



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

Simulation on The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

This simulation focuses on a U.S.-led effort to bring together many elements of both Israeli and Palestinian society to hold discussions about the needs and interests of both sides before entering into formal negotiations.

The simulation provides an opportunity to view this longstanding conflict from the perspectives of those immediately impacted by it: in particular, the communities of ordinary Israelis and Palestinians who have yet to see much benefit in their own lives from the peace process.



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Introduction

"Israelis need trust; Palestinians need hope."
-- King Hussein of Jordan, 1999

Many involved in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process argue that previous attempts at peace have failed because the interests of ordinary citizens have not been considered. This meeting, therefore, is convened to help the mediators gauge the needs and interests of the people who will ultimately have to make any peace agreement work.

Participants will have the opportunity to role-play ordinary Israelis and Palestinians engaged in discussions about the conflict, the peace process, and the potential impact of real peace in their daily lives.

Each student will be assigned a role. In your role, all of you either live in Israel or in the Palestinian Authority. You have been asked by an outside party to discuss your needs and concerns in this environment of violence and hostility. The outside facilitator will be playing a key role in helping to move official discussions between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority from proximity (or indirect) talks to direct talks between the two parties, mediated by the United States. Many involved in the failed Oslo peace process believe that it is critical to understand what issues are of most concern to average citizens, something diplomats and officials failed to consider prior to 2000. The outside party needs to provide guidance to the negotiators about what is necessary in building a sustainable peace and also in considering what should also be included in any possible peace agreement. The simulation is meant to provide a venue to discuss possibilities for peace through the lens of ordinary citizens affected by the ongoing conflict. Thus, you will engage in a facilitated discussion, often an important tool or process in conflict resolution to explore the needs of different groups in conflict.

Participant Tasks

Participants' first task is to read the background documents and their role guides, and begin to understand the position and views of the role each will play. Those who facilitate the discussions between an Israeli and a Palestinian do not have specific roles other than as listeners and questioners. Facilitators are there to understand the conflict better and assist the participants in talking with each other. Throughout the simulation, each participant should:

- Try to understand the underlying reasons for the conflict
- Listen to the needs and interests of the parties on the other side of the divide
- Think about recommendations for the future course of the peace process

The simulation promises to be an enriching and rewarding experience. The importance of being prepared cannot be stressed enough. Participants should read all of the enclosed documents and take time to analyze the situation. It is important that participants remember which issues must be addressed, on which points flexibility is possible, and which issues are vital to a particular role's interests. With sufficient preparation, this simulation will provide participants with a firsthand experience of the challenges confronting those who tackle the issue of peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians.



Materials

Each participant should receive the following materials:

- The Introduction, Scenario and Background documents (pages 1 - 11)
- A role guide

Teachers may wish to make available as well the following items for this simulation:

- A classroom or conference room and sufficient breakout rooms or additional space for any needed sub-group meetings or other teamwork exercises
- An overhead projector or multimedia data projector and an overhead screen.
- Flip charts and flip chart paper (or white boards) and markers
- 1 pad and pen per student



Scenario

American representatives plan to convene a workshop that will bring together many elements of both Israeli and Palestinian society in order to begin to assess better the needs and interests of both sides before entering into any formal negotiations where, in the past, Israeli officials and Palestinian officials have usually been locked into rigid and fixed negotiating positions. One of the reasons that many former American officials and other critics of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (also known as the Oslo process) believe that attempts at peace failed was that neither the average Israeli, nor the average Palestinian, ever saw much benefit in their own lives from the peace process.

Therefore, this meeting has been convened to help the mediators gauge the needs and interests of the people who will ultimately have to make any peace agreement work, who will be critical in creating an environment in which peace can be imbedded.

Background

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has pitted two peoples – Jews and Palestinian Arabs – against each other within the larger conflicts between Israel and its neighboring Arab states. The conflict is a struggle for land, existence, security, justice and acceptance – by both peoples. How can Israeli sovereignty and security be reconciled with the national aspirations and needs of the Palestinian people?

Most, including most Israelis now, believe that a Palestinian state is inevitable. But how can a stable, democratic and responsible Palestinian state be created that will ensure Israel's security? What would such a state look like and how will it come into existence? Although creating a Palestinian homeland will not guarantee Middle East stability, an unresolved Palestinian problem continues to exacerbate regional instability and has been a constant source of anti-Israeli sentiment in the region and increasingly has become a source of anti-Americanism in much of the Middle East.

Thus, this workshop comes at a time in which violence is extremely high and there is little trust by most Palestinians and Israelis that the other community truly wants peace. Those on both sides who are less interested in compromise and who take a hard line toward the other and want little compromise have gained in power and stature. The moderates, those who have promoted compromise and peace, have lost support and have little credibility. The workshop is meant to be a facilitated discussion of the needs and interests of Palestinians and Israelis. It is not meant to be a negotiation. The goal of the dialogue is to assess and bring to the surface what some of those needs are. Ultimately, it will be up to the representatives of each community to reach a settlement if possible.



