

For A Comprehensive Peace In The Middle East

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Peace is the target and the question is how to achieve, ensure and guarantee peace. Concrete action or a declaration of intent is needed.

An international consensus has emerged. Peace in the Middle East is a condition conducive to international peace and security. The emerging consensus is that the question of Palestine is the core of the conflict in the Middle East and consequently it is the key to peace. There is unanimity, including in the U.S.A., that a comprehensive settlement conducive to peace cannot be achieved until and unless the "Palestinian problem" in all its aspects is resolved.

Thus, the issue of peace or no peace in the Middle East rests on resolving the "Palestinian problem" in all its aspects. The aspects are human, political, economic etc. In our opinion — and again there is unanimous support to this — the fate of the Palestinian refugees must be addressed and the "refugee problem" must be resolved. The only solution is to enable the refugees to return to their homes and property. The right of return is a principle in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and this right is not contingent on any other consideration. The right of the Palestinians to their homes has been upheld by the unanimous vote at the United Nations — Israel abstained in the vote — but could not vote against the decision.

But in practice Israel not only prohibits the Palestinians from exercising this right but has created and still does create conditions to force the Palestinians to leave their homes. Whatever the conditions or circumstances that compelled or compel the Palestinians to leave their homes — the right of return stands firm — and the Palestinian justly defends his right to return. All attempts and measures to negate and deny and obstruct the exercise of this right are deliberate attempts to obstruct endeavours for peace.

Another component of the "aspects of the Palestinian problem" is the right to self-determination. I believe it was Woodrow Wilson who formulated this concept — it

was not an exercise in linguistics. It was and still is hard substance. The exercise of the right of the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination is an aspect, a prerequisite, a condition for achieving peace. I am not aware of any people — or any nation — willing to accommodate at the expense of its own rights — thus the Palestinian people — and the overwhelming majority of the international community voted in support of this right of the Palestinian people at the United Nations in July 1980. The vote was 112 in support of this right and only 7 voted against it. Israel voted against this principle of self-determination for the Palestinian people. Israel persists in its policy reflecting such a rejection of the principle through the imposition of oppressive military occupation practices, and in so doing practices racist policies against the Palestinians under occupation.

I must say here that the policies adopted by the Israeli government are not "emergency or contingency measures." They reflect a concept or an ideology. An American Rabbi who was in the area has just issued a book "They Must Go." Meir Kahane describes the Palestinians as a malignant growth and prescribes their elimination from Israel and from the occupied territories. But he is not the first to say such things. Mr. Weitz — of the colonization department of the Jewish Agency in 1940 said that all Arabs should be *transferred* to the neighboring countries "not one village, not one tribe, should be left."

In 1916, Jabotinsky "saw in the evacuation of the Arabs from Palestine the basic prerequisite for the implementation of Zionism."

In June 1981, Begin, in an election campaign statement apparently suggested that the "Arabs" be integrated and Peres was enraged: "This is not our Zionist project, this is suggesting a binational state" he cried. So one can safely conclude that a condition for peace — namely, respect for the rights of others — brotherhood — is missing. As a matter of fact this condition is to be eliminated, even if it is by force. These are some of the facts. They show that it is Israel that stands in the way of a just, comprehensive peace.

What do the Palestinian people want? When I speak on behalf of my people it is because I am so authorized by my people. "The Palestine Liberation Organization is our sole and legitimate representative" say the Palestinians.

The Palestine Liberation Organization is the representative of the Palestinian people, declared the United Nations. Let me tell you what we want. In very simple English, we want to return home and live in peace.

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carriers, two to four aircraft carrier groups plus a command vessel with three destroyers.

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Chairman Arafat addressed the international community in 1974 and said in simple terms, let's return home and live in peace and harmony as citizens of one democratic society in one country, all equal, no discrimination — no privileges, sharing the prosperity and the labor.

When this option did not meet with unanimous support, the Palestine Liberation Organization then agreed to another option — offered by the international community — the Palestinians will be enabled to return to their homes, and the Palestinian people will exercise their self-determination and establish their independent sovereign state in that part of Palestine from which the Israelis must withdraw — namely the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967. The Palestinian state will then assume its responsibilities and decide its relations in

accordance with international law and other norms and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Israel and the United States of America reject this approach. Our question now is how can we work together to achieve peace in the Middle East.

The fact remains that the only vehicle is the United Nations and the international community has a lot at stake. The USA, the USSR and others equally share the responsibility and, in our opinion, must be involved. The main question is — do we want peace and how could we achieve peace? Those who obstruct endeavours for peace must be identified, namely, those who have rejected the options of the international community, those who have converted the area into an arsenal of the most developed weaponry, and those who in reply to peace efforts sign a strategic alliance, those who instead of sending aid, teachers and doctors, conducted a military operation under the disgusting misnomer — “bright star” — those and their allies are the real enemies of peace. □

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