



THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN TWO-STATE SOLUTION MODEL: AN ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE

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“The Israeli-Palestinian Two-State Solution Model: An Israeli Perspective”

1. Introduction

One hundred and twenty-one years ago, the first Zionist Congress convened in Basel, Switzerland. For the first time after two millennia in exile, the vision of an independent political entity for the Jewish people was formulated. Twenty years later, in 1917, the Zionist movement achieved its most significant milestone—the Balfour Declaration:

“His Majesty’s government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish People ... ”

This year also marks 70 years since the establishment of the State of Israel and 71 years since United Nations Resolution 181, which called for the partition of the then British-ruled Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state.

Moreover, Israel has just passed the 50th anniversary of yet another historic event in the region: the 1967 war. When attacked by five Arab states, which were supported by eight additional ones, Israel swiftly defeated them and conquered the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. However, the admirable victory of the 19-year-old country fighting for its life has not yet been translated into serving the core values of a Jewish democratic state as encapsulated in the 1948 Declaration of Independence.

Within seven decades Israel has reached globally outstanding achievements in multiple areas—science, culture, academics, technology, economics, agriculture, literature, medicine, security, resilience—all while absorbing millions of immigrants. However, within the past five decades, Israel has also seen an incremental erosion of its founders’ vision and an ongoing internal struggle over Jewish and human values and the identity of the Israeli society. With no recognized boundaries to encompass Israel’s fundamental values, it displays growing trends of inclining to the political right via extreme nationalism, messianic religiosity, and anti-liberalism. This reality is rather distant from the Zionist aspiration of forming an exemplary society. Yet leadership has turned a blind eye.

Due to Israel’s dramatic shift away from its founding principles, it is more crucial today than ever that Israel reverse that trend, starting with ending the conflict with the Palestinians. Israelis do not question the Jewish people’s right to self-determination in its own state in Eretz Yisrael, but some do doubt that the Palestinian people have the right to self-determination in general, and in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in particular. However, Zionism never intended to govern a people other than its own. It is time to end this conflict and draw Israel’s borders alongside a demilitarized Palestinian state to secure the democratic nation-state of the Jewish people—the true vision of Zionism. However, with the Oslo Accords catching, a new approach is needed to achieve that vision.

2. The Oslo Accords Catch

Few experts, if any, could have foreseen in the early 1990s that a radicalized Jew would assassinate an Israeli prime minister, Palestinians would commit multiple suicide and terror attacks against Israeli civilians, Hamas would violently overthrow Fatah in the Gaza Strip, and the Israeli population in the West Bank, outside of Jerusalem, would quadruple within 25 years. However, with the breakdown of Oslo, that is exactly what has transpired.

Israelis and Palestinians entered the Oslo process with different goals. Generally, the Israelis strove for long-term security and the Palestinians for statehood, yet both sides came out of the negotiations empty-handed.

However, Oslo's legacy has been, and still is, to have effectively separated Israel and the Palestinians into two distinct national entities. Whoever is concerned with the future of Israel and the Palestinians should aim at preserving the conditions for a two-state solution, with the two distinct national entities agreed upon at Oslo still intact.

3. Getting Out of the Political Deadlock

Currently, the odds are not in anyone's favor for attaining a full-fledged, permanent status agreement in the near future, and for several reasons: the gaps in the historical narratives of Israelis and Palestinians are wide, and widening over time; there is mutual distrust between the respective leaderships and societies; the parties are far apart on the permanent status of core contentious issues: Jerusalem, the Holy sites, territory, settlements and boundaries, security, and refugees; the leaders are reluctant to move ahead and seem unprepared to take the risks involved in moving toward peace; and there is no reliable, mutually trusted broker to facilitate a negotiation process. In addition, developments in the broader Middle East and across the Arab world in the last decade have further complicated the intertwined nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, have pushed it down the priority list of the Arab regimes, and have displayed trends that are concerning to decision-makers in the region and beyond. Furthermore, within the Israeli and the Palestinian political systems there are domestic inhibitors to the process that will be elaborated upon in a separate section below.

