



**Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1967 (Third Edition)**  
**William B. Quandt**

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Appendix X

*Letter from Bill Clinton to Yasser Arafat,  
April 26, 1999*

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April 26, 1999

His Excellency Yasser Arafat  
Chairman, Palestinian Authority, Gaza

Dear Mr. Chairman,

I appreciated the opportunity to see you at the white House last month and exchange views on the current situation. This is indeed a time of challenge and opportunity in the pursuit of Palestinian-Israeli peace. As the leader of the Palestinian people, you have made historic decisions for peace. It is critical now that you stay that course and maintain this courage and vision that can help bring us closer to that goal. The United States is a full partner with Palestinians and Israelis in that endeavor and we will be there to support both sides. It is particularly important that you and I work closely in the period ahead.

Mr. Chairman, I know that you and your people have faced great difficulties in the past several years. Clearly the Oslo process has not made the kind of progress we would have hoped to see. Much time has been wasted and many opportunities have been lost. Oslo was based on the principle of mutuality and the critical role negotiations must play in realizing Palestinian aspirations. At the same time, the Palestinian-Israeli partnership -- so essential to peacemaking -- has been badly shaken. The agreement we helped facilitate between you and Prime Minister Netanyahu at Wye carried with it a great deal of progress. The first phase was implemented. Unfortunately, the second and third phases have not been. The Palestinians have implemented many of their commitments for the second phase, and I appreciate your efforts, particularly in the security area where Palestinians are engaged in a serious effort to fight terror. It is important that you continue these efforts and fulfill all of your commitments. We will continue to work actively for implementation by Israel.

It is also critical that Palestinians and Israelis proceed with the important work of the permanent status negotiations. As agreed by the parties in the Declaration of Principles, "these negotiations shall cover remaining issues, including Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations and cooperation with other neighbors and other areas of common interest.

As May 4 approaches, I also understand that you face enormous pressures and challenges in trying to realize Palestinian aspirations and keep hopes for peace alive. In your effort to deal with these challenges, I am asking that you continue to rely on the peace process as the way to realize the aspirations of your people. Indeed, negotiations are the only realistic way to fulfill

those aspirations. In this context, and in the spirit of my remarks in Gaza, we support the aspirations of the Palestinian people to determine their own future on their own land. As I said in Gaza, I believe Palestinians should live free today, tomorrow and forever.

Given the importance to Palestinians and Israelis of achieving a just and lasting peace, it is vital that negotiations be re-energized as soon as possible. As we approach May 4 - the date for the end of the five year transitional period and the conclusion of the permanent status negotiations -- I want to mention several important steps we have taken related to the pursuit of Israeli-Palestinian peace.

The United States has called upon both parties to continue to adhere to the terms of reference of the peace process as defined in Madrid and Oslo. The objective of the negotiating process is the implementation of US Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, including land for peace, and all other agreements under the Oslo process.

We have also called on the parties to continue to carry out all their interim period responsibilities, including full implementation without any further delay of the Interim Agreement and the Wye River Memorandum and continued cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government.

The United States further believes that the Oslo process was never intended to be open-ended. We have called on both parties to engage in accelerated permanent status negotiations and to rededicate themselves to the goal of reaching an agreement within one year. Toward that end and in an effort to facilitate that process, the United States is ready to help launch those negotiations after the Israeli elections and once an Israeli Government has been formed, and to review and monitor their process. The United States is also prepared with the consent of the parties to bring them together within six months to review the status of their efforts and to facilitate reaching an agreement.

For these negotiations to succeed, it is vital that the environment in which they occur be credible, serious and fair. The United States knows how destructive settlement activities, land confiscations, and house demolitions are to the pursuit of Palestinian-Israeli peace. In this regard, we will continue to exert maximum efforts to have both parties avoid unilateral steps or actions designed to change the status of the West Bank or Gaza or to prejudge or preempt issues reserved to permanent status negotiation.

As we work together to advance peace, I am also committed to continuing to enhance the U.S.-Palestinian partnership. I will do everything possible to strengthen that partnership and through the U.S.-Palestinian Bilateral Committee to remove impediments to our relationship.

Mr. Chairman, the road to a just and lasting Palestinian-Israeli peace will not be easy. It will require leadership, partnership, and a commitment to the idea that peace is a strategic goal to promote the well-being of both the Palestinian and Israeli people. For my part, I want to assure you that I am personally committed to this objective and to doing all I can to help the Palestinian and Israeli people achieve the peace and security that they have for too long been denied. Working together with you and your Israeli partners, I know we can realize this goal.

Sincerely,  
Bill Clinton