



## November 25, 2008

**Daily News Issue Date:** November 25, 2008

**News Blurb:** ATFP Board Member Daoud Kuttub explains the ongoing centrality of the occupation to Palestinian lives and thinking (1). Disputes emerge among Hamas leaders (2), while the PA contemplates elections in the West Bank only if Hamas blocks them in Gaza (7). Reports suggest economic growth in the West Bank (5) and growing distress in Gaza (6). A UN official compares the Israeli occupation to apartheid in South Africa (4), while Israeli soldiers are again caught on tape abusing Palestinian civilians (3).

### What preoccupies young Palestinian minds

**Article Author(s):** Daoud Kuttub

**Media Outlet:** The Jordan Times

**Date:** November 23, 2008

**Source Link(s):** <http://admin.jordantimes.com/index.php?news=12320> <sup>[1]</sup>

The occupation is foremost on Palestinian youth's mind. This was made clear in the Palestinian village of Beita, near Nablus, at an event held on November 17: the opening of the youth development resource centre, funded by USAID and some private international technical companies.

The audience included US Undersecretary of State James K. Glassman, responsible for public diplomacy and public affairs, Ziad Asali, president of the American Task Force on Palestine, Jean Case, chief executive officer of the Case Foundation (the two are co-chair of the US Palestinian public-private partnership), senior Palestinian officials, town leaders and practically all 8,000 residents of Beita.

After the speeches of the minister of youth, the governor of Nablus and a senior USAID official, Iqab Attari the chair of the youth centre reminded donors of the larger problem facing the Palestinians.

?All your efforts and contributions in building this centre and hooking it with the latest technology, and genuinely helping our youth will all be wiped out the moment a youth from Beita tries to go to Nablus or Ramallah and is stopped and humiliated at an Israeli checkpoint,? he said.

The people of Beita should know. According to Wikipedia, 50 of the village's residents were killed by Israelis. The village was a major news item in June 1998 when a clash between stone-throwing youth and gun-wielding Israeli civilians led to the death of one Israeli and three Palestinians. Following that incident, Rabbi Haim Druckman, of the national religious party, said that the entire village should be wiped from the face of the earth.

The town was not wiped, but the Israeli army punished the villagers quite badly. They demolished 13

houses, damaged 23, killed three Beita residents, injured dozens arrested hundreds, detained and deported six Palestinians.

Now with money from American IT companies and the cooperation of the organisers of the centre Ruwwad - the USAID-funded youth project run by Boston-based Educational Development Centre - a state-of-the-art computer lab was unfolded. Young people from Beita quickly hooked up their computers, got online and told the anticipating audience that they planned to connect with another group of young people. The connection was expected to be with teens from Australia, youth from Chicago or fellow young Muslims from Turkey, yet the youth of Beita had a different group in mind: youths from nearby East Jerusalem.

After the introductions and the greetings came yet another touching moment. The youth from the Nablus area wanted to know how fellow Palestinians in nearby Jerusalem were doing. They wanted to know how Nablusites were doing! No one talked about the wall, no one mentioned occupation, travel restrictions weren't harped on. Their message, delivered without malice, anger or hatred, was clear. They cared about the occupation.

Soon after the event, the visiting group got into their well-protected SUVs and drove to Ramallah to meet the Palestinian prime minister and other Palestinian business and IT professionals. On the way, they passed a number of illegal (according to international law) Jewish settlements and illegal (according to Israeli law) outposts. By evening, they were back to their comfortable hotels in Jerusalem.

Driving with me to Jerusalem was another American who after seeing the settlements on the Nablus-Jerusalem road said: "I am not sure I am in favour of the two-state solution after seeing all this. Your Palestinian state will look like Swiss cheese with these settlements."

## Hamas leaders abroad question group's iron grip on Gaza

**Article Author(s):** Avi Issacharoff

**Media Outlet:** Haaretz

**Date:** November 24, 2008

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1040612.html> <sup>[2]</sup>

Internal Hamas correspondence intercepted by the Palestinian Authority and obtained by Haaretz reveals a deep divide between the organization's leadership abroad and its West Bank leadership, on the one hand, and the Gaza leadership on the other.

