

Political-diplomatic relations between Romania and the Palestine Liberation Organization

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Abstract: Political-diplomatic relations between Romania and the Palestine Liberation Organization. The Arab-Israeli conflicts during 1967-1989 brought international attention to an extremely sensitive issue for the Arab world, namely the Palestinian refugee population, which in a very short time turned into one of the most difficult problems of the 20th century. Although, it was highly involved in finding a solution for the peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli crisis, the Bucharest government initially hesitated to establish direct contacts with the organizations fighting to create an independent Palestinian state. Gradually, Nicolae Ceaușescu understood the importance of this problem for the Arab world and became more receptive in creating contacts with the new Palestinian leaders. From here to the friendship with the "brother" Yasser Arafat was no more than a step. By the late 1980s, Romania had become one of the most important partners and supporters of the Palestinian cause.

Keywords: Arab-Israeli conflict, Palestinian population, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Yasser Arafat

Rezumat: Relațiile politico-diplomatice dintre România și Organizația pentru Eliberarea Palestinei. Conflictul arabo-israelian din perioada 1967-1989 a adus în atenția opiniei internaționale o problemă extrem de sensibilă pentru lumea arabă, și anume populația refugiată palestiniană, care într-un timp foarte scurt s-a transformat într-una dintre cele mai dificile probleme ale secolului XX. Deși a fost extrem de implicat în găsirea unei soluții pentru rezolvarea pașnică a crizei arabo-israeliene, guvernul de la București a ezitat inițial să stabilească contacte directe cu organizațiile care luptau pentru crearea unui stat palestinian independent. Treptat însă, Nicolae Ceaușescu a înțeles importanța acestei probleme pentru lumea arabă și a devenit mai receptiv față de crearea unor contacte cu noii lideri palestinieni. De aici și până la prietenia cu "fratele" Yasser Arafat nu a mai fost decât un pas. Spre finalul anilor '80 România se transformase într-unul dintre cei mai importanți parteneri și susținători ai cauzei palestiniene.

Cuvinte-cheie: conflictul arabo-israelian, populația palestiniană, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Yasser Arafat

Romania's official position on the Palestine Liberation Organization was initially a reticent one, Romanian authorities preferring to maintain some distance in relations with this entity. However, the Romanian diplomats from the Arab states were urged to hold unofficial relations with PLO representatives.¹ The reserve of Romanian diplomats to establish official contacts was determined by the contradiction between the objectives of the Palestinian movement, namely the formation of an independent state, and the attitude of the Arab states directly involved in this conflict.²

Until 1968, Romania pleaded for compliance of the UN Resolutions of 1948, 194 and 394 respectively, using in all statements from this period the phrase "*Palestinian Arab refugees*", but not recognizing any Palestinian organization or movement.³ Romania's position on the Palestinian issue was very clearly exposed at the Extraordinary Session of the UN General Assembly through the President of the Council of Ministers of the R.S.R in June 1967, as follows: "*We believe that on the basis of human rights and international norms, the issue of the Arab population displaced from Palestine, must be resolved in the light of the decisions of the General Assembly, such as Resolution 194 adopted at the third session, which provides that refugees will be allowed to return to their homes if they desire so or will be compensated by governments responsible for the loss of their property, and Resolution 394 adopted at the 5th Session, which emphasizes the need to protect the rights and property of Arab refugees in Palestine.*"⁴ Since the 1967 conflict, Romania has been actively involved in granting aid to the Arab states in order to support them, and not to help the Palestinian population. In fact, Romania refused to respond positively to UNRWA's call for assistance for Palestinian refugees.⁵

Since 1968, Romania has reconsidered its policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and has begun to take into account the recognition of the Palestinian issue. The first action that demonstrates the change in approach to the conflict in the Near East was to provide an aid to the Palestinian, not Arab, population of 100,000 lei in material goods through the General Union of Syndicates. Thus, for the first time, Romania recognized a Palestinian organization, namely the Federation of Syndicates of Palestine.⁶

The attitude of the Romanian state in relation to the problem of the

¹ Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, Problema 210/1970, Palestina, Direcția a V-a Relații, Dosar 15, *Problema palestiniană și situația din Orientul Apropiat*, f. 18.

