



Middle East Spotlight

Pathway to Peace

As part of Israel's efforts to advance negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, the Jewish state has taken a series of steps during the past several months to improve access and movement for Palestinians in the West Bank. Despite the risks to its security, Israel removed more than 130 roadblocks and checkpoints and opened its borders to increasing Palestinian exports and workers, resulting in reduced travel time and increased economic activity.

Unfortunately, terrorists continue to exploit Israel's positive moves by plotting attacks, thereby limiting Israel's ability to accommodate Palestinian needs and still preserve its own people's safety. Despite this fact, Israel has facilitated greater access and movement for Palestinians in the West Bank.

In addition to the 130 roadblocks which have been removed, Israel has also opened the Shave Shomeron checkpoint near Nablus. This act alone eased the movement of close to 300,000 Palestinians, according to the United Nations. Further, Israel is now using biometric systems at a number of major checkpoints, which is greatly reducing travel times through a more efficient inspection process.

These efforts to ease movement in the West Bank have been well received and the Middle East Quartet, comprised of the United States, Russia, EU, and United Nations, issued a statement late last year which "commended recent measures by the Israeli Government to lift restrictions on access and movement, and encouraged further steps to ease conditions for Palestinian civilian life and the economy."

Palestinian terrorists are seeking to take advantage of Israel's positive steps by carrying out attacks. Checkpoints remain a necessity as Palestinians continue to exploit these Israeli efforts.

In fact, in 2008 the Israeli Defense Forces stopped several suicide bombers and confiscated dozens of pipe bombs and other weapons at West Bank checkpoints. In mid-September, the IDF found 110 pounds of potassium nitrate, regularly used to make explosives, at the Tarkumiya checkpoint northwest of Hebron.

Ultimately, Israel takes the risk of dismantling roadblocks because she wants peace and Israel has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to resolving the conflict with the Palestinians. However, in order to finally achieve a durable peace the Palestinian Authority must match Israel's commitment by isolating Hamas, fighting terrorism and laying the groundwork for historic political compromise.