In the documents, the leadership abroad says it does not want "to control Gaza completely while losing the West Bank."

These leaders claim that Hamas in Gaza caused the reconciliation talks with Fatah that had been slated for Cairo to fail. The leaders abroad say their Gaza counterparts thwarted the chances for a Palestinian national unity government by their unwillingness to consider giving up control of the Strip and setting "impossible" conditions.

Hamas in the Gaza Strip is led by Mahmoud Zahar, Said Siyam, and Halil al-Haya, while the leadership abroad is headed by the formerly dominant figure Khaled Meshal, head of the organization's political wing, and his deputy, Musa Abu-Marzuk.

Palestinian sources say Hamas in Gaza is demanding that its power in the organization's leadership body, the Shura, be increased from 34 percent to 51 percent. It cites its extensive control over the most important grassroots supporters, and the attempt by leaders abroad and in the West Bank to impose their will on Gaza.

The documents reveal that the leadership abroad - which includes Hamas' representatives in Syria, Iran, Lebanon and elsewhere - and the leadership in the West Bank hope to impose a more moderate agenda on the organization in Gaza with respect to dialogue with Fatah.

A document sent on October 6 from Damascus to the Hamas leadership in the West Bank states that the Damascus leaders sense from meetings in Cairo with senior Gaza-Hamas officials that the latter do not want to pursue the dialogue with Fatah. Hamas canceled its participation in the Cairo talks a few days before they were to begin.

The document states: "We are including a document that includes all the corrections of the brothers from Gaza to a document we sent them and you with regard to the dialogue. We in the political bureau [in Damascus] have studied the corrections of the brothers and we have a number of objections and comments that we will discuss when we see them [the Gazan leaders] ....

"But the most important thing ... is that the 'soul,' as we saw it, is not ready for dialogue and there are impossible conditions being made, and the split [the Hamas takeover of Gaza] has become serious and is not perceived as undesirable ....

"In addition is the situation in the West Bank and what we are exposed to in the bloody, ongoing operations [by the PA] intended to destroy the foundation [of Hamas] as revenge for what happened in Gaza. We must weigh this situation properly .... In short, we want to go to dialogue and we want this dialogue to succeed."

The document provides a rare glimpse into the way disputes are managed in the Hamas leadership. The Gaza leadership's takeover of the Hamas agenda can be said to be dictating more extreme positions not only vis-a-vis the PA, but also with regard to Israel. This is especially the case following the win in the organization's recent Gaza elections by Hamas' military wing, which opposes any long-term arrangement with Israel.

In the month before the opening of the talks that had been planned for earlier this month in Cairo, Hamas held discussions on the document the Egyptians had proposed on reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas. The leadership abroad presented its objections to the document, with the goal of making them preconditions for the Hamas-Fatah summit.

The preliminary document includes proposals on issues like government posts, elections and the security forces. For example, the Hamas leadership in Gaza objects to the Damascus branch's proposal to allow PA President Mahmoud Abbas to continue in his post, which Fatah thinks he should hold until 2010. Hamas in Gaza believes it should end in 2009.

## **Policeman filmed head-butting East Jerusalem residents**

**Article Author(s):** Jonathan Lis

**Media Outlet:** Haaretz

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1040584.html> <sup>[3]</sup>

The Justice Ministry's Police Investigation Department (PID) recently launched an investigation in efforts to locate a patrol police officer who was documented head-butting two Arab residents of East Jerusalem, a man and a woman, while evacuating homes slated for demolition.

The policeman was filmed by an activist belonging to the human rights group B'Tselem during the preparation for the demolition of several buildings in the al-Boustan neighborhood in the Silwan village in the city. The footage was recently handed over to PID.

B'Tselem issued a statement saying that the organization welcomes the PID investigation. "Now the prosecution must pursue justice for the attacking officer and send a message that police brutality is not acceptable," the statement said.

## **Top UN official: Israel's policies are like apartheid of bygone era**

**Article Author(s):** Shlomo Shamir

**Media Outlet:** Haaretz

**Date:** November 24, 2008

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1040614.html> <sup>[4]</sup>

United Nations General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann on Monday likened Israel's policies toward the Palestinians to South Africa's treatment of blacks under apartheid.

