

EIRFeature

Breakthroughs at Arab Summit Confront Israel and the U.S.

by Hussein Al-Nadeem

Putting gossip and Arab mass media's "harem" behavior aside, one should emphasize that the Arab Summit held in Beirut, Lebanon on March 27-28 took actions critical for the Arab nations and the Middle East in general. Although 12 of the 22 nations were not represented by their heads of state, this summit was able to pass two historic changes in the Arab nations' relationship with Israel. Both pose challenges for the policies of the United States, and for the Mideast war policy of the Sharon government; the Arab Summit actions were taken at a critical moment for the very survival of Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority.

First, the Arab states offered Israel a comprehensive peace initiative accepted by all Arab countries. Second, the Arab nations settled some old scores among themselves, especially the situation between Iraq and Kuwait. The representatives of Iraq and Kuwait signed written commitments to cooperate in settling all differences that have emerged since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the ensuing Gulf War in 1991.

However, this does not mean that the region is immediately closer to peace. The adoption of what had been known as the "Abdullah Plan," and the surprising Kuwait-Iraq agreement, may well be met by an escalation by the war-minded Israeli leadership and the Clash of Civilizations factions in Washington. Israel invaded cities of the West Bank the day after the summit concluded. The immediate reaction to the Arab Summit actions by Washington and Tel Aviv, was denial. Even the reporters at State Department spokesman Richard Boucher's March 28 press briefing, accused him of denying that there has been a substantial break by the Arab nations with U.S. policy on Iraq.

The 'Arab Peace Initiative'

As expected, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz made his peace offer to the Israelis public, in his speech on March 27 following the opening remarks by the summit's host, President Emad Lahoud of Lebanon. Prince Abdullah in-



The March 27-28 Arab League Summit in Beirut took place under virtual war conditions, and was severely shaken, but then pulled together two critical agreements which challenge the Clash of Civilizations forces. Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal briefs the press on March 28, with Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa (left) and Lebanese Foreign Minister Mahmoud Hammud (center).

voked the main principle of peace the Arabs had accepted in earlier occasions, which is “land for peace.” Addressing the Arab leaders, Prince Abdullah said: “It is clear in our minds, and in the minds of our brethren in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, that the only acceptable objective of the peace process is the full Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with al-Quds al-Shareef (East Jerusalem) as its capital, and the return of refugees.”

Prince Abdullah then “directly address[ed] the Israeli people, to say to them that the use of violence, for more than 50 years, has only resulted in more violence and destruction, and that the Israeli people are as far as they have ever been from security and peace, notwithstanding military superiority and despite efforts to subdue and oppress. . . . I would further say to the Israeli people that if their government abandons the policy of force and oppression and embraces true peace, we will not hesitate to accept the right of the Israeli people to live in security with the people of the region. . . . Only within the context of true peace can normal relations flourish between the people of the region and allow the region to pursue development rather than war and destruction.”

The Crown Prince urged the member-states of the Arab League to “put forward a clear and unanimous initiative addressed to the United Nations Security Council based on two basic issues: normal relations and security for Israel, in exchange for full withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, recognition of an independent Palestinian state with al-Quds

al-Shareef (East Jerusalem) as its capital, and the return of refugees.”

The initiative proposed was actually then drafted by a committee consisting of the “frontline states”—Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt in addition to Saudi Arabia and Morocco, the Chairman of the Jerusalem Committee. A final draft was presented to the final session on March 28, called the “Arab Peace Initiative” (see box), and ratified by all Arab states.

The initiative has two objectives. In the short term, it may be an offer to which Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, given his policies, cannot say “yes.” It is intended to expose Sharon’s unwillingness to opt for peace, and by that means contribute to his ousting. On the long term, this initiative will become a complete package for comprehensive peace between Israel and the Arab nations, whose parts cannot be divided and negotiated separately. It also implies that future negotiations could be conducted by the Arab states as a group with Israeli representatives; thus, that Arafat would not again be cornered at a Camp David, squeezed between a U.S. President and an Israeli Prime Minister trying to extract agreements from him on the most sensitive issues.

