

# In Geneva, ME Peace Put On International Agenda

by Dean Andromidas

Ceremonies held in Geneva Dec. 1, and attended by over 700 political leaders, intellectuals, and other notables from Israel, the Palestinian National Authority, and all over the world, placed the new Geneva Accord for Middle East peace on the international agenda of nations. The Accord is a virtual draft peace treaty to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through the establishment of a State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel. Drafted in long negotiations by two teams led by former Israeli justice minister Yossi Beilin and former Palestinian culture and information minister Yasser Abed Rabbo, the Accord promises to become a Palestinian-Israeli effort backed by the international community, outflanking the policies of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government and the Bush Administration now under the control of Vice President Cheney's neo-conservative faction. Support for this Israeli-Palestinian commitment to fight for peace, was expressed by current and former heads of state and international organizations.

In recognition of the key role played by the Swiss government in sponsoring the effort, the master of ceremonies for the Geneva conference, American actor Richard Dreyfuss, introduced as the first speakers: the Swiss foreign minister Micheline Calmy-Rey, Geneva's mayor Christian Ferrazino, and the President of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, Laurent Moutinot. They were followed by former American President Jimmy Carter, who gave the real keynote speech in the ceremony.

## **Carter: Restore Unbiased American Leadership**

In a very hard-hitting speech, Carter said things only an American President can say. He began by fully endorsing the Accord, declaring it "offers the crucial and unavoidable elements of a permanent peace in the Holy Land. . . . The alternative is sustained and permanent violence." Carter stressed that the Geneva Accord is completely compatible with the Road Map fashioned by the United States, European Union, United Nations, and Russia; he declared that the Accord overcomes the "fatal flaw" of the Road Map's step-by-step approach. Pointing to the Road Map's failure thus far, Carter said, "Its first phase has been substantially rejected, as the Israeli government has ignored mild objections from the Bush Administration and continued to colonize Gaza and the far reaches of the West Bank, and build an enormous barrier

wall on Palestinian land." This has led to the hardening of the Palestinians' demands, "continued violent attacks by Palestinian terrorist groups, and increasingly harsh reprisals from Israel."

Carter reported, "When the Institute headed by James Baker, Secretary of State to George Bush, Sr., presented these basic premises [of the accords] in an opinion poll, 53.3% of Israelis and 55.6% of the Palestinians approved. The people support a settlement. Political leaders are the obstacles to peace." Pointing to the fact that the "balanced mediation of the United States" has played a sustaining role in peace efforts for over 25 years, he blasted the Bush Administration: "The present Administration in Washington has been invariably supportive of Israel, and the well-being and suffering of the Palestinian people have been ignored or relegated to secondary importance. Without a restoration of strong and unbiased American influence, Israeli and Palestinian extremists will prevail in their opposition to this or any other peace initiative."

Stating the American interest in solving the conflict, Carter declared, "There is no doubt that the lack of real effort to resolve the Palestinian issue is a primary source of anti-American sentiment throughout the Middle East and a major incentive for terrorist activity."

None of the other speakers directly criticized the Bush Administration. Although President Bill Clinton sent a message endorsing the Geneva Accord, his statement did not have even a hint of criticism of the White House.

Carter's speech reflected the effect of the anti-Cheney mobilization that Lyndon LaRouche has been conducting for many months, in emboldening key figures in the otherwise hopeless Democratic Party. Only a week before the Geneva event, Carter's former secretary of state, Warren Christopher, published an op-ed in the *Washington Post* criticizing the Bush Administration, but more importantly, Democratic Party Presidential candidates. In his Geneva speech, Carter came out in full support for the Saudi peace initiative known as the Abdullah Plan, and directly challenged the policies of the Sharon government: "With massive financial and political incentives from the Israeli government over the past decade, the number of Israeli settlements has skyrocketed. . . . No matter what leaders Palestinians might choose, no matter how fervent American interests might be, or how great the hatred and bloodshed might become, there is one basic choice for Israelis: Do you want peace with your neighbors, or do you want to retain settlements throughout the occupied territories?" And Carter called on the Palestinians "to renounce violence against Israeli citizens in exchange for the commitments of this Geneva initiative."