Despite the solid security cooperation between the respective Israeli and Palestinian forces, from a candid Israeli perspective, today's borders and status quo are unsustainable—militarily, diplomatically, and morally. For Israel, it is imperative that it reverse the trend toward a one binational state, which would be neither Jewish nor democratic. Israel needs to realize that a political horizon for the Palestinians is also a road map for genuine Israeli independence. It needs to adopt a proactive approach to change the course of this trend and resolve the conflict through a balanced and graduated political initiative with transitional phases. The goal of such an initiative would be the territorial division of the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea into two nation-states.

Theoretically, the fundamental contour of the endgame for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is already known, and its parameters might still be within reach. Years ago, President Bill Clinton redefined the formulae of “land for peace” and suggested a framework for resolving core contentious issues: territory and settlements, Jerusalem and the Old City, the refugees and security. However, the path to get to that point is definitely unclear. It is clear though that a third party, preferably U.S.-led, is indispensable for moving ahead, and that the inhibitors to the process should be addressed adequately.

4. Politics and Public Opinion

4.1 *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in the Eyes of the Israeli Public*

When considering the Israeli public’s opinion regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the issues most crucial in their eyes are Jerusalem, the settlements, and security. The Institute for National Security Studies’ (INSS) National Security Index, a systematic longitudinal survey tracking trends in Israeli public opinion on national security issues, reveals valuable information about public opinion on these specific issues.

Only 21% of the Jewish Israeli public believe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the gravest external threat to the State of Israel, and 83% of Jewish Israelis believe that Israel is capable of successfully defending against a chain of consecutive major terrorist attacks. These percentages show that the Israeli public is in no hurry to reach a solution with the Palestinians; instead, it believes that the State will succeed in containing the threats and dealing with the challenges facing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

4.1.1 Support of the Two-State Solution

During the past few years, many world leaders have offered different solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, all of which involved the idea of a two-state solution. However, support for the establishment of a Palestinian state has decreased in the past 10 years. In 2008, support stood at 46% and rose to 58% in 2010, following Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's foreign policy speech at Bar Ilan University, in which he explicitly declared his support for a two-state solution. Thereafter, support for the establishment of a Palestinian state gradually decreased to 43% as of 2018.

The INSS National Security Index reveals that support for the two-state solution among the Israeli public stood at 55% as of 2017. However, when looking at the past five years, this percentage has fallen from 69% in 2012. A majority of the secular public (72%) supports the two-state solution, though among the religious public the support is very low—only 20%. This solution is controversial among the Israeli public, and different sectors of it believe in alternative solutions.

The Index reveals that 39% of the Jewish Israeli public believe Israel’s best option is to strive toward a permanent agreement, 18% believe the best option is the annexation of the settlement blocs in the West Bank to Israel, and 17% believe that the best option is transitional arrangements for separation from the Palestinians. Another 15% believe that the

best option is to maintain the status quo, and the remaining 11% support the annexation of all territories in the West Bank to Israel.

Another survey done this year by Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research shows that the highest support for the two-state solution is among secular and traditional Jews and reveals more data about other sectors of the Israeli public. Religious Jews, for example, prefer a state with equal rights for all its citizens over other alternatives, and an equal part of them prefer the two-state solution with the possibility of expelling the Palestinian population. Ultra-Orthodox Jews also prefer the possibility of a single egalitarian state over other alternatives.

When presented with various proposals aimed at ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—a two-state solution, a confederation, or a single binational and democratic state—46% of the Israeli Jewish public still support the two-state solution while 33% support a confederation, and the remainder prefer one binational, democratic state. Most supporters of the two-state solution define themselves as politically left and center, with 63% of them being secular. Most supporters of a confederation option also self-identify as being on the left, though they are accompanied by right-wing and religious Jews (5% and 10%, respectively). Support for a binational democratic state is low and erratic, and its support is the highest among Ultra-Orthodox and “religious” (modern Orthodox) Jews (40% and 31%, respectively).

However, from an overlook at the entire political spectrum, the option with the highest support among all groups is for the two-state solution, including groups that define themselves as “moderate right.” Only among those who define themselves as “right” are the groups that support the two-state solution and the single-state solution in equal measure (20%). The highest support in this group is for deportation (“transfer”) of Palestinians (29%). Among the Arab citizens of Israel, 88% support the two-state solution, and 12% are in favor of the one-state solution. Not surprisingly, other plans (apartheid, expulsion, etc.) have no support among Arab Israelis.

