

BROOKINGS DOHA CENTER
SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY
THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

THE NEW ISRAELI GOVERNMENT, PALESTINIAN
RECONCILIATION, AND PROSPECTS FOR PEACE
AFTER THE GAZA WAR

Doha, Qatar

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

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Welcome and Moderator:

HADY AMR, Director, Brookings Doha Center;
Fellow, Saban Center for Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

Featured Speaker:

SAEB ERAKAT
Head of the PLO Negotiation Affairs Department

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. AMR: (In progress)--an increasingly distinguished figure, Dr. Saeb Erakat. His bio is on your chair, but I'll tell you a bit more about him briefly.

Brookings is the oldest think tank and the largest of its kind in the U.S. It's more than 90 years broad range of issues. Our purpose is to bring together business, government, media, academia, political figures in conversation and dialogue about the issues facing us today.

Brookings doesn't endorse any particular views, so we're open to discussion, as we see fit. Today's event is entitled "The New Israeli Government, Palestinian Reconciliation, and Prospects For Peace After The Gaza War," I should also add and prospects for peace after the Arab Summits and during the Arab Summits.

I'm going to turn off my cell phone. I'd like to ask everyone to do the same. I'd like to ask Dr. Erakat to speak about these topics for about 15 minutes, maybe 20. We usually do 10 minutes, but

since we only have one speaker today, a very distinguished one, will do that. And then we'll have our normal question-and-answer period.

So thank you very much. And before--you have Dr. Erakat's bio, but he is the Head of the PLO Negotiation Affairs Department, and he is the Deputy Head--was the Deputy Head of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid Peace Conference; and many other positions. Anyway, Dr. Erakat, thank you for coming.

DR. ERAKAT: As-Salam Alaikum. I thank you, and I'm honored and privileged to be amongst you tonight here at the Brookings Institute in Doha. I was with you a week ago in Washington.

I want to begin--I--30 minutes ago, I just finished hearing the speech of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the new Prime Minister of Israel.

And I want to address Mr. Netanyahu by saying to him, "Mr. Prime Minister, you spoke about Palestinians ruling themselves by themselves." Out of my experience as someone who came under your Israeli occupation when I was 12 years old, it's impossible for us to rule ourselves by ourselves with the

continuation of the Israeli occupation, with the continuation of your settlement activities, fait accompli policies, the closure and suffocation regime your governments impose on the Palestinian people and those back in Gaza.

The only way that Palestinians can rule themselves by themselves is through ending the Israeli occupation that began in '67 through the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital on the '67 line to live side-by-side in peace and security with the state of Israel.

I believe a missed opportunity occurred to that in the Israeli Knesset. I did not hear Mr. Netanyahu speak about his commitment to a two-state solution. This he did not mention. He did not commit to stop settlement activities, including natural growth. And he did not commit himself to negotiate on all core issues without exception, including Jerusalem.

I think making peace requires deeds and not words. And if the Israelis various critical parties are interested to make peace between themselves, they can do that. He can make peace with (inaudible). He

can make with (inaudible). He can make with the Labor Party or whatever left of it with Barak, and then that's his business. I cannot stand guard on the actions of the lips of any Israelis.

But Mr. Netanyahu, not you and nobody else once you make peace with yourself can (inaudible) yourself to be (inaudible). We know what's best for you, and we can differentiate as Palestinians between negotiations and dictations. We will not be part of any dictation whatsoever.

I know that since Eve negotiated Adam, I stand to be the most disadvantaged negotiator in history. I have no army, no navy, no air force, no economy. My people are fragmented in the West Bank and Gaza.

But having said all of this to a country that possesses 2,500 fighting planes, 5,000 tanks, and nuclear weapons, I can say openly that you have three options as Israelis.

Number one is my option: a two-state solution on the '67 lines, a Palestinian state to live side-by-side with (inaudible-4:59) and peace and security on the '67 line in accordance with the

international (inaudible), the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, and to live and let live. That's my option. I have (inaudible), and I know that Jews will not convert to (inaudible) and become Palestinians. And Christian and Muslim Palestinians will not convert to Judaism and become Israelis.

If you don't want this option, option number two is a one state. I come from a town called Jericho. That's where I live and where I was born. And between the River Jordan, to the Mediterranean, something will never change. It is 63 kilometers; right. You want to (inaudible) Israel, talk to me. I want to be equal. And once I say this, that I become the evil Palestinian who will undermine the Jewish nature of Israel, of course.

Option number three for you, Mr. Netanyahu, I don't think the world has the stomach for it. Diseases like racism and bigotry no one is immune to. Once such diseases enters under--beneath our skin, men, women throughout history tend to justify it. Sometimes we use (inaudible), sometimes socially, sometimes sexually, sometimes security.

Today, in the West Bank, there are roads I cannot use as a Palestinian. Only Israelis can use. Never in the darkest hours of South Africa's apartheid regime were blacks prevented to use roads that were used by whites. And yes, Palestinians can be arrested. Mothers can be arrested. Wives can be arrested. And Jews can be arrested. And what we live in the West Bank today until you find another name for it, it's the worst kind of apartheid.

Now we are committed to the Arab peace initiative. We are committed to the international (inaudible). We want to make peace. We want to live side-by-side with the state of Israel in our own state, where it cannot be the exception for international system that houses 192 nations today. That's number one.

So we hope--I always said that we respect the (inaudible) of Israel. We don't choose who run Israel. We stand guard and see that (inaudible) of the Israelis who come to the negotiating room. But this time, Mr. Netanyahu, you have to accept the two-state solution agreement signed and stop settlement activities if you want to have political negotiations.

Otherwise, I don't think you or anybody else can take us for a ride. That's number one.

Number two, I know as an Arab as a Muslim that Western Arab relations have not been defined since the year 1638. I'm not making a mistake--1638. In that year, a European capital was sieged by Muslim forces--Vienna. And it was since that day 'til now, relations between the Westerners and the Arabs have not been defined. Let's face it. Let us cut the long story short and start defining such relations on the basis of interests instead of fear, suspicion. Anybody who (inaudible) in this (inaudible), you break their heads. It happened to Mohammed Ali of Egypt, Nassir, Sadam, name it, anybody. And it's time for the moment of truth for all of us.

I think today, as far as Israel is concerned, the Quartet Committee, composed of the United States of America, the European Union, the Russian Federation, and the United Nations, came to us when we formed our national unity government and told President Abbas look, in order for us to deal with this government, this government must accept the two-state solution agreement signed and security

commitments.

We said that's your right. That's the job of responsible governments. To them, we ask tonight, we ask President Obama, we ask the Europeans and the Russian Federation, and the U.N., are you going to apply the same standards to the Israelis, because they have similar commitments in the Road Map, the same road map, i.e., to accept the two-state solution, agreement signed, and to stop settlement activities. And if you fail (inaudible) in the West to apply the same standard, you will shoot us in the head and shoot yourself in the foot. In this region will be handed to the bin Laden's and all extremists for the next 100 years.

This is a critical point in the interests, integrated thinking of those who want to deliver this Middle East through the path of security, peace, stability, democracy, accountability, transparency. You cannot continue acting as if Saddam Hussein was a good dictator when he ventures into a crazy war against Iran, and then he's a bad dictator when he occupies Kuwait.

And I don't want to speak examples of this

trend of relations. We don't have, unless you see it, as Arabs we don't have neons saying (inaudible), you know. We want our relations to be based on interests.