Key Issues

Territory: Gaza is a small enclave that abuts the Mediterranean Ocean and Egypt to the southwest. It is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, with close to 1 million people. Poverty and unemployment are rampant. The Islamic Palestinian party, Hamas, now effectively controls Gaza.

The West Bank is situated west of the Jordan River and Dead Sea and east of most of Israel. Israel has occupied the land since its victory in 1967. It is now home to 2.1 million people, over 200,000 of whom are Jewish settlers. Of the 1.9 million Palestinians, over 500,000 are refugees, many still living in refugee camps. The economy is largely agricultural.

Israel's population is about 6.6 million. 5.3 million are Jews and 1.3 million are Arabs and others (such as Druze). If Israel were to absorb the territories it currently occupies, its population would be about 9.7 million, with 4.2 million non-Jews.

Security: Israel says that it cannot accept Palestinian authority over the occupied territories if the security of Israeli citizens is not guaranteed. Thus, the Israeli government continues to hold the Palestinian Authority responsible for the attacks on civilians in Israel. Even after the Israeli Defense Forces withdrew from Gaza and Jewish settlements were dismantled, bombs and rockets continue to threaten and kill Israelis in neighboring communities. In addition, even if the borders of Israel were more secure, Israel does not trust the Palestinians to ensure the security of Jewish settlements. On the other hand, Palestinians do not believe that Israel will ever allow true self-determination. Even as Israel withdrew troops from some major cities in the West Bank, soldiers continued to protect Jewish settlements. In fact, most Palestinians claim that there was never any Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, merely a redeployment. Even within the West Bank, Palestinians cannot travel freely from town to town. Israeli military checkpoints are omnipresent. Military curfews are often imposed and schools shut down frequently.

With the election of a Hamas-led government in 2006, Israel and the international community have effectively imposed sanctions on the Palestinian Authority because Hamas is classified as a terrorist organization and it has refused to recognize the state of Israel or agree to any negotiations with Israel. Increasingly, over the past few years the Palestinian Authority has split into two distinct entities: the West Bank, dominated by President Mahmoud Abbas and the Fatah Party, and Gaza, dominated by Hamas, considered by most in Israel and the U.S. as an extremist religious party dedicated to the destruction of Israel. Neither Israel, the U.S., Europe or the United Nations will recognize Hamas or engage with it because Hamas is considered to be a terrorist organization. The daily governance and control of the West Bank is implemented by a government affiliated with neither party. Hamas maintains control over and nominally governs Gaza. As a result of the Palestinian split and the continued military occupation, the Palestinian economy has become strangled and the Palestinian Authority cannot pay salaries for the large public sector work force nor can it provide much in the way of goods and services at all. The economic consequences for Palestinians have been devastating. The average income for a Palestinian in the occupied territories is now 10% of that of an Israeli.

In the meantime, Gaza has imploded and the Fatah party is struggling to retain control over most of the West Bank. Thugs from both Fatah and Hamas have periodically killed each other in the streets. But many Palestinians complain that Israel has no interest in a two-state solution and seeks more land for settlements and is de facto creating four isolated enclaves for Palestinians. Too often Israeli actions provide credibility for Hamas and discrediting the moderates who are willing to work with Israel. Israel claims that it has no one to work with and that Mahmoud Abbas and Palestinian moderates are too weak.



Because, for most Israelis, the Palestinian Authority is incapable of preventing attacks on Israelis or capturing and punishing those who commit such acts, or threaten to do so, Israel is in the process of walling itself off from the Palestinian territories. The goal is to provide a defensive barrier that will ensure security. Some Palestinians cite the route of the barrier and its incursion into Palestinian territory, as well as its division of one community or neighborhood from another as proof that Israel has designs on Palestinian land. The government and the military, along with many Israelis, feel that security needs dictate the course of the fence because Palestinians are incapable of policing themselves.

Settlements: The first settlements in the occupied territories sprang up shortly after the 1967 war, and were essentially intended to be security outposts. A few religious groups set up Jewish settlements to stake a claim to ancient biblical lands. By 1980, there were 12,000 settlers, most of whom were religious Jews who saw the land of the West Bank as the sacred biblical land of Judea and Samaria. These settlers were encouraged to settle in the Palestinian territories by the Likud government in the late 1970s. In the 1980s, economic incentives were utilized by the government to entice new settlers to the land and the government itself was building many of the new Jewish communities in the West Bank. The number of settlers by 1990 was 76,000 and by 1995 was 146,000. Today, the figure is close to 225,000 settlers, almost all of whom are in the West Bank. Most of the settlements close to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv house Israelis who moved there because the housing was cheaper and the commutes to jobs easier. Many of those who live in more remote settlements strongly believe that Israel has a right to this land and have worked very hard to undermine any peace agreement that would cede territory to Palestinians.

