

How to Achieve Real Peace in the Middle East

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld

For years now, efforts to create peace between Israel, the Palestinians, and the other Muslim countries in the Middle East, have foundered on the rocks of hatred and intolerance. For example, the Obama government favors a two-state solution between the Israelis and the Palestinians. But what he so obviously omits is a demand that the new Palestinian state be as democratic and open as the Jewish state. Obama seems not to care if the Palestinian state becomes just another jihadist haven for continued attacks against Israel.

But the only solution that can make the two-state idea work is if the Palestinians agree to make their state as democratic and open as Israel's. This is vitally important, for more than 300,000 Jews now live in territory that the Palestinians claim for their state. But Palestinian chief Mahmoud Abbas has declared that "no Jew will live among them."

Why can't Jews live in the new Palestinian state? Why must Palestine be Judenrein, the Nazi term used to describe a country without Jews. Over a million Arabs live in Israel and are citizens of the Jewish state and enjoy all of its social benefits. If a sizable Jewish minority lived in Palestine, would it not be a positive asset to the new state? Would not their energy and ingenuity help Palestine become a prosperous country?

There are Arab members in the Knesset, Israel's parliament. Why couldn't Jews be members of a Palestinian legislature? In Israel, road signs, postage stamps, and currencies are printed in three languages, Hebrew, Arabic, and English. Will road signs and postage stamps in Palestine be only in Arabic?

The West Bank, which will be the heart of the new Palestinian state, is also the sacred territory of Biblical Israel. Do not Jews have the right to live in Judea and Samaria alongside their Arab neighbors? After all, historically, the Jews were there before there was a Muslim religion. So, in a sense, the Arabs are the occupiers of ancient Jewish land. This is not an insignificant factor in deciding who shall live in Judea and Samaria.

If the Palestinians decided to accept Jews as citizens of their new state, that would dramatically change the dynamic between Arabs and Jews throughout the Middle East. The Palestinian state would have to be democratic, open, and enjoy good relations with the Jewish state. That would have a positive effect in the rest of the Muslim world. Indeed, Jews with Palestinian passports would be able to travel freely throughout the Muslim world.

But will it ever happen? It will if the United States and the European countries agree that an open, democratic, and tolerant Palestine is the only kind of state they would recognize and support.. But if they accept an intolerant, despotic, jihadist Palestine as a member of the international community, they will have betrayed their own cultural values and paved the way for future wars and future terrorism.

Gaza is a case in point. The Israelis made the horrific mistake of destroying the very productive Jewish communities in Gaza because Sharon and other Israelis accepted the Arab idea that no Jews should be allowed to live among them. In other words, the Israeli government carried out its own policy of Judenrein Palestine. This was a huge blunder on the part of Israel which should have realized that the only solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict was for the future Palestinian state to accept Jews as fellow citizens. Many of the Jewish farmers would have wanted to remain in Gaza with dual citizenship if Israel had accepted the idea that Jews could live in a democratic Palestinian state.

Had the Jews remained in Gaza, there would have been no Hamas bombardment of Israeli towns, and no need for the Israelis to invade Gaza to put a stop to it. And Gaza would not have become Iran's base of operations against Israel. Also, a Palestinian governing body would have had to include representation from the Jewish communities, so that Arabs and Jews could work together for their mutual benefit.

Meanwhile, Obama seems to have given up the idea of imposing a new building freeze on Israeli towns in Judea and Samaria. But if those towns would become part of a future democratic Palestinian state, then there would be no reason for Jews to stop building in these communities.

It is obvious that if two democratic states are created, there will be a great deal of coming and going between them. The two states will form a very productive symbiotic relationship. Goods and services will flow in both directions. Palestinians will be able to work in Israel, and Israelis in Palestine will hold dual citizenship, serving to enhance the Palestinian economy, while maintaining their Jewishness.

This is the only solution that makes sense and avoids the inevitability of future wars. The Palestinians must accept Jews to live among them in a democratic state. And Jews must agree that they can live peacefully and productively among the Palestinians. That is the only way the two states can live side by side in peace and economic harmony. And so, both sides must meet the challenges dictated by facts on the ground and the aspirations of the two peoples.