

11.29.2007

What We Think, Where We're Going, What We Did...

The much anticipated Annapolis peace conference is over. Final status peace negotiations will soon begin with the goal of creating a viable Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel.

Over the past weeks, Brit Tzedek has led the charge to rally American Jewish and Congressional support for the peace conference, and we will continue until we reach our goal. There is no turning back.

Continue below to learn about What We Think; Where We're Going; What We Did; and how to Keep Us Going.

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Keep Us Going

Now that the parties have agreed to go back to the negotiating table, we need to demonstrate to our leaders that American Jews expect

results. For that we need your support. Please donate as generously as you can to help us stay the course to peace.

AMERICAN JEWISH SUPPORT IS KEY TO ISRAEL'S PEACE PROSPECTS

Leading Jewish Peace Group Calls on U.S. and Community to Ensure Annapolis is More than Just a Photo-Op

CHICAGO—Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, the country's largest Jewish grassroots peace movement, welcomed the renewed commitment of the U.S., Israeli and Palestinian administrations to negotiate an historic two-state resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and urged the American Jewish community to do its part in ensuring that the first U.S. brokered, face-to-face meeting between Israeli, Palestinian and Arab leaders in nearly seven years amounts to more than just a photo-opportunity.

"Gains in achieving long-term prospects for peace and security were made Tuesday at Annapolis, both in terms of the parties' agreement to work together to establish a Palestinian state by the end of 2008 and of the U.S. government's renewed commitment to play a constructive role in facilitating the negotiation process," said Brit Tzedek's president, Steve Masters. The group went on to applaud the parties' pledge to include the negotiation of 'all core issues, without exception' and to immediately undertake concrete steps to improve the situation on the ground, including the implementation of security reforms and a settlement freeze, closely monitored by the United States. Brit Tzedek further welcomed Secretary Rice's recent appointment of General James Jones to the post of Mideast security envoy and called on the Bush Administration to continue to undertake substantive measures to strengthen the peace process relaunched at Annapolis.

"It's time now for the American Jewish community, which has historically played a guiding role in the formulation of successive administrations' policies on Israel, to make clear to the current administration and the one that will follow it that the American Jewish community stands behind the Annapolis process and demands sustained diplomatic engagement to ensure a successful outcome," said Masters. "We will be vigilant in our insistence that the Annapolis

conference is a first step. For the sake of Israel, there can be no turning back.”

Despite the results of a recent poll conducted by Zogby International (June 4, 2007), commissioned by Americans for Peace Now and the Arab American Institute, showing that 87% of American Jews support a two-state solution and 68% are more likely to support a candidate who promises to take an active role in the peace process, the majority of leaders of established Jewish communal organizations have been resistant to support Annapolis, and similar initiatives before it, intended to reinvigorate the peace process.

“It simply doesn’t make sense that when Israel faced war in Lebanon, the Jewish community’s support for Israel was loud and unambiguous, but when 40 Arab nations and the leaders of the Palestinian people sit down with Israel’s Prime Minister, most of our leaders’ voices are silent, with some openly hostile,” said Masters. “How can we who deeply care for Israel’s future speak up only after Israel is under attack, and not also when there is a genuine opportunity to prevent devastating loss of life from future wars?”

To build on the momentum generated by Annapolis, Brit Tzedek will intensify its mass mobilizations of Jewish activists from across the country to advocate for pro-Israel, pro-peace policies to Congress and to hold the Administration to President Bush’s pledge to commit "the resources and resolve of the American government" to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In the lead-up to the Annapolis conference, Brit Tzedek activists contacted hundreds of Congressional offices to advocate that their representatives sign the Ackerman-Boustany letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice sent to express support for the Annapolis conference as a “critical opportunity” to reinvigorate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and to urge that “robust, hands-on U.S. leadership and diplomacy is necessary to frame not only on what transpires at the meeting, but on what takes place before and after it.” Ultimately, 135 Representatives signed the letter, including more than 1/3 of Congress’ Jewish delegation, among them Rep. Lantos (D-CA), Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Henry Waxman (D-CA), dean of the Jewish House members. In addition, the

entire delegation from Massachusetts, where three of Brit Tzedek's strongest chapters are located, signed the letter.

In the coming election year, Brit Tzedek also plans to undertake a campaign to raise attention on the importance of Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking for the next administration through outreach to the individual presidential candidates and to the American Jewish community. In synagogue events, house parties, and rabbinic petitions - such as our most recent, "Kindle the Lights of Peace," which garnered over 500 rabbinic signers - we will mobilize our community to express that a truly "pro-Israel" candidate is one who will do everything in his or her power to realize the vision of Annapolis: a secure Israel and a viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace.

[Annapolis Resource Page](#)

Check out Brit Tzedek's Annapolis Resource Page for a regularly updated list of all the speeches and documents coming out of Annapolis, as well as links to important analyses and op-eds on the conference and what needs to happen next.

What happens AFTER Annapolis?

[A Town Hall Conference Call with Daniel Levy](#)

Daniel Levy, Senior Fellow and Director of the Middle East Policy Initiative at the New America Foundation and the lead Israeli drafter of the Geneva Initiative, provides an in-depth analysis of the Annapolis peace conference in Brit Tzedek's Town Hall Conference Call.

