



## Address by Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni at the Annapolis Conference

(November 27, 2007)

Madam Secretary of State of the United States, Ms. [Condoleeza Rice](#),  
Mr. [Abu Ala](#),

Esteemed colleagues, and especially the representatives of the Arab world here in this room today,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Sixty years ago this week, the [United Nations](#) passed a resolution to partition the strip of land between the Mediterranean and the [Jordan River](#) - the place known to us as the Land of [Israel](#) and to others as Palestine. The strip of land where I was born, where my forefathers lived for thousands of years. The strip of land to which the Jewish people yearned to return when in exile, when they prayed for [Jerusalem](#), and to which they returned over the course of hundreds of years. The strip of land where my Palestinian colleagues were born.

I did not come here today to argue about rights. I did not come here to argue whose claims are more justified. I came today to tell my colleagues from the Arab world that the right thing to do is not to relinquish our sense of justice or our belief in rights. I have no intention of asking another nation to do that, just as I do not ask that of myself - and I believe in the Jewish nation's right to all of the Land of [Israel](#). This is the time to think about a different right - the right of our children to live in peace and mutual dignity, according to the values that I believe are the legacy of all the peoples in the region, and certainly the values of all the religions. Your important participation here, even though for some of you this was not an easy decision, testifies to that fact and instills in me hope for the future.

True, there is a national conflict between us, whose just resolution is to give expression to the national aspirations of each of the nations in its own state. This is exactly the principle determined 60 years ago, after years of bloodshed between the residents of this country - the principle of two states for two peoples: one - a Jewish state, as decreed by the [UN](#) resolution, and the other - an Arab state.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the decision to establish the State of [Israel](#) alongside an Arab state was meant to provide a response to the past conflict; it is not what created the present conflict. The decision did not determine who was more in the right, but rather what would lead to a life of peace between the peoples.

Even before the State of [Israel](#) was established, the Jewish public accepted the principle of the partition of [Israel](#). We chose already then not to resolve the question of rights over the Land of [Israel](#), or the question of historical justice. We decided to embark on a new life in a new state - even if only on part of the territory.

This choice, which was rejected at that time by the Arab world, is still a choice that can be made by the Arab world in general and the Palestinians in particular.

On the day that the State of [Israel](#) was established, May 14, 1948, our [Independence Day](#), the day that you, my Arab colleagues, call the “Nakba” - the disaster, Israel proclaimed in its Declaration of Independence: "We extend our hand to all neighboring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighborliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help..."

Our hands are still outstretched in peace to the entire Arab and Muslim world without exception, including the Palestinians, [Lebanon](#), [Syria](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), [Oman](#), [Bahrain](#), [Morocco](#) and [Indonesia](#).

I am proud at where [Israel](#) is today. I am sorry that the Arab world rejected the principle of partition in the past, and I hope and pray that today there is an understanding that instead of fighting, the right thing to do is to build a shared future in two separate states: one - the State of [Israel](#), which was established as a Jewish state, a national home for the Jewish people; and the other - Palestine - which will be established to give a full and complete solution to Palestinians wherever they may be. Those who are in [Gaza](#) and the [West Bank](#), and those in the refugee camps in other Arab countries with temporary status, waiting for a sense of belonging to a national state - the same feeling of wholeness that the establishment of the State of [Israel](#) gave to the Jewish refugees who were forced to leave Arab countries and Europe and became partners in building [Israel](#).

I believe that the solution of two nation states serves the interests of both sides. Not every celebration of ours is cause for sorrow on the other side, and vice versa. I say to my Palestinian colleagues: Do not bemoan the establishment of the State of [Israel](#); establish your own state, rejoice in its establishment and we will rejoice with you, since for us the establishment of the Palestinian state is not our Nakba, or disaster - provided that upon its establishment the word “Nakba” be deleted from the Arabic lexicon in referring to [Israel](#).

