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## Interview: Faisal Hussein

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# The fate of the Mideast peace process is now in America's hands

*Faisal Hussein has been a key figure in the launching of the peace process in the Middle East. He led a Palestinian delegation to meet with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker III to lay the groundwork for the peace talks between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel, and was then named to head the Palestinian team to the Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid, Spain. Mr. Hussein is now the Palestinian Authority minister in charge of Jerusalem. He was interviewed by David Kilber in Los Angeles on May 15.*

**EIR:** Mr. Hussein, can you tell us of your current role and responsibilities in the Palestinian Authority?

**Hussein:** I am a member of the Executive Committee of the PLO, I was elected at the last PNC [Palestinian National Congress], and I have been the Palestinian Authority minister in charge of Jerusalem. Second, I am a member of the Central Committee of Fatah.

**EIR:** I believe you played a major role in the Oslo agreements.

**Hussein:** No, actually, I played a role before that. I headed negotiations with [then-Secretary of State] Mr. Baker for the preparations for the meeting, then I became the head of the Palestinian team for the peace process in Washington. Along with that, maybe, I played a part in making the link between Israeli negotiators in Oslo and the Palestinian negotiators in Oslo, without knowing that we were taking the line which would lead to the agreement. So we started, and were surprised after that to see that there were some fruits from it. . . .

**EIR:** What are you doing on this tour in the United States? What do you hope to achieve?

**Hussein:** Actually this visit is to Canada and the U.S., and I have a series of official meetings in Canada on the peace process and the responsibilities of Canada on the refugee problem, and about the role of Canada in Jerusalem. Here in the United States, it is mainly meetings with Palestinian, Arab, and Jewish organizations.

**EIR:** I heard that you met with the American Jewish Federa-

tion in Los Angeles.

**Hussein:** Yes, I met with the American Jewish Federation. Tonight I have a meeting with the Arab community here, and then tomorrow there will be another meeting, and then I am going to Dallas for the same purpose, maybe there I will have some meetings, also, with Americans. . . . And then, in Washington, I have a meeting with the State Department. All these meetings are either to mobilize people for pushing the peace process forward, or to fineline the governments, especially the United States, to take more courageous positions on important issues, especially on Jerusalem.

**EIR:** The proposal made by the United States, for a 13% further Israeli withdrawal, rejected by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but accepted by Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, is far short of what you expected from the Oslo Accords. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright mentioned, in an interview with the London *Financial Times* last week, that the Palestinians, she thought, had assumed that they would get more territory than the Israelis ever thought. Can you explain, actually, what the agreement was, in Oslo, on the Israeli withdrawals? How much territory was supposed to go to you?

**Hussein:** Again, the agreement was like this: In the beginning, we will have all the areas of Gaza, plus Jericho. And then, after that, there will be three redeployments . . . making a total of 90%. That is, 90%, because the areas the Israelis are not going to withdraw from are Jerusalem, the settlement borders and locations, and the military locations. Under any kind of assessment, this will not be more than 10%, leaving us with 90%.

**EIR:** How do you evaluate the U.S. position after Netanyahu's rejection of Albright's ultimatum? Do you think that the United States is supporting the Palestinian view more concretely now?

**Hussein:** What I can say, only, is that now the ball is in the American court. It is as simple as that. We accepted; the Israelis refused. First, are they going to be responsible for the peace process, and, if yes, are they willing to work to implement this agreement? And, if there is a problem

between the Palestinians and the Israelis, they will ask for arbitration.

Now, the Israelis are refusing the American suggestion, which was extremely more toward the Israeli suggestion, and not ours. Netanyahu suggested 9% [withdrawal] and the Americans suggested 13%, as opposed to 30%. So, we would like to know, in the end, who is the boss? Who is the boss in the Middle East? Is it Netanyahu, or Clinton?

