

Building Arab Support for Peace

“If Israel is going to make some very difficult political decisions around settlements and ultimately around borders that would allow for a Palestinian state, Arab states have to make some difficult political decisions themselves, recognizing Israel's existence, its legitimacy, that it has security needs like any other state...”

--President Barack Obama, July 2, 2009

Building regional Arab support is essential to advance the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

If Israel is to enjoy genuine peace, it must be secure from all sides. As President Obama has emphasized, Israel's security “extend(s) to concerns that they have in a whole host of neighbors where there's perceived and often real hostility towards Israel's security.” Including the Arab countries as part of a broader peace deal will allow true normalization among neighboring countries, as Israelis and Palestinians both take on integral roles in the region.

The Obama administration is urging Arab states to take important steps in exchange for Israeli concessions.

According to news sources, the Administration is privately urging Arab states to implement the following confidence building gestures, in exchange for an Israeli settlement freeze:

- *Arab countries in the Gulf would allow Israeli passenger and civilian cargo aircraft to fly over their territory.
- *Israel would be able to open interest sections in other states' embassies in several Arab capitals.
- *Arab countries would lift bans on the entry of tourists and other visitors whose passports carry Israeli visas or entry stamps.
- * Israeli-registered cell phones would be able to operate on Arab networks.
- *Arab leaders would visit Jerusalem and receive Israeli leaders in their own capitals.
- *Israel and Arab states would hold cultural exchanges.
- *Provide more aid for the fragile Palestinian Authority government and Gaza reconstruction efforts.

Normalization of relations with Arab countries is fundamentally in Israel's interest.

Diplomatic recognition of Israel by the Arab world would signify the acceptance of Israel's legitimacy. Israelis could travel, enter economic partnerships, and expand their opportunities throughout the Middle East. Israel could take its place as a regional leader in progress of all kinds as true normalization deepens the ties among neighboring countries and makes it increasingly difficult to justify hostilities against one another.

The Presidents of both the United States and Israel have praised the Arab League Peace plan.

President Obama told Israel's President Shimon Peres that he is “very impressed” with the plan, which offers full Arab recognition of Israel in return for return to the 1967 borders. Peres himself praised the Arab Plan, saying Israel could obtain peace with all Arab states for the price of an agreement with the Palestinians. Prime Minister Netanyahu has publicly noted that Israel “valued efforts of Arab states to advance peace initiatives, and if these offers are not final offers, then I believe this spirit can create an atmosphere in which a comprehensive peace is possible.”

The Arab League supports President Obama's efforts.

The League has affirmed that Arab states are ready to "take the necessary steps to support the American effort," and will “deal positively with Obama's proposal to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.” It has called for a U.S. peace plan that would include a specific time frame and mechanisms for supervision of implementation and monitoring.

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