Knowing that the conflict has a solution is not enough. Reaching the solution depends first of all upon us - on the two sides themselves and their ability to conduct negotiations, to touch on the most sensitive points and to provide answers based on the understanding that neither side can obtain everything it wants and that compromises are necessary on both sides.

The solution also depends on the ability of the leaders to cope with extremists and [terrorism](#), and we are not speaking here only of the leaders of the sides directly involved in the conflict. This is the central task of the entire world leadership, and especially of the Arab and Muslim world.

Alongside the fact that we have gathered here to launch the peace process - we cannot ignore reality. [Gaza](#), which is supposed to be part of the Palestinian state, is controlled by a terrorist organization and arms continue to flow into it; [Hizbullah](#) - the long arm of [Iran](#) - prevents stability in [Lebanon](#) and persists in arming itself despite the [UN](#) resolution; [Iran](#) is threatening the entire region, and extremist entities within your own countries are being manipulated from outside by radical organizations.

This is the time for decision. Everyone must decide which side they are on, and the sides, ladies and gentlemen, have changed. They are no longer [Israel](#) on one side and the Palestinians on the other side. They are no longer the Arabs on one side and the Jews on the other side.

In one camp is everyone who is sitting here in this room - Jews, Muslims and Christians, Israelis, and Arabs, Americans, and Europeans.

You know who did not come - those who are working against the conference. The states that did not come are those that support terrorist organizations and radical elements in your home countries; those who wish to cause instability in the region. The organizations and leaders who use God's name to sow hatred, to send children out to be killed. The same God we see as the God of mercy and peace.

This is the battle that must be won.

Sitting on the fence will not accomplish it. Neither is one-time participation in an event sufficient. The common goal is comprehensive peace in the region for all the peoples and all the states. Peace is not merely an agreement in exchange for land; peace means ending incitement, ending support of terrorism and actively opposing it, ending arms smuggling, and dismantling terrorist bases of operations.

And that is the role of leadership - even if it has to cope with inflamed public opinion. Nothing is more worthy of mention in this context than the dramatic change brought about by two brave leaders 30 years ago this month, [Menachem Begin](#) and [Anwar Sadat](#), who chose to influence the course of history rather than surrender to it - and the hearts of the people changed with them as well.

I have heard those who say that [Israel](#) needs to pay for normalization. Such talk is based on an approach whereby normalization is a kind of prize that should be given to [Israel](#) only after comprehensive peace is achieved between [Israel](#) and its neighbors, an approach that assumes that it is in [Israel](#)'s interest to achieve normalization with the Arab world instead of a difficult [peace process](#) including compromises.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is a mistake.

I admit that [Israel](#) wants to live a life of peace and partnership and to establish normal relations with the entire Arab world. [Israel](#)'s strong desire to make peace with its various neighbors does not replace the process of direct negotiation with the Palestinians, even at the cost of the compromises that will be required of us - and today we are resuming this process. The yearning, the goal and the vision that we seek to fulfill - peace with the Palestinians and with our other neighbors - this is the prize. We want to do it.

Our dream is not to stall for time, and stagnation is not our policy. It does not serve the interests of either side. We are not trying to establish facts on the ground through settlements and we are willing to pay a heavy price in terms of territory for peace. We do not want to control the Palestinians or to dictate their lives. We do not want our children, as soldiers, to stand at checkpoints and screen civilians, and we do not want your children's childhood pictures to be our children, as soldiers, putting their parents through a security check. We have no hidden agenda. Not so long ago, we decided on [disengagement](#). We left [Gaza](#), we dismantled [settlements](#), we withdrew our army, we took risks with the understanding that [Gaza](#) will not be the last step.

We want to take the next steps through agreement.

It is clear to us that in order to carry out change, we will have to give up parts of [Israel](#). Our border is the border of security. We are prepared to do so, provided that it does not endanger the lives of our citizens. That is also our obligation towards them.

Normalization is not something that you give and [Israel](#) receives; it is something from which everyone benefits.