A survey conducted by Dahlia Scheindlin, a reputable international public opinion analyst based in Tel Aviv, presents a helpful, broad perspective of today’s Jewish Israeli public opinion. When examining the political tendencies of the Israeli public over the past 10 years, it appears that the Israeli public is shifting toward the political right. The percentage of Israeli Jews defining themselves politically as on the right rose by 6% between 2007 and 2017, while the proportion of those who define themselves as center, center-left, and left has decreased. Importantly, political tendencies vary between the different sectors of the Israeli Jewish population. While a majority of the secular population define themselves as center and left (59%), the vast majority of the Jewish religious sectors in Israel define themselves as being on the right (69% of traditional Jews, 75% of Ultra-Orthodox Jews, and 91% of religious Jews).

4.1.2 Support for a Combined Deal

To identify obstacles that future deals face, the survey analyzed the core issues that bother Israeli society. These will probably be the core issues in future Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. To better identify the core issues, respondents were first offered a two-state, permanent peace agreement. Subsequently, they were offered several incentivizing policies in combination with the initial agreement.

The initial two-state agreement was composed of (a) a demilitarized Palestinian state; (b) an Israeli withdrawal to the Green Line (the 1949 armistice line, more often referred to as the June 1967 borders) with equal territorial exchange; (c) family reunification in Israel of 100,000 Palestinian refugees; (d) West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine; (e) the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall under Israeli sovereignty, and the Muslim and Christian quarters and the al Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount under Palestinian sovereignty; and (f) the end of the conflict and claims. Only 35% of Israeli Jews supported the terms of this agreement, and 55% were opposed, compared to 85% of Israeli Arabs who supported it. In total, 43% of Israelis supported the initial agreement. Support for the initial package was higher among the less religious respondents and lower among the more religious. The skepticism among Israeli Jews appears to be closely related to serious doubts about its feasibility, echoing previous surveys' findings. Prior surveys have shown that trust in the Palestinians—that the Palestinian public wants peace—has been a powerful factor.

Among all Israelis, including Arabs, nearly half (48%) believe a two-state solution is still viable, while 42% think settlements have spread too much for it to be viable. Among Israeli Jews specifically, even more think it is not viable (46% compared to 42% who think it is). However, support among Israeli Jews for the general idea of a two-state solution stands at 46% while among Israeli Arabs, support for the two-state solution rises to 83%. Among Israeli Jews who believe that the two-state solution is still viable, 50% support the initial agreement. Moreover, their support of an agreement is partly dependent on the belief that there is indeed a chance for the establishment of a Palestinian state over the next five years. Regarding this time frame, 73% of Israeli Jews do not expect that a Palestinian state will be established in the next five years. However, still fewer people support the other three possible alternatives to a two-state solution: one state with equal rights; one state without rights; or the expulsion, relocation, or “transfer” of Palestinians.

Despite the majority's rejection of the initial agreement, their opposition can be shifted significantly once specifically defined incentivizing policies are added. For example, 44% of Israeli Jews who are opposed would change their minds if the Palestinian government committed to ongoing security cooperation as it does today—including sharing intelligence with Israeli security forces, preventing attacks, and arresting terror suspects—bringing total support to a 59% majority. When offered four similar options for what should happen next in the conflict, 38% of Israeli Jews chose to reach a peace agreement. However, in a departure from previous attitudes, 18% of Israeli Jews called for a definitive war with the Palestinians.

4.2 *Polling the Elite*

Elites are influenced by their perceptions of their society's opinion, as well as by their perceptions of the opposition's opinion. A survey of 175 elite Israelis from sectors such as academia, business, media, politics, and civil society at the end of 2017 reveals interesting data relating to this point.

Support for the two-state solution was very high among the elite on the left (99%) and center (78%) but relatively low among elites on the right (26%). These findings confirm those of previous studies of the general population—i.e., that self-definition by political or ideological affiliation is meaningful and describes highly distinct positions and worldviews with relation to the conflict. They also substantiate another consistent finding: even among hard-line right-wingers in Israel, a minority support the two-state solution; further, centrists hold positions that are significantly closer to the left than to the right, but in slightly lower proportions.