² *Ibid.* f. 19.

³ Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, Problema 210/1970, Palestina, Direcția a V-a Relații, Dosar 16, *Situația mișcării palestinieni*, f. 60.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ff.21-22

⁵ *Ibid.*, f.61

⁶ *Ibid.*, f.61

Palestinian population is not only a charity act but is based on a series of political and economic elements. The interest for the situation in the area has brought to the attention of the Romanian authorities the fact that this issue is extremely sensitive for the Arab states so, any state that wanted to establish relations of any kind, should consider also this delicate situation for the Arab world.⁷ At the same time, taking into account the fact that at the end of 1968 the trade relations between Romania and the Arab states turned around the amount of 901.730 million lei, of which 679.160 million lei were⁸ only exports, it is very clear that the marketplace of these states was a huge potential for Romania.⁹ Also, the economic exchanges between 1966 and 1969 between the Romania and the Arab states increased by about 40%.¹⁰ Beyond these issues, we must also take into consideration the support that the Arab states have given over time, to the various actions that Romania has initiated within the UN.¹¹ Thus, in the views expressed by the Romanian state, in state and party documents and in the speeches pronounced at the UN on the situation in the Near East, the Romanian officials often took into account the extremely sensitive subject of the Palestinian refugees, often highlighting the fact that urgent action must be taken to put to an end the plight of the Palestinian population.¹² Therefore, on December 10, 1969, Romania voted the UN Resolution 2535, which reaffirmed "*the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine*."¹³

As a result of the Romanian state's decision to establish relations with Israel on a different level by the mutual upgrading of diplomatic representation at the embassy level, on September 2-7, 1969, a meeting of the Palestinian National Council, the supreme forum of PLO, took place in Cairo, where Romania's initiative was debated. The news of the evolution of the Romanian-Israeli relations was not received with open arms by the Palestinians, although there were voices who thought that Romania was a sovereign state able to make decisions according to its own interests and that this should not stand in the way of developing closer Palestinian-Romanian relations.¹⁴ Therefore, the Executive Committee of the Palestinian Syndicates call on the General Union of Syndicates in Romania, an aid consisting of food,

⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 63.

⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 63.

⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 64.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 64.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, f. 64.

¹² Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, Problema 210/1970, Palestina, Direcția a V-a Relații , Dosar 15, *Problema palestiniană și situația din Orientul Apropiat*, f. 16.

¹³ *Ibid.*, f. 16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 18.

clothing, tents and medicines. Although the Romanian authorities' response was a positive one, the Palestinian authorities refused the aid sent, as a result of a subsequent decision by the Arab unions to break relations with Romanian unions. Despite these disagreements, two months later, the government in Bucharest decided to send assistance to the Palestinian population, this time through the Red Cross.¹⁵

Since the 1970s, representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization have begun to step up their diplomatic work and put pressure on several states, including Romania, by requesting the opening of PLO representations in their capitals.¹⁶ Thus, during February-April 1970, a delegation of the PLO, led by Yasser Arafat, undertook a series of visits to several socialist states like the USSR (the visit to Moscow was not an official one, despite the fact that Arafat had a series of talks with Soviet officials¹⁷), the People's Republic of China and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and also visits to other socialist states such as Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and the DRG. As a follow-up to these actions, Romanian officials were advised to accept the initiative of the PLO to make a visit to Romania, given the fact that at that time a refusal by the Romanian authorities could have had a negative impact on the relations with the Arab states.¹⁸ It was also envisaged that a possible visit by Palestinian officials to Romania could attract reproaches from the Western states, but especially from Israel and the United States of America.¹⁹ On the other hand, accepting such a visit would have generated a favorable echo in all Arab states, which could have intensified Romania's relations with them on all levels, without this visit implying an official recognition of the PLO or the Palestinian organizations program.²⁰

Starting from this moment, we are witnessing at a series of efforts made by the Government of Bucharest to maintain a close relationship with the PLO representatives. In February 1970, UN Secretary-General U.Thant launched a humanitarian appeal to highlight the tragic situation of Palestinian refugees in the Near East, and called on the Romanian authorities to provide a financial contribution equivalent to \$100,000 in products or in currency, hoping that with the contribution of all UN member states, the \$4.8 million deficit will be covered. U.Thant also mentioned that the situation in the Near East was so critical, and the discontinuation of UN assistance to Palestinian

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 18.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 15.

