

TALKING POINTS

DECEMBER 2008

ARAB PEACE INITIATIVE:

- The API provides Israel with an historic opportunity to end its diplomatic and economic isolation and enhance its security on all fronts by concluding a comprehensive peace with all its neighbors and ending the conflict on all levels, in exchange for normalization and recognition of Israel by all 22 Arab states.
- Whereas currently only four Arab/Muslim countries (Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania and Turkey) have full diplomatic relations with Israel, accepting the API will enable Israel to have diplomatic and economic relations with all 22 Arab states, as well as a total of 57 Muslim countries.
- A comprehensive agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as with the Syrians and Lebanese, will neutralize other military threats in the region and radically re-shape the entire regional equation. Conversely, failing to seize on this historic opportunity will only embolden extremists and the opponents of peace on all sides. Israel should seize this historic opportunity, particularly in light of the growing radicalization and instability now threatening all states in the region.
- Peace negotiations on the basis of the API would greatly enhance Israeli security on all fronts by tackling, once and for all, the root causes of the conflict (namely occupation of territory and the refugee issue) in a comprehensive and final manner. Both the Lebanon war and Gaza withdrawal show that neither militarism nor unilateralism can bring Israel the security it needs, which can only come from negotiations on a comprehensive peace (as exemplified in the agreements with Jordan and Egypt).
- In addition to enhancing Israeli security, the API's offer of full normalization significantly increases economic opportunities for all parties by: opening regional markets to Israel; creating synergies between the economies of Israel and neighboring Arab states; strengthening tourism in Israel and neighboring states; increasing oil supplies and reducing oil prices in Israel supply; ending Israel's economic isolation by opening up opportunities in the broader Muslim world and other countries.
- The API is consistent with and builds upon the Roadmap and Pres. Bush's support for a viable and contiguous Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace and security and ending the Israeli occupation that began in 1967.
- The weight of Arab unanimity represented by the API helps to neutralize internal Palestinian political divisions, while isolating extremist elements and those opposed to peace/negotiations.

PS Issues in the context of the API: Borders, Jerusalem and Refugees

- The language of the API calls for full Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 line, at least in principle. This means any viable Palestinian state must be based on the 1967 borders. This principle has formed the basis of all previous negotiations and is consistent with Pres. Bush's April 2005 declaration that "changes to the 1949 Armistice lines must be mutually agreed". However, this does not preclude the possibility of minor, reciprocal and equal border modifications (*i.e.*, 1:1 swap in both size and value) agreed upon between the parties.

- At least two essential permanent status issues will require broader Arab support and cannot be resolved without the involvement and backing of Arab countries. The API provides the framework for such a consensus. These are Jerusalem and Refugees:
 - Due to Jerusalem's religious and historical significance to the broader Arab and Muslim worlds, a durable and sustainable peace must have the backing of Arab states. [*Note:* Recall the position taken by Egypt and Saudi Arabia during Camp David negotiations that President Arafat did not have a mandate to sign an agreement on Jerusalem without broader Arab and Muslim backing.]
 - Similarly, a resolution of the refugee question cannot be achieved without the backing of several Arab states, most notably those hosting large numbers of Palestinian refugees (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, etc.). The Initiative provides a framework for an "agreed upon" settlement to the refugee problem with all relevant countries, including Israel, while rejecting those "which conflict with the special circumstances of the Arab host countries."
- On refugees, we anticipate that a menu of options and incentives will be provided to the refugees whereby they will be able to choose where to permanently reside and normalize their status. Granting them the option of resettling in the countries where they currently reside will be important for protecting the element of choice and making the resolution just. This can only be achieved through a region-wide agreement.
- Israel's concern about the refugee provision in the Initiative is unfounded. The wording of the provision embraces the subtle distinction between the principles and their implementation. We need Israel to accept the basic international framework for resolving the refugee question; however, the PLO has indicated its willingness to reach an *agreed-upon* settlement with Israel with regard to the implementation of those principles in a manner that meets both sides' concerns and interests.