The support for an initial comprehensive package for the two-state solution was high among the left (90%) and the center (57%), but only 13% of the right supported it. The package would include the following: (a) the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state with borders close to the 1967 boundaries; (b) Israel's annexation of large blocks of settlements in exchange for an equally sized territory for Palestine, plus Israel's evacuation of outlying settlements; (c) establishing East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, with West Jerusalem remaining the capital of Israel and each side controlling its holy sites in the Old City; (d) the return of Palestinian refugees to a Palestinian state, with a limited number allowed into Israel for family reunification.

To test the strength of the opposition to the package, an incentivizing amendment was offered to those who opposed it. The amendment stated that the Palestinian leadership would announce that it recognizes Israel's religious and national connection to the region and its right to exist as a Jewish state. Among the Israeli elite, the highest positive response came from the center, with 30% changing their mind and accepting the package if it contained this incentive; only 14% of elites on the right and left followed suit and accepted the package.

The Israeli elite was asked to assess the majority opinion among the Israeli public. Only the left (64%) believed that most Israelis support the two-state solution; 41% of the center and 22% of the right believed the same. This trend broadly reflects findings among the general population—the ideology of respondents influences their assessment of their own society. Thus, Israelis on the left are more likely to think society shares their support for the two-state solution, and those on the right are less likely to think society supports a position that most of them do not favor. When asked to assess most Palestinians' views, 64% of Israeli elites on the left believed that most Palestinians support the two-state solution, while 30% of the center and 26% of the right believed the same.

4.3 Incentives as Reflected in Recent Joint Polls

Any initiative to revive negotiations for a two-state solution, perhaps led by the Trump administration, will not be “dead on arrival,” but only if both publics buy in to the idea. The latest joint survey of Israelis and Palestinians shows how to accomplish that.

A recent poll identifies policy incentives that would dramatically increase support for a new proposal. For example, 44% of Israeli Jews who oppose the two-state principle would change their minds if the Palestinian government commits to maintaining Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation, including sharing intelligence with Israeli security forces, arresting terror suspects, and preventing attacks. After adding this incentive, 44% of Israeli Jews said they would support a two-state solution, increasing total Israeli support to 59% (from the current 46%).

Among Palestinians who are opposed, 39% would change their minds if Israel recognized the exodus (“Nakba”) and suffering of Palestinians who fled or were expelled from their homes during the 1948 war and if Israel provided compensation to them. This provision would boost Palestinian backing for a two-state solution to 62% (also from 46%).

An additional incentive that appeals to both sides is putting a Trump plan within the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative, which would change the minds of 37% of Israelis (55% of Israeli Jews) and 24% of Palestinians who now oppose an agreement.

These are but a few examples demonstrating that both populations are more flexible and open to new ideas than they were in the past. If Trump’s team uses the survey’s findings to craft a plan that will garner support by most people on both sides, its proposal will be a living document. Israelis and Palestinians will be incentivized to drag their recalcitrant leaders into a process to resolve the conflict through a territorial division into two nation-states for two peoples.

Other incentives were suggested as well to see what kind of responses they elicited from the public. Perhaps if offered, these too could have positive effects in bringing the two sides to an acceptable agreement.

What if the agreement states that the Palestinian state will have a democratic political system based on the rule of law, periodic elections, free press, strong parliament, independent judiciary, and equal rights for religious and ethnic minorities, as well as strong anti-corruption measures? Forty percent of Israeli Jews said this would make them support the agreement.

What if the agreement states that Israeli Jews, including settlers, are allowed, if they wish, to live as permanent residents inside Palestine while maintaining their Israeli citizenship, as long as they are law abiding? Thirty-five percent of Israeli Jews would support the agreement with this item.

And what if the Palestinians return to a Palestinian state and the agreement states that they do not have the collective right to return to Israel proper, with exceptions only for family reunification? Thirty-one percent of Jewish Israelis would support the agreement in this case.

And what if the agreement allows Jews to visit at the Temple Mount? Forty-seven percent of Israeli Jews said they would support the agreement in that case. Added to those who already support the agreement, about 61% of Israeli Jews would support it with this item.

