

## Endgame

**It's an idea for solving the conflict that sounds like a vision of the end of days: Grant Israeli citizenship and equal rights to all the Palestinians in the West Bank. And who is proposing the one-state solution? Right-wingers and settlers.**

**By Noam Sheizaf\***

"The prospects of the negotiations with Mahmoud Abbas do not look promising. President Obama undoubtedly thinks otherwise, but if Abbas speaks for anyone, it's barely half the Palestinians. The chances of anything good coming of this are not great. Another possibility is Jordan. If Jordan were ready to absorb both more territories and more people, things would be much easier and more natural. But Jordan does not agree to this. Therefore, I say that we can look at another option: for Israel to apply its law to Judea and Samaria and grant citizenship to 1.5 million Palestinians."

These remarks, which to many sound subversive, were not voiced by a left-wing advocate of a binational state. The speaker is from the Betar movement, a former top leader in Likud and political patron of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and a former defense and foreign affairs minister – Moshe Arens. On June 2, Arens published an op-ed in Haaretz ("Is there another option?") in which he urged consideration of a political alternative to the existing situation and the political negotiations. He wants to break the great taboo of Israeli policy making by granting Israeli citizenship to the Palestinians in the West Bank. Arens is not put off by those who accuse him of promoting the idea of a binational Jewish-Palestinian state. "We are already a binational state," he says, "and also a multicultural and multi-sector state. The minorities [meaning Arabs] here make up 20 percent of the population – that's a fact and you can't argue with facts."

---

\* „Haaretz2 15.07.2010.

As Washington, Ramallah and Jerusalem slouch toward what seems like a well-known, self-evident solution – two states for two nations, on the basis of the 1967 borders and a small-scale territorial swap – a conceptual breakthrough is taking place in the right wing. Its ideologues are no longer content with rejecting withdrawal and evacuation of settlements, citing security arguments calculated to strike fear into the hearts of the Israeli mainstream. Their new idea addresses the shortcomings of the status quo, takes account of the isolation in which Israel finds itself and acknowledges the need to break the political deadlock.

Once the sole preserve of the political margins, the approach is now being advocated by leading figures in Likud and among the settlers – people who are not necessarily considered extremists or oddballs. About a month before Arens published his article, Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin (Likud ) said, "It's preferable for the Palestinians to become citizens of the state than for us to divide the country." In an interview this week, Rivlin reiterates and elaborates this viewpoint.

In May 2009, Likud MK Tzipi Hotovely organized a conference in the Knesset titled "Alternatives to Two States." Since then, on a couple of occasions, she has called publicly for citizenship to be granted to the Palestinians "in gradual fashion." Now she is planning to publish a position paper on the subject. Uri Elitzur, former chairman of the Yesha Council of Settlements and Netanyahu's bureau chief in his first term as prime minister, last year published an article in the settlers' journal *Nekuda* calling for the onset of a process, at the conclusion of which the Palestinians will have "a blue ID card [like Israelis], yellow license plates [like Israelis], National Insurance and the right to vote for the Knesset." Emily Amrousi, a former spokesperson for the Yesha Council, takes part in meetings between settlers and Palestinians and speaks explicitly of "one land in which the children of settlers and the children of Palestinians will be bused to school together."

It's still not a full-fledged political camp and there are still holes in the theory. But although its advocates do not seem to be working together, the plans they put forward are remarkably similar. They all reject totally the various ideas of ethnic separation and recognize that political rights accrue to the Palestinians. They talk about a process that will take between a decade and a generation to complete, at the end of which the Palestinians will enjoy full personal rights, but in a country whose symbols and spirit will remain Jewish. It is at this point that the one-state right wing diverges from the binational left. The right is not talking about a neutral "state of all its citizens" with no identity, nor about "Israstine" with a flag showing a crescent and a Shield of David.

As envisaged by the right wing, one state still means a sovereign Jewish state, but in a more complex reality, and inspired by the vision of a democratic Jewish state without an occupation and without apartheid, without fences and separations. In such a state, Jews will be able to live in Hebron and pray at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, and a Palestinian from Ramallah will be able to serve as an ambassador and live in Tel Aviv or simply enjoy ice cream on the city's seashore. Sounds off the wall? "If every path seems to reach an impasse,' Elitzur wrote in Nekuda, "usually the right path is one that was never even considered, the one that is universally acknowledged to be unacceptable, taboo."