Today, as the United States of America, your borders are no longer with Canada and Mexico and the two oceans. Your borders are with Turkey, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, China, Pakistan, the Gulf, Saudi, Jordan, and Syria. When the nation has 200,000 of its kids stretching Iraq and Afghanistan, then the functional role of nations, the proxy role of nations--everything changes. And I know the Israelis did not wake up one morning and feel their conscience aching for my suffering that they sit with me in the negotiations. They tried everything in the book to deny my existence--for 100 years. They do it because they realize if they want to have peace, they need to speak to me. They need to make peace with me.

And by the way, I did not wake up one morning and feel my conscience aching for the Jewish and Israeli suffering that I sit with them. That's the truth.

President Bush did not wake up one morning and felt his conscience aching that he accepted the

two-state solution. It's his interests. And the same thing is with Mr. Obama's administration.

Now I know as members of the Quartet, you want to speak about the European Union. We are not-- there is no such a thing as European foreign policy. There are 27 European foreign policies.

To the Russians, I know that's too much to talk about deploying missiles in Chechnya, Poland, Ossetia, Apazia, Georgia--it's bothering a lot. I don't know if the Obama administration wants to take us out. I know what you're going to do with that in return, but, as a Palestinian, I don't have big shoulders for everybody to tap dance in the name of my question. You meet Sharm el Shaikh to talk about Gaza Reconstruction, but the real eyes were focused on Iran. That's your business. What do you want to say today? It's that the problems in this region cannot be solved through Marines and gunships and wars. And this region does not need more wars. This dialogue between the U.S. and Iran must succeed. The dialogue between Syria and Iran must--and Syria and the United States must succeed.

Wars will just--you're playing into the

hands of turning this region into the jungle of extremism. And when the lights go down, I don't know who will put it back on--maybe in the 22nd century, where the 23rd century or so on.

This region needs two things in order to go the path of democracy, stability, and moderation.

Number one, the solution to my problem, the Palestinian problem. And you don't need to reinvent the wheel or eat the apple from the start. We know it's going to be a two-state solution on the '67 borders. Do it. Do it.

Number two, democracy in the Arab world, and I'm speaking from an Arab capital. Anybody who says Arabs are not really for democracy is a racist. Enough.

There's are the two elements that are required to deliver this region outside the circles of misery and all these things that we are witnessing.

Now I want to talk a little bit about our internal Palestinian problems. I'm not going to avoid it, because I know that's a question on everybody's mind.

Look unless-- Hamas is a Palestinian

political party won the elections. Nobody disputes this. And Hamas will always be a Palestinian political party, and nobody--actually, nobody should dispute this. Okay?

If we don't help ourselves as Palestinians, nobody else will. Nobody else can. Let's put it this way: nobody else can. We are not asking Hamas to recognize Israel. We're not.

I remember the day Mr. (inaudible at 14:54) came to the Executive Council. I had just had been elected from my constituency, Jericho, in the Jordan Valley. I was representing the minority. My party became the minority in the Council.

And I told him Mr. (inaudible at 15:05) today you are no longer the Prime Minister of Hamas. You are my prime minister. You are the prime minister of all Palestinians. Act as such.

Nobody is asking Hamas to recognize Israel or accept the two-state solution or any obligation. And, as a matter of fact, nobody is asking any Palestinian faction. We're asking the government. We have to be a responsible government. We have commitments. And the government, to show their

responsibility and to be a responsible member of the international community, yes, must stand up and say in its first communiqué that accept all the contractual obligations--financial, security, economics, political, and so on.

Today, we're having a dialogue in Cairo. The purpose of this dialogue is very simple: we're going to form a national unity government to do two things: to reconstruct Gaza, because I'm ashamed that two and half months after the crime committed against these innocent people, my family in Gaza, we haven't been able to construct a single house. Number two, we need to go through presidential and legislative elections, because we have differences as Palestinians.

It's not bullets. It's ballots that should decide. And we're going to go back to the presidential (inaudible at 16:29). That objective of this government--maybe six months, seven months. And this government must accept the obligations of the PLO. Nobody asking Hamas or Jihad or PFLP or Fatah or anybody--I hear in the news, you know, just debates. They want us to recognize Israel. They want us to

give up resistance. They want us to do this. And nobody wants you to do any of this.

You won the elections. You cannot come and say because I won the elections, I want the U.N. to change its charter, its resolutions. I want the Arab League to change its resolutions. Let's change the Arab peace initiative. And I want to cancel our agreements. This never happens in history of mankind when Khomeini came to office.

After toppling the Shah of Iran, he changed the name of the country, the name of the Parliament, the name of the Army,, the name of the security forces, the Constitution--everything.

But the first statement he came up with was that the Islamic Republic of Iran honors of the contractual obligations of his country and his people. So did Nelson Mandela.

So did any government throughout history of mankind. We need help. We need help as Palestinians to tell all these factions that governments act this way. Imagine that we are a government that are under occupation.

We govern ourselves under occupation. And I

hope that we can help ourselves, and we can do this. And if Hamas wins the elections, I give you the commitment President Abbas that the office of the presidency and the Council will be delivered in the smoothest, most peaceful manner to them, because that's the end--people choice.

And, I finished?

DR. AMR: Continue.

DR. ERAKAT: One more what?

MR. AMR: Continue.

DR. ERAKAT: Okay. Now as far as the--I mentioned that it is our responsibility as Palestinians. I mentioned the Israeli responsibilities. I mentioned the Quartet's responsibilities.

Let me speak a little bit about two things: number one, the war that Israelis waged against Gaza was not waged against Hamas. It was waged against the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people.

Look. Netanyahu will go to Washington, and he will have this dialogue with President Obama. I can close my eyes and imagine how things will be (inaudible). Mr. President, we had the common thread

of Iran. We support you in your dialogue, and if you fail, we will be the spearhead.

This is a survival threat for us. So President Obama responds, "Okay. That's good. We'll do our best. What are you going to do with these Palestinians?"

He will say to him, "Oh, no. Don't worry. I will bring up (inaudible) Saeb Erakat for negotiations. And he will take us for a ride."

And then Mr. Obama will, say, "No, no. I want the commitment to the two-state solution. This is a vital American interest."

And then Netanyahu will look at him and say, "Okay. But whom shall I make peace with? Gaza or the West Bank?" That's why the war was waged against Gaza. This was demise and separation of the West Bank and Gaza.

These people are not funding charitable organizations. I hope my message is very clear.

Number two, as far as the Arab world is concerned, okay, people just ask me--Kalkob just asked me a question if the Palestinian conflict has added to the Arab--or has created Arab divisions?

Okay. That's really unfair.

Arabs have been divided since before I was born. Okay. And I cannot kill them. I'm one of them. All right?

But I can tell you very frankly that, to me, Palestine and Jerusalem is much more important than all Arab nations and their capitals.

And Palestine and Jerusalem cannot be turned into a sacrificial lamb that will be put into the timbers of dealing and wheeling in this region. We are much bigger than this.

We mean all--no harm to anyone. I was in Washington last week. I informed the new administration that the resumption of the Syrian-Israeli track is a major asset for us and doesn't threaten us. We will not allow any track to be played against the other. On the contrary, Israel withdrawal from the Arab-occupied Golan to the '67 borders is a vital strategic interest for us. Do it.

And this doesn't threaten--and I'm very serious. You know, to the Israelis--and I know them by now, even though sometimes we lie; we say we don't interfere in Israel's business, but (inaudible) like

lying and in Israeli minds, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, whenever Arabs around them is that they call them literally a strategic threat that can be sorted out with this agreements, regulations, deployment, redeployment, and (inaudible) what kind of weapons to have, not to have, to do, not to do--the list.