¹⁷ Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, Problema 210/1970, Palestina, Direcția a V-a Relații, Dosar 16, *Situația mișcării palestinienilor*, f. 119.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 95.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 96.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 96.

refugees could give rise to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.²¹ As a result of this request, the Government of Romania decided to grant, through the National Red Cross Council, aid to the Palestinian refugees amounting to 120,000 lei, consisting of medicines, clothing and food.²²

The preoccupation of the Romanian state for the situation of the Palestinian refugees in this period is very obvious. In an interview from May 12, 1970 given by Nicolae Ceaușescu to the magazine "Le Figaro", he stated that "*... it is necessary to take into account the existence of the Palestinian population that plays an important role in the Near East. The end of the conflict in this area calls for the satisfaction of the Palestinian national interests, including the possibility - if this population wishes - of forming their own independent state.*"²³

While it seems that at this time the Romanian government was trying to respond as soon as possible to many of the demands made in connection with the Palestinian population, Romanian diplomats were still advised to be very careful in their discussions with various members of the PLO. Relations with PLO representatives should have a personal character and in no case an official one. Also, the heads of diplomatic missions were advised to refrain from visiting the Palestinian office and promising aid for the Palestinian cause, if PLO had requested such aid.²⁴ On the other hand, the Palestinian leaders tried to convince the Romanian ambassadors accredited in different countries in the world to establish official contacts between PLO and Romania. They tried to point out that Romania's position on the conflict in the Near East was highly appreciated among the leaders of the PLO, and to prove this, any attack on Romania was strictly forbidden among the publications of the organization.²⁵

The desire expressed repeatedly by the PLO representatives regarding a possible meeting of Yasser Arafat with Nicolae Ceaușescu was long delayed by the Romanian officials. According to the MFA, Romanian diplomats were skeptical about the role and interests of Palestinian liberation organizations that "*they are not the most representative of the Palestinian population.*"²⁶ Therefore, the Bucharest authorities were advised not to follow up an initiative to invite Palestinian representatives to Romania unless such an initiative would come from the Palestinians. In this case a visit could be organized in Romania

²¹ Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, Problema 216/1970, Palestina, Dosar 17, *Refugiați palestinieni*, f. 1.

²² *Ibid.*, f. 6.

²³ Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, Problema 220/1970, Palestina, Dosar 19, *Politica externă OEP*, f. 97.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 120-121.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 135.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 139.

through the Romanian Friendship League with the African-Asian peoples or even through the Front of the Socialist Unity.²⁷

Gradually, the Romanian-Palestinian relations have entered an ascending trend. As a result, on February 14, 1974, Nicolae Ceaușescu met with Yasser Arafat in Beirut, where they had a discussion about the evolution of the conflict in the Near East and possible solutions that could help defuse this situation.²⁸ A month later, a permanent representative of the PLO was accredited in Bucharest. From this moment on, the political-diplomatic exchanges between the two entities have intensified considerably. On April 27th the same year, the Romanian president was the host of a delegation of the Federation of Palestinian Syndicates, who came in a experience exchange in our country. In May, a delegation from the Socialist Republic of Romania held an invitation to the Second Congress of the Palestinian Jurists. Between June 24 and July 1, 1974, a delegation of the PLO led by General Abdul Razak El Yahia had a series of meetings with President Nicolae Ceaușescu discussing the need for joint actions that would lead to the withdrawing of the Israeli troops from the territories occupied abusively²⁹, while stressing the need to create an independent and sovereign Palestinian state, as well as recognizing the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.³⁰

