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## Jerusalem in the Annapolis Process - a Media Review by Alon C. Ferency

It is by now a familiar cliché that "all sides know what has to happen in Jerusalem": Jewish neighborhoods for Israel, Arab neighborhoods for Palestine, two national capitals and an international regime for the Holy Basin, including the Old City, Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, City of David and Mount of Olives. In short, the Clinton parameters or something like them.<sup>1</sup>

The Palestinians insisted that they would not make concessions on the refugee issue in return for an Israeli withdrawal from parts of the West Bank unless they received major Jerusalem concessions as well.<sup>2</sup>

Olmert has sought to fudge his acquiescence to addressing Jerusalem, refugees and future borders in the summit document, appearing to agree to a loose statement of declarations while reportedly discussing key issues in recent conversations with Abbas.<sup>3</sup>

Olmert and Deputy PM Haim Ramon have spoken publicly about the need for Israel to divest itself of Jerusalem's outlying Arab neighborhoods and refugee camps like Walaja and Shuafat that never should have been included within its borders in the first place. Even Avigdor Lieberman, another deputy prime minister and a right winger, has concurred.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, and presumably as "compensation" for those who object to Olmert "dividing" Jerusalem, he has given the green light for construction at E1, thereby physically linking Ma'aleh Adumim to Jerusalem, rendering any future solution that attaches Arab East Jerusalem to a Palestinian state that much more complicated and sabotaging Palestinian trust and confidence.<sup>5</sup>

The division of Jerusalem will be discussed in the November peace conference in Annapolis, Vice Premier Haim Ramon implied at Sunday's [October 7, 2007] cabinet meeting. "It is in Israel's interest that all the Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem receive international recognition, and that Arab neighborhoods like Wallaja and Shoafat are transferred to the Palestinians," Ramon said.<sup>6</sup>

These statements came about one month after [Ramon outlined his official political agenda](#), which included the division of Jerusalem and the establishment of joint sovereignty over the city's holy sites, and was presented in a letter to Kadima member Nir Barkat. "The Jewish neighborhoods will be recognized as Israeli and under Israeli sovereignty. Accordingly, the Arab neighborhoods (like Shoafat) will be recognized as Palestinian. Passages between the Israeli neighborhoods will be open and secure - accordingly the same will be true for the Palestinian neighborhoods," the letter said. "There will be special sovereignty over the holy sites, taking into

<sup>1</sup> <http://usa.mediamonitors.net/content/view/full/47149>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2678>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=18258>

<sup>4</sup> <http://usa.mediamonitors.net/content/view/full/47149>

<sup>5</sup> <http://usa.mediamonitors.net/content/view/full/47149>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3457214,00.htm>

account Israel's unique interests in overseeing them. Within this framework the Western Wall, the Jewish Quarter and other holy sites in the Jerusalem vicinity will remain under Israeli rule forever."<sup>7</sup>

Right-wing opprobrium at the recent floating by Israeli Vice Premier Haim Ramon of a plan endorsing handing East Jerusalem neighborhoods to a future Palestinian state has been met with a popular apathy unthinkable in the 1980s and 1990s. "Ramon is, in a way [doing], for [Prime Minister Ehud] Olmert, what Olmert did for [Ariel] Sharon. He is his [putting] his finger in the wind and showing which way the wind is blowing," Dror Etkes, a leading authority on West Bank settlements and former Peace Now program leader, told ISN Security Watch.<sup>8</sup>

Olmert appeared to put his weight behind his deputy's plan on Monday [October 22, 2007], asking the Knesset, "Was it necessary to also add the Shuafat refugee camp, Sawahra, Walaje and other villages and define them as part of Jerusalem? On that, I must confess, I am not convinced."<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Olmert on Monday addressed one of the core issues, implying that he would be ready to give up some outlying Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> A subject once deemed taboo, sharing Jerusalem, was discussed and, "no one quit the cabinet, the coalition did not even crack, no one went out to demonstrate, nary a bumper sticker was printed."<sup>11</sup>

A Yediot Ahranoth/Dahaf Institute poll published last month showed that a slight majority of Israelis were happy with changing the status of Jerusalem under a peace accord, while 61 percent favored maintaining Israeli sovereignty over the Western Wall and Temple Mount. A firm 68 percent stood against handing East Jerusalem neighborhoods to the Palestinian Authority (PA), reflecting popular Israeli antipathy to the physical re-division of the city. Israel-Palestinian program director at Tel Aviv's Institute for National Security Studies Shlomo Brom explained to ISN Security Watch that there has been a general trend in Israeli public opinion in recent years whereby "things that used to be sacred cows, such as the division of Jerusalem, are not so sacred anymore."<sup>12</sup>

In a Thursday interview with ISN Security Watch, Kadima legislator Otniel Schneller said, "I believe that in the future, when the Palestinians have an independent state that part of Jerusalem will be part of Al Quds [Jerusalem]. "The formula, more-or-less, will be that all of the Jewish neighborhoods will be under Israel and most of the Arab neighborhoods will be [Palestinian-controlled] Al Quds, and in between it will be a special area/territory with special arrangements and status," he said.<sup>13</sup>

The status of Israeli plans for large-scale suburban development in the E-1 corridor between Jerusalem and the large West Bank settlement of Ma'ale Adumim are an important bell-weather of the status of Israeli-Palestinian relations. If "the original plans to build the E-1 area will be realized this will mean that Palestinian East Jerusalem is almost completely encircled by Jewish neighborhoods. [...] It will make it [Palestinian capital in Jerusalem] very difficult," Brom said.<sup>14</sup>

Asked if Jerusalem would be on the table at Annapolis, Brom said, "I believe that once real negotiations will start, yes. I don't believe that this will take place now. I think that what is preventing full negotiations is the weakness of all the parties involved. On the Palestinian side I think it's obvious. Mr. Abbas is not in control of anything."<sup>15</sup>