In perceiving the social support of the two-state package, the respondents estimated that the level of support for the package among their communities is low. Among Israeli Jews, a high rate of 62% believes that most of the public oppose the plan. Although 35% of Israeli Jews support the plan, only 19% believe that most of the public supports it. The percentage of respondents who believe that the Palestinians would support the combined package (29%) is higher than the percentage of those who believe that most Jews support it.

Additional incentives included:

Mutual recognition of Palestine and Israel as the homelands of their peoples. Fifty-nine percent of Israeli Jews support this incentive, including 40% of West Bank settlers. Eighty-five percent of Israeli Arabs support mutual recognition.

The establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and the demilitarization of the Gaza Strip (no heavy weaponry). Fifty-six percent of Israeli Jews support and a nearly identical percentage of Israeli Arabs (55%) support this item.

The establishment and deployment of a multinational force in the Palestinian state to ensure the security and safety of both sides. Israeli Jews were divided in their support of this term of the agreement, with 48% for and 45% against it; among Israeli Arabs, 69% supported it.

Full sovereignty for the Palestinian state over its air space, land, and water resources, but Israel will maintain two early warning stations in the West Bank for 15 years. Thirty-eight percent of Israeli Jews support this item, as do 56% of Israeli Arabs.

The establishment of the Palestinian state in the entirety of West Bank and the Gaza Strip, except for several settlement blocs that will be annexed to Israel in a territorial exchange; Israel will evacuate all other settlements. Thirty-seven percent of Israeli Jews support this item (12% of settlers), while 85% are opposed. Seventy-one percent of Israeli Arabs are in support.

The territories Palestinians will receive in exchange will be similar in size to the settlement blocs to be annexed to Israel. Thirty-five percent of Israeli Jews and 68% of Israeli Arabs support this, with settlers showing nearly the same breakdown as the previous item.

West Jerusalem will be the capital of Israel and East Jerusalem the capital of the Palestinian state. Less than a quarter (23%) of Israeli Jews and only 5% of West Bank settlers support this item.

In the Old City of Jerusalem, the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall will come under Israeli sovereignty and the Muslim and Christian quarters and Temple Mount will come under Palestinian sovereignty. Twenty-eight percent of Israeli Jews support the Old City arrangement, with 66% opposed.

Palestinian refugees will have the right to return to their homeland; the Palestinian state will settle all refugees wishing to live there. Israel will allow the return of about 100,000 Palestinians to Israel as part of a family reunification program. All other refugees will be compensated. This item receives the lowest support from Israeli Jews out of all the items tested: 19% support the arrangement on refugees, with 74% opposed; 92% (essentially a consensus) of West Bank settlers are opposed. Israeli Arabs show the opposite trend: 85% support it, with 13% opposed.

5. In Practice: A Way Forward

If, indeed, the Trump administration aims at leading an international effort to facilitate Israeli-Palestinian peace, it should take into consideration lessons drawn from past failures and adopt a three-pronged approach.

First, it goes without saying that any process should comprise bilateral negotiations but not, however, an exclusive course of action, which characterized the vast majority of past attempts to resolve the conflict. Instead, it should simultaneously promote (a) tracks of regional dialogue within the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative and (b) independent constructive steps. Such steps will allow the preservation of the conditions for a two-state solution through the gradual and phased creation of a two-state reality. Second, the process should comprise political interim agreements; gradual processes with transitional phases; and a pragmatic, uncompromising approach to counter terror, violence, and any form of extremism. And third, tangible traction on the ground should be simultaneously promoted, enabling a bottom-up progress to sustain any political dialogue.

Prior to an agreement, it is essential that the international community differentiate between the main settlement blocs as well as the Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem on the one hand, and the settlements in the rest of the West Bank on the other hand. About 80% of the settlers reside in the main blocks that would be incorporated within the final borders of Israel under any arrangement. Additionally, the international community should aim for a firm commitment by the Palestinians to not internationalize the conflict by condemning Israel in international fora or to promote boycott campaigns, and to fight incitement to violence and the glorification of terrorism against Israelis and Jews.

