

The Honorable  
**Ehud Danoch**  
Consul General of Israel,  
Los Angeles

## The Day After Disengagement: What Next For Israel and the Middle East?

**T**hese are historic times when it comes to the Middle East. Today, democratic elections were held in Egypt for the first time. Last week the Israeli Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sylvan Shalom, met with his counterpart from Pakistan, with Turkey as the host. Israel has left the Gaza Strip and part of the northern Samaria. I've been asked to focus my remarks on the latter of these.

There is a feeling in Israel today, of transition, renewed optimism in Israel and in the Middle East. You saw the pictures these past two weeks—it started on August 15, the disengagement, the pullout from Gaza and four cities in the West Bank. This is something that started about a year and eight months ago. Prime Minister Sharon was the one to initiate the disengagement. It was approved by the Cabinet of Israel three times and it was approved by the Knesset. What the disengagement says, basically, is to disengage from 25 cities—21 cities in the southern part in the Gaza Strip and four cities in northern Samaria, what is known as the West Bank. We're talking about 8,500 Israelis that lived there all their lives.

They lived in those places for over 35 years. Now they're going to start a new life in another place, in Israel. The pictures were hard. I was in the Ministry, and before the plans started—even before the Cabinet approved it—I learned and knew almost by heart the disengagement time.

I also had the opportunity to learn about the disengagement plans from my brother. My brother is 20 years old and is in Golani, an infantry unit. I call him up and I ask him, "Where are you now? What are you going to do? What's happening?" My brother, he went to an Orthodox school—he went to a shiva. It's a religious school. At a shiva you learn about the establishment of the State of Israel, the significance of establishing the State of Israel, to strengthen their relationship with the culture and the people. I knew that he was going to be in the army for the next six months, and he told me he was going to be in the Gaza Strip and I asked him, "Tell me. Is it going to be hard?" and I know what school he comes from and I know that some of his friends live there, and I know that some of their families also live there and he might be one of those who gives the eviction notice at 7 a.m. to those families. He told me, "Ehud, it will be difficult and it will be hard, but if we do not implement the

**Think about relocating cemeteries. For the second time, those families are going to do a funeral according to the Jewish tradition. I think it shows what Israel is willing to do in order to restart the peace process**

Cabinet's decision we will find ourselves in an anarchy." This is why we're a democracy. The rule of law. We have to obey, and we have to do it. Although there are disagreements with some of the people, the majority of the people in Israel—over 65 percent of the citizens—agreed to it. The Cabinet agreed to it. The Knesset accepted it and we have to do it.

I think it shows a lot about the society in Israel, especially now. In three or four days from today Israel is going to finish with the relocation of the cemeteries and synagogues. Think about relocating cemeteries. For the second time, those families are going to do another funeral according to the Jewish tradition. But I think this shows the sacrifice of Israel in the past two weeks. I think it shows what Israel is willing to do in order to restart the peace process with the Palestinians. I think it shows that Israel has had enough of what has happened in the past years.

I'm sure many of you are familiar with the situation in Israel, also the political situation. Many, many told Sharon, "You can be the prime minister for the next 20 years, just don't do anything. Just don't do anything." But this shows the courage and determination of the prime minister of Israel. I think it shows that the prime minister, the Cabinet of Israel and the people of Israel want to start a new beginning with the Palestinians. In Israel we want to restart the peace process. We want to continue the Road Map—and many of you are familiar with the Road Map—an initiative of President

Bush that was approved by the Palestinians, by Israel and by the Americans. They agreed on the Road Map. But this is something that until today, the Palestinians did not start implementing the first phase of the Road Map. The international community, I think, should put the pressure upon the Palestinians to implement

go onto the second phase. The second phase is a temporary Palestinian state. The third phase is to reach the final status between the sides.

Unfortunately, in the past eight months since Abu Mazen was elected, we did not see concrete action against those terrorist extremists. Hamas is getting stronger. Their aim is to become a third of the Palestinian parliament in the elections that will take place very soon. Now, those issues are significant issues for Israel. Those are significant issues for the region because we see a meeting between the Israeli foreign minister and the Pakistani foreign minister for the first time ever. We see that the Israeli foreign minister is going to head a delegation to Tunisia and we don't have relations with Tunisia. We see a certain movement that is going on in the Middle East and we believe that it's an historic moment for the Palestinians to seize this opportunity, and for the Arab world also, to join forces together, to fight those extremists and to

strengthen the moderates in the Arab world. We think that this is something that we can see in the future. We believe that this is something that can happen.