Refugees and the right of return: Close to 3 million Palestinians are refugees. Half a million live in the West Bank; the rest are mostly in refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan or are spread elsewhere in the Middle East and the west as part of a large Palestinian diaspora. Most of the refugees either lost their homes in 1948 or are the descendants of those who lived within the borders of the state of Israel. Some became refugees after the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967. One of the biggest stumbling blocks in Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts has been an insistence by Palestinians on a "right of return." Some argue that such a right can be acknowledged and compensation provided without the actual return of property to the refugees or refugees literally returning to what is now Israeli territory.

Jerusalem: In the original UN partition plan, Jerusalem was to remain under international authority because of its prime status for the religions of Judaism, Islam and Christianity. In 1948 the state of Israel controlled the western part of Jerusalem while Jordan controlled the eastern part, including the old city, home to the most important holy sites of the three religions. Israel wants to maintain sovereignty and control over all of Jerusalem while the Palestinians want sovereignty over East Jerusalem and to establish it as the capital of a Palestinian state. East Jerusalem is majority Arab but new Jewish settlements have been built to help solidify the Israeli claim to the entire city.

Incitement: Hateful language, hostile propaganda, and images emanating from each side that incites violence has rapidly increased in the past two years. Such inciting language emanates from school books, the media, and from religious authorities. True peace and reconciliation are impossible in such an environment. A major part of the problem is that when the Oslo peace process was underway, many people in both communities saw little benefit from peace. From 1992-2000, the standard of living for the average Palestinian declined in half while Israelis saw a rise in violence during that same period.



Roles

The simulation is planned for approximately 16-19 participants including 7 Israeli roles, 8 Palestinian roles, and 1-4 American mediator roles.



Marwan

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You are a 24-year old who lives in Ramallah. Seven years ago you came to the United States and participated in a program called "Seeds of Peace." It brought Israeli and Arab young people together to learn about each other and explore how they could live in peace together. You found the program to be very positive. You were seen as an equal and you could talk to Israelis as equals. You lived together, worked together, competed together, and shared your hopes and fears together. You believed in the prospects for peace. Yet, today, you have not been able to finish your studies in college as the Israeli authorities constantly shut it down. You have no job and some of your friends have been killed in clashes with the Israeli military or by Israeli shelling. Most of the time you cannot leave Ramallah and have to be off the street by nightfall. Some weeks the people of Ramallah cannot be outside at all. You are increasingly incensed by the policies of Israel, the United States and the European Union to boycott the Palestinian Authority because of the election of Hamas. You have never particularly liked Hamas, but for Israel and America to promote democracy in the Palestinian Authority and then reject what was by every measure a free and fair election is more evidence that they simply want to dictate terms to the Palestinians. Also, members of Seeds of Peace as well as moderate voices in the Palestinian community have been harassed or locked up along with those the Israelis suspect of terrorism. It is harder to retain friendships with Israelis these days – often they want moral equivalency. Your Israeli friends see both Jews and Arabs as victims who suffer equally now. But far more Palestinians have been killed. And while you grieve for innocent Israelis, the Israelis could easily stop this escalating violence and make peace by withdrawing the military, dismantling the settlements and giving Palestinians all of their land in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, as called for by United Nations resolutions.

You have long been an advocate and organizer for Palestinian-Israeli exchanges. But you are now disillusioned. You now believe that Israelis participated in exchanges and peace groups only to feel good about themselves. They could claim to be open-minded and liberal but when any challenge to their easy lives occurred they retreated away from peace and demanded revenge and a strong military response to Palestinian unrest. When you met with Israelis you were always expected to speak Hebrew or English. Most Israelis never bother to learn Arabic. It reinforces the inequities and imbalance of power between Israelis and Palestinians. It is particularly galling for you to go through Israeli checkpoints manned by Russian or Ethiopian Jewish émigrés who can barely speak Hebrew while you are fluent. Yet they are the ones with the guns.



Noha

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You are a doctor who has long been an advocate of non-violent demonstrations against the Israeli military occupation. You believe that the suicide attacks play into the hands of the Israeli hard-liners. Palestinian violence gives Israel a pretext to keep its military in Palestinian territories and expand settlements. Soon these “facts on the ground” will become permanent so that Israel can say that any Palestinian state will be nothing but a few cities linked together in order to ensure Israeli security. You also feel that it is critical for the United States to realize that actively supporting a peace process is also important for moderate forces throughout Middle East. Arabs will be much more likely to support action against extremists in the Middle East, if they saw that the United States was also working for peace and human rights for Palestinians. At the same time, killing Israeli civilians simply gives Israel the moral high ground and erodes international support for the Palestinian cause. One of the reasons for the success of the intifada in the 1980s was that the world saw defenseless boys being killed by Israeli tanks. The boys don't seem defenseless any more and use tactics that repel most people.



