

President George W. Bush
United States of America
Washington, D.C.

15 April 2004

Your Excellency,

I am writing you in reaction to your Excellency's meeting yesterday with Prime Minister Sharon, along with the press conference held afterwards and to the exchange of letters of assurances between Israel and the United States.

We believe that the current Israeli position to bypass the Palestinian side on matters that go to the heart of a final status agreement between Israel and the PLO will not lead to peace. We believe that the Palestinian people have rights established under international law, UN Resolutions and past agreements which should be respected. Based on our careful review of the press statements and letters of assurances, I wish to inform your Excellency that we view them as inconsistent with international law and the roadmap specifically on the following matters: a rejection of the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homes lost prior to 1949; acceptance of Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory, on land illegally confiscated from their rightful owners over the last 36 years; implicit acceptance of the territorial annexation of occupied East Jerusalem and the acceptance of acquisition of territory through the use of force.

Frankly, the positions expressed in the press statements and letters of assurance run counter to assurances that previous Administrations have given to the Palestinians, including a letter of assurances from Secretary of State James Baker to the Palestinians in 1991, which opposed unilateral actions that prejudice the outcome of negotiations.

The current Administration's position accepts that illegal settlements change the outcome of permanent status negotiations on borders, which allows Israel to continue creating illegal facts on the ground. This position contributes to prejudging the outcome of the bilateral negotiations between the parties.

Three weeks ago we informed the US delegates whom we met in Jericho that the Gaza evacuation could be a historic opportunity as it is a step towards ending the Israeli occupation. However, the US letter of assurances shows that while Palestinians will have more land in Gaza, the regime governing these areas will not change. Israel will continue to control the "borders, airspace, and territorial waters" of the Gaza Strip. This prevents the potential for the Gaza Strip to become in any meaningful way a microcosm and a model of the future Palestinian state. The parameters identified in PM Sharon's letter of assurances, if not modified, can never make the Gaza evacuation a historic opportunity but rather a prison.

The fundamental issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is 36 years of Israeli occupation and the continuing illegal acquisition of Palestinian land and the denial of fundamental Palestinian rights - rights that are internationally recognized for all peoples all over the world. The fundamental issue is not terrorism, as the Israelis assert, but occupation. If the Palestinian people believe that Israeli occupation will end, that the confiscation of their land will cease and that Israeli settlements will be dismantled, I can assure you that peace will prevail. Throughout history, negotiations have been the vehicle through which violence and conflict have ended.

Dear Mr. President, the Palestinian leadership remains committed and is prepared to begin immediately fast track negotiations on permanent status starting where we left in the Taba 2001 on the basis of the terms of reference agreed by the parties; land for peace, implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 242 and 338 and end the occupation that commenced in 1967.

I respect your "determination to find a way forward toward a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute" and hope that your efforts will be geared towards the immediate resumption of permanent status negotiations to achieve a just and durable peace.

Sincerely;

Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala)
Prime Minister

H.E. Mr. President George W. Bush
United States of America
Washington, DC.