### Dead end

A year ago, in a seminar sponsored by the Geneva Initiative group, Uri Elitzur astonished an audience of parliamentary assistants with pointed, clear remarks about the desirable political framework. "The worst solution," he said, "is apparently the right one: a binational state, full annexation, full citizenship."

Among those who were not surprised were leading figures from the settlers' movement Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful ). Elitzur has been trying to sell them his idea for some time. "At first I was in splendid isolation," he says, "but lately more and more people are willing to move in my direction. I think it's the only practicable solution. The two-state formula has been kicked around for 10 years or more. All the politicians say – aloud or in a whisper – they are for it, but it's still not happening. The differences between left and right, over which they kill each other in hatred, are really very small. But everyone is convinced that moving a fraction of an inch from his viewpoint will mean the country's destruction. Neither the one side nor the other is to blame, nor even the Palestinians. The Arab world simply does not want to reach a compromise with us, and even if the formula is found, it won't endure.

"The existing situation is also a dead end," Elitzur continues. "It can't last forever. The problems Israel has faced in the international community in the past five years are due to the fact that the world is fed up. The international community is telling us, 'You claimed it was a temporary situation, yet that temporary situation has already lasted 40 years. We are ready to agree to another decade, but we want to know where things are going.' The Israelis are also starting to grasp this. I want us to look for the solutions on the other side of the scale, which lies between the existing situation and the annexation and naturalization of all the Palestinians."

In internal forums and in front of a home audience, Elitzur is even more outspoken. "There are many softened or newspeak variations of apartheid," he wrote in Nekuda, which devoted an entire issue to the search for an alternative policy to the two-state solution. "Some suggest that the Palestinians should be under Israeli rule but vote in the elections for the Jordanian parliament. There are ideas involving autonomy, cantons, powerless self-government. It's not by chance or by neglect that none of these proposals became the official policy of Likud or of the right. In the end, they all go back to a dead end: a

whole population living under Israeli rule without civil rights. That is unacceptable on a permanent basis. It's a situation that can exist only temporarily and faces mounting pressure, both internal and external, to bring the temporary situation to an end at long last."

What do you say to the allegations that you have joined the radical left?

"There's a clear separation between us. I am talking about a Jewish state, the state of the Jewish people, which will contain a large Arab minority. The left is talking about an Arab state containing a Jewish minority, even if they do not explicitly think that. The leftist demonstrators in [the West Bank village of] Bil'in have totally joined the Palestinian cause."

Still, in terms of the political plan, there are points of convergence between you and them.

"In terms of the political plan, yes. But so what? I have many points in common with the extreme left. I am in favor of refusing an order to dismantle settlements, they are in favor of refusing an order to serve in the territories, and both of us are against the [separation] fence. I am not frightened at the fact that there are Jews with whom I profoundly disagree on one issue but with whom I share views on other issues. But I will not enter into a political alliance with the Anarchists [Against the Wall] even though I too am against the fence. We have common ground, but beyond it we have a very deep disagreement. As I see it, the State of Israel was established in order to preserve the rights of the small Jewish minority in the Middle East – six million vs. 300 million – and that is its main purpose. After fulfilling its main purpose, it is also a democratic state. That's why it has to grant human rights to everyone, Jew or non-Jew."

Indeed, Elitzur no longer needs the left to wrench him out of his splendid isolation. Hanan Porat, for example, one of the iconic

founders of Gush Emunim, though rejecting what he terms "the automatic citizenship that Uri is proposing, which is naive and is liable to lead to grave consequences," also suggests gradually applying Israeli law in the territories, first in regions where there is a Jewish majority, and within a decade or a generation, throughout.

And the Palestinians?

Porat: "In my view, every Arab has three options. First, those who want an Arab state and are ready to implement that goal by means of terrorism and a struggle against the state, have no place in the Land of Israel. Second, those who accept their place and accept Jewish sovereignty, but do not want to take part in the state and fulfill all their obligations, can be considered residents and enjoy full human rights, but not political representation in the state's institutions. By the same token, they will also not have full obligations, such as military or national service. Third, those who say they are loyal to the state and to its laws and are ready to fulfill the obligations it prescribes and declare loyalty to it, can receive full citizenship. I consider this a moral and human principle: citizenship is not forced on anyone or granted just like that. We tried this in East Jerusalem, and the fact is that we failed.

