

## **„Bringing Peace Together”**

*Als Frucht der internationalen Konferenz „One Year after Annapolis” am 26./27. November 2008 in Ost-Jerusalem und in Abu Dis und unter dem Eindruck des Krieges in und um den Gazastreifen, der am 27. Dezember 2008 begann, hat das Leitungsgremium der Konferenz Barack Obama am 1. Januar 2009 einen Offenen Brief mit fünf zentralen Anliegen übermittelt.*

Jerusalem 1/1/2009

Dear President-Elect Barack Obama,

Bringing Peace Together (BPT) is a joint Palestinian-Israeli peace group dedicated to bringing real change to the lives of Palestinians and Israelis by contributing to the dialogue and development of a just and lasting peace. As the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to escalate while the peace process remains stagnant, it is evident that a renewed commitment to peace is needed by all sides. We, Palestinians and Israelis, have been inspired by your calls for, and commitment to, peace, freedom, and justice around the world. We, Palestinians and Israelis, have suffered from the devastating consequences of more than sixty years of war, conflict, tension, and distrust. Peace between the Palestinians and Israelis is not impossible. There is no better time than now to put peace back on the table.

We understand that you and your administration have already received a wealth of advice, knowledge, information, and feedback on the Israeli-Palestinian and Middle East peace process such as: The European strategic action plan, an Arab League letter, a book prepared by 15 American experts from the Brookings Institute and the Council on Foreign Relations, an Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs document, and an Oxford Research Group document. We in BPT would like to offer our suggestions on the road to peace, as a group of Palestinians and Israelis who directly experience the consequences of the conflict, and have personal insight into the elements that are needed in order to ensure a sustainable peace process.

On November 26 and 27, 2008, BPT hosted a conference in Jerusalem that brought together Palestinian, Israeli, and international diplomats, academics, civil society leaders, and peace activists to review lessons learned from previous negotiations, and develop new approaches to peace negotiations based on the lessons learned. By building on what we have learned from the past, we will be better positioned to achieve a comprehensive Middle East peace, and establish an independent Palestinian state that lives in peace and security, next to Israel. As such, the conference participants identified the following five strategic core strategies for achieving sustainable peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

**Core Strategy 1: The starting point for continuing the peace process**

**should be regional:** It is the regional factor that can help bring Fatah and Hamas together in the path of peace, help bring out a sustainable Israeli-Palestinian Peace that will not be spoiled by regional actors, and help in preventing escalation and deterioration to wars as happened again in Gaza beginning in the last few days.

Therefore peace should be resumed on all tracks with Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon with Israel simultaneously, and not sequentially, thereby creating multi-bilateral tracks that will begin together. While they might not end together. Beginning these tracks together will lead to a process of controlling the spoilers from all sides, until the comprehensive peace can be achieved.

**Core Strategy 2: Combining negotiations with the fulfillment of the sides of their obligations according to the first stage of the Road Map**

**Map:** One of the problems with the peace process is the contradiction between the nice words in the negotiating rooms and the realities on the ground that increase mistrust between the two sides. Accordingly, it is important that the Palestinians continue to fulfil their security responsibilities with all the successes they did in that direction in West Bank, and build on these successes, and also release the Israeli captive Corporal Gilad Shalit, while Israel freezes settlement expansion, including in East Jerusalem, lifts the settlement outposts, reopens the Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem, ends the sanctions on the Gaza Strip, and opens the free passage and the border crossings to the West Bank. It is also important that Israel lifts the checkpoints, releases Palestinian prisoners,

stops building the wall inside the Palestinian territories, and stops the targeted killings, attacks and collateral damage, and the settlers' aggression against the Palestinians. The two sides should have reciprocal Hudna that is inclusive to West Bank and Gaza, and they should abstain from using any kind of violence on their path to get to an end of occupation and to two-state solution. The two sides also should commit to the previous understandings that they achieved, so they will not reopen these understandings for re-negotiations. Also, the two sides should be compelled to stick to the time ceilings that they decided upon in order to achieve an agreement, in order to avoid continuing an open ended negotiations that will only increase mistrust, uncertainty, and the lack of confidence towards the peace process and its results. In this sense the two-state solution should have been created yesterday, and therefore the creation of the Palestinian State should happen as soon as possible without losing any additional time, that will make it's creation an impossible task.

**Core Strategy 3: Modify the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations agenda,** so that it will be more macro-focused, rather than micro-oriented, which has led to delving into many details at the expense of the overall solution. In addition, the concept of gradualism should be changed, in order to include two new stages: The first is ending the settlements project, to be followed by the second, ending the Israeli army occupation. Moreover, the new negotiations agenda should include the concepts of human security, aiming to get to an equitable access to both sides, to all the components of freedom from fear and freedom from want as all clarified by the literature on Human Security.

**Core Strategy 4: Promote a new concept for an international role in the conflict, focusing on involvement:** This involvement will be done in stages upon agreement between the two sides, and it should include military and civil components. It should also include international and regional participation aiming to help the Israeli army to withdraw from all the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 war, and help the Palestinians to achieve internal reconciliation. This international force should also play the role of monitoring the implementation of agreements and making necessary arbitrations. In this international-regional process, a dialogue between Hamas and Fatah should be left for the Arabs to handle themselves.

**Core Strategy 5: Promote work within the two publics in Israel, Palestine, and regional countries,** in order to promote the popular support of peace, as it is the people that represent the main forces that make peace agreements either prevail or fail. In Israel, more support is needed for the Arab Peace Initiative and the comprehensive Middle-Eastern Peace, while in Palestine and the wider region, more support for recognizing Israel as a member of the region is required.

Mr. President-elect, we urge you to revive the peace process and ask that you consider these core strategies as fundamental to achieving a sustainable peace between the Israelis and Palestinians, and to promote them in future negotiations. It is imperative that we reevaluate the successes and failures of past negotiations, and transform those lessons into an improved process of peace negotiations that instills mutual trust between the two sides and throughout the region, and achieves real results. The time is now to bring real change and real peace to the Middle East, and we support and thank you for your leadership in working towards this goal.

We would like to request to meet with you and your staff personally to convey our support and discuss the core principles to successful peace negotiations, and other ways in which we may help your administration on this crucial issue.

Sincerely,

Bringing Peace Together Coordinating Team

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