Dalia

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You are a professor of sociology at Bir Zeit University. As you see the problem, violence is fueled mostly by unemployed young men. This is true throughout the Arab world. It's also true in Pakistan; true in Indonesia; true in the Philippines; true in Sierra Leone or Colombia or Northern Ireland. Who is responsible for their plight? What can they do about it? Most live at home, have no visible means and thus often have no prospects for marriage. They are frustrated and angry, and easily exploitable and manipulated. It is easy to talk them into blowing themselves up for a cause. They make a name for themselves. Someone who had nothing can become somebody. Otherwise, there are so few opportunities to make a difference for one's people, for one's community, even for oneself. The road to peace begins with economic development. You blame both the corrupt Palestinian government officials for enriching themselves off the suffering of the Palestinian people and the Israelis and international community for not helping to develop economically these lands while talking so much about peace. While there has been some economic improvement in the past year, it is too little, too late, and does nothing to relieve the despair, poverty and unemployment that are growing dramatically. And, with no end to the Israeli occupation, most Palestinians increasingly have developed an attitude where they think, "if this is peace, I may be better off with war." You find it laughable that the Israelis hold Mahmoud Abbas responsible for stopping the violence because Israel does not reward him for any attempts at moderation.



Mohammed

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You are a shopkeeper from Nablus who has come to support Hamas. You are not particularly religious, but you lost faith in Fatah's Palestinian leadership. Most Palestinians have become much poorer in the past few years, while Fatah leaders have greatly enriched themselves. If they won't look out for the people's interests, who will? At least Hamas has shown that it will stand up to Israel. Most Israelis seem to support the military occupation and the daily humiliation of the Palestinian people. Hamas will not be humiliated. Your father was a farmer who grew olives and grazed sheep on his land. That land was confiscated in 1984 for a Jewish settlement on a hill south of Nablus. Your father had no recourse because some of his papers were missing as a result of the change of laws between the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate and the subsequent wars. Your father lost everything and died soon thereafter. So the Israelis must withdraw from all the lands they occupied in 1967 – the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights – as called for in United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, and constantly reaffirmed by the United Nations to this day.

You feel that this struggle is all about power. Palestinians must find a way to counter the strength of Israel. The power asymmetry between Israel and Palestinians continues to grow. Palestinians have no other recourse than a kind of guerilla violence and they have no other means to challenge the mighty Israeli military machine. In addition, the Jewish state was forced upon the Arab people, which you feel is a historical injustice. While you may not be able to make the state of Israel disappear, it is critical for Palestinians, not Israel, to determine the nature of a Palestinian state. It is also important, in your view, to show the Palestinian people that the Israelis can be scared, that Palestinians do not have to kow-tow before Israel as Mahmoud Abbas so often does. There is a strong alternative to his weak leadership, one that is rooted in religious faith and strength, not corruption and weakness.

So, perhaps an alternative path must be pursued – Islamic fundamentalists offer paradise after death, confrontation with those who are responsible for your plight, and will provide you with the socio-economic benefits you can't get any other way. Finally, in 2000, the Israeli military withdrew unilaterally from Lebanon with no Arab concessions. Ultimately, Israel has a breaking point and will not continue to see its soldiers and civilians killed. The Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon showed Israel's weakness. After enough loss of life, Israel can be induced to withdraw unilaterally from occupied lands as demonstrated in Southern Lebanon, and more recently in Gaza. But continued violence seems to be the only thing Israel does respond to. Your sons increasingly feel that Palestinians have lost their land, their ability to move about freely, and their dignity – they have nothing left to lose or give other than their lives.



Aisha

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You are head of a Palestinian Human Rights organization. You know more families that have seen their children killed or lost relatives than you can count. You have strongly campaigned against what you feel are wholesale violations of human rights throughout the Palestinian territories. You are increasingly angry at the United States because you find it hypocritical when you constantly hear American rhetoric on human rights yet the United States turns its back on Israeli violations of human rights. Human rights and human dignity are insured not just in preventing killing, but rather by how people are treated. A Palestinian woman dies in childbirth inside an ambulance because Israeli soldiers will not let it pass; human life has become cheap. Israelis humiliate Palestinians in almost every aspect of their daily lives. Schools are closed; buildings razed; land bulldozed – all in the name of security. There is almost nothing left for Palestinians to preserve – and Israeli policies strip Palestinians of almost all dignity. Young men are rounded up and held without charges or trials for months. Some are beaten. Most are innocent, but become scarred and resentful. Eventually they may become a real terrorist and a real threat to Israelis. You feel increasingly that Israel has through its treatment of the Palestinian people over the years brought much of the violence on itself; Israeli policies have forged many of the bombers.