Me, to the Israelis, I'm their daily life strategic threat. I'm the core.

So the Syrian track and the resumption of the Syrian and after your story. Prime Minister Olmert came to see Abu Mazen. We were meeting and then he said to him, "I want to resume the negotiations with the Syrians through the Turks. Does this help you or impact negatively on you?"

And President Abbas said, "No, no, no. This helps us. Please do it."

And he said, "President Bush doesn't want it. Can you help me?"

Abu Mazen said, "Me helping you with Bush?"

He said, "Yes."

Abu Mazen made a phone call to President Bush in which he told him the Syrian-Israeli track resuming with the Turkish mediation will help us.

It's not a threat to us. And that's how things began. We mean it. I know when I speak with any Arab about brotherhood, twin relations, the future, past history, and all this, we talk too much as Arabs.

And defined interests of nations. And I said to the Jordanians defined their interests with me on the border and security and refugees. They are partners with me--the same thing to Syrians, Lebanese, to the Egyptians.

I'm not a threat to anyone. But my shoulders are not good enough for all this tap dancing.

And the last point I want to make the dialogue between Iran and the U.S must succeed--must succeed. And I say this because if war breaks out against Iran, my house will burn in Jericho. I'm the first casualty in any war as a Palestinian. That's it. I know it. The Palestinian question and the Palestinian issue is in the hearts and minds of Arabs and Muslims. And that's the truth. I cannot deny this.

And this is why I just want to (inaudible) by saying that I hope that we can develop a matrix of

interrelated interests, roadmap--a regional roadmap that will put mechanisms for implementation and timelines and monitoring systems for the roadmap and the Arab peace initiative. We don't need negotiations anymore. Believe me. I finished it--I cannot. Now it's time for decisions.

All issues--all stones have been turned. In the last negotiations between us and the Israelis, I can just brief you, and this--I'll shut up later.

And there was an exchange of ideas. We offered a map package. We offered a map and a package. We said, by the way, last July, we had right after that meeting with Dr. Rice, and everybody acknowledged that the borders of the state of Palestine and the negotiated map is the 1967 borders, including the Red Sea, East Jerusalem, Gaza, and also the 46 kilometers in the No Man's Land.

The Israelis offered us to take 6.5 percent of the West Bank and to give back 5.8 percent of the 1948 areas, and ,07 percent they said that they will make a safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza.

Of course, we asked Mr. Olmert at that time--President Abbas asked Mr. Olmert 10 questions, and

asked him to put this proposal on paper, submitted to us officially, with a map, and I think there was an agreement in December 18th for President Bush that I will go to Washington with an Israeli counterpart to put the maps and to see where things are.

Unfortunately, they chose to go to Gaza. It was much closer than Washington for peace.

We offered a map of an exchange of land of 1.9 percent, because all the built-up areas of settlements in the West Bank, believe it, it's 1.2 percent.

And it's not mathematics. And I'm not an (inaudible) trying to apply international law. I know that swaps of land happened between Jordan and Saudi Arabia in '65, where they swapped 29,000 square kilometers of land; so did the Iraqis in the Jordanians, I think. Qatar is on many around them and Saudis and many around them, and Americans and Canadians, and (inaudible) in Ecuador and so on.

We are not running a soukh or a bazaar. All you want to achieve is a fair agreement, because I'll be very honest with you. Palestinians and Israelis their signing an agreement does not make peace.

Peace depends largely on the day after--how the commoners would feel the effects of their normal life in economics, social, educational, and so on. And I believe today the world is really not divided between those who are pro-Israel or pro-Palestine. The world is divided between those who are pro-peace and those who are against peace. Thank you very much.

MR. AMR: Thank you, Saeb. You did good. You stuck to the 20 minutes. That's good. I give you the extra time.

Saeb, I wanted to--I have so many questions, and I usually let the audience go first. But I want to ask a couple of them quickly. V v

First of all, as you said, you just came back from Washington. What are the Palestinian people--you know, what are you--well, speak for yourself--what are you expecting from President Obama? Are you expecting any changes and--so that's one question.

And the second question I have--and I mean this with all care and respect--

DR. ERAKAT: You can be candid. Candid.

MR. AMR: I will. You know, I have watched

you--I have watched the Oslo process from when I was in graduate school in 1993 until today. I've watched you and your colleagues speak over the last five years. And I--or--the last several years. And I guess I feel like I've heard you say this before. And I'm wondering if there's any mechanism--I'm mean, I appreciate what you're saying. I think you're saying the right thing, but is there any leverage? What is the leverage--you talk about yourself being the most disadvantaged negotiator in all of humankind. Is there a way for the Palestinian people to develop a leverage in negotiations so that the only thing the Palestinians have is not just these words?

I mean, because I would hate to, you know, I don't know--1948, 2048--I don't know how old you will be in 2048, but I hope you're not making the same speech then.

DR. ERAKAT: Look. First of all about the Obama administration. I hope that Mr. Obama will make the difference between what's needed and what's possible. Since 1956, I mean, the pattern in the previous American administrations, as far as we're concerned, they come to Tel Aviv, figure out what the

Israeli government can do and cannot do, and then tailor their initiatives, ideas in accordance with what's possible.

I'm urging President Obama and his administration to shift from what's possible to what's needed.

And what we need is to translate the American vision of a two-state solution from a vision into a realistic political track.

Now as far as your second question, I come from a town called Jericho. I live in the home I was born in until now, and through the window of my bedroom, I see the Mount of Temptation where Jesus led his fast for 40 days--three minutes walk literally from my house, you will see the walls that came crumbling when one of our ladies open gates to somebody who came from Egypt (inaudible). And then three minutes in the other direction there is Acaya Spring (inaudible)--tax collections and whatever. Ten minutes drive is the Dead Sea where women can stashes of salt.

And then, you know, in the same neighborhoods there you find people every Saturday

going to their place of worship, and they have been saying the same things--every Saturday, for 5,700 years and when they say it, they feel that they are hearing it for the first time. And I cannot change a single comma for this.

Next door there are people who go every Sunday to the places of their worship and say the same thing every Sunday, and they feel that they are hearing it and saying it for the first time.

And on the other side of the street there are people who have been going to the places of their worship for 1,450 years, every Friday, saying the same things; and feeling that they are saying it and hearing it for the first time.

I hate to repeat myself. I don't like to be redundant or to say things and to be boring--sorry, if I bored you. But, you know, with this history, I also come from a social fabric--my mother began teaching me how to feel guilty when I was nine months old. Why? I don't know. So this is the combination of what we are.

This conflict between Palestinians and Israelis is not the conflict between Bahrain and Qatar

over certain islands. It's not the conflict over three islands occupied by Iran from the air raids. It's not the conflict of the disputed lands between Ecuador and Peru.

It's not the conflict between Congo Brazzaville and Kinshasa. It's not. It's bigger. It's much bigger. people there they believe and they live on this belief--they're willing to die for their beliefs and their psychology and their security and their being and their religion and their--whatever we do.

So I--many people ask me--you know--I'm--and, you know, my specialty is conflict resolution. And actually this year I authored a book the beginning of, you know, Arab negotiating behavior.

I feel that has never been touched before. We are very--anyway, I'm not on the subject here now. We've come a long way, but--Hady, we've come a long way.

