

Pressure mounts in U.S. to bring PLO into talks

By WOLF BLITZER
Jerusalem Post Correspondent

WASHINGTON. — A group of State Department career diplomats recommended late last year that the Reagan administration appoint a prominent Palestinian living in America to serve as a special intermediary to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

They specifically named three Palestinian professors teaching in the U.S. as possible candidates: Edward Said of Columbia University, a member of the PLO's National Council, Hisham Sharabi of Georgetown University, a past president of the National Association of Arab Americans, and Walid Khalidi of Harvard University and the American University in Beirut.

Their report, classified "secret," was officially circulated throughout the department and its overseas posts under the auspices of the "Open Forum," created in 1967 to bring "new or alternative foreign policy views to the secretary of state and other senior officials."

The Open Forum's Palestinian-Israeli working group had met for more than two years before making recommendations for resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the spring 1982 issue of the *Open Forum Journal*, an unclassified document, the group issued a detailed proposal for the creation of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza.

But in the autumn 1981 issue of the same publication, the working group had proposed that the U.S.

try to bring the PLO into the negotiating process. Unlike the second report, the first document was classified "secret."

The State Department spokesman, Dean Fischer, in responding to questions about the Open Forum, has insisted that its dissenting views do not officially represent the department, but only the opinions of those diplomats on the working group.

Other officials said last week that there has been no change in U.S. policy toward the PLO.

At the same time, however, these officials conceded that there is mounting pressure on the administration to take steps to bring the PLO into the peace negotiations and to work towards the creation of a Palestinian "homeland or entity" on the West Bank and Gaza.

The working group, chaired by Larry Roeder, Jr., an official in the office of East-West trade, proposed that the U.S. work towards mutual and simultaneous Israeli-PLO recognition. It envisaged the PLO's eventually establishing a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza with Jerusalem as the shared capital of Israel and Palestine.

As a first step, it suggested sending a prominent Palestinian living in America with an official message from the U.S. government to the PLO leadership proposing the start of a secret dialogue. Preferably, it said, the message should be in writing to demonstrate the seriousness of the proposal.

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