
Tony Blair addresses the 5th Israeli Presidential Conference in Jerusalem

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Full text of the speech by Tony Blair, Quartet Representative to the Middle East
The 5th Israeli Presidential Conference, under the auspices of President Shimon Peres
International Convention Center, Jerusalem.

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Finally leaders have to be visionaries. Shimon Peres in one of his inimitable quotes once put it to me brilliantly: "A leader in office has to decide: does he want to be in the history book or the guest book?" Right now in this region, we need such leadership for peace for the history book between Israelis and Palestinians. Resolution of this conflict is essential: for the security of Israel; to the dignity of Palestinians. Some people say a two-state solution is now a fantasy. I say the fantasy is in thinking a one-state solution would ever be remotely sustainable or consistent with the values Israel represents. Let us hope that over the coming weeks, a plan for progress can be put in place in which politics, economics and security are aligned. With Secretary John Kerry's fantastic energy and commitment, we're all working hard to accomplish this. But we should understand: the window of opportunity will be open for only a short space of time. We must go through it together. If not the window will close again and could even close forever. Time is not our friend. This is urgent. This is now. And it is a time for statesmen not politicians.

Peace will not depend simply on negotiations. Peace is a state of mind as well as states with borders.

There is a shift in the psyche of each side that also has to happen. Israel must see a viable sovereign Palestinian State not as a reward to the Palestinians for good behaviour; but as a strategic necessity for Israel's future security and as a right for the Palestinian People. The Palestinians must see that for Israel to feel confident enough to make peace, they need to know that such a Palestinian State will be properly governed with a Palestinian politics, unified in pursuit of an agreement that recognises clearly Israel's right to exist and ends the conflict once and for all.

Peace here is most important for Israelis and Palestinians. But it is important for all of us. Why? Because peace would symbolise reconciliation and respect between not only two nations but two peoples. The great political divide of our time is less between traditional left and right and more between the open minded and the closed minded. The open minded see a world in which different faiths, races and cultures mix and mingle, as an opportunity; the closed mind sees it as a menace. Yet globalization, an unstoppable force driven by technology and people not Governments and laws, pushes us together. We live interconnected and interdependent. Such a world only works through respect for difference. You may have your faith and I mine but my faith does not make me superior to you or you to me. Those who use religion as a badge of identity in opposition to those of a different faith put our world at risk. My Faith Foundation is about to launch a programme that links up schools of different faiths across the world so that children can learn from an early age how to live with each other and from each other.

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