"There is no point in threatening us with the idea of a state of all its citizens," Porat continues. "Already 30 years ago, we in Gush Emunim were against solutions of fear – both withdrawal and transfer – and said that in the Return to Zion there is room for the Arab population who desire this, as long as we are not naive about the process."

### Lower price

A few weeks before he published his article in Nekuda, Elitzur spoke at the conference Hotovely organized in the Knesset on alternatives

to the two-state solution. Despite the participation of serious speakers, such as former chief of staff and present minister for strategic affairs, Moshe Ya'alon, and Major General (res. ) Giora Eiland, a former head of the National Security Council, Hotovely came out of the conference disappointed. "It made a lot of headlines and had resonance, but I did not see a genuine vision," she says. "The ideas ranged from the status quo to 'Jordan is Palestine.' Most of the speakers rejected the alternative put forward by the left without putting anything positive on the table.

"This approach has characterized the political discourse of the right wing for years," she continues. "The right, you could say, had a Qassam for every argument of the left. We had deep ideological roots which said that this is our land, but beyond that we did not put forward a real solution. Only Uri Eilitzur took a different approach."

Since then, Hotovely has become increasingly convinced that the idea of giving the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria citizenship must be part of the political horizon. At the moment, she envisages this as a long-term process, perhaps lasting a generation, during which the situation on the ground will stabilize, while the symbols and character of the Jewish state will be enshrined in a constitution. But the goal must be clear: annexation and citizenship, or as she puts it, "removing the question mark from above Judea and Samaria."

Hotovely: "My outlook has two motivations. First, my deep belief in our right to the Land of Israel. Shiloh and Beit El settlements are, for me, the land of our forefathers in the full sense of the term. The second thing is that I do not ignore the fact that there are Palestinians here. Both the left and the right chose to shut their eyes to the fact that there are human beings here. The left chose to do it by building a fence and deciding that they just don't want to see them, and the right simply said, 'We will continue and see what happens.' We have reached a critical point, a situation in which the entire Zionist enterprise is under threat, because the international

community now disputes the legitimacy of our defense of Sderot and Ashkelon, not the legitimacy of building a settler outpost."

The international community takes that stance because we are still occupiers. There will be greater legitimacy when the occupation ends.

"We did not get legitimacy in return for our previous withdrawals. Worse, the harm we are inflicting on the Palestinian population has become far more mortal. Our instruments of defense became tanks and planes, and that is always worse than policing operations that are done when you control the ground.

"The assumption of the left is that once it hides behind the international border, everything will be permitted. But it's clear already now that not everything is permitted and that the principle of proportionality is shackling Israel in Gaza – so what will happen in Judea and Samaria? In fact, it goes even deeper. There is a moral failure here. After all, the left has long since stopped talking about peace and is resorting to a terminology of separation and segregation. They are also convinced that the confrontation will continue even afterward. The result is a solution that perpetuates the conflict and turns us from occupiers into perpetrators of massacres, to put it bluntly. It's the left that made us a crueler nation and also put our security at risk."

Could a country with such a large non-Jewish minority still be Jewish?

"At the moment, we are talking about citizenship in Judea and Samaria, not Gaza. In Gaza there is an enemy regime that rejects Israel. It is outside the political discourse, including the two-state discourse. There are 1.5 million Palestinians in Judea and Samaria. I want it to be clear that I do not recognize national rights of Palestinians in the Land of Israel. I recognize their human rights and



their individual rights, and also their individual political rights – but between the sea and the Jordan there is room for one state, a Jewish state."

The fact is that the state is having a hard time containing a minority of 20 percent even now. How will it cope with 30 or 40 percent and also preserve its character?

"Every choice entails a price. The status quo carries a heavy price, the two-state idea carries a heavy price, and the approach I am now presenting also carries a price. Coping with the Arab minority is a lower price than the danger of the Qassams, the delegitimization and the immoral actions we will commit in coping with them, and also preferable to giving up parts of the homeland, including Jerusalem."

Once the Palestinians become citizens, things might lurch out of your control. Some will say you are playing with fire.

"Everyone is playing with fire. There is no solution that is divorced from the world of risk in the Middle East. The risks in the two-state conception are not virtual, they have already been actualized. The risks I am talking about can be addressed in a rational process lasting a generation."

Of the two dangers you discern – a binational state or a Palestinian state – which would you choose?