Today, I don't think that when we went to Madrid, for instance, I had to put a kofi on my shoulder as I was integrated in the Jordanian delegation. The Israelis could not sit with me. And

so you have to integrate your system of beliefs that our God, as Muslims, regards peace and reconciliation and healing. And the same God--God is the same. God is one for Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

And we happen to be an important world where the employment of religion is part of the job of politicians. I cannot help that. People run for elections using supposed to go to mosques to worship God. When I go to mosque to use God, I have problems. We're supposed to go to a synagogue to worship God. When you go to synagogues to use God, you're in problems. And you know the problems when people went to churches and used God.

So we have come a long way. I'm not saying we're near the end game. But as a Palestinian, I feel that, you know, I come from a town that's 10,000 years old. And unless I can provide an agreement that I can put to the public opinion poll--I'm not saying that would be totally satisfactory--but a fair agreement, I rightly or wrongly believe that my rights have been compromised. I was supposed to disappear from the face of the map. There have been since 1917 87 and initiatives launched by many countries around us to

wipe the term Palestine off the minds of people, to integrate me into other countries. Today, I was 12 years old when the occupation came to my hometown Jericho. Today, I became in 2008 grandfather. My twin daughters made me a grandfather of a beautiful daughter and a beautiful son.

I hate to see my grandchildren grow under occupation. I don't want them to be suicide bombers. To be honest with you, I want to be like your children. I want them to be the painter, the professor, the lecturers, the soccer player--just normal life.

It aches me--it aches my heart that we have to go through this, but, at the end of the day, I'm under occupation.

MR. AMR: Let me turn to the audience. You've all been very patient. I will do my best with my vision to--why don't you all put up your hands? Let's--I see one, two, goodness gracious--three, four, five, six, seven, eight. I see a whole bunch of hands.

Why don't just like whack them all. Okay. Why don't two or three--why don't we take three at a

time?

DR. ERAKAT: Let me take them all.

MR. AMR: All? We'll take them by section. Why don't we take--we'll take some questions from the section in here, and then we'll go. So there was one of the front and then we'll just move back. Go ahead, sir.

DR. ERAKAT: (inaudible).

MR. AMR: And yes, so please state your name and your affiliation. And why don't we start in the front and then move our way back? Just please state your name and affiliation for Dr. Erakat.

MR. ABDULLAH: I'm Yassir Abdullah. I work for the UPDHEO over here in Qatar.

Now I've been observing--I'm from India actually. I've been observing that when the peace negotiations have started early in the '80s and '90s and until now, I've been saying that the Israeli regime is gaining more exceptions and more from the Palestinians other than Palestinians treating any other rights.

So what's your take on this?

MR. AMR: Thank you. That was a great short

question. Also in the front row--why don't we just move it back?

MR. AWAD: Abdi (inaudible) Awad,
Palestinian (inaudible).

Dr. Erakat, I would like to tell us more about the new government, the Israeli government, which you have a long experience with Netanyahu before and what do you expect from him soon? Thank you.

MR. AMR: Another great short question.
Let's go the second row.

MR. CHABADIN: Ahmed Chabadin , and I work for Al-Jazeera. You said about the intent of the war was essentially to systemize Gaza or the division between Gaza and the West Bank. So I just want to know if you think that will succeed and if it has succeeded?

And the second quick question--I'll be quick is whether or not you think the emphasis is placed on the American media in terms of its--

DR. ERAKAT: I didn't hear that.

MR. CHABADIN: --the emphasis is placed on the American media, whether you think it's actually an integral part of finding a solution, if there's going

to be change?

DR. ERAKAT: You mean, American media?

MR. CHABADIN: Media coverage of the conflict. A lot of people place emphasis and say that that's a role--that plays a role in terms of if there ever will be peace.

MR. AMR: Let's stay in the second row.

MS. RUEDA: My name is Maria Gonzalez Rueda. I just wanted--I'm a little bit disappointed, because I feel that, you know, like Mr. Amr told you that you've always said the same thing for the last 20 years.

MR. AMR: Oh, I said five years, but.

MS. RUEDA: Five years. Well, I think 20, actually. And it disappoints me because I thought that when Hamas won the elections, Fatah will realize that they needed to change.

And nothing has happened. When will Fatah finally do something to try to realize that the times have changed; that maybe people want something else.

MR. AMR: Thank you.

MR. BIN: (Speaking Arabic.)

DR. ERAKAT: (Speaking Arabic.)

MR. BIN: Nouri Bin . Another one--okay
since there is no translation--

MR. AMR: There is translation--

MR. BIN: It's easier to ask in English.

MR. AMR: So--

MR. BIN: I heard what you said but a kind
of criticism for the Iranian involvement in Gaza. I
heard kind of that you have some resentment of the--
this is what I feel; I mean, that you didn't like what
you believed to be Iranian involvement in Gaza when
you said--you talk about Iran and these things. This
is correct impression or maybe I'm wrong?

MR. AMR: Thank you. Let's keep going.
Keep going. Let's do the whole section here.

MR. MAZIAD: Myra Maziad, Qatar University.
And I have a question on your vision for the
new state of Palestine, if it is to be created. How
do you envision it to be?

DR. ERAKAT: (Speaking Arabic.)

MS. MAZIAD: Myra Maziad at Qatar
University. So what's your vision for that
economically and militarily, culturally? Is it a
secular state? And you talked about interest, and I

think this is very important. So how can you argue that it's in the world's interests to see in a new state emerging that is not necessarily weak, and it's in the interest of the world and also in the interests of Israel, the neighboring country? So how are you arguing for that?

MR. AMR: Good. One more question in the back and then we'll let Erakat answer.

MR. MISALIFAH: Fahh Misalifah . I'm an engineer living in Qatar. Do you see the possibility of reaching peace with the Israeli society while they are maintaining their Zionist ideology and the Israeli flag, which represents a lot of things, I believe. Thank you.

MR. AMR: Do you want to take those and then we'll go for two more rounds?

DR. ERAKAT: To Yassir, I think 92 percent of Palestinians who are living today in the West Bank and Gaza and East Jerusalem were born after June 4th, 1967. When I was 12 years old I saw the Israeli flag placed in the Jordan River, and, of course, in the Mediterranean. So my whole country was gone. It disappeared.

So I know the sentiment what we heard about 20 years were 200 years or whatever. But when I look at things today, I totally disagree with you because my victory is that when my son, Ali, finds a job in Ramallah or Hanunes or East Jerusalem and he doesn't come to work in Qatar or Dubai or Oman or Cairo.

That's my devastation. So my job, sir, is to do everything I can to build the institutions, universities, gas-water systems, road systems, schools, good hospitals, because we are like you in India, like anybody else, we take showers everyday. We like to be clean. We like to--when our mothers or sons or daughters get sick, we like to have decent doctors and hospitals. And this is the only home we have.

So we, you know, when I tell you that the Israeli flag was in the Jordan River and the other one was in the Mediterranean, and you feel that the Israelis were gaining, you know, that's the way, you know, I can--you know, between people who are politically motivated, I am a Fatah member, but I really always believed that Palestine and Jerusalem are much more important than Fatah or Hamas or anybody

else.

Now with political motivations or political arguments, people who want to prove their point through, you know, using a word here, a word--that's their business. That's politics. Okay?

I don't enjoy living under the occupation. I don't enjoy negotiations that will take place for over 15 years. In my story is--my options are very limited. I'm in a field where I cannot equalize. I cannot ask for a timeout. I cannot withdraw. And I cannot lose. I cannot.

So gaining, losing is not in my vocabulary and not my dictionary. I will stay there. All right?

Abdul Khareem, about the expectations from the new Israeli government--look, as I said, I cannot stand guard on anybody's action, even your actions. I cannot. I cannot stand guard on anybody's lips. If Israel wants to make peace when of these days that it realizes that its interest is better served through peace, through fences that will make good neighbors in the walls of suffocation and racism and (inaudible), they know by now what it takes.

