

Ideas for a new approach to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations

Flaws in the approach adopted over the last years:

- The peace process has always been able to be derailed by the actions of extremists (e.g. negotiations stop if a suicide bomber kills people)
- The sequential nature of the process has meant that assorted barriers have to be overcome before the next stage in the process can be reached. (The roadmap is the quintessential example of this.)
- There has been no proper structure to support negotiations nor preparation by a neutral third party (e.g. Camp David, a rushed attempt to pressure the PLO to agree to terms in which the US acted as an attorney for the Israeli side, according to US participants)
- The primary interlocutor between the parties, the USA, is demonstrably too close to Israel and able to be influenced by Israel on matters of process and substance.
- There has been little pressure on the stronger party, Israel, to actually negotiate and as a consequence no negotiations since 2001.

A new approach

Permanent status negotiations need to start, and not be linked to any other matters or preconditions, (i.e. move immediately to the third stage of the roadmap).

Both parties need to be guided towards confidence-building measures, (e.g. cessation of violence, settlement & wall building, etc.) but these should not be preconditions for negotiations.

A permanent secretariat should be set up as a neutral third party to support the negotiation process, authorised by the UN Security Council.

An additional independent mechanism should be established to monitor the situation on the ground and the compliance of both parties with past agreements.

Both parties need to declare that they will not let the actions of extremists outside their control influence the conduct of the process.

The international community needs to schedule regular reviews of the negotiation process, based on reports from both independent units, and make it clear that if progress is not made then an imposed approach will be considered.