Gradually, during the visits of Nicolae Ceaușescu to the capitals of the Arab countries in the Near East, there were numerous meetings of the Romanian President with the Palestinian leader. Such a meeting took place on April 24, 1975, in Damascus, during which the two leaders discussed about the clashes between the Palestinian fighters and the Israeli forces on Lebanon's territory. Yasser Arafat briefed President Ceaușescu about the recent events, insisting that the situation in Lebanon could degenerate at any time giving rise to massacres similar to those of the Armenians and the Jews.³¹ Also, Arafat explained to the Romanian president the difficult situation of the members of the organization who were banished from Jordan and had to seek refuge in Lebanon. From here they were determined to fight with all forces to end the American-Zionist plot to eliminate the organization.³² Nicolae Ceaușescu analyzed this situation with a lot of calm and tact, trying to convince the PLO leader to understand that such a rigid position of the organization is primarily in the disadvantage of the Palestinian population. Asked by the Romanian President how he sees the resolution of the conflict, Yasser Arafat replied that

²⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 141.

²⁸ Arhivele Naționale, Fond C.C al P.C.R, Secția Relații Externe, Dosar 217/1974, f. 113.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 113 verso.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 114.

³¹ Arhivele Naționale, Fond C.C al P.C.R, Secția Relații Externe, Dosar 62/1975, f. 3.

³² *Ibid.*, f. 3.

he believes that as long as a disengagement has been made on the front of Sinai and the Golan Heights, this should be also possible in Gaza and the West Bank.³³ These territories should be in the PLO possession, possibly through the UN forces or a mixed Arab organization.³⁴

In the view of the Palestinian leader, the negotiations for this move should have been carried by Egypt and not by Jordan who had direct interests in the issue, but neither by the PLO that both Israel and the United States refused to recognize³⁵. At the same time, Arafat appealed to the goodwill and good relations of the Romanian state with the states of Western Europe and with the USA³⁶, for starting the procedures for disengagement in the two territories. Nicolae Ceaușescu avoided to give a concrete answer to this, suggesting that Arafat should have a discussion with King Hussein of Jordan, to find a solution together.³⁷ Arafat replied that Hussein "*speaks one and does another*", so any discussion with him would have been useless, especially since through the money he received from the Americans he tried to buy the peace and silence of the Palestinian people in the two territories.³⁸ Nicolae Ceaușescu insisted that the PLO had to intensify its political and diplomatic activity at international level, and this could also be achieved by convening a special session of the UN General Assembly. In this way the UN will get acquainted with the new realities of the situation in Near East and based on them will issue a new set of political measures to help resolve the conflict.³⁹ The new measures had to take into account the fact that Israel had the obligation to withdraw from the occupied territories in 1967, while acknowledging the rights of the Palestinian people and the need to establish a Palestinian state in the territories of Gaza and West Bank, as well as guaranteeing the right of all states in the area, including Israel.⁴⁰

The Romanian president was of the opinion that, by adopting such measures, Israel would had been subjected to international political pressure which eventually could have led it to give up the territories acquired illegally in 1967.⁴¹ In fact, the whole dialogue between the two leaders seems to have been more of an exploration of the interlocutor to discover the true positions of each other. On the other hand, the discussion of the two was much hampered

³³ *Ibid.*, f. 4 verso.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 8 verso.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 8 verso.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 8 verso.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 8 verso.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, f. 9.

by the PLO's position on Resolution no. 242, which they considered to be extremely unfair. Representatives of the organization have refused to accept the stipulations of this resolution by showing that they do not meet the most ordinary conditions of the Palestinians. First, the Resolution referred to the rights of the refugee population, without specifying the nationality of this population, and secondly, the rights of the Palestinian nation were ignored.⁴²

Nicolae Ceaușescu has repeatedly tried to point out that although this resolution is not perfect and, from some points of view, it is not correct to the Palestinian people, even so it has some very important and essential stipulations to restore peace in the region. First, Resolution no. 242 clearly stated that Israel must withdraw from the territories occupied by force in the wake of the 1967 war. This withdrawal involved the liberation of territories in the West Bank and Gaza that the Palestinian people claimed and which could be the first step towards the establishment of a Palestinian state.⁴³ Nicolae Ceaușescu therefore tried to explain to the Palestinians that it was better not to fight this resolution but rather to ask for its implementation as soon as possible, especially as this could be supported by almost the entire international community.⁴⁴ Moreover, the resolution pleaded for compliance for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states in the region, including Israel, an idea with which the Palestinians had to get used.⁴⁵

