

France Advocates Peace in the Middle East

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius on June 21, 2015 at meetings in Jerusalem and Ramallah revealed plans to help revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace process that broke down in April 2014. The proposal would entail a United Nations Security Council resolution that would call for an agreement on a two-state solution on the basis of the armistice lines that existed before June 1967. If no successful agreement is reached within an 18-month period, the intention, apparently, is an international call for recognition of a Palestinian state.

Well-meaning though the French proposal is, the essential problem is that it obviates the process, advanced since 1967, of direct negotiations between the two parties.

A new book by the paleoanthropologist Ian Tattersall assays not simply the errors and fraud in the scientific community but even more the unwillingness of supposedly objective analysts to change their minds even in the face of compelling evidence that contradicts their own views. Partisan motives in science as in politics often influence supposedly objective conclusions. This problem is inherent in all political analysis but particularly so in the case of commentary on the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

The fundamental question is whether sincere negotiations are possible at this time, and whether the international community should be involved. Three issues immediately arise. The first overwhelming problem is the refusal of much of the Palestinian world to accept the existence and legitimacy of the State of Israel, whatever it calls itself.

Many Palestinian logos and TV broadcasts continue to show a

map of "Palestine" that includes in it the area of the State of Israel as well as areas in the West Bank and Gaza. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority, himself stated on April 8, 2015, "Palestine means the entire national land, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea." Either "Israel" is erased from the map or if Israel is mentioned it is "Occupied Palestine." Frequently accompanying these statements is an image of the Dome of the Rock with a text, "Jerusalem, we will not forsake a single grain of your soil."

The problem here is shown by at least one of the senior figures of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Bahr, one time Deputy Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council. His desire for peace was displayed by his preaching for the "annihilation of Jews and their supporters and the Americans and their supporters." Equally friendly, he announced at the 27th anniversary of the founding of Hamas that the organization was preparing 100,000 fighters to liberate Palestine and expel the last Zionist soldier from the land. In saying that the Israeli occupation must go, Bahr apparently forgot that it was the "occupied" who had started the war against Israel.

If not rejection of the very existence of Israel, only qualified acceptance comes from the highest Palestinian quarters. In June 2015, Saeb Erekat, the head Palestinian negotiator for more than two decades who never "negotiates," issued a statement calling for revoking any Palestinian recognition of the State of Israel until Israel recognizes a Palestinian state, as well as Palestinian sovereignty over east Jerusalem. Erekat did not qualify his urging for cancelling of all economic and security cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. The Palestinians, he said, should never sign any peace deal with Israel that recognizes it as a Jewish state.

The second issue is that the Palestinian authorities, including Fatah, have continued to glorify Palestinian terrorists. In April 2015, 14 Palestinian terrorists who

murdered more than 160 people were honored. The most well known was Khalil al-Wazir, more familiarly named Abu Jihad, the co-founder of Fatah and deputy to Yasser Arafat, who killed more than 125 Israelis. He was praised as a person who "Allah created just to confront the enemy (Israel)." He certainly confronted his enemy by heading the PLO's military wing that killed at least 125 Israeli civilians. He was responsible for organizing the Savoy Hotel operation in Tel Aviv in March 1975 that killed 11 people; the Coastal Road Massacre led by woman terrorist Dalal Mughrabi in March 1978 when 37 people were killed and 70 others injured in a hijacked bus; an attack on March 7, 1988 on a bus, the so-called Mothers' Bus, that killed three people in Dimona, and an attempt to capture the Israeli Ministry of Defense.

It is dispiriting that Abu Jihad was officially praised for his talent in persuading young people to die as martyrs and to be prepared to sacrifice. One wonders what the possibilities for peace can be when the Fatah Central Committee member Abbas Zaki issued a statement on April 19, 2015 that "this region needs pioneers on the path of brother Abu Jihad."

Abbas Zaki is not only the advocate of this sad future for Palestinians to become terrorists, but also falsely present arguments in favor of their cause. A particular one was his dependence on UN General Assembly resolution 3236 of November 22, 1974. Zaki states, "We have UN resolution 3236 that the Palestinian has the right to use any means of struggle, including armed struggle. That's an international resolution."

The trouble is that the resolution says the exact opposite.

The correct words are that the UNGA "recognizes the right of the Palestinian people to regain its rights by all means *in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations*." The Charter, of course, says that international disputes should be resolved by peaceful means.

Hamas is no angelic group. In a surprising move – because of

its constant criticism of Israeli actions – Amnesty International on May 26, 2015 published a report on the abduction, torture, and summary killing of Palestinians by Hamas forces during the conflict in the Gaza Strip in summer 2014. It indicates the extent to which the security forces of Hamas carried out horrific abuses, and spine-chilling war crimes. They executed at least 23 Palestinians and arrested and tortured dozens more. It was only the presence of journalists and photographers that made Hamas stop the brutalities.

The casualties came from members of Fatah or those said to be cooperating with Israel. Like the Mafia, Hamas settled scores with its rivals. With utter ruthlessness, Hamas used part of the al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City to interrogate and torture suspects, while other parts of the hospital continued to function as a medical center.

The third issue is the nature of the unknown second party in any negotiating process. On June 17, 2015 the so-called Palestinian unity government headed by Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah resigned because it was impossible to heal the differences between the two feuding groups, Fatah and Hamas. The “government” found it could not operate in the Gaza Strip. The non-negotiator Erekat naively argued that Hamas and Islamic Jihad should join the executive committee of the PLO.

The 26th Arab League Summit on March 28, 2015 witnessed a fantasy exchange of belligerent statements. Mahmoud Abbas, now in the 11th year of his four-year term as president of the Palestinian Authority, called for an Arab military intervention, a joint Arab force, to intervene against Hamas in Gaza. In response, Hamas stated that Abbas had lost his legal legitimacy and had no mandate to take any decisions or make any declarations that “depart from the national consensus or national constants.”

Foreign Minister Fabius stated without comment that Abbas had

told him that a new Palestinian unity government would include only officials who recognize the State of Israel and who renounce the use of terror. Fabius is aware that he has a long way to go to overcome the uncompromising Hamas commitment to violence, and the refusal of the organization to live together in dignity, security, and peace with the State of Israel.

The search for peace must continue, but Fabius must first find out the correct Palestinians telephone number to call in order for them to meet Israelis at the negotiating table.

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