

MEMMO

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Netanyahu Backs Two-State Solution, Reiterates Israel's Commitment to Peace

In a [major policy address](#) yesterday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu backed a two-state solution and reiterated Israel's strong desire to reach peace with the Palestinians and the Arab states. Netanyahu urged the immediate resumption of peace talks with the Palestinians, and offered to travel to leading Arab capitals to help end the Arab-Israeli conflict. The prime minister asserted the deep historical connection of the Jewish people to the land of Israel—a connection that would ultimately have to be recognized by the Arab world if there were to be peace between Israel and its neighbors. A [White House statement](#) on behalf of President Obama welcomed “the important step forward in Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech.”

Netanyahu explicitly accepted a two-state solution to the conflict: a demilitarized Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state of Israel.

- The prime minister said he would be prepared to accept a demilitarized Palestinian state as part of a future Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement if the Palestinians, in turn, recognize Israel as the state of the Jewish people.
- In calling for a demilitarized Palestinian state, Netanyahu is following a long-standing Israeli policy backed by prime ministers of all the major political parties, including Ehud Barak of Labor, Ariel Sharon of Likud and Kadima, and Ehud Olmert of Kadima. President Clinton also called for a “non-militarized” Palestinian state in his proposed parameters for a peace deal in 2000.
- Indeed, the notion that an eventual Palestinian state would be demilitarized has been understood as a *sine qua non* for a successful Israeli-Palestinian peace process virtually from the beginning of the Oslo process.
- Netanyahu outlined his vision of peace: Israelis and Palestinians will “live freely, side-by-side, in amity and mutual respect. Each will have its own flag, its own national anthem, its own government. Neither will threaten the security or survival of the other.”



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for a demilitarized Palestinian state that, in turn, recognizes Israel as the state of the Jewish people.

- Netanyahu reiterated that Israel has no desire to rule over the Palestinians, saying, “We do not want to govern their lives, we do not want to impose either our flag or our culture on them.”
- To reinforce Israel’s willingness to take risks for peace, Netanyahu asked the United States and international community for “clear commitments that in a future peace agreement, the territory controlled by the Palestinians will be demilitarized.”

The prime minister reiterated Israel’s desire to reach peace with all its neighbors.

- In his speech at Bar Ilan University’s Begin Sadat Center (BESA), named after the Israeli prime minister and Egyptian president who signed the first Israeli-Arab peace treaty, Netanyahu said he shares President Obama’s “desire to bring about a new era of reconciliation in our region.”
- “Peace has always been our people’s most ardent desire,” the prime minister said. “Our prophets gave the world the vision of peace, we greet one another with wishes of peace, and our prayers conclude with the word peace.”
- Netanyahu said he was ready to travel “to Damascus, to Riyadh, to Beirut, to any place—including Jerusalem” to meet with Arab leaders to discuss ways to end the conflict.

Netanyahu said the Palestinians must recognize the Jewish historical connection to the land of Israel.

- Netanyahu said Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state is an ultimate prerequisite for ending the conflict. However, the prime minister did not demand this recognition as a precondition for negotiations. Instead, he called for resuming talks immediately without any preconditions.
- The prime minister said the “connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel has lasted for more than 3,500 years...Our right to build our sovereign state here, in the land of Israel, arises from one simple fact: this is the homeland of the Jewish people, this is where our identity was forged.”