[Post-Annapolis Sermon by Rabbi Joshua Levine Grater, Brit Tzedek National Secretary](#)

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, declares the wisdom of the Proverbs (13:12). And isn't it true? When we hope, when we pray, when we put our faith in a future that looks different from the present, and then those hopes and prayers are dashed, delayed or ignored, our hearts are sick, our bodies tire, our souls begin to decay under the heat of pessimism and fear. Isn't it too true that when our hope is left wanting, waiting for too long, we turn to other means to achieve our desired ends?

Brit Tzedek and Others Rally for Peace at Annapolis

Brit Tzedek joined forces with eight other progressive pro-Israel organizations to rally outside the Naval Academy during the Annapolis peace conference this past Tuesday. Nearly 100 people, including Brit Tzedek activists from our New York City, Washington DC, Philadelphia, and even our Rhode Island chapters, converged on Annapolis to demonstrate the strong American Jewish support for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

During the one-and-a-half hour rally on the grounds of St. Anne's church, two blocks from the Naval Academy where the conference was being held, nearly a dozen speakers of all ages declared that the creation of a viable Palestinian state is the only solution to Israel's long-term needs for peace and security. The crowd chanted "Two Peoples. Two States. Time to Negotiate!" and sang Jewish peace songs such as "Oseh Shalom" and "Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu."

Brit Tzedek's own Washington Representative, Rob Levy, gave the concluding speech, proclaiming that there could be "No Turning Back" to the diplomatic neglect of the last seven years and calling on all those in attendance to return home recommitted to being activists for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Following the rally, many of the attendees marched closer to the gates of the Naval Academy where small groups of protesters were gathered in opposition to the peace process. As the protesters condemned Prime Minister Olmert and the Israeli government for striving to make peace with the Palestinians, we had no doubts who the truly pro-Israel side was.

Cosponsoring the event with Brit Tzedek were: Ameinu, Americans for Peace Now, Meretz USA, Union of Progressive Zionists, Keshet ARZA, Habonim Dror, Hashomer Hatzair, and The Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring.

Media coverage of the rally:

VIDEO of the Rally featuring Brit Tzedek activist Shirley Rausher, New York chapter activist. [Middle East Issue Hits Home with New Yorkers](#). CBS-2 New York. Nov. 27, 2007.

[On Summit Sidelines, Jewish Groups Square Off](#), by Nathan Guttman. *Forward*. Nov. 28, 2007.

518 Sign Rabbinic Call "Kindle the Lights of Peace"

Brit Tzedek built critical Jewish clergy support for the Annapolis peace conference with its [rabbinic call](#). In just ten days, 518 national pulpit, academic and organizational rabbis and cantors, and rabbinic and cantoral students from all major denominations of American Judaism signed on to Brit Tzedek's rabbinic call—"Kindle the Lights of Peace." The Chanukah-themed appeal draws on the story of the oil that burned for eight days to remind the community that "even when circumstances appear grim - perhaps especially then - hope and courage are vital." The call expresses support for efforts to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks at the Annapolis peace conference and urges the Jewish community to use the rekindled excitement generated by Annapolis to inspire engagement of the candidates during the upcoming election year

[A full-page ad featuring the call](#) appeared in the November 23rd issue of *The Forward*. Additionally, throughout this conference week, Rabbinic Cabinet leaders Rabbis John Friedman, Julie Saxe-Taller, Joshua Levine Grater, and Scott Weiner appeared on nine different talk shows across the nation to discuss the call and the Annapolis conference.

Among the call's many prominent signers were Rabbis Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, former Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council; Burton L. Visotzky, Professor, Jewish Theological Seminary; Paul Menitoff, Executive Vice-President Emeritus, Central Conference of American Rabbis; and Toba Spitzer, President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association.

According to Rabbi John Friedman, chair of Brit Tzedek's Rabbinic Cabinet, "for the Annapolis talks to become something other than a well-meaning gesture, it is essential that we, as a community, make clear to the current Administration and the one that will succeed it that the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is vital to the interests of all those who live in the region, and the American people."

[Full text of the rabbinic call](#)
[Complete list of signers](#)
[Forward Ad](#)

Digesting Annapolis: What Happened, What It Means, and What Happens Next?

Over 200 people attended the roundtable discussion with leading American, Israeli, and Palestinian former negotiators, experts and opinion shapers.

Sponsored by:

Brit Tzedek v'Shalom (The Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace), Americans for Peace Now, Israel Policy Forum, the Arab American Institute, Churches for Middle East Peace, the Foundations for Middle East Peace, and the American Task Force on Palestine

Thursday, November 29, noon - 2:00 PM
U.S. House of Representatives
Rayburn House Office Building Room 2200

Featuring

- Ori Nir, Spokesman for Americans for Peace Now, former reporter on the Arab-Israeli conflict and American Mideast policy for several major publications, including *Haaretz*, Israel's leading newspaper, and *The Forward*, the largest independent American Jewish weekly newspaper.
- Ghaith al-Omari, Advocacy Director for the American Task Force on Palestine, lead Palestinian drafter of the Geneva Initiative, former foreign policy advisor to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.
- Scott Lasensky, co-author of *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace* (USIP Press, 2008), Director of USIP's initiative on Iraq and Its Neighbors, co-director of USIP's Study Group on Arab-Israeli Peacemaking.
- Daniel Levy, Senior Fellow and Director of the Middle East Policy Initiative of the American Strategy Program at the New America Foundation, lead Israeli drafter of the Geneva

Initiative, former senior policy adviser in the Israeli Prime Minister's office.