President Trump is well positioned to recognize that the economic development of Palestinian territories is indispensable for shaping the region's stability. A "Marshall Plan" for

Palestinian development, preferably led by the United States, should invite the relatively moderate Sunni-Arab states (Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Emirates) to be partners of Israelis and Palestinians. It should promote meaningful economic access for Palestinians to Area C in the West Bank—a territory that makes up 60% of the West Bank—and establish plans for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Gaza Strip, based on extremely tight security arrangements and within the framework of a regional diplomatic effort.

Process-wise, it is essential to change the “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” paradigm—used for the negotiations in Camp David (2000), Taba (2001), Annapolis (2007-2008), and the Kerry round of negotiations (2013-2014)—into “what has been agreed should be implemented.” Such an approach is likely to provide the ground for an agreement on boundaries, security, statehood, and economy. Additionally, there is a need for mutually coordinated, independent Israeli and Palestinian steps in line with a two-state reality. Subsequently, the negotiations over Jerusalem and the refugees will continue in a state-to-state fashion, as well as within a regional framework.

What should Israel do now regarding the settlements and the other matters to ensure that, whatever happens, it will preserve its Jewish-democratic identity? Israel must draw its borders while disengaging from the Palestinians by expending efforts on renewing the negotiations—regionally, bilaterally, and independently. In other words, with or even without a comprehensive agreement in sight, the Israeli leadership should be proactive, strategize, plan, and act to achieve peace and security.

Here are policy recommendations for constructive, independent Israeli steps that neither negate negotiations nor impede the success of a future two-state solution:

- No long-term sovereignty claims by Israel east of the security fence, hence outside the settlement blocks;
- Halt settlement construction outside of the main blocks;
- Initiate a genuine, ongoing engagement with the Israeli society in preparation of public opinion on the critical need to take decisive action for the sake of Zionism;
- Promote within the government a plan on a national scale for the relocation of 100,000 people (note that, in the absence of an agreement, there will be no evacuation by force);
- Formulate a national prioritization program for resettling citizens now living beyond the security fence;
- Pass legislation on voluntary evacuation, relocation, absorption, and compensation;
- Solidify security cooperation with the Palestinians, and encourage governance, institution building, law enforcement, economy building, and improvement of Palestinian lives until an agreement is reached;
- With the support of the international community, initiate an Israeli effort to rehabilitate Gaza, including an international task force, allocating a special role to both Egypt and the Palestinian Authority; alleviate the closure on the Strip through

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a long-term truce with Hamas; construct sea ports, infrastructure for water, sewage, and energy; and establish a joint Israeli-PA-Egyptian crossing point.

From an Israeli perspective, saving the Zionist enterprise requires courage, leadership, and national responsibility. Otherwise, Israel will face imposed arrangements, de-legitimization, demonization, international isolation, and the erosion of its core values. Therefore, the application of the “two states for two peoples” principle is indispensable. It is in the benefit of a Jewish-democratic Israel and consistent with the Zionist vision, which never envisioned such a long-term seizure of densely populated areas and its consequences that Israel is now facing. Not only is it beneficial, it is attainable. Through a series of transitional phases, interim agreements, and independent steps, all compliant with a continuous negotiation process, this conflict can cease. To that end, an internal Israeli dialogue and a participatory process are also essential to amend the current schisms within the society and prepare for the conflict’s resolution.

To President Trump and the international community, our message is that both Israel and the Palestinians need your continuous hands-on assistance. Not only is it needed, but the statistics previously mentioned show that, now, there is a reasonable probability of these issues resolving if addressed correctly.

The second item on the current Israeli government’s agenda, as explicitly written on the official website of the prime minister’s office, addresses the Israeli-Palestinian issue as follows: “The Government will advance the political process and work towards a peace agreement with the Palestinians and with all our neighbors, while safeguarding the security, historic, and national interests of Israel. If such an agreement is reached, it will be brought before the Government and the Knesset for approval, and if required by law, to a national referendum.” To the Israeli government, our message is that it is time for you to live up to your promises and advance the process toward a peace agreement instead of delaying it any further.

It is a general Israeli hope that, as other protracted conflicts in history have come to an end, our conflict, however complex, will eventually come to an end as well. We, Israelis and Palestinians, can end this conflict once and for all and keep our descendants from inheriting this ongoing situation. It is in our hands, but we must act.

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