Levantine Arabic transcript:

أين: ماذا يحدث في النشاط الذي يقدمه الناس عن إقتصاد البلد؟

أين: هل إقتصاد البلد موضوع حديث اليوم، يعني هل الناس يتحدثون بشكل كبير؟

أصام: أصام يقوم بإنتاج أو استهلاك محدود أو القائم على تطوير إسرائيل كموارد خام واستيراد مواد مصنعة.

أين: طيب؟ أين شغلت أصام في الماضي أو في السابق، من وين بنيته؟

أصام: ظهور إقتصاد الفلسطيني في المعمل، من حيث ذلك، أو كما يمكنني النظر إليه؟

أين: أصام في النشاط الذي يقدمه الناس عن إقتصاد البلد، يعني هل الناس يتحدثون بشكل كبير؟

أين: هل إقتصاد البلد موضوع حديث اليوم، يعني هل الناس يتحدثون بشكل كبير على إقتصاد البلد؟

أصام: في الاستغلال الذي يقدمه الناس عن إقتصاد البلد، يعني هل الناس يتحدثون بشكل كبير؟

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أين: هل إقتصاد البلد موضوع حديث اليوم، يعني هل الناس يتحدثون بشكل كبير على إقتصاد البلد؟
**English translation:**

Anas: Okay, dear sir, Mr. Issam, I want to ask you about the economy. The first question I want to ask you is, is the economy a topic of conversation for people? Do people here discuss this, or is it a topic that is not debated between people?

Issam: The country’s economy… of course we live in occupied lands, and you know that the Palestinian economy faces enormous challenges. Why? Because the Palestinian economy is not independent, and consequently there is a very peculiar national economy. The Palestinian economy relies first of all on the Israeli economy. The Palestinian market is heavily dependent upon the Israeli market. Whatever is available on the Israeli market is available here. Whatever is missing is also missing for us. Consequently, the buying power of the Palestinian economy is very weak compared to Israeli economic power. Therefore, trade indicators… or the difference between us and Israel (even though we are heavily reliant on their economy) is very big. This is for many reasons. First of all, of course, the absence of infrastructure, airports, water systems, air and land travel infrastructure that would allow us to transport our products. Palestinian products are either manufactured locally or the raw materials are sent to Israel and the final product returns.

Anas: What kinds of things do most people do? Where do they work and how do they get jobs?

Issam: I told you there is a sector of the Palestinian economy, or a sector of Palestinian workers (about 90%) that work in the Israeli market. Of course, this returns to the lack of large factories that could employ these workers, the lack of organizations concerned with these workers’ issues, the presence of unions that do not serve the needs of these workers… The Palestinian worker depends on the Israeli market: [he looks to see] if the Israeli market presents him with work with which he can support his kids, or [whether] he can find these things at home.

Anas: What are the economic or work opportunities… the things people can do in the West Bank that are good, things that are good for people to work in … for example, agriculture…

Issam: Palestine in general has rich land in all senses. In agriculture, 70% of Palestinian land is rural, between hills and mountains. All of it is land that could be used for agriculture. But, unfortunately, there is no development – or people who could watch over the development of this land. Second of all, we have a very rich sector in Palestine that is ignored and undeveloped, which is the minerals sector. Palestine is considered one of the best producers of these minerals and of stones (marble). And in America, I believe there is an airport called the Texas airport: if you go to see that airport you will see that it is built from Palestinian stone. But this stone is not sold by us. The problem is that we produce things, and make things, and Israel sells things under the Israeli name. But it is
our production and our material … but it’s like I told you there are no people… there are no people who are protecting this economy.

Anas: There is a problem I expect that people face: they go and work in Israel, and Israel gives them money, and compared to the money that they would earn working in the West Bank it is more. But, at the same time, when they buy they buy at Israeli prices. So when he buys a bag of cement he buys it at 120 shekels -- so what are the consequences ….

Issam: This is a large challenge facing the Palestinian economy. As I told you, our economy is tied to the Israeli economy. Whatever they have, we have, but the buying power is different. Income in Israel … income in Palestine is three or four times weaker. But the price of goods is the same. But incomes are different. For example, let’s talk about a basic material like … a bag of cement. A bag of cement in Palestine is 105 shekels; that’s about 25 dollars. In Israel, the same thing, 25 dollars. But the Palestinian worker’s income might be 30 dollars per day. The Israeli worker’s income might be between 70 to 90 dollars. That’s the difference. It’s clear.

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