



UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

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Event Summary

Middle East Peace: Who Leads? Who Succeeds?

United States Institute of Peace

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Upon the release of a new USIP publication “[The Sadat Lectures: Words and Images on Peace 1997–2008](#),” volume editor Shibley Telhami, Dr. Jehan Sadat and distinguished panelists convened at USIP for a public event on April 1 to discuss the topic of “Middle East Peace: Who Leads? Who Succeeds?”

Drawing upon the great leadership of her late husband President Anwar Sadat, Dr. Sadat opened the remarks by recalling the vision for Middle East peace that President Sadat tried to realize some 30 years ago—a unified agreement between Israel, the Arab league and Egypt. She quoted her husband:

“Any separate peace between Egypt and Israel. . . will not bring permanent peace based on justice in the entire region. Rather, even if peace between all the confrontation states and Israel were achieved, in the absence of a just solution to the Palestinian problem, never will there be that durable and just peace upon which the entire world insists today.”

She underscored that President Sadat's formula for peace remains valid today, that the United States plays a major role in clinching Middle East peace, and that no more time can be wasted in the pursuit of peace: “This is a time for leadership to

do what's right, to fulfill a vision that one man articulated on behalf of millions of others—and paid for it with his life.”

Moderator Shibley Telhami and panelists Ellen Laipson, Aaron Miller and William Quandt addressed the role of leadership in the process of pursuing Middle East Peace, reflecting on the contributions of President Sadat and on the state of regional and global leadership today. They described the era of Sadat as a heroic one, noting that today's leader is less powerful than before at the international level and that the diffusion of power is the norm for today's global culture.

The entire panel supported the proposition that the United States continues to play a key role in the pursuit of Middle East peace but that exactly how and when the U.S. should engage depends on many factors, including the particular style and effectiveness of each U.S. administration, the perceived “ripeness” of the conflict and the particular agenda of the United States as situations change. The panel commented on the current absence of great leaders and bold visionaries, like President Sadat. Without the presence of strong regional leadership in the Middle East, it remains to be seen whether the U.S. can effectively mediate between the parties.

-By Kay Hechler