"Unequivocally the binational danger. In the binational process we have a degree of control, but the moment you abandon the area to the Palestinian entity, what control do you have over what will happen there?"

51 percent majority

In a political reality of increasing polarization between the country's Jewish and Arab citizens, talk of a shared space between the Mediterranean and the Jordan does not always get a serious hearing. Some of the right-wing spokesmen understand this. For Moshe Arens, integration of the Arab population into Israeli society is a prior condition – only afterward will it be possible to talk about granting citizenship to the Palestinians in the territories. "If we are incapable of integrating Israel's Arab citizens, how will we be able to offer the others citizens?" Arens says. "If I wanted something to happen after my article was published, it was for an emphasis to be placed on the attitude toward the Arab population inside Israel. I have spoken to the prime minister about this dozens of times. It's the biggest problem in the country. If we do not integrate the Arabs, it will simply be a disaster."

There is one large party that says they simply have to be transferred into a Palestinian state.

"The platform of Yisrael Beiteinu is nonsensical, an attempt to curry to the lowest common denominator in the country," says Arens sharply. "Where will the transfer be carried out? Will Galilee be transferred to the Palestinian state? The Negev to Egypt? It's not doable. They are just causing damage to 20 percent of our population, insulting them by saying they want to be rid of them, strip them of Israeli citizenship. Who ever heard the like?"

"I repeat: first of all, we need to take care of the Israeli Arabs who are citizens. That is also essential if we are thinking of giving citizenship to Palestinians from Judea and Samaria. Only if they see that the Arabs have it good in Israel will they think it might be good for them, too."

Your opponents will say that by publishing an article like this, you are strengthening Sheikh Ra'ad Salah [a leader of the Islamic Movement

in Israel] and that you will introduce a fifth column into the country that will spell the end of the Jewish state.

"Only those who don't grasp the full depth of the issue will say that. I have written dozens of times that the policy must be two-pronged: against the Islamic Movement – to outlaw them, because they are a subversive, seditious movement – and, at the same time, to work against feelings of discrimination among Israel's Arab citizens. It is untenable for these people to be hewers of wood and drawers of water – doing the dirty work in the industrialized and advanced country that is Israel."

Have you been accused of becoming a post-Zionist in the wake of your article?

"That's a lot of nonsense. Was [Revisionist leader Ze'ev] Jabotinsky a post-Zionist? He talked about a Jewish state with a Jewish majority, but for him a majority meant even 51 percent, too. In his last book, he suggested that the president might be a Jew and the vice president an Arab, and also the opposite. Jabotinsky was no post-Zionist."

If there is anything that unites the political establishment – Ehud Barak, Tzipi Livni and now Netanyahu, too – it's the view that granting the Palestinians citizenship is dangerous and that only separation will ensure a democratic Jewish state.

"Demagoguery. If Zionism means 'as little as possible for the Arabs,' I have to say that I do not accept that. Jabotinsky did not accept it, either. You call that Zionism – as few Arabs as possible in Israel? That is the Zionism of [Avigdor] Lieberman. If what is implied by the rhetoric of Tzipi Livni is that we need as few Arabs as possible in Israel, it's not so far from Lieberman. "People should not exploit what I said for their purposes. My intention is that, to begin with, we have to focus on the Arab population in Israel, and especially the Muslims.

It's definitely a dual-stage process. Only then, many years from now, will it be possible to consider additional minorities, and then maybe the Arabs across the Green Line will say that things are simply good in Israel – not in order to overcome us demographically, but simply because things here are good. We haven't yet reached that point."

### One land

If Elitzur, Hotovely and Arens represent the political aspect of the idea of a joint state, Emily Amrousi is interested in its everyday side. Amrousi, who lives in the West Bank settlement of Talmon, is active in Eretz Shalom (Land of Peace ), an organization that arranges meetings between settlers and Palestinians, focusing on the local interests of both sides, not necessarily on the political pitfalls. She, too, admits that in the distant future there will have to be citizenship for everyone. "But don't make me out to be a one-state advocate," Amrousi says. "In the end, it might arrive at that, but that's still a very long way off. Let's talk first about one land, one strip of ground. We are not like the Canaanite movement: we are not forgoing the State of Israel and the flag of Israel."

And until we reach the coveted equality, will we have to make do with the status quo?