You strongly supported the peace process at first. But you feel that Palestinians cannot be supplicants any more. It is better to have no peace than an unjust peace. If there is no hope, if peace does not have any payoff for common people, what good is it?



Randa

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You work with refugees in a United Nations camp outside Jericho. Your concern is that peace is not possible without dealing with the needs of the refugees. When asked where they live, many older refugees will state that they live in Jaffa or Ramla, places in Israel, places they haven't seen in 53 years. Yet they will show you the key to their house that hangs on a chain around their neck. Even a young boy or girl will talk as if they are from a street in a town in Israel. The right of return for the refugees to their homes is acknowledged throughout the world in other conflicts by the international community and is critical for Jews in their relationship to Israel. Yet Palestinians are denied these rights. Obviously after all these years, most Palestinians have no homes to return to, but an acknowledgement of that right is critical and just. And, if they cannot return home in actuality, then some form of compensation must be made. The international community must decide how to help the stateless refugees in places like Lebanon or elsewhere in the Middle East. When a Palestinian state is established, can the millions of refugees come there? The strain on poor resources and an overpopulated society will be enormous. But the refugees must be given some sense that they will be included in a future peace. Otherwise, they will have nothing to lose. You have seen your niece killed in front of you by an Israeli missile; Israeli soldiers shot your cousin. You see your own teenage children increasingly radicalized. They hate the Jews and hate their American sponsors.



Mustafa

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You and your family live in East Jerusalem and run a hotel. Since September 2000, income has fallen nearly 75% as tourists avoid Jerusalem out of fear of violence. You are angry that the Jerusalem city government granted tax rebates to Israeli hotel owners but not Palestinians even though you are bound by Israeli laws and regulations. All of your children have lost hope and moved to Brazil or Canada. Everywhere you turn, you are humiliated by the Israeli authorities. You have to wait hours at any checkpoint and whether you are allowed to continue on your way seems random. You are treated worse than a dog and made to humble yourself before young Israeli soldiers who assume that all Palestinians are terrorists. You have just learned that a religious group of Jews wants to petition the government to condemn your hotel so they can ultimately move into it and set up a religious community in the center of Jerusalem. The old city of Jerusalem must be internationalized. The United Nations has called for this since 1948. In addition, East Jerusalem should be given to the Palestinian people as their capital. East Jerusalem has always been predominantly Arab. You like the old idea of a single shared city government for the municipality of Jerusalem with two separate capitals, the Israeli one in the west, the Palestinian one in the east. Jerusalem is special so should have the most unique status in the world.

Israeli authorities continue to expand settlements around Jerusalem, thus cutting off the Palestinians of the Holy City from the rest of the Palestinian population. Even as building of settlements continues, permits for Palestinians to build are almost impossible to obtain.



Ghassan

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You are an Israeli Arab from Haifa. You had never been politically active, but the violence of the past few years has scarred you. You have relatives who live in the West Bank but had not really thought of their cause as your cause. But today, you are treated differently, particularly after the late 2008 riots in Akko, just north of Haifa. Israeli Jews now think of you as the enemy. Some of the suicide bombers have been Israeli citizens; some of those killed by Israeli bullets have also been Israeli Arabs. You are increasingly torn. You and most other non-Jewish citizens are not welcome to join the Israeli Defence Forces, your villages are provided second-rate services and your schools are inferior. You essentially feel like a second-class citizen in a self-described Jewish state. Yet, you have a much better life than your cousins in the Palestinian Authority. You have a job; your standard of living is five times what they have. Often in the past your cousins thought of you as soft and not a true Palestinian. In many ways, you are suspect in the eyes of all sides of the conflict.



Yossi

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You are a professor of history at Hebrew University. You are increasingly reminded of what former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir once said: "I don't hate the Arabs for what they do to us, but for what they make us do to them." That is how you feel now. Israel has no choice but to answer the Palestinian violence with strong military retaliation. This hurts Israel but you feel that there is no choice because the Palestinians still seem to want to destroy Israel. The destruction of Israel remains written in the PLO Charter to this day. Hamas will not acknowledge Israel's existence, much less your right to exist as a Jewish state. Even if Israel gave back all of the territory from 1967, the Palestinians would simply want the rest of the land until all the Jews had been pushed back into the sea. You were more tolerant and opposed to the policies of the government until the bombing of the cafeteria at Hebrew University eight years ago, one of the few places Arab and Jew could come together without fear or prejudice. There are no safe havens any more. It seems that the only way Israelis can ever be safe again is to separate themselves completely from the Palestinians. There can be no return of Palestinian refugees. To absorb more Arabs into Israel would destroy the character and essence of the Jewish state. And to let more refugees into the Palestinian territories would further radicalize them. They would be that much closer to the place they left in 1948 and would covet them, and the destruction of Israel, that much more.