And withdrawal to the 1967 border, the

establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, solving all core issues, including refugees, and a just and acceptable solution based on 194, and this is my basis as was given to me by the international community, by the international law, and by the--all the conventions that's supposed to guide the relations between conflicting parties.

I hope that the Israeli people will see that it's in their interests to live in peace and to make peace. And security--there's a big difference between the term security and defense. You know, defense--guns, weapons, planes, alliances and so on--security is everyone's feeling. So my expectations of the Israeli government if they do not accept the two-state solution, if they don't accept to negotiate all core issues, including Jerusalem, and stop settlement activities, I don't think we can have political negotiations, because they will be reneging on their obligations and (inaudible) from the Roadmap.

Hamad, no, I don't think it will succeed. I don't think there can be a Palestinian state without Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem forming the state. I mean, I think this is the worst thing that

happened to us since 1967. I think the division has become the main sword in the Israeli politicians' hands over our necks.

And if we don't help ourselves as Palestinians, nobody else can. I believe Hamas and Fatah were formed for Palestine, to serve Palestine. Not if they want the people to serve them, that's another--if they become an end by themselves that's another (inaudible), and I hope that we can through this dialogue taking place under the Egyptian auspices which was supported by all the Arab countries today and yesterday in Qatar, I hope that we will move in this direction and succeed.

And as I said, the formula here is the differentiation between the function of the government and the function of the party. And once again, no one is asking Hamas to recognize Israel-the two-state solution, and to us, to abandon any of its beliefs.

A government is something different than the party. All right? And governments usually serve all their people. I know that when a government comes to being in any democratic country or non-democratic country, they represent all people, not a special

section or special party of a society.

As far as the question about American media, I'm not an expert on bias, but I know I'm (inaudible) as a Palestinian. It's my word against any Israeli, and the Congress, and the Senate, I don't stand a chance. I'm dead.

I have no money, no voters. I'm cost free. All right? And I always wonder as a Palestinian under so much attacks you're under in Gaza and Jericho and Ramallah and so on, and with these Arab resources, and all these things, something is wrong, guys.

You want me to change the world, I will. But don't you have any responsibilities whatsoever in this Arab war to do something about the situation other than being the champions of saying who's good and who's bad in Palestine?

And, Maria--Marwa. Marwa. Now Maria (inaudible) Mawar. No, Maria, said--(inaudible) I mean, that I've been saying everything myself for 20 years. And she wanted me to see the light when Hamas won the elections that we needed to

SPEAKER: (Off mike.) (inaudible).

DR. ERAKAT: --to change.

SPEAKER: I've been there at that time, and everybody was (inaudible). It doesn't mean you have to be Hamas.

DR. ERAKAT: I understand. I can't be. I don't want to be Hamas.

SPEAKER: Some changes. And I don't want you to be Hamas but at least--I don't know a little bit of just thinking like I lost the--we lost the elections. Why? Because people are no longer feeling close to us, like there should be some.

DR. ERAKAT: It's perfectly well--we made mistakes, and people made us pay for the mistakes. We're a democracy, and we don't ensure our lives to have our children inherit us in the government, all right? And I agree with you 100 percent that a Palestinian state must be a state about accountability, transparency, the rule of law, and nobody prevents Saeb Erakat from becoming to be a businessman selling cars or ships or planes. But if I want to do that, I should not be in government, because there is something called conflict of interest there.

We're doing our best to change. I want my

party, Fatah, to hold its sixth Congress to elect a new leadership, and we will do it hopefully very soon.

And we are looking at every single mistake we did, and there's a long list of mistakes. We admit them. We face them. And we hope that this competition between us and all other political parties--from us and others--will be done through ballots and not bullets, because if parties that run for elections have differences and they start shooting each other and declaring coup d'etats as the one carried out in Gaza, then nations will have problems.

So I want people just to have--you know, we are what we are; okay? And scoring points, finger-pointing, trying to undermine others is always a criteria that people do; all right?

But we did not dispute that Hamas won the elections. For God sake's, in 18 days after the elections, we met in the Council and my friend and my colleague at the University Dr. Hazziz (inaudible) as the new Speaker. In five weeks, Mr. Hannia , even though he refused the program with the President, defined our basic law. He was sworn in as the Prime Minister.

So there was a smooth transition on this. So why can't we just say one plus one equals two. I told Hannia that I want you to be my Prime Minister, and you are my Prime Minister. You're not the Prime Minister of Hamas alone.

And once again, I think we have always room to improve, and so on.

Now as far as the 20 years, as a matter of fact for I think for 51 years--I'm 53 now--I began speaking maybe at one and a half. So maybe I said (inaudible) when I was two, and I said Palestine when I was one and a half.

I've been repeating myself for 52 years in the area. And I want my grandchildren to repeat what I'm saying every morning, every afternoon, with each time (inaudible) something, with each time they see the rain or the sun or the moon, I want them to repeat the name Palestine and Jerusalem and independence and freedom.

And I'm sorry to bore you of repeating myself, because the issues that I'm dealing with have not changed. The issue is true Islam under occupation, borders under occupation, settlements that

are ongoing, water that's being stolen from me; okay?

So the issues have not changed. I'm surviving under occupation. The roadblocks have been a system in my life. You know, when you speak the term bridge (inaudible) and you (inaudible) if you take a Qatari today or an Egyptian and say this term, what does come to mind. What does come to your mind as a Qatari when I say (inaudible) is something over water, nice, you may drive by the car. You may see the water running. You may take your children, your wife, your (inaudible) whatever--have a nice time.

Say the word (inaudible) to a Palestinian. What comes to mind?

Comes to mind striptease, searching, throwing your clothes out, waiting for 12 days to 12 hours to enter to make that regularly check-ins and so on.

So the book at a lady is different in your society and my society, and I'm really once again sorry to have bored you, because I think that 20 years my people appreciate me because--you know, I could have signed an agreement in 1994, as the Israelis offered that I run my education and I run my

agriculture and I run my schools and hospitals, and they would be the source of authority for me. I did not sign.

I could have signed--Abu Mazen could have signed two months ago on almost 100 percent of the West Bank. He did not sign. And we will keep repeating Jerusalem, Palestine, independence, freedom, statehood, and--Nourideem please.

Nourideem, I did not--well, first of all, Iran, Qatar, anybody on air--I don't like anybody to interfere in my internal politics.

SPEAKER: Excuse me. That's why you were forced (inaudible).

DR. ERAKAT: I don't poke my nose. I said I want the best for all. I said Arabs should not fear Iran and we should not use the term Sh'ite and Sun'i, this is to me is something--can I use bad words here in this country or not?

Any wish. Iran is part of our geography, our social fabric, our--they're our neighbors here. All right?

So what I'm saying is that we shouldn't have real dialogue with Iran, but we shouldn't avert war.

We should avoid war. We should not allow anyone to wage war or encourage one against Iran. That's my message.

Now as far as--

SPEAKER: (Off mike.) (inaudible).

DR. ERAKAT: --okay. And I'm (inaudible).

If you ask a Qatari today what's the main issue for you in your life, he will tell you Palestine. That's true. And the same thing to the Egyptian and the Indonesian--and the Iranian. That's their cause. What's the cause for a Qatari, or an Egyptian, or a Sudanese or so on? It's Palestine.

And there have been so many sacrifices from Egyptians, Syrians, Lebanese, Jordanians and others. But, at the same time, I said something that, to me, at least Palestine and Jerusalem is much more important than all Arab nations and their capitals. And my shoulders are not big enough for their tap dancing; all right?