Beyond these misunderstandings, Romanian officials have supported the establishment of a Palestinian government, believing that such an action could bring a new perspective on the approach of the Palestinian issue in the Near East. The Romanian president also encouraged Yasser Arafat in his efforts to establish a Palestinian government, even though at that time the territories claimed by the PLO belonging to the Palestinian population were occupied by the Israelis.⁴⁶ Recognition of such a government has increased the prestige of the PLO among the international community and has given another meaning to the Palestinian issue.

On November 10, 1975, through UN Resolution 3376, the UN General Assembly established the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People⁴⁷, consisting of 23 member states including Romania, the Arab States and the PLO being observers.⁴⁸ The main objectives of the

⁴² Arhivele Naționale, Fond C.C al P.C.R, Secția Relații Externe, Dosar 165/1974, f. 3.

⁴³ Arhivele Naționale, Fond C.C al P.C.R, Secția Relații Externe, Dosar 118/1980, f. 13.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 13 verso.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 14.

⁴⁶ Arhivele Naționale, Fond C.C al P.C.R, Secția Relații Externe, Dosar 220/1976, f. 18.

⁴⁷ Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, Problema 224/1980, Orientul Mijlociu, Dosar 1930, *Problematika Orientului Mijlociu la Organizația Națiunilor Unite*, f. 6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 7.

Committee were:

- implementing a program for the implementation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian population,
- establishing contacts with all Member States, intergovernmental organizations as well as with the Palestine Liberation Organization
- to draw up a report on the recommendations of the members of the Committee and forward it to the Security Council.⁴⁹

During the sessions of this committee Romania supported the Palestinian cause, having very good relations with the members of the PLO at the UN.⁵⁰

In 1977, after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, the Bucharest government sent two delegations with messages from Nicolae Ceaușescu to confirm to the Palestinian authorities that Romania is doing all it can to resolve the conflict in the Near East.⁵¹ Signing the Camp David Agreements, deeply dissatisfied the Palestine Liberation Organization. Its leaders accused the signatories of the agreements of trying to diminish the Palestinian issue and the role of the organization in solving it.⁵² The Palestinians reproached the fact that with the aim of gaining advantages for Egypt and Israel, some of the Middle East issues were partially solved through these agreements, and the interests of the Palestinian cause were totally ignored. Indeed, the entire Arab community accused Egypt of collaborating with Israel.⁵³

In view of the growing recognition of the PLO on an international scale as legitimate representative of the Palestinian population interests, the organization has gained increasing influence among international organizations. As a result of the PLO leadership's approach, in 1980, the organization was invited to participate as an observer at a World Bank and International Monetary Fund session held in Washington in September. The US Delegation vehemently opposed this initiative and called on the World Bank and the IMF to use the vote by correspondence on the presence of the PLO in Washington. The PLO Executive Committee forwarded an address to the MFA officials requesting the Romanian side to refrain from sending its vote by correspondence even if it was one in favor of the PLO. Palestinian leaders thought that a small number of votes could call into question the credibility of such an approach by giving them a win-win situation. As a result

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 11.

⁵¹ Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, Problema 220/1978, OEP-RSR, Dosar 2264, *Relațiile politico-diplomatice româno-palestiniene*, f. 13.

⁵² Arhivele Naționale, Fond C.C al P.C.R, Secția Relații Externe, Dosar 2P/1974-1989, f. 15.