Sabotage Over Arafat’s Trip

Sharon’s desperate Israeli government tried to sabotage this summit by preventing the “bridegroom,” Palestinian Authority President Arafat, from attending the “wedding” in Beirut. This was done by imposing humiliating conditions on

him, such as getting personal permission from Sharon himself, and letting Sharon censor the content of the speech to be delivered by Arafat. The real problem, however, was not Sharon. It was the Bush Administration's unwillingness to put pressure on Sharon and force him to give all the assurances necessary for Arafat's safe round trip.

This prompted a serious reaction from the one Arab nation which is the leading U.S. ally and has a peace agreement with Israel—Egypt. According to the Egyptian State Information Service, President Hosni Mubarak advised the Palestinian President not to go to the summit; Mubarak, as well, did not go himself. He told an interviewer on March 27 that his advice to Yasser Arafat had actually saved the summit. "The Arab leaders would have been put in an intolerable fix had Arafat gone to Beirut and been denied access back to the Palestinian

territories, especially as the Arabs have no party to resort to in order to convince Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to allow Arafat back," Mubarak said.

Mubarak stayed away not only in solidarity with Arafat, but as a protest against the U.S. Administration's lack of interest in facilitating Arafat's participation in a summit which could bring about historic changes toward peace with Israel. Mubarak's protest action was followed by a last-minute decision by Jordan's King Abdullah also not to attend.

"The conditions set by the Israelis have turned the whole matter into a means to blackmail the Palestinian Authority and people," Mubarak said. "They do not want to implement [the] Tenet plans, for they keep making remarks to change them, and also to change [the] Mitchell recommendations, and then they come out with Zinni's paper, and later on they

Arab Summit Endorses Abdullah Peace Plan

The following resolution, entitled "The Arab Peace Initiative," was passed by the Council of Arab States during its session on March 27-28, 2002.

The Council of Arab States at the Summit Level at its Fourteenth Ordinary Session,

Reaffirming the resolution taken in June 1996 at the Cairo Extraordinary Arab Summit, that a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East is the strategic option of the Arab countries, to be achieved in accordance with international legality, and which would require a comparable commitment on the part of the Israeli government,

Having listened to the statement made by His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in which His Highness presented his initiative calling for full Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied since June 1967, in implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, reaffirmed by the Madrid Conference of 1991 and the land-for-peace principle, and Israel's acceptance of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, in return for the establishment of normal relations in the context of a comprehensive peace with Israel,

Emanating from the conviction of the Arab countries that a military solution to the conflict will not achieve peace or provide security for the parties, the Council:

1. Requests Israel to reconsider its policies and declare that a just peace is its strategic option as well.
2. Further calls upon Israel to affirm:
 - I. Full Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occu-

ried since 1967, including the Syrian Golan Heights, to the June 4, 1967 lines, as well as the remaining occupied Lebanese territories in the south of Lebanon.

II. Achievement of a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194.

III. The acceptance of the establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian territories occupied since June 4, 1967 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

3. Consequently, the Arab countries affirm the following:

I. Consider the Arab-Israeli conflict ended, and enter into a peace agreement with Israel, and provide security for all the states of the region.

II. Establish normal relations with Israel in the context of this comprehensive peace.

4. Assures the rejection of all forms of Palestinian repatriation that conflict with the special circumstances of the Arab host countries.

5. Calls upon the government of Israel and all Israelis to accept this initiative in order to safeguard the prospects for peace and stop the further shedding of blood, enabling the Arab countries and Israel to live in peace and good neighborliness and provide future generations with security, stability, and prosperity.

6. Invites the international community and all countries and organizations to support this initiative.

7. Requests the chairman of the summit to form a special committee composed of some of its concerned member states and the secretary general of the League of Arab States to pursue the necessary contacts to gain support for this initiative at all levels, particularly from the United Nations, the Security Council, the United States of America, the Russian Federation, the Muslim states, and the European Union.

demand that Arafat inform them of the contents of the speech that he was supposed to give before the summit, had he been allowed to go. There is no humiliation more than that; I felt dismay and anger to see an Arab leader being treated in such a way. If Sharon thinks that putting more pressures on Arafat would make him respond to the Israeli demands or lay off, . . . he is just fueling the hatred in the people's hearts."

Arafat was represented at the summit by Palestine Liberation Organization Foreign Minister Farouk Kaddoumi. However, under circumstances that remain mysterious, the chairman and host of the conference, President Lahoud, blocked Arafat's live address to the Arab leaders via satellite. This prompted the Palestinian delegation to withdraw. Other delegations decreased their representation at the summit, and for a moment the summit seemed to have collapsed.