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat sent a letter of support which was read at the Geneva ceremony, declaring the Accord "a brave initiative that opens the door to peace" and called upon Israeli Prime Minister Sharon to show his support for the Geneva plan. Arafat's security advisor, Jibril Rajoub, attended the ceremony, along with Palestinian Authority Minis-



*Israeli parliamentarians Avraham Burg (left) and Collette Avital, and Bethlehem Mayor Zuheis Al-Manassial (right)—here at the dias at the Dec. 1 Peace Accord ceremony in Geneva—make up one group of leaders coming to the United States to mobilize support for this two-state solution which has been negotiated.*

ters Hisham Abdel Razek and Kadoura Fares. Rajoub told the gathering: “My presence here sends a clear message from Arafat to the Israeli right, that the only solution is two states for two peoples. . . . Since [Yitzhak] Rabin, there has not been a leader in Israel who is capable of taking brave decisions and who has respect for the Palestinian people.”

By contrast, Sharon’s response was demonstrated in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, where the renewal of the targeted assassination policy resulted in the deaths of four Palestinian militants.

### **‘Don’t Manage the War: End It’**

Carter’s presentation was followed by statements of support from current and former heads of state (see box), including a very strong message read on behalf of French President Jacques Chirac, who promised to do everything in his power to revive the Road Map, for a all but dead for the last six months. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak sent a very significant message of support, read out by his personal advisor Osama Al-Baz. King Hassan VI of Morocco’s letter was read out by his close advisor Andre Azulay, also one of the leaders of the Moroccan Jewish community. Both have played a key role in efforts towards peace.

European Union (EU) President Romano Prodi called upon the principal drafters of the Accord to come to Brussels as soon as possible to meet with the EU. British Prime Minister Tony Blair sent a letter of support, read out by Lord Michael Levy, who often acts as Blair’s personal envoy to the Middle East.

In addressing the ceremony, the Geneva Initiative’s Israeli negotiator, Yossi Beilin, declared, “This is not a celebration of an achievement . . . [the] document is virtual, but all

of us are real. . . . That’s why we are committing ourselves to fight for peace, despite the harsh opposition both of us face, and despite the threat to our lives.”

This threat is very real; only days before the event, gunmen fired at the house of Beilin’s Palestinian partner, Yasser Abed Rabbo. Addressing the international community Beilin said, “Don’t try to help us manage the conflict. Help us end it.” He declared that the Accord was a key “option to end the vicious cycle of violence.” Beilin ended his statement with a dedication to “a soldier of peace, who was killed eight years ago. My strong feeling is that had he lived, we would have had a permanent peace agreement by the original date: May 1999. We are committed not only to remembering Yitzhak Rabin, but to fulfilling his legacy. . . . This is my strong commitment and my promise to you, Yitzhak Rabin.”

Yasser Abed Rabbo gave a hard-hitting speech warning that forces were at work to prevent any chance for a peace settlement, and that this was reflected in Sharon’s construction of his “Berlin Wall” on the West Bank. Speaking of the brutal effect the wall is already having on the Palestinian people, he spoke of “farmers who have seen their land and trees sacrificed on the altar of the separation wall. . . . A wall is being built through the heart of Palestinian land to ensure that the occupation will continue. They hope that the separation wall and the annexation of Palestinian land will be the solution in the place of a peace agreement. But by doing this, Israel will become an apartheid state. This is an alternative we will never accept.”

### **Fight for Peace Is On**

Both the Palestinian and Israeli teams set before themselves the task of going back to their people to fight for the

## World Leaders Declare Support

Former heads of state, government ministers, and other notable figures demonstrated their support for the Geneva Accord.