David

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You are a South African Jewish emigrant who came to Israel over 20 years ago. You wanted to live in a country that was built by Jews, for Jews. You wanted to help in building it and strengthening it even more. You moved into a settlement on the West Bank in order to help Israel lay claim to land that had been Jewish as far back as 3000 years ago. You and your fellow settlers vow never to give up land that rightfully belongs to the Jews – given to them by God. The Arabs have demonstrated that they have no interest in living with Jews given the violence they perpetuate even when given areas of autonomy. They were given a chance to be peaceful and they failed. You, like many of your neighbors, wonder why the other Arab states do not accept the Palestinians. And, there already is a Palestinian state – in Jordan, where Palestinians are a majority of the population and where they have citizenship. There were never Palestinians before 1948, just Arabs. Now they claim a right as a people because their Arab brethren did not take most of them in, and have actually treated them worse than the Israelis ever have.

You strongly support the tough policy of the government in its retaliation for Palestinian violence. In your mind, the Palestinians must see that violence does not pay. If Israel were to return to the negotiating table now, the Palestinians would view this as a victory for violence and would use renewed violence any time they wanted to extract a concession from Israel.



Rachel

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You are with the Peace Now movement, which has always advocated an independent state for Palestinians and condemned the Israeli military occupation. You feel that this has become a huge tragedy because in many ways, both sides are right; both have legitimate claims. Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first president, admitted that the Jews were no more morally right than Arabs. But injustice was unavoidable and the decision would be whether to be unjust to Jews or Arabs. Zionists believed they had nothing else left; they couldn't stay in Europe and weren't wanted elsewhere. So you want to find a way to make this work. If only the Palestinians would stop the terror and the Israelis would leave the settlements and the West Bank. You feel that military occupation has eroded the special nature of Israel. Prior to thirty years ago, Israel was the underdog and there was a sense of morality and right in its military campaigns for survival in the Middle East. Today, Israel seems like a bully too often. The protesters on the Turkish ship as part of the convoy to Gaza especially hurt Israel's international image.

As a schoolteacher in a community near Jerusalem, you have had to deal with years of trauma that the ongoing violence and insecurity has produced in children. A suicide bomb was detonated on a bus in your town and a sniper killed two young women near the school. The children are being traumatized. The learning in the classroom has declined, attention spans are shorter, and children are scared. But you have also noted that for many of the children, they talk about Palestinians or Arabs as the enemy. "Those people" or "them" is often used. All Arabs seem bad or evil to them. For others, there is confusion about why anyone wants to hurt them or their family. As one little girl asked, "if we stop hurting them, will they stop hurting us?" You sense that little Palestinian girls probably ask the same question, but none of the adults seems to have an answer.



Simona

Note to Participant - You have been given this role to play for the simulation. This is meant to give you an identity and a perspective from which to discuss the critical issues dividing Israelis and Palestinians: land, security, refugees, Palestinian autonomy, Jerusalem, and incitement to hate and violence. Please stick to your role, express yourself about what you feel the needs and interests of you and your community are, be creative and have fun.

You are a child of Jewish parents who were forced out of Iraq in the 1950s. One of your greatest fears is that most Palestinians acknowledge that Israel exists as a fact but not that Israel has a right to exist. Your concern is that Arabs only acknowledge this because they cannot do anything about it – for now. But if they could, they would destroy Israel because in their minds Israel has no right to exist as a Jewish state. Until the Palestinians condemn the terrorist attacks and acknowledge the rights and suffering of Jews instead of focusing only on their own sense of victimization, there can be no discussion of peace. You don't feel that the Palestinians should be expelled from the land nor should they be discriminated against. But they must realize that they are a minority in a Jewish state. As long as Palestinian Arabs recognize that Israel is a Jewish state and that Jews have a right to a state in their ancestral homeland, as ordained by God, then they are free to live here equitably and are free to share in the prosperity and future of this state, but as a minority. The Palestinians, through their continued terrorism are telling Israelis: "you will never be safe in what you claim to be your home." You have friends who have been killed by Palestinian bombs, including the 14-year old daughter of your neighbor. You are incensed that the Palestinians use their own young to kill young Israeli children. Targets such as buses, discos, pool halls, pizza parlors, even schools, show the lack of respect for human life by the Palestinians.