Israel's actions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were like "the apartheid of an earlier era," said Brockmann, of Nicaragua, speaking at the annual debate marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

He added: "We must not be afraid to call something what it is."

Brockmann stressed that it was important for the United Nations to use the heavily-charged term since it was the institution itself that had passed the International Convention against the crime of apartheid.

Israeli ambassador to the UN Gabriela Shalev in September called Brockmann an "Israel hater" for having hugged Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a vocal enemy of Israel.

Meanwhile, other diplomatic attacks against Israel were expected Tuesday on the second day of the annual debate.

The event is usually observed on November 29, to coincide with the UN's resolution in 1947 to establish a Jewish and an Arab state in Palestine.

The Palestinians, along with a group of Arab states, intend to use Tuesday's debate, entitled "the Palestinian question and the situation in the Middle East," for a public campaign directed at the international community about the suffering of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation. They will also denounce Israel as responsible for the lack of a solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Speakers at the debate are expected to harshly criticize Israel for its policy in the territories, especially

following UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's complaint that Israel refused his request to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip.

In her address Tuesday, Shalev asked why the UN has turned November 29 into a day of mourning, but does not mention that on this day a resolution to establish two states was adopted with Israel's consent.

"The UN must adopt new content and no longer accept the agenda foisted on it by the automatic majority, which sabotages the peace process' progress in the region," she said.

The two-day event includes several events and ceremonies at the UN headquarters, including movies and photography exhibitions showing alleged Palestinian hardships under Israeli occupation.

The debate is expected to end with the adoption of some 20 anti-Israel resolutions. In the past, these included denouncing Israel for annexing East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights in separate resolutions.

## Boom Times for West Bank Economy

**Article Author(s):** Abd el-Raouf Arnaout

**Media Outlet:** The Media Line

**Source Link(s):**

[http://www.metimes.com/Business/2008/11/25/boom\\_times\\_for\\_west\\_bank\\_economy/4695...](http://www.metimes.com/Business/2008/11/25/boom_times_for_west_bank_economy/4695...) [5]

Palestinian businessmen concluded their one-day Palestine Investment Conference "north forum" in the West Bank city of Nablus with a package of seven investment projects with a total value of \$510 million.

Five of the projects were in the infrastructure sector, one in industry, and one to finance investments. All are concentrated in the northern part of the West Bank where the Palestinian Authority (PA) has proved, over the course of this year, its ability to impose law and order.

The biggest project was the power plant planned for the northern parts of the West Bank with a capital of \$300 million shared among several investors.

Second is an iron factory in the West Bank city of Jenin with a capital of \$100 million, of which \$15 million has been allocated to begin the first phase of the galvanized iron plant.

A fund to revive the economy of the northern parts of the West Bank was launched at a cost of \$50 million to be funded by the PA, the private sector and donors.

Palestine Industrial Estates Development and Management Company (PIEDCO), a company affiliated to the Palestine Development and Investment Company (PADICO,) announced a grain silos project in Jalama, north of Jenin, at a cost of \$18 million.

On the sidelines of the conference, the Palestinian Investment Fund (PIF) and the municipality of Nablus signed a memorandum of understanding to establish an industrial zone on an area of 120 dunams (30 acres) in Nablus to cost \$25 million in the first phase, then to be expanded to 350 dunams at a total cost of \$85 million.

In addition, a solid waste treatment project in the governorate of Nablus, to cost \$2.1 million, was launched.

Twelve other projects were presented in the four sessions during the conference, attended by 1,200 Palestinian and Arab businessmen, according to the organizers.

Unlike the first Palestinian investment conference held in the West Bank city of Bethlehem last May, no Israeli businessmen showed up.

PA Prime Minister Salam Fayad announced that the next conference would be held in May, without mentioning the venue of the conference, but PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas told the conference that he hoped to hold it in Gaza, the stronghold of the militant Islamic group Hamas.

Both Abbas and Fayad expressed the hope that one day such a conference would be held in Jerusalem, which Palestinians want as the capital of a Palestinian state.