I have heard some say that [Israel](#) should not expect a handshake, and I will not ask for one. But let us imagine what might happen if the worst possible scenario occurs and there is a handshake between an Israeli leader and an Arab leader whose country has no diplomatic relations with [Israel](#), and that handshake is broadcast around the world.

Then the extremists in the [Palestinian Authority](#) will understand that the fact that [Abu Mazen](#), [Salam Fayyad](#) and [Abu Ala](#) are meeting with Israelis and conducting peace talks is not a betrayal of these principles but rather a process that is supported by the Arab world.

Then the extremists in the Arab countries will understand that a new era is beginning, that the process is right and that it is being implemented in stages. Should you announce today that you will promote ties with [Israel](#) beyond a handshake, with [Israel](#) taking additional steps for the benefit of the Palestinians, those same extremists will understand that you are not helping [Israel](#) and neglecting the Palestinian channel, but rather you are helping the Palestinians and utilizing the normalization with [Israel](#) in order to help them.

And it can make things easier for us as well. When the Israeli public, which has been victimized by terrorist attacks, fails to understand how we can permit ourselves to promote a [peace process](#) in the current reality, we can say that we are changing the face of the entire region. You can help [Israel](#) to help the Palestinians.

Furthermore, by sitting on the fence and waiting for the conclusion of the [peace process](#) between [Israel](#) and its neighbors, you will miss a historic opportunity to influence the process. Influencing the process in this manner means supporting the bilateral process, strengthening the Palestinians to make the necessary decisions. Because we have no doubt that even if the Arab peace initiative presents principles based on the Arab narrative, you have no intention of replacing the Palestinians in the negotiations. Please support them; they need it. Without your support for compromises there will be no peace.

The world is watching events here in Annapolis. I was pleased with your decision to come here. The picture emerging from here is one of a vision of peace shared by those who are prepared to make the necessary change - and it is a picture worth more than a thousand words. Your presence here is important, not just for the leaders with whom we are meeting today. Your presence is important to the entire world - it is important for you at home, it is important for the [Palestinian Authority](#) and it is important for [Israel](#).

Today's picture is the start of the journey toward peace.

Today we set out on three parallel tracks.

The first - the political track - is an ongoing bilateral dialogue between us and the Palestinians in an attempt to reach the agreements that will allow for the realization of the vision.

The second - the practical track - according to the [Roadmap](#), requires hard and diligent work vis-à-vis the terrorist organizations wherever they are, in [Gaza](#), in the [West Bank](#) - a battle against the leaders, a battle against incitement, a battle against their patrons, one place after another. This is a difficult task that the [Palestinian Authority](#) have begun and at the end of the political track, we will return to the practical track to check whether the conditions are ripe for the establishment of the Palestinian state.

The [Roadmap](#) is not an obstacle to the process. It is the right way to advance it, and it represents the interests of the Israelis, the Palestinians and the region. According to the [Roadmap](#), the path to a Palestinian state passes through the war against terrorism - not as an excuse for not establishing it, but rather as a need of the entire world. We must all provide a response to the situation on the ground, particularly in [Gaza](#), where the kidnapped Israeli soldier, [Gilad Shalit](#), is still being held.

The third track that has been opened here today is the regional track. I hope and believe that your participation here today is an expression of support for the bilateral process - support for a legitimate Palestinian government, support for the moderate elements in the region and the beginning of the normalization process between you and us in stages and in accordance with the steps that [Israel](#) will take to benefit the Palestinians.

We have paid a heavy price over the years of the conflict. Families have lost their loved ones and we are powerless to soothe the pain of a bereaved mother. We cannot turn the wheel of history back, bring our dead back to life, restore the maimed to health, and return people to their homes. We cannot change decisions that we have made. There is no point in regretting decisions that we could have made in time and missed the opportunity. We can make decisions that will affect the future, and the journey to peace in the region begins once again here, today, in Annapolis

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Source: [Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

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