

**ANOTHER VIEWPOINT**  
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**PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST**  
**THE ARABS SAY YES: WILL ISRAEL SEE THE LIGHT?**

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The United States has reactivated its peace initiative and the Arabs have said "Yes," but will Israel see the light and help to make peace a reality? Prime Minister Shamir and his cabinet have agreed, with conditions, to attend a peace conference. Israel has also indicated willingness to release Arab prisoners from Lebanon in exchange for release of hostages and missing Israeli soldiers. These are good signs. However, Israel's conditions -- a limited role for the UN at the conference, severe restrictions on Palestinian representation -- and the repeated statements by Israeli officials against "land for peace" or a State of Palestine are strong warnings against rushing to celebrate peace in the Middle East.

I am convinced that most Israelis want peace. But I am also convinced that the Israeli government wants peace on a silver platter, with all compromises to be made by its opponents and none by itself. This position will not lead to peace. Israel must be more realistic, flexible, and willing to give and not in the cause of peace.

There are at least five basic "needs" Israel must satisfy before it can enjoy the peace its people have been wanting for decades.

First, Israel needs to commit itself to certain basic philosophical principles regarding its relations with other countries in the M.E. region: For instance, it has to accept the idea of "live and let live" within recognized boundaries, on the basis of co-existence, not domination; hence, the military occupation of parts of Palestine must end. It has to accept the principle

that no territorial war gains can be tolerated; otherwise its own territory and war gains will always be a cause for another war. Israel has also to accept Security Council resolutions as means to coexistence and stability. Israel itself has been created by virtue of a Security Council resolution. Finally, it has to accept the idea that collective action to maintain stability under the New World Order can be applied to it as it has been applied to other countries in the region. Israel must not believe that it is immune or above the rule of collective action of which it approved during the Gulf war.

Second, Israel needs to accept the equality of rights of different people to exist as independent and sovereign. While Israel's right to exist may not be in question, the legitimate rights of the Palestinians are as important as those of Israel, in principle, and for the sake of international stability. Similarly, unity of the Palestinian people is as important as unity of the Israeli people. Trying to split the Palestinians, those within the Occupied Territories from those without, can only be counterproductive and a blow to the prospects of peace and stability. Israel has only to review the terms of agreement with the Palestinians, regardless who the representatives are. It can always say no to those terms. To pose strict conditions on representation in advance of the discussion of substance can only foil the initiative and block the way to the peace conference.

Third, Israel needs to recognize the regional expectations of its neighbors. Security of the Arab countries is as important as the security of Israel, and threats to the Arab countries are as destabilizing as the threats to Israel. By the same token, restrictions on the development and use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons applied to one country must apply to all countries, including Israel. Otherwise, the threat of such weapons remains and endangers peace and stability of the region and the world.

Fourth, Israel needs to commit itself to peace in action, not just in rhetoric and public declarations. Israel has an obligation to make its commitment to peace substantive, functional, and known. It can do so by taking certain steps which cost it little and yet contribute much toward the peace process. For example, Israel can release the political detainees in the Occupied Territories, especially those who have been held by administrative detention without due process of law. Their number runs in the thousands and many of the them are subjected to cruelty and torture.

Israel can institute due process of law in dealing with Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. These people are neighbors and hopefully will be friends when peace comes.

Israel can remove restrictions on mobility of the Palestinian people, especially labor mobility, with little risk to its security, which is hardly threatened in any case.

Israel can remove the restrictions imposed on educational institutions and let them once again be centers of learning and incubators of knowledge and scholarship.

Israel can free the Palestinian economy from arbitrary military and administrative restrictions which have crippled it and subjected the Palestinian people to poverty, deprivation, and economic cruelty.

Israel can remove the restrictions on the use of the economic resources in the Occupied Territories by Palestinians who are anxious to invest and expand their agriculture and industry. Releasing water from restrictions, easing the issue of business permits, putting an end to Jewish settlement of Palestinian land and respecting the land rights of the Palestinians, and allowing the Palestinians access to the market as freely as it is in Israel -- all these can be major steps toward building confidence and paving the way to peace. These

are also ways of allowing the Palestinians to make a decent living by using their own ingenuity and resources.

Israel can transfer many of the administrative responsibilities in the Occupied Territories to the local authorities, in anticipation of peace and military withdrawal from the Territories.

Israel can reduce its military presence in the Occupied Territories to an absolute minimum with hardly any risk to its security, both as good will and as sound economic policy. The reduction of military presence can be a major contribution to the initiative for peace and harmony. It will also reduce the burden on the Israeli economy.

Finally, Israel can contribute to the peace effort by applying its principles of equality and democracy to all its citizens: Jews and Arabs alike. To continue to practice or allow discrimination against its Arab citizens casts doubt on its democracy, sincerity, and willingness to live in peace with its Arab neighbors. Israel may not want or may be unable to do all the above, but any of the steps suggested would be an important signal that Israel is indeed in favor of peace.

Fifth, Israel needs to appreciate the value of peace with its Arab neighbors and do more to bring it about. Peace will allow Israel to enjoy the security it has dreamed of for centuries.

Peace will allow Israeli citizens to travel freely around the M.E. and enjoy in the economic, cultural, and artistic treasures of the region.

Peace will allow Israel to reallocate its resources from the wasteful military to the productive economic sectors and reverse the decline in the standard of living of its people.

Finally, peace will allow Israel to commit its talents and resources to creativity, technological innovation, and improvement of the quality of life for its own people and for people of other lands.

As I remember it, Abba Eban once said that there is no such thing as the price of peace, for peace has no price and must be achieved for its inherent value. That is true, but the achievement of peace requires sacrifices. Now Israel faces a challenge. It has the chance to share in the sacrifice and let the American initiative and the Arab "Yes" bear the sweet fruit of Peace. Let us hope Israel will do so.

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From Our Readers

#### “STOP BLOCKING PEACE

The Board of Trustees of the International Center for Peace in the Middle East, convening in Tel-Aviv, calls for the immediate removal of procedural and substantive obstructions to the new opportunity for peace created in the Middle East after the Gulf war.

The insistence on one or another conference framework; the refusal to acknowledge indispensable partners to the peace process; and, in particular, the Israel Government's persistent refusal to recognize the right of the Palestinians to choose their own representatives, are all obstructions to the achievement of peace.

It is time for all parties concerned to remove all obstructions; it is time to discontinue settlement of the occupied territories which sabotages peace; it is time to recognize that peace can only be achieved through mutual recognition of the right to self-determination for all parties to the conflict, including the Palestinians; it is time to implement UN Resolutions 242

and 338, ruling out annexation of territories by force; it is time to accept and implement the principles of 'territories for peace' and the right of each people in the region to live in its own state with secure and recognized borders.

IT IS TIME TO END THE STALLING MANEUVERS AND GET DOWN TO  
TALING PEACE."

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