During the four sessions of the conference, which discussed infrastructure, industry, agriculture and domestic tourism, the Palestinians tried to convince their Arab counterparts and Palestinians living in the diaspora of the opportunities available in the Palestinian territories and especially in the northern parts of the West Bank.

At a time when businessmen around the world are facing the consequences of the world financial crisis, Palestinians were guaranteeing these business people that the effects on the PA economy were marginal.

"Our national economy is not completely isolated from the developments affecting the global economy, which will result in recession and deflation that may last a long time; however, we are confident about its limited impact on us," Fayad told the conference.

"We have instructed the various specialized centers in the Palestinian Authority to work actively to reassure investors and strengthen confidence in the local investment environment, through openness and disclosure and to ensure immediate and sustained flow of information on developments of the crisis and its impact on our national economy," he added.

"We are confident that this good participation from guests of Palestine in the forum will give investors inside and outside Palestine more trust and confidence in our national economy, and stimulate some people to invest here, despite the blockades and closures imposed by Israel," Fayad said.

Fayad went further, saying, "The financial, moral and political revenues from your safe investment in Palestine are far more than any revenue you can achieve anywhere else in the world."

Abbas pointed to the various measures taken by the PA to introduce laws aimed at facilitating investment in the Palestinian territories, adding that the PA was the most transparent government in the area.

"We challenge anyone who says that now there is corruption the Palestinian Authority," he said.

Even though movement of the businessmen to and from Nablus during the day of the conference was easy and smooth, thanks to Palestinian-Israeli coordination, this is not the case on the other days of the year, especially in and out of Nablus, as a result of the Israeli checkpoints spread all over the West Bank.

Robert Danin, head of mission of the Office of the Quartet Representative, said, "Since I arrived here in April, I have had the opportunity to meet a broad range of Palestinians from the public and the private sector. I have been very impressed with the vitality, professionalism, courage and pro-activeness of both the PA and the private sector."

He added that [former British Prime Minister] Tony Blair, the Quartet representative, had been meeting

regularly with members of the Palestinian business community from throughout the Palestinian territories: from Hebron, Nablus, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Jericho, Jenin and Gaza.

"These discussions have helped shape our understanding of the huge potential of Palestinian entrepreneurship, as well as our understanding of what needs to take place to enhance the investment climate, so that this entrepreneurship and investment potential can bear fruit," Danin said.

"And we in the Quartet get it. It requires vision, risk-taking, and a broader view of investment that includes not only revenues and profits, but also the returns of a Palestinian state built on a vibrant and sustainable private sector. It requires immediate efforts to ease movement restrictions and to increase Palestinian access to resources such as land, telecommunication, security, water and more," he added.

He concluded that, "This is precisely what the Quartet has been focused on, working on the individual ingredients necessary for economic growth, and trying to create concrete precedents across sectors that all parties can latch onto and scale up throughout the Palestinian territories."

David Craig, World Bank country director for the West Bank and Gaza, said, "The Palestinian private sector has a unique potential to exploit growth opportunities and attract international investment. The World Bank's analysis of the Palestinian business environment concluded that it compared favorably with much of the rest of the region."

The World Bank's Doing Business report in June 2007 ranked the West Bank and Gaza as comparable with countries such as India, Indonesia and the Honduras. In particular, West Bank and Gaza ranked 22nd in the world the PA's tax regime for business, and 33rd in the world in terms of the legal framework to protect investors.

"In terms of the PA's policy framework, the Palestinian economy ranks among the top half of all economies in regard to import and export costs and procedures. Indeed, export potential is enormous. The PA enjoys generous trade arrangements with the European Union and with countries in the region. In addition, there is a readymade market among the 5 million-strong Palestinian diaspora worldwide," Craig added.

"In addition to its work on development projects and in support of the PA budget, the World Bank is focused on tackling the hurdles facing Palestinian businesses, particularly the comprehensive system of movement and access restrictions currently in place inside the West Bank and on the Gaza Strip's borders.