You find it hard not to support the retaliation against the Palestinian Authority because it seems that a majority of Palestinians support the terrorism. Yitzhak Rabin, when he was Prime Minister, condemned the attacks of right wing or fanatical Israelis. He said of them that they were not true Israelis and they would not stand in the way of peace when he pronounced, "We spit you out." Why won't Abbas "spit out" the terrorists and the Palestinian extremists such as Hamas? Until new leadership of the Palestinians emerges, Israel should refuse to negotiate anything. Public opinion surveys by your newspaper reveal that a strong majority of Israelis would support an independent Palestinian state but also support the strong military crackdown on the Palestinians by the Israeli government. Most Israelis despair that the violence has no end. The Palestinians will not stop killing them and they must go on killing Palestinians to show that terrorism does not pay.



Avner

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You are an orthodox rabbi. For many years you constantly heard that the basis of peace between Israel and its neighbors, between Israel and the Palestinians was "land for peace." That was how Israel made peace with Egypt and Jordan. Ehud Barak was prepared to give back almost all of the West Bank and Gaza, even though that could make Israel more vulnerable. But for the Palestinians, the formula seems to be "land for words." The Palestinians' only obligation to a peace process seemed to be to show up and receive concessions. Arafat would never acknowledge Israel's right to exist and he would only say he recognized Israel in English. Whenever he spoke in Arabic it was in very anti-Israeli tones. Abbas is not much better and Hamas is much worse. How can Israel make peace under such conditions? Israel cannot make itself vulnerable and then see how the Palestinians act. Israel needs guarantees up front. Jews have no other homeland. Israel's very existence is at stake. For the Palestinians, as Arabs, they can fall back on their Arab cousins as they have in the past. Jordan has a majority of Palestinians. You are also very concerned that Judaism not be displaced from Jerusalem. Israel must retain sovereignty. The prospect of returning to Jerusalem is in the heart of every Jew. It is the center of the Jewish religion. Muslims claim Jerusalem as being equally holy, but in fact Mecca and Medinah are far more important in Islam. Jews allow Muslims to worship on the Temple Mount, yet periodically the Muslims throw rocks down on the Jewish worshippers at the Western (Wailing) Wall. Jews still are not accepted or allowed to live in peace, even in their own state.

What bothers you most about the Palestinians is that they don't seem to see Israelis as humans who can suffer, who have fears and concerns. When Israelis are killed, or even when Americans were killed on September 11th, they cheer. Some of them deny that the Holocaust even occurred. Israelis need to be acknowledged as a people. That was why Israel could make peace with Anwar Sadat, with Egypt. Sadat came to Jerusalem, the very center, the very symbol of Judaism, and said he was willing to make peace. He broke down the psychological walls between Egypt and Israel, between Arabs and Jews. Shortly after the Jordanian-Israeli peace agreement a Jordanian border guard went berserk and killed some young Israelis on a picnic. King Hussein visited the families of the victims and grieved with them. He made a connection with the Israeli people as human beings. Arafat and Abbas have occasionally condemned terror attacks but they never grieve for the victims, never make gestures to Israel that acknowledge Israeli needs and fears. How can Israel ultimately make peace with such people?



Chaim

Note to Participant - You have been given this role to play for the simulation. This is meant to give you an identity and a perspective from which to discuss the critical issues dividing Israelis and Palestinians: land, security, refugees, Palestinian autonomy, Jerusalem, and incitement to hate and violence. Please stick to your role, express yourself about what you feel the needs and interests of you and your community are, be creative and have fun.

You come from a large agricultural community in northern Israel where you own a small dairy. Your parents were Holocaust survivors who emigrated from Europe. They were strong believers in the equality of all people and felt that Jews had a special obligation to seek justice, something denied to them in Europe. But the rise in terror bombings and the loss of innocent civilians has led you to question whether Israel can afford to make any concessions to the Palestinians. On the other hand, the continuing violence has had a devastating effect on the Israeli economy. Your business is feeling the effects. You live in a country where your family never seems safe and secure; you worry that you may not soon be able to provide for them as well. You are concerned that the Jewish people are being threatened unlike any time since World War II. At the same time, you cringe whenever you see the power of the Israeli military machine arrayed against civilians. Yet the terrorists hide among and behind the Palestinian civilians.

