

# MEMMO

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## Annapolis: Potential for Progress if Arabs Demonstrate Seriousness by Matching Israel's Commitment

**The recent Middle East meeting in Annapolis could help launch substantive Israeli-Palestinian negotiations between the two parties based on key American principles. For this process to succeed, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Arab governments must match Israel's readiness for serious negotiations by taking concrete steps that demonstrate a true commitment to ending the conflict. Palestinian performance on key security and political obligations to combat terrorism and end incitement is critical. Arab states should provide real and sustained backing to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and begin normalizing relations with Israel.**

Israel has reiterated its commitment to peaceful negotiations with the Palestinians and Arab states and is taking steps to help the talks succeed.

- In his speech at Annapolis, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said he believes “that there is no path other than the path of peace. I believe that there is no just solution other than the solution of two national states for two peoples.”
- Olmert reiterated that Israel is prepared to deal with all the core historical issues at the heart of the conflict, saying, “[T]he negotiations will address all of the issues which we have thus far avoided dealing with. We will do this directly, openly and courageously. We will not avoid any subject.”
- In a sign of Israel's commitment to the talks, Israel on Dec. 3 released 429 Palestinian prisoners, while Olmert authorized the transfer of armored vehicles and ammunition to Palestinian police in Nablus. Olmert also committed that Israel would refrain from building any new settlements in the West Bank.
- Israel has already removed some roadblocks and checkpoints in the West Bank, despite the security risks. Just days before the Annapolis meeting, an Israeli father of two was shot and killed by gunmen affiliated with Abbas' Fatah party after an Israeli roadblock was lifted in the West Bank.



**Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas must combat terrorism, end incitement and reform political institutions to demonstrate the PA's commitment to talks with Israel.**

The Palestinian Authority now has an important opportunity to do more to ensure that talks move forward successfully.

- President Bush made clear that “a Palestinian state will not be born of terror,” identified ongoing attacks as the “greatest obstacle to a Palestinian state,” and noted that “while the borders of a Palestinian state are important, the nature of a Palestinian state is just as important.”
- Palestinian performance is critical to the success of the process. The PA needs to fully implement its Phase I Roadmap commitments, which require it to implement political and security reforms, undertake “sustained, targeted, and effective operations” against terrorists, dismantle the terrorist infrastructure and arrest and detain suspected terrorists.
- The PA also needs to meet its Phase I Roadmap obligation to end all official incitement against Israel, a move which would help prepare the next generation of Palestinians for peace with Israel.
- Abbas’ government also needs to dramatically increase its efforts to develop the institutions of a functioning civil society, with financial accountability and transparency, a functioning judicial system and a governing structure free of corruption.
- Because Hamas rules Gaza today, Israel faces enormous difficulty in negotiating with Abbas’ PA, which does not have control over nearly 40 percent of the population it claims to represent.

The Arab states can play a critical role in supporting peace efforts by strengthening Abbas and normalizing relations with Israel.

- President Bush said in his speech at Annapolis that Arab states “should also reach out to Israel, work toward the normalization of relations and demonstrate in both word and deed that they believe that Israel and its people have a permanent home in the Middle East.”
- While the Arab League decision to send foreign ministers to Annapolis is welcome, Arab states need to take concrete steps to support the talks, including strengthening Abbas with the political support he will need to fight terrorism, isolating Hamas and making the tough compromises necessary to reach an agreement with Israel.
- The Arab states can also demonstrate their commitment to the negotiations by rejecting extremism and refusing to meet with Hamas until it recognizes Israel and renounces terror.
- The Arab states also must end anti-Israel incitement in their media and prepare their own people to accept peaceful relations with Israel by taking steps toward normalization with Israel as called for in Phase II of the Roadmap, which requires the Arab states to restore links to Israel cut off in 2000 and to revive engagement with Israel on key regional issues such as economic development.
- If the Arab states are truly committed to the creation of a Palestinian state, they must provide the moderate Palestinian leadership with tangible financial support to help bolster the Palestinian economy. Saudi Arabia, which is expected to earn \$190 billion in oil revenue this year, has since June publicly pledged to provide Abbas with only \$50 million.
- Syria has a special role to play if it wishes to create conditions for peace. Its attendance at the Annapolis meeting is welcome, but for it to be a serious partner, Damascus must signal its readiness to end its support for terrorist organizations, curtail its ties with Iran and help win the release of the three Israeli soldiers held by Hamas and Hizballah.

The negotiating process launched in Annapolis should be guided by important principles outlined by the United States.

- In his speech at Annapolis, President Bush reiterated important U.S. principles that should serve as the foundation for Israeli-Palestinian talks, including that an agreement cannot be imposed on Israel and the Palestinians. “America will do everything in our power to support their quest for peace, but we cannot achieve it for them,” he said.
- Bush also affirmed in his speech the need for the Palestinians to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, noting that the “United States will keep its commitment to the security of Israel as a Jewish state and homeland for the Jewish people.”
- In a landmark April 14, 2004, letter to then-Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, President Bush also committed the United States to working closely with Israel—an absolutely essential element for success—and outlined other important U.S. principles that should serve as the foundation for Israeli-Palestinian talks:
  - **Secure and Defensible Borders for Israel:** “The United States reiterates its steadfast commitment to Israel’s security, including secure, defensible borders, and to preserve and strengthen Israel’s capability to deter and defend itself, by itself, against any threat or possible combination of threats.”
  - **Palestinian Refugees Should Go to Palestinian State:** The solution to the Palestinian refugee issue “will need to be found through the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the settling of Palestinian refugees there, rather than in Israel.”
  - **Israel Should Keep Major Israeli Population Centers in West Bank:** “In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949.”
  - **Palestinians Must Fight Terror and Reform:** An essential element of the peace process is to help the Palestinians reform their political and civic institutions, build a prosperous economy and build “capable security institutions dedicated to maintaining law and order and dismantling terrorist organizations.”

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## Basic Facts Summary

- Israel has reiterated its commitment to peaceful negotiations with the Palestinians and Arab states and is taking steps to help the talks succeed.
- The Palestinian Authority now has an important opportunity to do more to ensure that talks with Israel move forward successfully.
- The Arab states can play a critical role in supporting peace efforts by strengthening Abbas and normalizing relations with Israel.
- The negotiating process launched in Annapolis should be guided by important principles outlined by the United States.