



Peace between Israelis and Palestinians Is Not Easy to Achieve

Once again, thanks to the US President Donald Trump's initiative, the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians is being reactivated with a novel approach: An "ultimate deal", which would facilitate regional peace. However, peace is not easy to achieve —nor a more stable Middle East— and the pathway to reach a final agreement, whether regional or not, is fraught with serious difficulties.

During Trump's visit to the Middle East, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu showed unprecedented enthusiasm about this umpteenth call for talks: "For the first time in my life I see hope for change" and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas told Trump that, "Palestinians are ready to negotiate the peace." Trump produced the same positive reactions in Saudi Arabia, where he obtained King Salman's commitment to fight against Islamic extremism and to create a better world.

This wave of optimism is not a fresh trend though. Every new international push for peace in the Middle East has been overwhelmingly welcomed, despite continuous setbacks and stagnation. Nevertheless, as noted, in the case of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, peace requires much more than words and feelings.

In this regard, if Israel wants to survive in an inhospitable Middle East, it has to set several red lines for the negotiations that must not be crossed. **In security terms**, Israel must retain the security control of the Jordan Valley, the Palestinian Authority (PA) must stop hate and incitement against Israelis and Jews, and all Palestinians must reject terrorism as a means to achieve political goals — they could start by ending the payments to terrorists and their families. Furthermore, with Hamas in control of the Gaza Strip, the prospects for a peace deal are simply impossible.

At this juncture, Palestinians must give up some of their **unacceptable historical claims**. First, the international definition of refugee set by the UNHRC must be adopted for all Palestinians living outside the West Bank and Gaza, so that only between 20,000 and 50,000 Palestinians—those who left their homes in 1948—would be the ones to relocate or compensate, not the 5 million that the UNRWA wrongly claims. Second, East Jerusalem will be, at least, under some type of shared or divided sovereignty between Israelis and Palestinians; it would not be the capital of the Palestinian State as they have always envisioned.

In addition, Palestinians have to stop immediately the international assault on Israel's legitimacy at international organizations, carried out along with the support of Arab countries, and **recognize Israel as a Jewish State** in national terms — a State of the Jews as a nation, not as a religion.

These are inescapable and essential conditions if peace is to have a chance. Otherwise, all the invested efforts will

crash against a wall of futility. In addition to Israel's red lines, peace is also hard to achieve because the **Palestinian leadership has not internalized the idea of coexistence with Israel and what it takes to manage a regular nation**. Bill Clinton said last year that, "I killed myself to give the Palestinians a State. I had a deal they turned down that would have given them all of Gaza, ... between 96 and 97 percent of the West Bank, compensating land in Israel, you name it..." but, in the end, the Palestinian leadership, chaired by Arafat, rejected it. Almost a decade after, Mahmoud Abbas adopted the same obstructionist approach with the Ehud Olmert offer — even more generous than the Clinton-Barak proposal in 2000. Olmert stated in this sense that, "The Palestinians won't get an offer like this even in another 50 years!" **Still, Palestinians answered no**. Moreover, through all these years, Palestinians leaders have never presented their own plan, which is a clear sign of their traditional negative attitude towards peace negotiations.

Despite the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is not the epicenter of the problems in the Middle East, the strategy to create a regional alliance formed by Sunni-Arab countries and Israel due to the rise of Iran is smart. It could enable the understanding between Israelis and their historical enemies and it could also propitiate the formation of a pro-Western block in the Middle East. Currently, the main threat to the security of the Middle East is Iran's expansionism, which aims to build a Shia crescent from Tehran to Beirut via Baghdad and Damascus. The pernicious consequences of the bad nuclear deal with Iran have started to unfold; if nothing is done to confront it, Iran will dominate the region and threaten the existence of Israel and Saudi Arabia. Undoubtedly, it seems a good choice for Israel and the Sunni countries to have something in common.

However, prior to establishing official ties with Israel, the involvement of the Arab countries—especially the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council led by Saudi Arabia—for the ultimate deal should be focused on (1) accepting and absorbing Palestinians that are living in those countries as citizens, (2) stopping and eradicating anti-Semitism within their borders, (3) serving as custodians and guarantors of an eventual peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians (4) giving up the isolation and delegitimization of Israel in international forums, (5) fighting seriously against Sunni extremism, and (6) ending the commercial boycott against Israel.

None of these actions will be easy to accomplish, but the relationship between Sunni countries and Israel cannot only be built on confronting Iran. **Israel should become a normal and accepted reality in the Middle East, otherwise no regional deal will have a chance to succeed.**

The new push led by President Trump offers hope and a new opportunity; however, it will have to be managed very cautiously and, overall, with innovative strategies.

Spotlight

Friends of Israel Initiative Raised Its Voice against FIFA's Anti-Israel Vote

The hijacking of international organizations in order to delegitimize Israel reached FIFA. On May 9 to 11, the FIFA Congress in Bahrain was supposed to decide its position on the contentious question of the Israel Football Association (IFA) teams playing in the settlements of the Area C of the West Bank based on the report elaborated by the FIFA Monitoring Committee Israel-Palestine, led by Tokyo Sewale. Punishment, sanctions, or even expulsion from FIFA, were on the table. The Palestinian Football Association's (PFA) also requested official recognition of the entitlements to all its rights as described in the FIFA Statutes.

Finally, **FIFA decided to remove the issue from its Congress agenda.**

Previously, the Friends of Israel Initiative (FOII) strongly objected to FIFA president, Mr. Gianni Infantino regarding these issues.