If people want to help, they should help. All right? But I don't want anyone to use me, not Iran, not Qatar, not any country on earth.

SPEAKER: Sir, let me ask you--it's

straightforward: Do you think that Hamas is moved by Iranians?

DR. ERAKAT: To be honest with you, I have not seen--I cannot judge things unless I see something very accurately. But I don't think that Iran--since 1979, actually, I mean, since the Authority was formed in 1994, I was surprised that Iran did not help us.

And only in the last three years, when we have divisions, they start interfering to help a side--on the other side. And that's not good.

SPEAKER: Do you think Hamas will--

DR. ERAKAT: And I ask Iran and I ask Arabs and I ask everyone not to support Hamas or Fatah. Please don't (inaudible). We need you to support Palestine and the Palestinian cause and Palestinian independence and freedom. Okay.

SPEAKER: Do you think Hamas will allow fair election in Gaza?

DR. ERAKAT: Well, I think if we agree to have free and fair elections, it will be in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.

And yes, we will have free and fair elections, because Hamas cannot afford to just do a

one time elections and run away with it. They cannot.

Marwa, my vision of Palestine is what--we cannot. Look. Palestine will be, I'm sure. A (inaudible) will be. But these states will be different than other states. There will be limitations on us. Okay? We may not have, you know, a date to parade our air force and navy and army, you know, for--but I can assure you a Palestinian state, a pillar of security, development is that we will not compromise democracy, human rights, basic freedoms, individual and collective, transparency, and accountability.

And we will have--Palestine will have a zero--a policy of zero tolerance to anyone. And we're not perfect, by the way.

Many people think Palestinians are perfect. We're not. We're just like any other society on the earth. We have good people, bad people. We have people who try to use their positions to advance their personal lives.

But I can assure you that this Palestine that was crossed out of the maps and geography--and we have paid dearly just to maintain and survive--sorry,

Maria--the name Palestine; okay? And for the next 100 years, we will have nothing in our minds but our liberation and independence; and a state that will be based in democracy, human rights, accountability, and transparency, and institutions that will serve the people.

SPEAKER: Fahdi.

DR. ERAKAT: Fahdi. Just a second.

MR. AMR: I think we're out of time, sorry.

DR. ERAKAT: Fahdi, you ask a question about the Israeli--where's Fahdi. Can you repeat the question again, please?

SPEAKER: (inaudible) society.

DR. ERAKAT: Ah, the Israeli society because they're--look. Fahdi, Fahdi, look. As I told you, in 1897, the Zionists held their first conference in Basel, Switzerland. And they said let's give the land with no people to a people with no land. There were 500,000 of us, half a million--Christian and Muslim Palestinians.

So I call this era, el al Judea, a stage of nonexistence. They denied our existence. In this stage--remember between 1897 until 1917, when the

British came up with what's so-called the Balfour Declaration and they specified in that declaration a national home for the Jews and preserving the civil and religious right of the then Jewish communities in Palestine.

The Jews were eight percent of that nation, and we were the 92 percent. And we were turned into sub-humans. We're there, but (inaudible) to be walled off and so on.

At that year, 1917, there were 50,000 workers from the current Gulf countries working in our fields in Palestine, coming to annual pilgrimage to work on our farms--50,000. 5-0-0-0-0--from the Gulf countries of today.

We had 17 newspapers and magazines published in daily and weekly basis. We have three colleges. We had a major port in Yafa, and yet we were interned by a (inaudible) because those who agreed with the (inaudible) and it created their borders and national days--all the 21 countries in the Arab world that celebrate in the Arab world their national day and their independence and their freedoms were done at a cost of another country that was crossed out of that

map.

But I'm not here to judge history. And I remained a sub-human until 1948. When Israel was created, I was simply termed to their minds as a refugee. And they were to solve the refugee problems and rehabilitate us and advance us and have vocational training centers and so on. And nobody knew--and you don't know, Fahdi, that between 1948 until 1965, 40 percent of Palestinians born in refugee camps died before reaching the age of one. 4-0.

SPEAKER: (Off mike.) (inaudible).

DR. ERAKAT: Just a second. Just a second. Just a second.

And when we took to arms as Fatah and PLO and Yassir Arafat waged this revolution, we will not do it because we love to kill and get killed. We did it because we want to survive. And then we were branded as terrorists in the fourth stage of the century. We must (inaudible) and terrorism and terrorists and so on.

You know, in 1993, I was in Washington (inaudible) head of my late colleague, Had Abushafi -- God bless his soul. He died last year. And then

somebody came and said, "Oh, there is an agreement in Oslo. We did not know about it as negotiators."

And honest to God, I did not know that there was another track in Oslo.

So I said, why we're angry. Let's see the agreement. So I looked at the first paragraph of the agreement which says the government of Israel and the PLO, the sole legitimate (inaudible) of the Palestinian people, I said (inaudible). I did not exist. I existed in their minds as sub-human.

I became a refugee. I became a terrorist. And now they recognize me as people.

So it's not that they--their conscience is aching for my suffering that I will--they will make peace with me. I'm the reality. I'm a fact. I will not--I did not disappear. I don't intend to disappear. I will stay there.

What's really delaying us from our state today is our internal divisions and conflicts and so on. So when people make peace with each other, it's not because they have good intentions or love relationships or so on; okay?

They do it once they know and feel that it

serves their interests. And as I told you at the beginning, Fahdi, once Israel realizes that it will serve their interests, and it will--

MR. AMR: Saeb, let me interject. If you'll stay with us for 10 minutes, what I'd like to do is try and take four minutes of questions from the floor and get some questions. So I apologize to this group. I had my back to you most of the night.

Why don't--we can keep the questions as previously to about 30 seconds--

DR. ERAKAT: And then actually cut my answers.

MR. AMR: --then the speaker should cut his answers a little bit.

DR. ERAKAT: I talk too much. That's what my wife says to me all the time.

MR. AMR: Please, go ahead. And let us know who you are.

MS. HIYA: My name is Hiya and I'm with Georgetown University. And earlier you mentioned that there haven't been defined Western-Arab relations since 1638--

DR. ERAKAT: I'm glad that caught your

attention; yeah.

MS. HIYA: --so how would you suggest that now we as Arabs carry out this definition of Western-Arab relations?

DR. ERAKAT: What are you doing in Georgetown?

MS. HIYA: I study international politics.

DR. ERAKAT: What year?

MS. HIYA: I'm a sophomore.

DR. ERAKAT: So I hope that you will do a masters degree one day and you take this subject. It's a very--it was never touched.

MS. HIYA: Insha'allah.

DR. ERAKAT: Insha'allah. Keep it in mind.

MS. HIYA: Thank you.

DR. ERAKAT: I'm a university professor by my real recent life, you know, long time ago.

MR. KUPEROVA: My name is Saleem Kuperova. I'm working here at Qatar.

Realistically speaking at the moment, where you had mentioned in your statements regarding Iran and Syria and Turkey and Egypt, realistically speaking, what do you have as Palestinians to

negotiate with Israel at this stage?

MR. ALI: Yes, my name is Saleem Ali. I'm a visiting fellow here at the Brookings Center and on the faculty of the University of Vermont in the U.S.

My question is about the Arab-Israeli--so-called Arab-Israelis, what role do you see them playing in this current--

DR. ERAKAT: Arabs and Israelis?

MR. ALI: --no, no, the Arab-Israelis--

DR. ERAKAT: Ah, the Arab-Israelis?