"The World Bank remains firmly committed to advocating for the removal of these obstacles to trade and industrialization and is cooperating closely with the Quartet representative, Tony Blair, in this effort. Recently, some progress has been made. However, if a virtuous cycle of growth is to be initiated and sustained, these improvements must be scaled-up and expanded upon," he added.

Abbas insisted that the biggest obstacle to economic growth was the network of some 600 Israeli roadblocks in the West Bank.

"There can be no real sustained development under occupation despite all our best efforts. We must make clear to the whole world that the occupation, the settlements and the roadblocks are obstacles that must go," Abbas said.

## **Palestinians line up for dwindling cash in Gaza**

**Article Author(s):** Ibrahim Barzak

**Media Outlet:** The Associated Press

**Date:** November 24, 2008

**Source Link(s):**

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5ioi\\_0jtO9RjMwPNRoXNCndRPRq3gD9...](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5ioi_0jtO9RjMwPNRoXNCndRPRq3gD9...) [6]

Local banks in Gaza, under pressure from Israeli sanctions, are running out of cash and desperate Palestinians lined up at branches Monday hoping to pull money out of frozen accounts.

But most banks have sharply curtailed withdrawals over the past two weeks and some have posted signs telling customers they cannot take out any more money. The U.N. stopped distributing cash handouts to Gaza's poorest last week.

Economists and bank officials are warning that tens of thousands of civil servants will not be able to cash paychecks next month.

"No society can operate without money, but that's the situation we are reaching in Gaza," said economist Omar Shaban.

The Israeli shekel is a widely used currency in the Gaza Strip, and the territory needs at least 400 million shekels, or about \$100 million, each month in new currency to replace aging notes and to pay salaries.

The main source of currency is the moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' government in the West Bank, which sends in currency shipments each month to pay its civil servants. The government dominated by the Fatah faction still claims authority over Gaza, despite losing control of the territory last year to the rival Hamas militant group.

Israel has not allowed cash shipments since October, part of a series of sanctions against Hamas since the group seized power from Fatah in June 2007. Israel tightened the blockade earlier this month in response to renewed rocket attacks out of Gaza, virtually sealing the crossings since the latest outbreak of violence.

But it opened the crossings Monday for the first time in weeks, allowing fuel and humanitarian supplies into Gaza.

Mahmoud Khazandar, head of the gas station owners' association, said Israel resumed pumping some diesel fuel to Gaza's only power plant. He said he did not know how much EU-funded fuel was being shipped. Fuel had last been shipped to the power plant Nov. 11, but the supply only kept it running for two days.

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak also ordered the crossings to open to allow food and medicine in, his office said. It was unclear how much aid was going into Gaza or when the deliveries would actually be made.

Israel stopped cash shipments, fearing Hamas would use money to fund attacks. But the cash shortage has little effect on Hamas, which smuggles money into Gaza through tunnels from Egypt and does not deal with the formal banking system. The militant group distributes cash to its own loyalists and the thousands of people it employs.

Shaban said the money shortage has worsened because residents tend to keep savings stashed at home, rather than in banks. Gaza businessmen pay in cash for goods imported from Israel, another drain on currency. Gaza's tunnel smugglers, who bring fuel and other goods into Gaza from Egypt, also pay for

purchases in shekels.

Little money comes into the territory, meanwhile, because Israel has banned exports.

Jihad al-Wazir, of the Palestinian Monetary Authority in the West Bank, said his agency has asked Western officials to pressure Israel to allow the money in time to pay December salaries. Mideast envoy Tony Blair and the World Bank have also contacted Israel about the issue.

The cash crunch is the latest shortage of essential supplies in Gaza. Israel and Egypt's tightened blockade have caused widespread power blackouts and severe shortfalls of cooking gas and flour.

Israeli defense officials did not rule out further cash transfers, but said nothing could be delivered while fighting persists. Shlomo Dror, an Israel Defense Ministry spokesman, questioned the seriousness of the shortage.

"We are used to the Palestinians inventing things and we are looking into their claim," Dror said.

The crunch has made life a misery for some 40,000 of the territory's public servants, whose salaries are deposited into bank accounts by the West Bank government. Some residents head to the banks almost daily to withdraw their salaries in drips.