⁵³ Arhivele Naționale, Fond C.C al P.C.R, Secția Relații Externe, Dosar 230/1979, f. 3 verso.

of this approach, the MFA proposed to pursue the Palestinian demand.⁵⁴

Following the conflict in Lebanon, the meetings and talks between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat intensified. The Palestinian leader has consistently sought to secure Romania's support for the cause of his people. Using the occasion of a visit by the Romanian President to Paris, the PLO leaders tried to get in touch with him to draw attention to the situation in Lebanon and especially to the problems faced by the PLO in this country. Khaled Al-Sheikh, the permanent PLO representative in our country, revealed to Nicolae Ceaușescu that the leaders of the organization have information showing that Lebanon was preparing actions aimed to liquidate the Palestinian population from several directions.⁵⁵ The PLO also held information that Israel had already begun implementing a Palestinian cleaning strategy in the areas they controlled. The establishment of new Israeli settlements in these territories automatically leads to the withdrawal of the native population. According to Palestinian information, 80 new establishments were registered in the West Bank. Although the number of Israelis in these areas was only 12,000, the territories they occupied were very large.⁵⁶ The position of France was generally quite elusive with regard to the existence of an independent Palestinian state.⁵⁷ Nicolae Ceaușescu's visit and his intervention with the French President in favor of the PLO could have been a step forward for the recognition of the full rights of the PLO to represent the cause of all Palestinians.⁵⁸

Throughout the 1980s, Romania continued to provide political and military support to the Palestine Liberation Organization, taking on its role as a mediator between the leaders of the PLO and Israel. In 1986, Yasser Arafat was invited by Nicolae Ceaușescu to celebrate August 23, Romania's national day. On the eve of this day, one of the most important PLO officials, Salah Khalaf, known as one of the bombers at the 1972 Olympics in Munich, on the Israeli delegation, said in an interview from the Hungarian national television that *"unfortunately, Romanian comrades commit a serious mistake and a sin against my people (Palestinian) when they treat the Transylvanian Hungarians as equally ruthless as Israeli people treat us in the occupied territories."*⁵⁹ Khalaf continued his speech claiming that it is very difficult to understand *"how a socialist country can take such drastic measures as the demolition of some villages, which has nothing to do*

⁵⁴ Arhivele Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, Problema 220/1980, OEP-RSR, Dosar 2087, *Relațiile politico-diplomatice româno-palestiniene*, f. 45.

⁵⁵ Arhivele Naționale, Fond C.C al P.C.R, Secția Relații Externe, Dosar 118/1980, f. 5.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 5 verso.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 7 verso.

⁵⁹ Michael Shafir, *PLO'S Second in Command Denounces Romania's Treatment of Hungarian Transylvanians*, Radio Free Europe, 25 august 1988, p. 1.

*with Marxism or socialism. I would like to tell you that I empathize with the Transylvanian Hungarians, who suffer exactly like the Palestinian people under military occupation. They are forced to flee from their native land that is expropriated, their villages are destroyed and they are deprived of their national culture and identity."*⁶⁰

This violent attack on Romania by a Palestinian leader can be explained through two aspects. First of all, it is very possible that Hungary had given Khalah some "special incentives" that led him to take such a position in a problem that had nothing to do with the situation of the Palestinian population. Another explanation could be the failure of Romania to receive from Israel an agreement on the participation of the PLO at an international peace conference on the situation in the Middle East. In fact, Romania's attempts to obtain Israel's agreement on this matter continued in the years to come. In 1988, Ceaușescu again appealed to Israel's favor by sending Constantin Mitea to Jerusalem, who had several meetings with Prime Minister Itzhak Shamir and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres to persuade them to start negotiations with the PLO representatives.⁶¹

Moreover, Khalah considers that a country that behaves with its citizens as Romania does in the case of Transylvanian Hungarians can not speak about peace, understanding and stopping the violence between Arabs and Israelis as long as they can not solve the problems in their own yard. Therefore, Romania was not the most suitable candidate for the role of mediator between Israel and the Palestinian people.⁶² Given the very good relations between Ceaușescu and Arafat, it is unlikely that the Palestinian leader would have been aware of his second statements. Khalaf's attitude most likely betrayed a series of tensions accumulated at the top of the PLO, and his statements were essentially just a message through which he transmitted that it is delimiting itself by the policy promoted by Yasser Arafat and of his vision of solving the Palestinian problem.

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⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.2

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