"No, I don't like the status quo either because it's really not moral. It's impossible to go on like this, with a situation in which my Palestinian neighbors have to cross three checkpoints to get from one village to another. There is a distortion here – true, for security reasons, for logical reasons – but something went wrong along the way, and we can't go on accepting this.

"The word 'citizenship' is very national and very political. In the Eretz Shalom initiative we do not talk about citizenship, but about concepts of neighborly relations. There are no neighborly relations here,

because either it's relations between enemies or we are transparent to them and they to us. And the relations that do exist are like those between horse and rider. There must be an initial basis before we talk about citizenship and a judicial system. We need to speak their language and we can even have a joint swimming pool here, because both they and we need separation between men and women. That may be a bit far off, but we have to think first about everyday life. I know that sounds like conditional citizenship – saying they must first be my good neighbors and then I will grant them rights – but I really do want to talk about a process that starts from below."

From below or from above, in the end we reach a state whose demographic and geographic parameters are very different from what we have today.

"Demography is definitely a threat, but the other threat is bigger. The harder price is to cut up this country, with one part topographically higher than the other. I can't speak with the Israeli public now about citizenship and Palestinians on the beach in Tel Aviv, because that's a threat to the public. The whole situation now is wrong. We made a mistake, we arrived at the wrong place and we have a long way to go, but in the end there has to be one space here. We will yet talk about one state, but in the meantime we can talk about one land."

One can take a cynical view of Eretz Shalom, of Amrousi's decision to learn Arabic or of the project being organized by the settlers in Talmon: to build a lean-to for Palestinian workers awaiting a security check before entering their settlement. Fashionably late, one could say, and under the threat of evacuation, Gush Emunim is discovering the enlightened occupation. But there is another side, too: the impression that the Israeli center, in its addiction to the separation idea, has sloughed off the question of relations with the Arab population, on both sides of the Green Line. Is it a coincidence that Amrousi chose to describe the reality in the Land of Israel as "one space," a term used by critical sociologists from the radical left?

Prof. Yehouda Shenhav, formerly from the Sephardi Democratic Rainbow and editor of the journal Theory and Criticism for the past decade, believes that the concept of reality for people on the right, as quoted above, is far more accurate and honest than the two-state concept of the left. In his recent book, "The Time of the Green Line" (Am Oved, Hebrew ), Shenhav returns to what he terms the true foundation of the conflict, namely 1948, and not "the obliterating and blurring paradigm according to which everything was swell until 1967, and then things went awry, as David Grossman writes in 'The Yellow Wind.'" Shenhav rejects both the two-state idea and the "state of all its citizens." He argues that the only possible stable model is one that will recognize the distinctiveness of different communities – among both Palestinians and Jews – in the one space between the sea and the Jordan River.

"The diagnosis of the right-wingers is accurate," Shenhav says, and immediately adds, "But let's be precise: it's not the whole of the right. Most of them do not speak in those terms. But there is a minority that reads reality in a far less denying and less repressive way than all the people on the left who support the two-state solution. The majority of the left does not understand a spatial concept that does not permit homogeneity. The Jews and the Palestinians are Siamese twins. The ideology of the Jewish state espoused by the articulate spokespersons of the left tries to sever the different Palestinian groups, and takes their severance as a fait accompli. In contrast, Rubi [Reuven] Rivlin and Moshe Arens understand that those on both sides of the Green Line are Palestinians.

"I am not in favor of the wrongs being caused by the settlements," Shenhav continues, "but in their political diagnosis the settlers are right. In one way or another, we too will ultimately learn this, and the only question is how much bloodshed it will entail. I wrote exactly what the right is saying today: the war in Gaza is the model that will be repeated in the future if there is separation."

The 1967 lines are accepted by the international community. The left is against the plunder of land that is taking place to the east, against the fact that a settlement like Ofra is situated on private Palestinian land.

"What exactly is the difference between Ofra and Beit Dagan, which is situated on [the former Palestinian village of] Beit Dagan? Do the 19 years from 1948 to 1967 make one settlement moral and the other immoral? In my book I quote Uri Elitzur, who says, 'You [the left] expelled the Palestinians in 1948, did not allow them back, established settlements on all their villages and afterward built the separation fence, and then you come to us with complaints, even though we have not destroyed even one village in the West Bank – not even one – to build a settlement.'