"I'm begging the bank to give me shekels," said public servant Shawkat Othman, who lined up at a bank for four hours this week, waiting to withdraw 700 shekels ? about \$175.

Chris Gunness, spokesman for the U.N.'s Relief and Works Agency, said the agency halted cash handouts to 98,000 of Gaza's poorest residents last week. Gunness said they could not obtain a daily sum of 270,000 shekels (\$67,000) to make the distributions.

ATMs throughout Gaza City still dispense U.S. dollars. But most Gaza residents try avoid withdrawing dollars because money changers are expensive. Instead, Gazans deal in tattered, greasy Israeli notes. Residents mostly use cash ? few stores accept credit cards.

Instead of harming Hamas, the cash shortage seems to be hurting Abbas' West Bank government, which needs to pay salaries to shore up support for his rule.

"The absence of shekels in Gaza is weakening one of the few tools left to (the Abbas government) that it could use to have influence in Gaza," said Shaban, the economist. "And that is salaries to thousands of public servants."

## West Bank alone could go to polls

**Article Author(s):** Jumana Al Tamimi

**Media Outlet:** Gulf News

**Date:** November 23, 2008

**Source Link(s):** [http://www.gulf-news.com/region/Middle\\_East/10262362.html](http://www.gulf-news.com/region/Middle_East/10262362.html) <sup>[7]</sup>

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas could hold elections in the occupied West Bank alone if Hamas prevents the ballot from taking place in Gaza, an Abbas aide said on Monday.

"If Hamas forcibly prevents them from preparing for elections in Gaza, this is not going to stop the elections from being held. We will hold the elections in the West Bank and Hamas will be responsible for preventing the elections in Gaza," senior Abbas adviser Nimer Hammad said.

The election of Abbas as President of the state of Palestine by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) late on Sunday demonstrates serious concerns over Hamas' threats to stop recognising his authority after his term ends early next year, independent Palestinian analysts said on Monday.

Abbas's election as President aims to "boost his legitimacy in the face of Hamas threats... this shows they [Fatah and the PLO] are concerned about Hamas' threats. Otherwise, why would such a move come now?" Hami Al Masri, head of the West Bank-based Al Badael Centre for Studies and Research told Gulf News.

"The significance of the move is limited," Al Masri, said of Abbas's election by PLO Central Council. "It was a symbolic move, because there is no Palestinian state on the ground," he added.

Hamas was swift in challenging the election, saying the Central Council does not have the right, constitutionally, to elect the state president. "It is an illusion," Fawzi Barhoum, Hamas spokesperson in Gaza, told Gulf News.

Fatah and the PLO wanted to "create the perception that they have achieved something."

While many politicians describe the election of Abbas to fill the position that has been vacant since the death of Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian icon, more than four years ago, as symbolic, they noted that what is more important - and maybe more dangerous, is if Abbas' threats to hold early elections if talks with Hamas fail, go through.

Abbas gave Hamas an end-of-year deadline yesterday to resume dialogue with his leadership or face snap elections.

### Crucial days

"The next 45 days are crucial to the future of the Palestinian cause," Al Masri said. "If Abbas' threats are a kind of tactic, it is fine. If not, it is going to be a catastrophe," he told Gulf News.

Politicians and analysts describe the current crisis between Hamas and Fatah as the worst in the history of the Palestinian question.

Hamas and Fatah are locked in a deep political dispute that has exploded militarily more than once since Hamas won the last elections in 2006. By mid-2007, Hamas took control of Gaza, while the Palestinian National Authority kept its control over the West Bank.

Meanwhile, Arab-Israeli Knesset member Ahmad Al Teibi described the leaked Israeli military document published on Sunday in Haaretz daily that calls for contingency plans to prevent Palestinian elections as "Satanic leaking".

The assessment to be submitted to the Israeli Cabinet next month, urges to avoid fresh elections at all costs because of the risks of a new Hamas victory. It also warned of the possibility of Abbas's "disappearance" after his term ends.

"The elections should be held and all the Palestinians should be given the chance to participate," Teibi said. "Israel should stay out of the Palestinian democracy."

The Israeli report is "a media fabrication and a new lie," Barhoum said.

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