However, the Arab leaders managed, overnight, to bridge all the differences, and emerged united the next day. This reflects the existence of a pre-established common agreement, to pass the resolutions necessary to meet the grave threats the region is expecting.

The Iraq-Kuwait Settlement

The other major breakthrough was the surprising attitude of conciliation among Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. In the past few months, the Iraqi leadership has made serious diplomatic moves to regain confidence with the other Arab states, especially in the Persian Gulf. The Secretary General of the Arab League Organization, Amr Mousa, visited Iraq earlier this year and was asked by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to convey specific initiatives for reconciliation with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The Saudi leadership welcomed the proposals, but Kuwait continued to claim that it could never trust the Iraqi leadership again.

The most important sign of a shift in the Arab mood toward Iraq, and toward American policy on Iraq, was the response to U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney's mid-March tour in the region. Every Arab leader Cheney met, including Saudi Arabia's King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah, and even the Kuwaiti leaders, informed him that they rejected any military action against Iraq, and that Saudi Arabia will not provide any basing. (British press reports at the end of March claimed that the United States would shift its staging buildup to Qatar, instead.)

At the Arab Summit, Iraqi Vice President Ezzat Ibrahim responded: It was announced on March 28 that Iraq and Kuwait reached and signed an agreement on recognizing each other's sovereignty, borders, and the necessity of preserving their national security and territorial integrity. Iraq has also reportedly pledged not to repeat the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait. This agreement was negotiated by the governments of Qatar and Oman.

Notably, the Iraqi delegation did not oppose the Saudi peace initiative with Israel, a major shift, and television coverage showed Crown Prince Abdullah embracing Iraqi Vice President Ibrahim.

In the final statement of the summit, this agreement between Iraq and Kuwait was referenced and welcomed by all Arab states: "The Council welcomes the assurances by the Republic of Iraq that it will respect the independence, sovereignty, and security of the state of Kuwait and safeguard its territorial integrity. Within the same framework, the leaders emphasize the importance of suspending media campaigns and negative statements to create a positive atmosphere. . . . The Council calls for respecting Iraq's independence, sovereignty, security, territorial integrity, and regional safety. The Council calls on Iraq to cooperate in seeking a . . . definitive solution to the issue of the Kuwaiti prisoners and detainees and returning [Kuwaiti] properties. The Council also calls on Kuwait to cooperate with what Iraq offers with respect to its nationals who are reported as missing through the International Committee of the Red Cross. . . . The Council calls for lifting the sanctions on Iraq and ending the tribulation of the fraternal Iraqi people. The Council rejects threats of aggression against some Arab states, particularly Iraq, and reiterates categorical rejection of attacking Iraq."

This, and Iraq's readiness to reopen the dialogue with the United Nations on accepting international inspectors for "weapons of mass destruction" back in Iraq, will pose a major obstacle for the Anglo-American plans for launching a major military offensive against Iraq. *EIR* had warned the Arab leaders in an open memorandum to the summit, which was widely circulated in the Arab world and in the press, that this would create a major "public relations" crisis between the United States and the rest of the world; but that it does not mean the "utopian" military factions inside the U.S. power structures would be thwarted from their Clash of Civilizations war on Iraq. The only solution, as the *EIR* memo stressed, would be to tell the truth and expose the connections of those behind the Sept. 11th attacks, to the Brzezinski-Kissinger-Huntington "new Roman Empire" faction in the United States and Britain.

This fundamental responsibility for the war crisis was not addressed by the Arab leaders, who left that issue to fate. The other major matter they did not address, is the question of establishing a new, just world financial and economic system, proposed by U.S. Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche as the main requirement for world peace. The Arab states were only interested in the pan-Arab, and inter-Arab economic and trade developments, without referring to the real economic-financial crisis engulfing the world today. Even within that limited framework, the Arab leaders did not address the real economic issues—large-scale economic infrastructure and water projects, including nuclear-powered water desalination for the region.

With the political and ideological breakthroughs achieved at the Lebanon summit, the Middle East and the world do not seem closer to peace. The problem does not lie with the Arab leaders themselves—except by crucial omissions—but with an insane group of "universal fascists" in the United States, Britain, and Israel.