**EIR:** It's becoming a real showdown, with Hillary Clinton supporting an independent Palestinian state.

**Husseini:** Yes, and we had another move, we hope that it is really the start of something. Clinton, for the first time, addressed an Arab conference in Washington. So, these two things, and the refusal by the Israelis of the American suggestion, puts the ball completely in the American court.

**EIR:** Could you explain to our readers why the Israelis have blocked important infrastructure projects, like the Gaza airport and seaport?

**Husseini:** Simply, when we went into this peace process with the Israeli partners, there were three consequences. The first one, that we are not agreeing with the Israelis on the business of historical rights. There are no more historical rights. It gets down to solving the problem with them in a certain way, which does not depend upon full justice and historical rights.

The second precedent is that their zero-sum game is over. Not everything that the Israelis are to gain, do we lose, and vice versa.

The third matter, which is ruining our relations and our negotiations, is Netanyahu's logic of power, instead of power of logic. He believes that everything we are going to gain, they are going to lose. And, because he believes that any strength of the Palestinians can threaten Israel, coming from the zero-sum game [standpoint], he's against any kind of airport, or any kind of port—even the preparation of the port. [This development] means we will find more work for our workers. We will have more investors. We will build our infrastructure.

**EIR:** How do you judge the subjective state of the Palestinian population in Gaza and the West Bank? Do you think people have any hope that the peace process can be restarted?

**Husseini:** You know that, unfortunately, the situation is like this: You know the governments can sign peace agreements, but if people are not seeing, or feeling, the fruits of the peace, they will not work for peace. And, if the peace is bringing them more difficulties, they will start to abort the peace process. Now, people are asking us, what is this peace bringing us?

**EIR:** What is the economic situation?

**Husseini:** First of all, the Israelis split our markets into two

markets: a small market in Gaza, and another in Jerusalem. Now, no investors are going to put money into such small markets. This is the first thing. The second problem is that the Israelis are isolating these two markets from the external world, making problems for us to export or import goods.

**EIR:** There has been very little credit forthcoming from the World Bank or International Monetary Fund.

**Husseini:** Yes. . . . They are not allowing it to us.

**EIR:** What, if anything, do you think can break the deadlock? Do you think pressure from Clinton would suffice, to force Netanyahu to implement the interim accords?

**Husseini:** Pressure from the United States will encourage the world to adopt the same method, and that will make the Israeli people feel that they might suffer if they don't do something.

**EIR:** What kind of pressure do you think would be effective?

**Husseini:** I believe that, first, you start by taking a clear position on this matter, and supporting the Palestinian position; and, second, to start putting on pressure to stop the delay in implementing the agreements. And, also, to open [up the issue with] the Israelis on the matter of nuclear weapons in Israel. Everyone is angry about India. I would like to understand why no one is talking about Israel. I would like someone to answer this: What are they [the Israelis] doing?

**EIR:** Are you familiar with Lyndon LaRouche's proposals for an Oasis Plan, that is, large-scale infrastructure development, for the region? We were confident in 1993 that if rapid economic development took place, the basis would be laid, in rapidly improving living standards for the Palestinian people, for an improvement in relations between Israelis and Palestinians. This was also our view of the way the Jordanian-Israeli peace would have to work. I would like to know what you think of that. I know it has been very disappointing, in terms of the credit. President Arafat has called for large-scale credit infusion, for tens of billions of dollars for development. Very little has come through, most of it for services, for police, and schools, and so forth.

**Husseini:** I believe I would like to see, even more than that, I would like to see Middle East cooperation to start with Palestine, Israel, Jordan, and Egypt, and after that, to spread to other places. I believe that not having any cooperation, the Middle East will not be able to open the next century in a dignified manner.

[Mr. Husseini's office responded, after the interview, from Jerusalem, after having a chance to look over LaRouche's Oasis Plan, with the following note: "Mr. LaRouche's proposals are ambitious and worth careful consideration. We do not disagree on the concept, but very much believe that in order to put it into action, we need large support from the international community and the U.S."]