- Greg Khalil, lawyer and legal advisor with the Palestine Liberation Organization's Negotiations Support Unit (NSU) since 2004.

- Phil Wilcox (Moderator), President of the Foundation for Middle East Peace, former U.S. Consul General in Jerusalem, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Middle Eastern Affairs, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research, and Ambassador at Large and Coordinator for Counter Terrorism.

Congressional Support for Peace Reaches Record Highs

Thanks to your advocacy, [135 Members of Congress](#) signed on to the [Ackerman-Boustany letter](#) to Secretary Rice in support of the Annapolis peace conference. That is more signers on a constructive pro-peace, pro-Israel letter than we have seen in years! If your Rep. signed, [please thank him or her now!](#)

After weeks of Brit Tzedek activists advocating on its behalf, Representatives Gary Ackerman (D-NY) and Charles Boustany (R-LA), along with 133 other Members of Congress, yesterday sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary Rice commending her efforts to reinvigorate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process by convening an international conference this fall and calling for additional steps to ensure its success. The letter calls for "robust, hands-on U.S. leadership and diplomacy" and states that "resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, through the establishment of two states for two peoples, is too important not to seize the opportunities that have emerged over the past weeks."

The letter's list of signatures and supporters is nearly as significant as its content. Its chief cosponsors are a Jewish-American and an Arab-American: Rep. Gary Ackerman, a Democrat from New York (who is also the chair of the House Subcommittee on the Middle East), and Rep. Charles Boustany, a Republican from Louisiana, respectively. Among the signers are 12 of the 30 Jewish Representatives, including Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Tom Lantos, and all four Arab-American Representatives.

In addition to Brit Tzedek, the letter boasted the support of a wide range of Jewish, Christian, and Arab-American groups, including: the Union for Reform Judaism, the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, Americans for Peace Now, the Israel Policy Forum, Churches for Middle East Peace, the Arab American Institute, and the American Task Force on Palestine.

Brit Tzedek in the Print and Broadcast Media

["Push for Annapolis summit triggers slew of Jewish lobbying efforts"](#) by Rob Kampeas, *JTA*, November 30, 2007

["We Must Keep Up Our Support"](#) by Donna Spiegelman, *The Jewish Advocate*, November 29, 2007

["US Jews pro-peace"](#) by Steve Masters. *The Jerusalem Post*, November 28, 2007

[What about Palestine?](#) Rob Levy, Brit Tzedek's Washington Representative on What-About Radio. November 27, 2007. (Rob's interview begins at minute 46)

["Brit Tzedek v'Shalom to Stage Rally in Support of Peace Conference"](#) by Rabbi Shai Gluskin, *Jewish Reconstructionist Federation*, November 26, 2007

["Hopes for Peace,"](#) *VelveteenRabbi.blogs.com*, November 27, 2007

["Dovish U.S. Jewish groups plan pro-Annapolis Tuesday,"](#) *Haaretz*, November 26, 2007

["Courage Of Convictions"](#) by Rabbi Scott Weiner. *Baltimore Jewish Times*. November 23, 2007

["AIPAC stance irks donors"](#) by Rob Kampeas. *JTA*, November 16, 2007

["Jewish Dems urge Palestinian Authority aid boost,"](#) *JTA*, November 11, 2007

["Ackerman, Boustany team on P.A. support,"](#) *JTA*, October 22, 2007

["Bush: Riyadh working to fight terror"](#) by Hilary Leila Krieger, *The Jerusalem Post*, October 21, 2007

"The Middle East: Of Torpedoes and New Voices" by Conn Hallinan,
The Berkeley Daily Planet, October 12 , 2007

Brit Tzedek's rabbinic leaders, Rabbi Jonathan Friedman, Julie Saxe Taller, Joshua Levine Grater and Scott Weiner appeared on Air American, Talk Radio News Service, XM Satellite Radio, WOL (Washington, DC), WOLB (Baltimore, MD), WWRL (New York, NY), WMNF (Tampa, FL), the State of Belief and The Young Turk Show.

Pre-Annapolis Sermon by Rabbi Joshua Levine Grater, Brit Tzedek National Secretary

Many of us live with the philosophy embodied by the phrase, "the glass is half empty/the glass is half full." And while it might not be the operating principle for every decision, we often react based on this idea: we are either leaning optimistic or leaning pessimistic. This way of viewing the world often either promotes a forward way of thinking, or promotes a regressive, fear-based way of thinking. We either believe that change is possible, or we believe that things are destined to remain the same.