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I would like to talk about the thing that I talked about in one of the sessions. This is about what I think is the real solution to achieve peace in the Middle East between Israelis and Palestinians. I do not speak about achieving peace in the whole of the Middle East. I am speaking about Palestinians in Israel because this situation has been used as an excuse by most of the Arab countries not to make peace with Israel, because of the situation with the Palestinians.

You may remember the history, which is not very long-ago history, but more recent history. We have had two occasions at least during the last 10 years in which Prime Ministers of Israel offered the Palestinians whatever they asked. We offered all the territory from '67, which is not literally the same territory but the same quantity of territory, through exchange of territories. We offered the whole Gaza Strip, and [Inaudible] even suggested the whole city of Jerusalem, except the Wailing Wall. Barak offered that to Arafat with Clinton and Barak refused to sign.

The second time was in the negotiations between Olmert as Prime Minister and Abu Mazen. They came to a total agreement about everything, and Olmert signed the agreement and gave the pen to Abu Mazen and asked him to sign as well. Abu Mazen asked for a few days and never came back. His excuse for not signing was that Olmert was at the end of his term, and maybe he could not apply it. However, I said, what did he have to lose? I asked him. I asked Abu Mazen personally, 'What did you have to lose? You could sign and make a commitment with a Prime Minister to a certain arrangement.'

You ask yourself the question of why they do not sign. They have the possibility to establish a Palestinian state that is almost in accordance with their dream. Why did they not sign? My answer to that is that, even in that arrangement, there is something that any Palestinian leader has to pay on their side for peace and for the deal. Their part of the deal is to give up the right to what they call the right of return. The right of return means that Palestinian refugees, according to their beliefs, should come back into the state of Israel. This means the destruction of the state of Israel and nobody believes that it is possible. The leaders of the Palestinian authority cannot make that decision. They cannot make that concession towards Israel.

Therefore, I have come to the conclusion that the best way to achieve peace is through the Arab initiative, or what is called the Saudi Initiative. It came to the world in 2002, before the disengagement from Gaza. At that time, I was a Minister in the Cabinet of Sharon. I suggested to Ariel Sharon, 'Leave the disengagement from Gaza. There is now a better suggestion from the Saudi Initiative. Let us go on that suggestion. We can turn everything upside down.'

I want to tell you something about this initiative. The Saudis came out with an initiative which in my opinion is very courageous and also very wise. It says to Israel, 'You can make peace with the Palestinians by going back to the '67 borders and find agreeable, justified solutions to the Palestinian refugee situation. If you can do this, we, the 57 Islamic countries, will make peace with Israel, with full normalisation, and that will be the end of the conflict between Israel and the Arabs.'

They have some other problems. I do not want to go into them, but I want to concentrate on those terms, why in my opinion it is very wise and why that is the best way to achieve peace. When they talked in 2002 about going back to the '67 borders, I automatically came out in big support of this initiative. I tried to convince Sharon and spent a lot of hours trying to convince him, but I did not succeed. I tried it with Olmert in the Cabinet format, as I was also a member of the Cabinet and the Security Cabinet. I brought this suggestion to the Cabinet and the Security Cabinet, and I did not succeed.

Again, with Netanyahu, when I was in opposition, I tried to convince him, because we were friends, and I did not succeed. My idea is to say that because we are in that situation, we may now have a possibility. They are now asking for the '67 borders and I said in 2002 that I do not believe that there is even one Arab leader who believes that Israel could literally go back to the '67 borders. However, we can exchange lands.



That came out when Kerry was managing the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians just a few years ago. The Arab League Committee came to him and said they were willing to make an exchange of lands. This meant they would get the same territory, but there is the four or 5% which we hold because of the big settlement which we cannot uproot. Instead of that, we will give them land from our land, which is of the same quantity.

If that is the situation, it has come true. In Monaco, I spoke to Turki Al-Faisal, when he was at the meeting. I asked him a question and I said, 'Is Saudi going to stand behind the Palestinians in order to make the decision to give up what they call the right of return?' Why? It is because they phrase it as finding an agreeable justifiable solution for Palestinian refugees. What do you mean by agreeable? Agreeable means that Israel had to agree.

Again, I am saying that not by guessing but knowing. There is not one Arab leader who believes that Israel will agree to bring back refugees into the green line of Israel. Therefore, they said an agreeable justified solution means that Palestinians who want to come back to live in our area would live in the Palestinian state and will be compensated. Now, if I go further with that, I ask myself this. If we can have peace with 57 Islamic countries and full normalisation, why should we make peace with the Palestinians alone? With the same price, we can get a much larger peace and change the world, so it is better to go this way.

Secondly, the Palestinians need it more than us. On our side, we can take the decision. There were Prime Ministers who took the decision, including Olmert, Barak and Rabin. On the Palestinian side, no Palestinian Prime Minister or President can take the decision to withdraw. Therefore, they need for the Arab League to take the decision. Therefore, we need the Arab initiative. That is the only way to circumvent it. That is the reason why Palestinians, Egyptians and Jordanians support it. There are two more points.

The second thing is that this is the only way to guarantee the existence of peace, because if we will have peace with all the Arab states, who will break it? If you make peace just with Palestinians, the next day, another leader will come and throw it up. Nobody can break peace with all the Arabs. Thirdly, the Arab peace initiative means we make peace with everyone, and this is the only way to bring Gaza back under the Palestinian authority, because they cannot stay alone. If they stay alone, we take them as an enemy.

Last but not least, if we have such an agreement, it will be much easier to pass it through the society of Israel. We are a democracy and things have to be passed democratically with the majority in the Knesset. If we have such a peace, it will move very easily through the Knesset. Today, we have a very extreme right-wing Government and we have an Israeli paradox which I call the hawks of peace and the doves of war. This means only hawks can make peace through national consensus in Israel. That is why Begin made peace with Egypt and why Netanyahu was the one who got out of Hebron and made Wye Agreement. If they are right and we make a decision, it will be automatically passed through the public of Israel and the Knesset of Israel.