You take great pride in how the Zionist dream of a Jewish homeland bloomed from the desert. The Jewish people have built a wonderful, prosperous, and modern state – something the Arabs throughout the Middle East can only dream of doing. In the territories of the West Bank and Gaza, the Arabs were much better off under Israel than under the Jordanians and Egyptians. And, Arab citizens of Israel have a far better standard of living than in almost any country in the Middle East. Your dairy herd and grazing land relies on water resources from aquifers that have sources in the higher elevations of the Palestinian territory of the West Bank. You are concerned that a future Palestinian state could threaten your water supply. Any peace must place numerous conditions on the Palestinians, including disarmament and a guaranteed water supply. On the other hand, you were better off when you could rely on Palestinian laborers for some of the work in your community, particularly construction. They were cheaper and plentiful. In addition, because the image of Israel has suffered greatly in the international community, Israeli agricultural products are less marketable, particularly in Europe and some of the neighboring states in the Middle East. You always got along well with your Arab neighbors and the Arab workers. But those days are over. The riots in Acre in late 2008 and the increasing tension among Arab and Jewish citizens within Israel is a growing concern. There is no civility any more and you are now enemies. Perhaps the solution is a wall around the West Bank, with a few open, but well-guarded gates. "Good fences make good neighbors."



Yoram

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You are a former military commander who served in the West Bank from 1991-1995 and 2001-2003. As you wrote to your superior officer recently, "In my 20 years in the West Bank...it became clear to me that no man or woman with a decent job and hope for the future ever agreed to be a suicide bomber." Economic growth is critical to turning Palestinian youth away from terrorism. Israel can never escape the problems of the West Bank and Gaza by simply turning the screws on the Palestinians. Even if Abbas remains as President of the Palestinian Authority, what can any new leadership provide his people? You believe that Israel has to change its policy of occupation in two ways. The first is to find a way to respond without using the military all the time. The military is trained to kill and do battle. Yet Israel faces more of a policing problem. In addition, the young soldiers are not trained to handle rock-throwing youths nor handle civilians as anything but terror suspects. You feel that the youth of Israel has been put in a terrible situation – in the midst of a population that hates them and uses unconventional means to challenge Israeli authority. Because they are dealing with a civilian population and because the threats to Israelis come from civilians not uniformed soldiers, the Israeli forces tend to treat all Palestinians as potential enemies or as someone who is a killer. Thus, all Palestinians tend to be humiliated by the occupation and the many checkpoints and border patrols.



Ganit

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You live in a settlement between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. While you and your family moved into the settlement because the houses were relatively cheaper than those in Jerusalem, you have become very attached to your community. The neighborhood is a mix of strongly religious families and people who commute into Jerusalem or a few who goes as far away as Tel Aviv. You resent being singled out by Palestinians, the international community and even some Israelis as an obstacle to peace. You strongly believe that Israel should not give up an inch of land it has developed and which is now home for hundreds of thousands of Jews, in fulfillment of the promise to return to the Promised Land. Even from a practical standpoint, there remains undeveloped land in the Negev that could be transferred to the Palestinians as compensation. Arab villages currently within Israel that are alongside the border could be transferred to the Palestinian side. To forcefully evacuate or expel Jews from their homes is horrific and traumatic, as was the case in Gaza, as well as in all of Jewish history. And, when the Jewish people have submitted or appeared weak, you feel that Israel's enemies will attempt to destroy Israel. Thus, Israelis must remain strong and not let their enemies sense any weakness on Israel's part.

You realize that expulsion of all the Arabs is impractical and would create even more problems for Israel internationally. However, the two peoples cannot "share the land." That is why the creation of the wall between Jews and Arabs is so important. The road south from Jerusalem is no longer subject to objects being thrown at passing cars; residents of the settlements feel much safer, and Jerusalem itself is much safer because of the security provided by walling off the Palestinians. From your perspective the strong security policies of the past few Israeli governments have enhanced the security of the people of Israel.



Related Web Links

Related Institute Resources

The Israeli Military and Israel's Palestinian Policy: From Oslo to the Al Aqsa Intifada <http://www.usip.org/pubs/peaceworks/pwks47.pdf>

The Palestinian Reform Agenda <http://www.usip.org/pubs/PeaceWorks/pwks48.pdf>

Healing the Holy Land: Interreligious Peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine <http://www.usip.org/pubs/peaceworks/pwks51.html>

The Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum on Implementation Timeline of Outstanding Commitments of Agreements Signed and the Resumption of Permanent Status Negotiations http://www.usip.org/library/pa/israel_plo/sharm_el-sheikh_09041999.html

Other Web Resources

Israel/Palestine Relations and the Middle East Peace Process <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/mideast/cuvlm/Isr-Arab.html>

BBC: *In Depth – Israel & the Palestinians* http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/middle_east/2001/israel_and_the_palestinians/default.stm

BBC: *History of Middle East conflict* http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/middle_east/2000/mideast_p_eace_process/340237.stm

United Nations: Question of Palestine <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpa/qpal/index.html>

NPR: The Mideast: A Century of Conflict <http://www.npr.org/news/specials/mideast/history/>

The Palestinian Refugee Problem and the Right of Return <http://wcfla.harvard.edu/papers/98-07.pdf>