

Why the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Talks were Set-up to Fail

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Barack Obama met to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian Peace talks. However, it should be no surprise that there is no optimism in the talks. Netanyahu said that "Israel has been doing its part and, I regret to say, the Palestinians have not" according to Israeli newspaper Haaretz.

The US Secretary of State John Kerry has a deadline on April 29th for a "framework Agreement" between Israel and Palestine. "It's my belief that ultimately it is still possible to create two states, a Jewish state of Israel and a state of Palestine, with people living side by side in peace and security," Obama said. "But it's difficult. It requires compromise on all sides" the report said.

On Tuesday Netanyahu demanded that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas recognize Israel as a 'Jewish State', "President Abbas: recognize the Jewish state and in doing so, you would be telling your people.. to abandon the fantasy of flooding Israel with refugees" he said at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) earlier this month. One of the major compromises that the Palestinians would have to accept according to Netanyahu is for Israel to be recognized as a "Jewish State". Netanyahu demands comes at a time when his administration continues to build Jewish settlements at unprecedented levels which have been admitted by the Israeli media including the Times of Israel. The Times of Israel stated the facts:

New construction in the West Bank skyrocketed in 2013 compared to 2012, new Israeli data revealed on Monday. The Central Bureau of Statistics reported an increase of 123 percent in construction of new homes in the West Bank in 2013 compared to 2012, a ratio dramatically higher than in the other six districts examined. The southern district, coming in second, witnessed an increase of 12%, Haifa 8%, Jerusalem 3%, central Israel 2%, and northern Israel 1%. New construction in the Tel Aviv district dropped 19% between 2012 and 2013

The Lebanese based online news website the Daily Star reported that Mohammad al-Madani who quoted Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas as saying "We cannot continue negotiations with ongoing settlement construction," concerning the negotiations imposed by Washington. The report confirmed that Abbas met Zehava Galon who is head of the Meretz party (an Israeli left wing political party) in Ramallah this past Monday:

A statement from Galon's office said that in addition to a settlement freeze, Abbas would also demand a release of "further prisoners beyond the next

tranche, including women, youths and administrative detainees.”

Israel committed in July to releasing 104 Palestinian prisoners in four tranches. It has so far released 78 of those in three batches.

Abbas also told Galon that “if the American framework agreement will not sufficiently address the fundamental principles of the core issues, we won’t enable extending the negotiations,” according to the statement

For the Palestinians to recognize Israel as a ‘Jewish State’ would be devastating politically. It would concede that all Jewish people would have a natural right to be in Palestine. For Palestinians who do live in Palestine, it will be only by permission of the “Jewish State” not as a natural right of the Palestinians who have been in the land for thousands of years. If the Palestinians were to recognize Israel as a “Jewish State” then the Palestinians living in Palestine has been illegitimate. This is one of the main reasons the Palestinians would not accept the “Jewish State” status of Israel. One other factor that the Israel and the Palestinian Authority will not succeed is because the United Nations recognition of Palestine based on its pre-1967 borders with Israel. This does not sit well with Israel because it legitimizes the Palestinians territorial integrity. Historically Palestinians have a right to be in Palestine and exercise their right to establish a sovereign state of their own. It is important to note that Israel as a Jewish State would also jeopardize the rights of all Palestinians who currently live in the Palestinian territories and of the Palestinian refugees who were forcibly expelled from their homes in 1948 after the state of Israel was created under the Balfour Declaration.

Recognizing Israel as a Jewish State is not beneficial for all people living within Israel as well since 25% of the current population is actually non-Jewish. Despite Netanyahu’s demands, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) under Yasir Arafat recognized Israel in the 1980’s while Israel did not recognize Palestine. In 1988, The New York Times reported that Yasir Arafat and the PLO with the Palestinian parliament had “*accepted the existence of Israel as a state in the region*” and “*declared its rejection and condemnation of terrorism in all its forms.*” But it was rejected by both Washington and Tel Aviv as the New York Times explained why they were not convinced:

In Jerusalem, Israeli leaders discounted the Stockholm declaration and Mr. Arafat’s comments. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres characterized them as a “cunning exercise in public relations.” What was needed, he said, was “a commitment in reality” to an end to violence. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was similarly dismissive.

The United States has long said it would not deal with the P.L.O. until it stated unambiguously that it recognized Israel’s right to exist and United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which lay out the basis for a negotiated settlement and peace in the Middle East. The United States has also asked for an unequivocal statement that the P.L.O. renounces all forms of terrorism

The peace process began in 1991 in Madrid with the intention of establishing peace between Israel and Palestine. The United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 was eventually accepted by Arafat and the PLO in 1993 during the Oslo accords disregarding the Palestinian people. The Oslo Accords or the Declaration of Principles (DOP) resulted in the recognition of Israel by the PLO and Israel recognizing the PLO as the

legitimate representative of the Palestinian people for whom the Israeli government can negotiate with. The Oslo Accords helped create the Palestinian Authority (PA) with limited self-government over Palestinian lands, but many issues involving Israel's recognition of Palestine as a state and its occupation and the Palestinian right of return remained unsolved. Overall, a Palestinian state was never granted under the Oslo Accords, it was a failure. When the Oslo Accords began and Yasir Arafat agreed to recognize Israel as a state, it only gave the Israeli government more power over the negotiations and the Palestinian people. In an article written by human rights advocate and fellow Palestinian Edward Said called 'The Morning After' he criticized Arafat's decision to recognize Israel as a State. He wrote:

By contrast Arafat's recognition of Israel's right to exist carries with it a whole series of renunciations: of the PLO Charter; of violence and terrorism; of all relevant UN resolutions, except 242 and 338, which do not have one word in them about the Palestinians, their rights or aspirations. By implication, the PLO set aside numerous other UN resolutions (which, with Israel and the US, it is now apparently undertaking to modify or rescind) that, since 1948, have given Palestinians refugee rights, including either compensation or repatriation. The Palestinians had won numerous international resolutions - passed by, among others, the EC, the non-aligned movement, the Islamic Conference and the Arab League, as well as the UN - which disallowed or censured Israeli settlements, annexations and crimes against the people under occupation

The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Yasir Arafat, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin in 1994 for their peace efforts during the Oslo Accords agreement. According to the Oslo Declaration of Principles, it states that "*a permanent settlement based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338*" which did not address Palestinian rights. MIT professor Noam Chomsky explained in Z magazine in 1993 the flaws regarding UN Resolution 242 and what it meant for the Palestinian people. He wrote:

The draft agreement makes no mention of Palestinian national rights, the primary issue on which the US and Israel broke with the international consensus from the mid-1970s. Throughout these years, it was agreed that a settlement should be based on UN 242.

There were two basic points of contention: (1) Do we interpret the withdrawal clause of 242 in accord with the international consensus (including the US, pre-1971), or in accord with the position of Israel and US policy from 1971? (2) Is the settlement based solely on UN 242, which offers nothing to the Palestinians, or 242 and other relevant UN resolutions, as the PLO had proposed for many years in accord with the nonrejectionist international consensus. Thus, does the settlement incorporate the right of refugees to return or compensation, as the UN has insisted since December 1948 (with US endorsement, long forgotten), and the Palestinian right to national self-determination that has repeatedly been endorsed by the UN (though blocked by Washington)? These are the crucial issues that have stood in the way of a political settlement.

On these issues, the agreement explicitly and without equivocation adopts the US-Israeli stand. As noted, Article I states that the "permanent status will lead to the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338," nothing more. Furthermore, as Beilin made explicit, the withdrawal clause of UN 242 is to be understood in the terms unilaterally imposed by the US (from 1971). In fact, the agreement does not even preclude further Israeli settlement in the large areas of the West Bank it has taken over, or even new land takeovers. On

such central matters as control of water, it speaks only of “cooperation” and “equitable utilization” in a manner to be determined by “experts from both sides.” The outcome of cooperation between an elephant and a fly is not hard to predict.

Chomsky was correct in his assessment on UN resolution 242 when one of the Nobel Peace Prize Winners Shimon Peres addressed the Israeli public in 1995 and stated that *“the deal kept the following in Israeli hands: 73 percent of the lands of the territories, 97 percent of security and 80 percent of the water.”* Another important factor regarding the DOP is in Article XVII Jurisdiction 1.

In accordance with the DOP, the jurisdiction of the Council will cover West Bank and Gaza Strip territory as a single territorial unit, except for:

- a. issues that will be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations: Jerusalem, settlements, specified military locations, Palestinian refugees, borders, foreign relations and Israelis; and
- b. powers and responsibilities not transferred to the Council

Which means that the Palestinian matters concerning Israel’s strategic military locations, Israeli settlements, the Palestinian Right of Return to their lands and the issue of Jerusalem becoming the capital of Israel would be under political and strategic control of the Israeli government. Oslo Accords was a failure for the Palestinians and for Israel for the simple matter that they could not wrap their tentacles around the Palestinian people and its lands any tighter than it already is. Israel would have come out being the benefactor to the peace agreements, not the Palestinians. The peace talks are unfortunately going to fail once again. The pre-conditions for the Palestinians to accept a peace deal with Israel through Secretary of State John Kerry’s *“Framework Agreement”* will backfire. *“Jerusalem will not be divided so long as I’m prime minister”* Netanyahu was quoted as saying on Israeli television this past January. President Abbas responded by saying *“The Palestinians want confirmation in writing that the capital of a future Palestinian state will be in East Jerusalem, Abbas told the Meretz leader. With regard to the refugee issue, Abbas said that claims he wants to flood Israel with 5 million Palestinian refugees are a lie.”* President Abbas was also responding to Netanyahu’s speech at the AIPAC conference. President Abbas said *“If the American framework agreement doesn’t address our basic principles regarding the core issues, we will not allow the talks to be extended beyond the original end date of April 29,” Gal-On quoted Abbas as saying* according to the Haaretz report. *“Back in the region, Meretz chairwoman MK Zahava Gal-On said after meeting with Abbas yesterday that he was pessimistic about the chances of reaching a framework agreement that would allow the peace talks to continue.”*

Allowing Palestine to accept Israel as a “Jewish State” will not happen. The new peace talks are not any different from the previous efforts by the United States and Israel. This time Netanyahu demands the Palestinian government to recognize the “Jewish State” of Israel. However, he does want a two-state solution, but on his terms. He once said *“I think that peace will require two states, a Palestinian state that recognizes the Jewish state.”*

The Palestinians deserve their own state; Palestine is a place that dates back thousands of years, it is a nation. David Ben Gurion, Israel’s first Prime Minister admitted that the Palestine belonged to the Palestinians in 1938 speech when he clearly stated

“Let us not ignore the truth among ourselves ... politically we are the aggressors and they defend themselves... The country is theirs, because they inhabit it, whereas we want to come here and settle down, and in their view we want to take away from them their country.”

Maybe Netanyahu should revisit the historical speeches of Israel’s past leaders, but that would not make a difference anyway. Peace is unachievable with the US backed “Framework Agreement” because what Israel is asking the Palestinians to accept is unrealistic. It is only a process that would advance Israel’s hegemony in the Middle East and allow it to expand its territory and obtain natural resources with its advanced military capabilities with the help of Washington.

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