
Towards a Comprehensive Settlement of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

With the Middle East immersed in its worst crisis for years, we call for urgent international action towards a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Everyone has lost in this conflict except the extremists throughout the world who prosper on the rage that it continues to provoke. Every passing day undermines prospects for a peaceful, enduring solution. As long as the conflict lasts, it will generate instability and violence in the region and beyond.

The outlines of what is needed are well known, based on UN Security Council resolutions 242 of 1967 and 338 of 1973, the Camp David peace accords of 1978, the Clinton Parameters of 2000, the Arab League Initiative of 2002, and the Roadmap proposed in 2003 by the Quartet (UN, US, EU and Russia). The goal must be security and full recognition to the state of Israel within internationally recognized borders, an end to the occupation for the Palestinian people in a viable independent, sovereign state, and the return of lost land to Syria.

We believe the time has come for a new international conference, ideally held as soon as possible and attended by all relevant players, at which all the elements of a comprehensive peace agreement would be mapped, and momentum generated for detailed negotiations.

Whether or not such an early conference can be convened, there are crucial steps that can and should be taken by the key players, including:

- Support for a Palestinian national unity government, with an end to the political and financial boycott of the Palestinian Authority.
- Talks between Israel and the Palestinian leadership, mediated by the Quartet and reinforced by the participation of the Arab League and key regional countries, on rapidly enhancing mutual security and allowing revival of the Palestinian economy.
- Talks between the Palestinian leadership and the Israeli government, sponsored by a reinforced Quartet, on the core political issues that stand in the way of achieving a final status agreement.
- Parallel talks of the reinforced Quartet with Israel, Syria and Lebanon, to discuss the foundations on which Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese agreements can be reached.

Nobody underestimates the intractability of the underlying issues or the intensity of feelings they provoke. But if the Arab-Israeli conflict, with all its terrible consequences, is ever to be resolved, there is a desperate need for fresh thinking and the injection of new political will. The times demand no less.

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