MR. ALI: --yes, exactly. What role do you see them playing in this current predicament with Lieberman's rise to power and their sort of--the rebirth of their Palestinian identity that some people are saying can be a source of some interesting solutions to the conflict or perhaps complicating the conflict?

MR. AMR: Is there anything else over here? Let's go to the other side and take up all the questions that we have and then let our speaker very graciously answer.

MR. PARKS: My name is Dillon Parks. I'm here--

MR. AMR: What was your name?

MR. PARKS: Dillon Parks.

DR. ERAKAT: Dillon.

MR. AMR: Dillon.

MR. PARKS: I'm here through Qatar University. My question is about--

DR. ERAKAT: Wait. What do you do in Qatar University?

MR. PARKS: Study Arabic.

DR. ERAKAT: Study Arabic.

MR. PARKS: But my question is about what concrete literal things could be promised by the Palestinian state, if and when it is created, given the long history of injustice and anger amongst the people to suggest that once the state itself is developed, it would not wish to retaliate against all the wrongs that were done to it?

DR. ERAKAT: Okay.

ALEX: My name is Alex. I'm also studying Arabic at Qatar University. I just graduated from Georgetown last spring.

My question is regarding George Mitchell, and I'm curious what you anticipate will be a

difference in approach that he will take in comparison to previous ambassadors--I'm thinking notably Dennis Ross.

Also related to that, some analysts have said that, you know, George Mitchell with his work with the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland that the point that he stressed was that you need the hard-liners at the table in order for legitimacy to be conferred on any kind of agreement that comes to bear.

So I'm wondering, you know, is it not just that, you know, Hamas was elected in the last round and could be elected, you know, to prominent--a prominent place through the coming elections? It's not just that, you know, we have this democratic system that we have to abide by, but they need to be at the table for any kind of peace agreement to actually come about.

MS. WITAKUK: Hi. I'm Ala Witakuk of Georgetown University. You mentioned in terms of the question of Palestine and its future that one of the options is one-state solution. This is--I guess one of the solutions that are more attached to, and it seems like everyone is promoting the two-state

solution.

So I was wondering if you could share your thoughts on the efficacy and viability of a one-state solution?

MR. MCCARY; Hi. My name is Adam McCary. I'm a journalist with Al-Jazeera. And I guess most generally I wanted to ask you if you think Israelis really want peace; what you think the new Israeli government--how it will regionally impact the Arab world; and what you--how you see it will affect the Egyptian- Israeli peace treaty, because, as you may know, Lieberman had already threatened to Egypt to-- that he would bomb us on (inaudible)--if he were to-- if Egypt were to wage war.

So what does this say about Israel? I mean, in the past 30 years, they haven't really done a great job to give other Arab countries to establish peace deals with them. So what does this say about a comprehensive Middle East peace deal?

MR. AMR: All right. This is the last chance.

DR. ERAKAT: Any question, any comment?

SPEAKER: I want to ask a question, which

is--

DR. ERAKAT: There. The gentleman there.

MR. AMR: Go ahead and ask your question.

SPEAKER: (Speaking Arabic.) I apologize
because that's (inaudible) Araby--

DR. ERAKAT: But I recognize his village
from the family name. Palestinians only can do this,
you know.

SPEAKER: (Speaking Arabic.)

DR. ERAKAT: To my (inaudible) you don't
understand Arabic. It's very enjoyable. So, I'll--
Palestinian politics at its best. This is it. This
is what we are.

SPEAKER: (Speaking Arabic.)

DR. ERAKAT: (Speaking Arabic.)

SPEAKER: (Speaking Arabic.)

MR. AMR: Maybe we can have a Palestinian
translation for them.

DR. ERAKAT: (inaudible), can you translate
what he said, please?

(Laughter.)

SPEAKER: (Speaking Arabic.)

DR. ERAKAT: Do you know Arabic, all of you

here?

MR. AMR: No. That's why I wanted to get a Palestinian translation of Palestinian.

DR. ERAKAT: (Speaking Arabic.)

SPEAKER: (Off mike.) (inaudible)

MR. AMR: No, but they're not getting it.

No, no.

SPEAKER: (Off mike.)

MR. AMR: No, no, no, no, no, no. Why don't you just take the mic and and--

DR. ERAKAT: And before the doctor goes--

MR. AMR: --yeah.

DR. ERAKAT: --can you translate what the--

SPEAKER: The gentleman was saying--yeah--

DR. ERAKAT: --and then translate to Dr.

Ibrahim what he was saying.

SPEAKER: I'll be very brief. The gentleman was saying that he is with Fatah and he was born that way, but he was saying that he believes that Hamas is not the majority, but because there are many mistakes in Fatah, if I'm translating correctly.

DR. ERAKAT: So far, so good.

SPEAKER: And so he is--to be brief, he was

asking what can we do, you know, to rectify these mistakes and why do we see the same people, you know, who have brought this sort of sad reputation on Fatah to this day, you know, representing us. Why is there no change?

DR. ERAKAT: Thank you.

SPEAKER: While making the question of Dr. Saeb, of course.

(Laughter.)

DR. ERAKAT: So many exceptions. (Speaking Arabic.)

SPEAKER: (Speaking Arabic.)

DR. ERAKAT: (Speaking Arabic.) Now translation, please.

SPEAKER: I caught the last part of it.

DR. ERAKAT: Well, the first part is that Dr. Ibrahim said that we--that I spoke about the commitments on the government and that's the main point of the divisions between us and Hamas, and we do we impose on Hamas the agreements, since they chose and elected Hamas? And why can't the people decide whether they agree with these agreements that we signed with Israel or not. The second point--

SPEAKER: I'll translate the second point.

DR. ERAKAT: Go ahead.

SPEAKER: He's asking Dr. Saeb why are you always--wire you present this frequently in the media? He doesn't see that this is beneficial as a chief negotiator for him to be so present in the media and would rather see him focus on the negotiating process and not be so present in the media.

SPEAKER: But I enjoy him.

SPEAKER: Sure. As a policy process.

DR. ERAKAT: Hady?

MR. AMR: No, I just wanted to really ask you quickly. You just came from the Arab League Summit.

DR. ERAKAT: Mm-hmm.

MR. AMR: Has the Arab League Summit offered any help to the Palestinian people that's tangible and valuable to you? And, if not, do you have any suggestions for how the Arab governments can be of more help to the Palestinian people?

DR. ERAKAT: Okay. I'll try to be as brief as brief can be. Okay.

To engage in this, it takes a long time.

But I have been researching this. I've been doing a lot of efforts on this, and I really--once you get to the graduate work, we have to begin as Arabs and has Palestinians to take this subject and handle it, because without a clear-cut definition of Western-Arab relations, we're doomed

The relations by the United States is not judged by Arab interests. It's by regime interests. And I cannot--it will take me a long, long time to elaborate on this, but once again, I think it's one of the major problems is that these relationships have not been defined since 1648.

I know that this is not the satisfactory answer, and I hope it will be one day in your research.

MS. HIYA: May I follow up?

DR. ERAKAT: Yes, you can.

MR. AMR: Sure.

MS. HIYA: But what would your (inaudible) of Western-Arab relations?

DR. ERAKAT: I want to see Western-Arab relations like--look. The Arab world GDP--GNP in 2008 stood at 16 percent of that of the U.S. Okay?

Arab total exports in 2008 stood at that compared to that of one-third of Germany alone. And the story is not slogans. It's not--you know (speaking Arabic.) I have to be very cautious, because as Ibrahim advised not to appear in the media, my party and my colleagues keep telling me cut my anger when it comes to Arabs, you know, because many Palestinians we fear and there, and we want to affect this. But I just came from (inaudible) to find a job here. We can work it out, you know.