Poland's former President Lech Walesa personally addressed the ceremony, and offered the lesson of how his own Solidarity Movement was able to prevail through solidarity and nonviolence. John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party of Northern Ireland and one of the architects of the Good Friday Agreement there, also spoke. He offered not only the lessons of his own struggle in Northern Ireland, but the example of how the European Union enabled Europe to overcome the legacy of two world wars and build a powerful institution for economic development. Hume also cited the ideas of the United States' Founding Fathers, and President Abraham Lincoln.

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan and the European Union's foreign policy chief Javier Solana both sent messages of support to the event. Solana called the Accord "a powerful example of how civil society efforts can . . . show Israelis and Palestinians alike that there are partners for peace on the other side."

Former U.S. President Bill Clinton and former Czech President Vaclav Havel had messages read out at the ceremony. Former South African President Nelson Mandela

made a video presentation of his endorsement, which was shown.

The former Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, and former Russian Ambassador to the UN and Washington, delivered a message of support on behalf of the Club of Monaco. The latter is a group of close to 50 former heads of state, government ministers, diplomats, academics, and journalists formed in March 2002 to promote peace and stability throughout the Mediterranean. Both Yossi Beilin and Yasser Abed Rabbo are members, and received support from it for their efforts in drafting the Accord. Members include Prince Albert of Monaco; former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali; Claude Cheysson, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of France; Prince Hassan of Jordan; Constantin Mitsotakis, former Prime Minister of Greece; Michel Rocard, former Prime Minister of France; and Mariou Soares, former President of Portugal.

Another statement of support was signed by 58 global leaders, initiated by the International Crisis Group based in Washington and Brussels, whose signatories represent a wide range of political views. Among the signers are Carl Bildt, former Prime Minister of Sweden; Lord Carrington, former Foreign and Defence Secretary of Great Britain and former NATO Secretary General; Hans-Dietrich Genscher, former Foreign Minister of Germany; Mikhail Gorbachov, former President of the Soviet Union; F.W. de Klerk, former President of South Africa; and former Philippines President Fidel Ramos.

implementation of the Accord. Copies of the Accord have been mailed to every household in Israel and the Palestinian National Authority, and it has already had an effect. A new poll published by the daily *Ha'aretz* found that 31.2% of Israelis support the Accord—including 13% of voters for Sharon's own Likud—with 37.7% opposed; but another 20% said they have not made up their mind. Beilin remarked, "If the *Ha'aretz* poll correctly reflects public opinion, then we are going in the right direction. If the public significantly supports the Geneva Accord, I think that the government, in the end, will have to listen," he stated in an interview given to Israel Army Radio.

Those opposed to the agreement, on both sides, have also begun to mobilize. In Israel, they are led by the Sharon government itself; Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, a crony of Sharon, denounced the intention of U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell even to meet with Beilin and Abed Rabbo and others involved in drafting the accord.

On the Palestinian side, opposition focuses most on the refugee question and the right of return (see box on the Accord's provisions). Demonstrations were held against the ac-

cords on Dec. 2 in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip.

At a press conference on Dec. 2, participants in the drafting—including Labor Party Knesset Members Avraham Burg and Collette Avital, and Palestinian governor of Bethlehem Zuheir Al-Manassrah—spoke of their plans to take the Accord to their respective peoples. A massive information campaign is planned, with meetings and conferences throughout Israel and the Territories, aimed at pressure on the government. It is not out of the question that the Sharon government could collapse, since it currently is facing not only a security crisis, but the worst economic crisis since Israel's 1948 founding.

Nonetheless, the key actors realize that if U.S. policy does not change, the entire effort could fail. To a question by *EIR* on the role of the Bush Administration, Labor Party Knesset member Collette Avital replied that "without question" it is important to get a change in U.S. policy, and to impact American public opinion, especially in the Jewish community. All three at the press conference were going to America to mobilize support. As of Dec. 3, Beilin and Abed Rabbo were al-

ready in the United States, where they were scheduled to meet Secretary of State Colin Powell. Nonetheless, the White House continues to be mute on the question; it is clear that as long as Cheney and his neo-cons are there, it will be an uphill climb to get the Accord adopted.