FOII's Board Members alerted Mr. Infantino on this misuse of FIFA and made it clear that to punish the Israeli Football Association is unfair and gets FIFA involved in a political fight.

In this regard, the Israeli football teams of the West Bank, under the Monitoring Committee Israel-Palestine watch, are located in Area C which, according to the Oslo Accords, has to remain under Israeli civil and military control until a final agreement is reached between Israelis and Palestinians. Area C is not under Palestinian Authority sovereignty, since final borders must be agreed between the two parties in direct and bilateral negotiations, as all international consensus about the peace process have established.

Nowadays, there is no final agreement including definitive borders yet. Therefore, the Israeli football teams which play in Area C do not violate the FIFA statutes that prohibit a member association from holding games in the territory of another member association without permission.

Furthermore, the PFA's request for official recognition of the entitlements to all its rights as described in the FIFA Statutes appeared to be in the same line of the assault regarding Israel's legitimacy in international organizations that we have been witnessing over the last years. The PFA, at this stage of the peace process and considering its last

actions, would only use the entitlements of its rights to isolate Israel in FIFA; hence FIFA could not allow itself to fall into this perversion of its goals.

As FOII alerted Mr. Infantino, **to allow diplomatic warfare through FIFA will not bring any positive outcome, not for the organization, football, Israel, or for the future of the Palestinians.** It would only poison the atmosphere between the two parties, who are undergoing a period of stagnation in the peace process. FOII also said to Mr. Infantino that, to take actions against Israel in favor of the Palestinian campaign in order to damage its legitimacy in international bodies will erode FIFA's prestige.

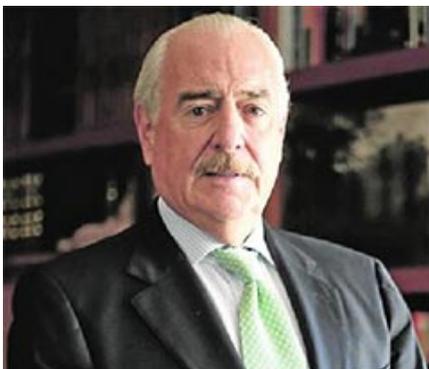
Hopefully, the FIFA Congress saw good reason to give up the possibility of imposing sanctions to the Israeli Football Association; the international campaign to assault and isolate Israel was defeated again.

As usual, **FOII is fighting in the frontlines against the delegitimation of the State of Israel.** Israel deserves to be equally treated in all international organizations and we will continue to fight for it.

FOII'S ACTIVITIES

Events and Activities

ANDRES PASTRANA, FORMER PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA, JOINS FRIENDS OF ISRAEL INITIATIVE



On May 5, Andrés Pastrana, former President of Colombia, joined the Friends of Israel Initiative as a Board Member.

Andrés Pastrana was president of the Republic of Colombia from 1998 to 2002. He is currently Honorary president of the Union of Latin American Parties (UPLA), and board member of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems and the Global Panel Foundation. He has also been president of the Conservative Party of Colombia. Prior to run for the presidency, he was mayor of Bogotá. After his mandate, he served as Colombian Ambassador in the U.S. Pastrana holds a Law Degree from Nuestra Señora del Rosario University and an International Affairs Fellowship from Harvard.

Andrés Pastrana is a wide-known voice against terrorism and intolerance and one of the brightest leaders of Latin America in the last decades. **Pastrana will be another non-Jewish head of government, along with José María Aznar, Lord David Trimble, Stephen Harper, Jon Howard and Luis Alberto Lacalle to be part of the Friends of Israel Initiative.**

THE WORLD VALUES NETWORK AWARDS A PRIZE TO FOII'S CHAIRMAN JOSÉ MARÍA AZNAR

FOII's Chairman José María Aznar was honored in the Fifth Annual Champions of Jewish Values International Award Gala for defending Israel in the world. Granting this high distinction was the World Values Network, an organization dedicated to disseminate universal Jewish values in politics, culture, and media, making the Jewish people a light unto the nations.

Aznar highlighted in his keynote speech that "Jewish values were the cradle of our Western civilization; Israel is today at the forefront of a civilizational struggle between civilized people and barbarians... That's why defending Israel is so important. It is vitally important." He also reaffirmed FOII's strong commitment to keep supporting Israel's right to exist in the international community and to keep promoting Israel's image as a dynamic, free, and prosperous country.

Aznar too declared that, **"I do believe Israel has been unfairly criticized and has been subjected to unacceptable treatment by many just because the Jewish people wants to have a State, in which they can live in peace under secure borders; just because the Jewish people want a better future for their children; just because they want a prosperous, dynamic, terrorism-free nation, in which they can live a normal life."**

This prestigious award constitutes an explicit recognition of the intense and important work that FOII has been carrying out since its foundation in 2010 and a clear sign of the high-level reach achieved by FOII during this period.

Op-eds

"Where Is the World's Outrage over Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul?", Colonel Richard Kemp, Major General James Molan, and Arsen Ostrovsky, Jerusalem Post, April 30. ([Read](#)).

“Puppet-State Lebanon: A Pawn for Ambitious Iran”, Major General Andrew James Molan, The Australian, April 24 ([Read](#))

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Follow FOII on social media to keep informed about our activities and about interesting feeds on Israel, the Middle East, and the West.



"Peace will come when the Arabs love their children more than they hate us."

Golda Meir

Help us now

Your contribution is all the more welcome now that the Friends of Israel Initiative is up and running and you can be rest assured that it will be put to effective use to further the cause.

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Dispatch n° 38. Year 7. June 2017. © Friends of Israel Initiative,

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