Qualified Industrial Zone is something that we would also like to see in many other parts of the Middle East and in the Palestinian territories. The Qualified Industrial Zone is a great contribution of the United States and Israel to Jordan, for example. I think it's interesting, and it is a great example of what we call the "fruits of peace." After the peace agreement with Jordan, Israel and the United States helped the Jordanians open a few textile industrial zones where all the exports would go to the United States. At the time we were talking about exports in the amount of \$13 million a year. Now, we're talking about \$1 billion of exports from Jordan to the United States—35,000 jobs in Jordan. That's a great example of what we call the fruits of peace.

There is a certain movement that is going on in the Middle East. Unfortunately, there are extremist countries in the Middle East. Recently we heard about the investigation of Rafiq Hariri's assas-



The Honorable Ehud Danoch  
Consul General of Israel,  
Los Angeles

**We see a movement going on in the Middle East and we believe that it's an historic moment for the Palestinians to seize this opportunity**

the first phase of the Road Map.

It's important to understand that the first phase of the Road Map talks about moral issues. Israel isn't asking for land, Israel is not asking for money, Israel is asking for only a few major and significant issues. Today the international community understands this very well because unfortunately terrorism became a global phenomenon. What we ask is that Abu Mazen—the Chairman of the Palestinian people, who was elected on January 9 and received the support of 70 percent of the Palestinian people—dismantle those terrorist organizations, stop the incitement, collect illegal weapons, fight those extremists of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad that unfortunately are in the Palestinian territories, in order for us to

A great example, I think, is our relationship with Jordan and Egypt. We have had, for many years, a peace treaty with Egypt. Many people say it's a "cold peace." You can call it a cold peace, but we have peace. We did not have war between us. In the past year and a half we saw the relations between Israel and Egypt getting stronger. When it came to the disengagement, we saw the coordination between us. Just two months ago the Egyptians signed with Israel and the United States—I don't know if you're aware of this—about the Qualified Industrial Zone. We signed an agreement. The

sination, the former Lebanese prime minister. Syria and Iran are continuing to support terrorist organizations. Syria and Iran are a threat to the region and are a threat to the world. The development of the Iranian nuclear program, we believe, is a threat to the free world. This is a concern not only to Israel but to the Europeans also and to many other countries. Iran and Syria are still continuing to support terrorist organizations among the Palestinians extremists—they finance some of them. This is something

where the international community must put the pressure on those countries and those extremists.

Today in Israel everybody is talking about politics. As I mentioned, in a few days from today the Palestinians are going to take over the security in certain cities. I think for the first time there's going to be an interesting experience to see whether the Palestinians are going to take over the security or not. We, in Israel, would not want to see any – God forbid – suicide infiltrators to Israel or any other terrorist organizations trying to break in. It comes to the Palestinians to take over the security on the one hand and on the other hand to try to work on the issues together with Israel. I mentioned that the prime minister was very determined and was very courageous. There is in Israel now a certain political dynamic. The prime minister is

very strong. A week from today he's going to join the General Assembly at the U.N. Many heads of state want to meet with him and to meet with the foreign minister. You all saw the way the heads of

**It comes to the  
Palestinians to take  
over the security on  
the one hand and on  
the other hand to try  
to work on the issues  
together with Israel**

state—also from the Arab world—the way they looked at the disengagement and we expect them also to put pressure on the Palestinians in order for them to fight those terrorist extremists in their places.

We believe that we can restart the peace process with the Palestinians, we believe that we can go towards a better future. The unemployment in the Palestinian Authority is very high—we believe that the majority of the people want their children to go to school and the parents to go to work in the morning. We believe that we can work together with the Palestinians on these important issues. The question is whether Abu Mazan is going to confront those terrorist organizations or not. I mentioned that I'm encouraged by recent events, by the relations between Israel and Egypt, and the issues about the peace and the agreement we have with Egypt. We believe there is a great potential in the Middle East and, God willing, those who live in the region will eventually realize it. We hope that they will enjoy it.

---

*Speeches to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council are edited for readability, not content.  
The Council is a non-partisan organization. The views expressed herein are solely those of the individual authors.  
The Council is a non-profit organization that pays neither honoraria nor expenses to its speakers.*