

JVP Position Paper: The End of the Current Round of Peace Talks

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What Happened to the Peace Talks?

US Secretary of State John Kerry was clear about the sequence of events.ⁱ First Israel refused to release the last group of Palestinian prisoners they had promised to free, then they announced construction of 700 new settlement units, and only then did the Palestinians respond with an announcement that they would attempt to join 15 international human rights conventions.

With talks already floundering, Israel unilaterally withdrew from the talks upon announcement of the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation agreement, despite the fact that for any real agreement to be agreed upon and implemented, all parties need to be at the table.

Unilateral Israeli actions to undermine peace go back much further.

Since the Oslo Accords, the number of Jewish settlers on Palestinian land has more than doubled and today there are some 650,000 settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.ⁱⁱ Benjamin Netanyahu campaigned for re-election on a promise of one million Jews living in “Judea and Samaria”.ⁱⁱⁱ

Rather than holding Israel accountable, the United States has repeatedly rewarded the Israel government whenever it violated the law or agreements, now fueling the occupation with \$3.2 billion in annual military aid.

Bottom line:

Israel’s withdrawal from peace talks and its threat to punish the Palestinians for the Fatah-Hamas reconciliation agreement is a tactical move meant to deflect from the main cause of the failure of decades of peace talks —Israel’s ongoing settlement expansion and the entrenchment of the occupation, materially and diplomatically supported by the United States.

What about the peace framework that Kerry wants as a basis for negotiations?

Should talks re-start, the Kerry framework includes an unprecedented demand that the Palestinian Authority recognize Israel as a Jewish state, which would condemn Israel’s 25% of citizens who are non-Jewish to second and third class status, and deny the internationally recognized rights of Palestinian refugees. (5)

Whatever the rhetoric of a “two-state solution,” Israeli policies have already created a de-facto single state including all of Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and occupied East Jerusalem, albeit one built on the premise of separate and unequal lives for Jews and non-Jews. This is the very definition of apartheid.

What Next?

Jewish Voice for Peace believes that the struggle for freedom and self-determination will end, like similar struggles in Northern Ireland and South

Africa, at the negotiation table. But that can only happen when all parties can sit down together with more equal power.

Israel has one of the strongest militaries of the world, the only nuclear arsenal in the entire Middle East, the unconditional backing of the world's sole super power, and is the 24th wealthiest country in the world, while the Palestinians across the table remain stateless, impoverished, refugees, occupied, or second-class citizens inside of Israel. The BDS movement will help equalize the power imbalance by putting pressure on Israel from around the world to change its policies towards Palestinians.

The BDS Movement

Nonviolent resistance by Palestinians and their allies – including Jews of conscience - around the globe are the greatest hope for negotiations on a more even playing field. Where the US has failed to do so, people are applying nonviolent economic pressure to hold Israel accountable for its repeated violations of international law.

The successes of the Palestinian-led nonviolent movement for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions are growing, with billions of dollars and major multinational corporations already impacted. That pressure has already been felt at this round of talks. The pressure from these non-violent campaigns is so significant that Prime Minister Netanyahu mentioned BDS 26 times in his speech to AIPAC, the US largest pro-Israel lobbying organization.

Israeli government officials agree. Israeli finance minister Yair Lapid warned that even a limited

EU boycott could cost the Israeli economy over \$5 billion dollars a year. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni put it even more directly: "The boycott is moving and advancing uniformly and exponentially...Those who don't want to see it, will end up feeling it."

The BDS Movement brings to the peace process a true honest broker—people of conscience around the world—who will facilitate acknowledgment of the power imbalance in a negotiation between occupier and occupied.

References:

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- iii <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/israel-going-for-one-million-jews-in-the-west-bank.premium-1.508510>