior.’

Lack of control over foreign consultants:

- ◆ ‘Most donor representatives are well intentioned. But embassies submit lists of experts entering the country. How do we know whether they are real experts?’
- ◆ ‘An expert coming to Palestine costs us USD 1’000 a day. That is the average monthly income of a Palestinian family. One fifth of all donor aid goes to foreign consultants.’
- ◆ ‘Donors send us retired officers and want to place them into our police stations. I do not accept that. I do not want to see our security forces under foreign tutelage.’

Discrepancies between Palestinian and donor priorities:

- ◆ ‘The training of the National Security Forces in Jordan costs USD 50 million. People will say that the forces stayed in expensive hotels.’
- ◆ The training should take place in Palestine to stimulate the local economy. The revenues generated by food sales and accommodation would benefit Palestine.’

- ◆ ‘Donors supply us with the equipment they want, not the one we need.’
- ◆ ‘We find it difficult to carry out security sector reform projects because the vision, methods and programmes of donors are different.’

What role for Palestinian civil society?

Participants found that civil society is not integrated in security sector reform. They also considered that civil society organisations are as dependent on donor support as the Palestinian National Authority.

Importance of broad stakeholder participation:

- ◆ ‘Reforming the security sector is both a political and a security issue. In order for reform to succeed, all political forces and civil society should participate in the process.’
- ◆ ‘The Palestinian people should own the reform process. Civil society should fully participate in reform.’

Aid dependence of Palestinian civil society organisations:

- ◆ ‘Let us not deceive ourselves. Both civil society and the Palestinian Authority are funded by the same donor states. Civil society faces the same problems as the security forces with donors.’
- ◆ ‘External funding makes the loyalty of some civil society organisations questionable.’

Lack of effective public oversight:

- ◆ ‘The political parties use the security forces to implement their political programmes.’
- ◆ ‘Civil society exercises very little control.’
- ◆ ‘The security forces and civil society distrust each other. And when there is distrust, it is difficult to achieve ownership.’

How to improve ownership?

Participants in the conference and in the working groups made the following recommendations to improve local ownership in Palestinian security sector reform:

Develop a coherent security sector reform strategy:

- ◆ ‘We should develop a security policy that is consistent with our situation.’
- ◆ ‘We need a strategic framework for defining our priorities in security sector reform. We must go for multi-year programming.’

- ◆ 'We can overcome the current division by building non-factional security institutions.'

Take the lead in reforms:

- ◆ 'We should depend on ourselves as much as we can.'
- ◆ 'We should say no to the donors if they do not bring us the type of equipment and cars that we want. We must not be afraid to lose the offer. We must be able to say no.'
- ◆ 'We can do our own training. Even the National Security Forces training in Jordan is based on our training programmes.'
- ◆ 'Why should we send our officers to Europe for training if we have institutions that can provide the same training here?'

Improve national coordination:

- ◆ 'We should reformulate our approach to aid based on Palestinian needs. We need more national cooperation to define and impose our priorities.'
- ◆ 'We should establish a general staff or joint committee of the security forces that handles communication with the donor states.'
- ◆ 'The security forces and the police should not work directly with the donors. The Council of Ministers has now begun to assume coordination with donors for the police.'
- ◆ 'The Ministry of Interior should be the main link between donors and security forces.'

Develop effective aid monitoring tools:

- ◆ 'We should set up an effective aid monitoring system and shared indicators.'
- ◆ 'We should ensure the security agencies have good internal control systems. If there is a good accountability system in these forces, we can develop ourselves.'

Link aid effectiveness in security sector reform to public finance management:

- ◆ 'Aid effectiveness and security sector reform are linked.'
- ◆ 'Aid effectiveness requires a healthy management of public finance.'
- ◆ 'We must strengthen transparency and discipline in spending.'

Increase the role of civil society:

- ◆ 'More NGOs should participate in monitoring progress in security sector reform.'
- ◆ 'Civil society must participate in setting reform plans, not only in terms of monitoring. This is important to ensure that the people own the reform.'

Protect donor investments:

- ◆ 'I wonder why the donors do not hold Israel accountable for the damage to infrastructure that has been built with donor funding.'

DCAF Spotlight publishes concise reports on salient topics of Palestinian security sector governance for local and international SSR practitioners.

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