As long as Jerusalem remains on the table and concrete Israeli confidence-building measures - expected at Annapolis - are forthcoming, Abbas retains a window of opportunity to negate Hamas in the West Bank while avoiding a necessary future power-sharing arrangement with the militant movement that would drive the US and Israel to end all support for negotiations.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3457214,00.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=18258>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ipforum.org/display.cfm?id=10&Sub=12&dis=1#>

<sup>10</sup> <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CE5DD1E31F935A25753C1A9619C8B63&sec=&spon=pagewanted=print>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ipforum.org/display.cfm?id=10&Sub=12&dis=1#>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=18258>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=18258>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=18258>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=18258>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=18258>

## American involvement and influence over the peace process

Proactive diplomacy:

"The American partner is much weaker than it used to be; it has started to be a kind of lame duck," [Israel-Palestinian program director at Tel Aviv's Institute for National Security Studies Shlomo Brom] opined. The Bush administration "took a conscious decision since the beginning of their term in office that they are not going to micromanage the process and be as involved as the Clinton administration was."<sup>17</sup>

President Bush has called for an international conference to be held in the United States this fall as part of a renewed push to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, trying to leave a legacy that has enticed and eluded his predecessors.<sup>18</sup> The new talks are aimed at drawing up a framework agreement to be presented to a peace conference hosted by the US at Annapolis, on the Maryland coast, in late November.<sup>19</sup>

The Palestinian Authority and Israel both recognise the indispensable role the US can play in supervising and guaranteeing any peace agreement.<sup>20</sup> "Judging from previous experience, US pressure can be very effective," Brom said.<sup>21</sup> [Olmert] believes that his personal connection with his peers greases the wheels of Israel's national interests and contributes to understanding and the prevention of disagreements.<sup>22</sup>

In Ramallah, Ms. Rice said, "Frankly, it's time for the establishment of a Palestinian state."<sup>23</sup> Another Secretary of State engaged in shuttle diplomacy, Henry Kissinger, had an easier time because he was dealing with governments in full charge of their own countries—Egypt and Syria.<sup>24</sup>

Congressman Gary Ackerman (D-NY), chairman of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the House Committee of Foreign Affairs, is currently circulating a letter to his colleagues urging support for the upcoming Annapolis conference, for significant additional aid to the Palestinians, and for the two-state solution.<sup>25</sup> Notably, the other House Member who is joining Ackerman in circulating the letter is Charles Boustany, an Arab-American and a Republican from Louisiana. The congressmen agree on the urgency of pushing for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement.<sup>26</sup>

The only thing that is certain is that strong American leadership is needed if this latest peace initiative does not die prematurely. If Annapolis fails, or does not take place at all, not only will the Bush administration sustain a critical failure in the Middle East but, almost certainly, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process will be placed on hold until the end of Bush's term.<sup>27</sup>

"So the question of Israel and the Palestinians . . . it's like a tool to create the right atmosphere and process that the conditions will be ready to support the United States in the near future, before the election in the States," [Kadima legislator Otniel Schneller] said.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=18258>

<sup>18</sup> <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CE5DD1E31F935A25753C1A9619C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=print>

<sup>19</sup> [http://economist.com/agenda/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story\\_id=9931628](http://economist.com/agenda/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story_id=9931628)

<sup>20</sup> [http://economist.com/agenda/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story\\_id=9931628](http://economist.com/agenda/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story_id=9931628)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=18258>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=917178>

<sup>23</sup> <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CE5DD1E31F935A25753C1A9619C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=print>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.ipforum.org/display.cfm?id=10&Sub=12&dis=1#>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1192380684317&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FPrinter>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1192380684317&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FPrinter>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.ipforum.org/display.cfm?id=10&Sub=12&dis=1#>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?id=18258>

## Raising Public Awareness

Israeli and Palestinian leaders on Friday reaffirmed their commitment to carrying out the first phase of the so-called road map peace plan.<sup>29</sup>

“Both sides emphasized their commitment to implementation according to the phases of the road map,” [said] Miri Eisin.<sup>30</sup>

Israel has weathered the storm of the second Palestinian intifada, and gained a measure of international respectability for going through with its withdrawal from Gaza. The Israeli economy is in rude health, and the government of Ehud Olmert, the prime minister, appears to be relatively secure, despite the buffeting that it received in the wake of last year’s war in Lebanon. Israel’s chief strategic concerns at present are the perceived threat of Iran’s nuclear programme and the related risks of conflict with Syria and/or Hizbullah. The Hamas takeover of Gaza has created problems closer to home, but of a lesser order than the other threats to Israel’s security.<sup>31</sup>

While in Paris and London, Olmert benefited from the current warming in relations with Israel.<sup>32</sup>

Nicolas Sarkozy informed his Israeli guest Ehud Olmert at the Champs-Élysées that he has to accept risk for peace and that there is a rare historic opportunity at the corner that should not be lost.<sup>33</sup>

France’s interests and security as well as the security of the Middle East are all tightly linked to resolving this conflict.<sup>34</sup>

Olmert showed the French president that he is ready for peace and the Annapolis Conference.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/27/world/middleeast/27mideast.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/27/world/middleeast/27mideast.html?_r=1&oref=slogin&pagewanted=print)

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/27/world/middleeast/27mideast.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/27/world/middleeast/27mideast.html?_r=1&oref=slogin&pagewanted=print)

<sup>31</sup> [http://economist.com/agenda/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story\\_id=9931628](http://economist.com/agenda/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story_id=9931628)

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=917178>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.daralhayat.net/actions/print2.php>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.daralhayat.net/actions/print2.php>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.daralhayat.net/actions/print2.php>