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## Documentation

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### Main Points of Geneva Accord

The main purpose of the Accord is to demonstrate to the Israeli and Palestinian public that there is an alternative to the policies of the government of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. The full text is available on the website of the Palestinian media center, [www.palestine-pmc.com](http://www.palestine-pmc.com), or the site of the Accord's Israeli initiators, [www.heskem.org.il](http://www.heskem.org.il). Its approach is like that of the Treaty of Westphalia, signed in 1648, which finally ended the Thirty Years' War, the religious war that devastated central Europe. This is asserted in the Geneva Accord's preamble:

"Reaffirming their determination to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict, and to live in peaceful coexistence, mutual dignity, and security based on a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace and achieving historic reconciliation;

"Recognizing that peace requires the transition from the logic of war and confrontation to the logic of peace and cooperation, and that acts and words characteristic of the state of war are neither appropriate nor acceptable in the era of peace;

"Affirming their deep belief that the logic of peace requires compromise, and that the only viable solution is a two-state solution based on United Nations Security Councils Resolutions 242 and 338";

Recognizing "the right of the Jewish people to statehood and the recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to statehood, without prejudice to the equal rights of the Parties' respective citizens."

The **first five articles** deal with technical aspects of the establishment of two sovereign states based on Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, with some exchanges of territory; and with the technicalities of implementing all aspects of a treaty, including deployment of a multinational force.

**Article 6** deals with Jerusalem and its establishment as the capital of the two states. This is considered the major concession by the Israeli side, which always held that Jerusalem would be the "undivided capital of Israel" and would hold sovereignty over the Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount. In this regard, East Jerusalem will become the capital of the Palestinian state, with its Jewish neighborhoods coming under Israeli sovereignty. Thus, several Jewish suburbs of Jerusalem, such as Ma'aleh Adumin and Gush Etzion, will be-

come part of Israel, though built on the territory of the West Bank. The Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount will be under Palestinian sovereignty, but an international force will ensure freedom of access for all faiths. However, Jewish prayer will continue to be forbidden there. The Western Wall will remain under Israeli sovereignty. The Holy Basin will be under international supervision.

This part of the accord is unique, in that it details how Jerusalem's old city and the various Jewish and Palestinian neighborhoods will be managed without physically dividing the city.

**Article 7** deals with Palestinian refugees and the "right of return." This is one of the most sensitive issues for Palestinians, who share the dream of returning to old family homes lost in what is now the State of Israel. The Article's solution has been interpreted as the concession of the right of return by the Palestinians. Though not explicitly stated in the document, it is juridically clear, because the Palestinians agree that anyone who requests to return to Israel must receive official approval from the State of Israel. The article calls for the comprehensive solution of the refugee question as "necessary for achieving a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace between them." In conformity with the relevant UN resolutions, all refugees, wherever their current residence—including those living in refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria—will have the right to return to the State of Palestine. An international commission will be established to oversee the process, which would include the option of residence in third countries and a package of economic compensation or aid.

Although Israel would not be required to accept Palestinian refugees' applications, it would have to accept as many refugees as any third country; e.g., France, Canada, or the United States.

**Articles 4 and 5** deal with settlements, and clearly call for the evacuation of those settlements that lie within the agreed borders of the State of Palestine. In exchange for territory where several large settlement blocks are located, Israel will cede equal territory to the Palestinian state. In this arrangement, Ariel, Efrat, and Har Homa—large settlements deep in the West Bank—will be part of the Palestinian state.

**The 1993 Oslo Accords** had Annexes defining economic development as crucial to the success of a peace agreement, including the establishment of joint and regional economic projects. The Accord does not have such annexes; nonetheless, **Article 8** calls for the establishment of an "Israeli-Palestinian Cooperation Committee," laying the foundation for a broad range of economic and social cooperation projects. Yossi Beilin, recognizing the importance of the Oslo economic Annexes, told *EIR* that agreements defining economic cooperation and development are being discussed.

Still to be detailed are **Article 12**, which deals with water; **Article 13** on economic relations; and **Article 14** on legal cooperation.