"The 1967 paradigm is intended to make it possible for the left to live in Tel Aviv and feel good about itself," Shenhav continues. "The settlements will be sacrificed in order to atone for what they did to the Palestinians in 1948. The settlers will pay the price of the sins of the left. Yossi Beilin and his Geneva Initiative and all the rest want to preserve the achievements of the Ashkenazi elite.

"Don't get me wrong: I am not in favor of the vision of the right wing. All I am doing is recommending that the left listen to what the right is saying. To take the right wing's diagnosis and develop it into normative and moral left-wing viewpoints, to create a horizon that reflects leftism – not nationalism, not a Jewish empire."

Are you now a person of the left or the right?

"I don't know. I wrote in favor of the [Palestinians'] right of return and I am against the evacuation of settlements. So where does that leave me?"

### Great candor

The supporters of the two-state concept always warned against closing a window of opportunity to establish a Palestinian state. Now that the right has started to talk about a one-state solution, is the window closed? Definitely not, says Gadi Baltiansky, director general of the Geneva Initiative: "But I appreciate the sincerity of those who speak clearly at this time. The right always spoke in negative terms. Tzipi Livni once noted that the Likud's platform always starts with the word 'no.' No to a Palestinian state, no to withdrawal, no, no and more no. Now there are people on the right who are saying with great candor what must be done, even if some of them are still hesitant about going public.

"I never liked the division into the 'peace camp' and the 'national camp,'" Baltiansky continues. "The fact is that I am no less national than the right and they want peace no less than I do. In Israel there is a two-state camp and a one-state, binational camp, and the choice is between them. But the right should not delude itself: one Jewish state will not be a solution, but a continuation of the conflict. There will be fights over the flag and over the anthem and over the school curriculum, and the situation will be untenable."

As of now, giving citizenship to the Palestinians is not on the political agenda of the right. According to the head of the Yesha Council, Danny Dayan, "the idea is unrealistic. In the present circumstances, it could put Israel's character at risk. Morally, the fact that the Palestinians will not have full political rights in the foreseeable future is the fault of the Palestinians themselves. They rejected every compromise and chose war and are now paying the price of their mistakes. It's not apartheid, it's their choice."

So what's the solution?



"The solution for the coming decades is the present status quo, with improvements of one kind or another. Of all the possibilities, that one affords the most stable balance. It is also important to say that even so, the Palestinians have more political rights than any Arab citizen in the Middle East, with the possible exception of the Lebanese."

Faithful to his outlook, Dayan last week – ahead of Netanyahu's meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama – was busy cobbling together a coalition of the leaders of the right-wing parties in the Knesset. The aim: to compel Netanyahu to end the construction freeze in the territories at the end of September, as promised. Other MKs who are against the two-state solution, such as Aryeh Eldad (National Union ) and Danny Danon (Likud ), also told me that giving the Palestinians citizenship is not on their agenda, not even in the face of the emerging two-state plan.

Still, the impression is that even those who are against the idea have modified their approach recently. Adi Mintz, a former director general of the Yesha Council, presented a plan whereby after the security situation stabilizes, Israel will annex 60 percent of Judea and Samaria, whose 300,000 Palestinian inhabitants will be granted Israeli citizenship. The status of the rest of the population and of the area will, in this view, be settled within the framework of a comprehensive regional solution in the more distant future.

The right-leaning newspaper, Makor Rishon, recently devoted an issue to the possibility of leaving settlements under Palestinian sovereignty if the two-state plan is implemented. Logic says that if supporters of such an idea are truly serious, it should not be a problem for them to agree to live in the one state that will extend from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, whatever its character.

In any event, it will soon become clear whether renewal of the political process will lead to the removal from the agenda of every

option except the establishment of a Palestinian state, or whether the opposition to such a state will generate momentum for supporters of the one-state alternative. Those who espouse this idea admit that its main drawback is that no genuine discussion of its merits and shortcomings has ever been held. Thus, key issues, such as the transition period leading up to citizenship, the refugee problem, the status of Gaza and even the bizarre question of how many Palestinians there really are have not been seriously addressed

.

For this reason, Hotovely wants to publish a position paper on the issue, perhaps with the aid of an American research institute. "I want people to understand the issues, not to say that [MK Ahmed] Tibi and I are from the same party. The taboo that forbids talk about any option other than the two-state solution is almost anti-democratic. It's like brain-gagging."

-----