So once again, I'll be more than happy to help you with this, but I'll give an example: When Saddam Hussein was in office in Iraq, the Americans were hugging him and pressing him when he was fighting the war against Iran. And he was a good dictator for eight years.

He ventured into an occupation of Kuwait, and then he became a bad dictator. Just think of the current relationships over the years. Study the battles of relations between the United States and Arab countries. (inaudible) the relations. People have bases here, and then they are angry with them and so on.

I really believe that the best pattern of relations is the relations based on interests. And as Arabs so far, we have failed big to speak to the West with the language that they understand, and they don't understand any other language but interests.

So it's about the language of interests and how can we educate ourselves and our decision-makers to talk about interests.

Saleem, you know, negotiations with Israel is about not reinventing the wheel or (inaudible) from the start. The Roadmap of the international Quartet have defined the objective of the negotiations as to end the Israeli occupation that began in '67. So this is a conflict that its end-game is already identified.

So what I need is to have the beginnings of an implementation--timelines, monitors to carry out these defined objectives of the peace process, as defined by the U.S., the European Union, the Russian Federation, and the U.N. and then the Security Council has issued 1515. And I want--and this is why I said negotiations are not needed. What's needed now is the decisions of how to proceed with the implementation of the defined game.

The Israelis--the Israeli negotiating behavior, you know, it's okay if people have a legitimate right to tell me--I can say one item, one price. You can tell me one item, 16 prices. You know, you can--because of the relationship of people under occupation--occupied--negotiating their occupiers, and its walls--the teeth they employ against you when you don't sign the agreements they want for 20 years--you know, and the roadblocks, suffocation, settlements, the arrests, the incursions, the killings, and so on. These are all elements, pressures on the negotiators.

And we, as I said, what we need to negotiate and to agree upon is the mechanisms of implementation timelines for ending the Israeli occupation.

SPEAKER: Just to add that on that issue. (inaudible) has said there is no such thing as Palestinian.

DR. ERAKAT: Yes.

SPEAKER: (Off mike) (inaudible) time and you have (inaudible).

DR. ERAKAT: No, we began negotiating as a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. And I remember Abud

D'Confia disqualified me. He ordered his delegations not to talk to me. And they did not talk to me for year. And I was not even allowed to enter the State Department in the negotiating team.

And there was a game in town--you know and I know and let's pretend we don't know. And, you know, that's the situation we are in.

Now Palestinians are negotiating through their PLO--the Palestine Liberation Organization. Still, they have their flag. In 1991, in my neighborhood in Jericho one night, a 14 year old kid was dragged by Israeli soldiers to get down the flag. We used to throw their flag on the wires, the electricity wires. And when the Israelis saw a flag, they shot the person who is carrying the flag to death immediately. Or, you know, they asked this kid to go to take the flag down, and was electrified to death.

Today, when we go and meet the Prime Minister of Israel in his home, there is a bigger flag of Palestine in his office than in my office.

Now look. Patience. And I believe that once Israel realizes that they cannot pressure us to un-dictate on us, and people blaming. Many

Palestinians say, you have been negotiating for 15 years. What did you bring us? Why can't--I could have--by the way, I became the chief negotiator only in 2004, and that's for the record; but Abu Mazen had my job before he became the Prime Minister and then (inaudible) the President, but, you know, Palestinians could have signed an agreement in 1994, as the Israelis also dictate or in 2000 in Camp David.

And Arafat could have avoided being under siege. And we could have signed--we want the Israelis to understand that they cannot dictate on us. They may impose siege, closure, incursions, kill, build settlements, enter their tanks into my house, prevent me to leave my hometown sometimes, as their chief negotiator (inaudible) with them.

They can do whatever they want with impunity, and they know that they can get away with it; all right? And they can violate agreements. And what I do when they violate the agreements, I write to the Americans and to the Europeans and so on.

If I violate the agreements, they impose the closure, the siege, this, that. They have teeth. I don't.

Anyway, Saleem Ali, look Arabs have been there in that land before Lieberman. They are there now, and they will be there after Lieberman.

And their main task is to remain on this land.

And as far as Lieberman and what he says and what he wants to advocate, I always said imagine that somebody forms a party anywhere on earth--suppose that a Palestinian forms a party and asked for the expulsion of Jews. Or somebody forms a party and asks for the expulsions of Christians--anywhere on the earth. This is party that's calling for the expulsion of Christians and Muslims because they are non-Jews.

Handle this in your university.

I am not saying that life is about fairness and justice. It was never, and I don't think it will ever be. We have so much sugarcoated language (inaudible) and so on, but--

SPEAKER: (Off mike) (inaudible), do you think you'll be able to negotiate with someone who has such views and?

DR. ERAKAT: No. I have no illusions, personally speaking. But I don't choose whom to

negotiate with. Then what can we offer you his promises, son.

Look, you know, I can tell you, you know, as a Palestinian, I take so much pride of being a Palestinian, because never in our history have we had a sectarian clash. Jews, Muslims, and Christians have lived in Palestine since time and authors and writers and historians began recording what goes on. We have never had a sectarian clash in our history.

Our neighbors in Lebanon destroyed each other. Armenians sought refuge in Palestine. We have an Armenian quarter in Jerusalem, and we took them.

Jews have always been treated, and they can talk about it. Never in our history we had anything other than coexistence between Muslims, Christians, and Jewish Palestinians.

The first bombs, the things that are put in markets and go boom to kill civilians, were introduced in Haifa market at the late 19th century. And you can research this and find that those (inaudible) were the Jews who immigrated from Russia.

We--I'm not saying--look. This is my history. I was never a threat to anyone. As a matter

of fact, Dillon, in 1919, when were asked who do you want to come and view your case is Palestinians, we said no to the British, no to the French, and, we said, you know what, the Americans are fair. Let the Americans come and do that.

And this is why the story about the King-Crane Commission. Anyway, but, you know, we can--we will be a responsible member of nations. We will have obligations and duties and will be a peaceful nation trying to build and to live and let live and advance the cause of dialogue, coexistence, and advance the sciences and literature and so on. And we can do that.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

DR. ERAKAT: And I don't think we will retaliate. I--excuse me to say, Ani, we have never even attacked anyone. When we did whatever we did in arms, I think we did defend ourselves. And it's our right to defend ourselves. And we will never give up this right to defend ourselves and our existence.

Alex, I think George Mitchell is a man of stature, a very decent diplomat. I've had the honor to meet him when he did his report, the Mitchell

Report in 2001, May 2001, which was signed by President Clinton administration in October 2000, when we met in Sharm El-Sheikh. And his report was the first to address to the minds of the Americans and others in the international community that military regimes and systems in attacks against Palestinians will not solve the problem.

These people deserve independence. They deserve a Palestinian state, and the Israelis must stop resettlement activities, including natural growth.

And actually, much of the Roadmap was adopted from what Senator Mitchell put. But at the end of the day, you know, Senator Mitchell is employed by an administration. And the U.S. is a superpower with so much interests here. And that depends on how they define these interests and how they move with it.

And I know that Israel is part of America's political life. This will not change. And let's see--let's--but we are determined to give this man the chance he deserves. And I hope that the Americans will shift from the policy of what's possible to the policy of what's needed. And so.

As far as Hamas, reelected, of course, when you go to the ballots and don't use bullets as Palestinians, Hamas is is a Palestinian political party. If they win the next elections, presidential, legislative, that's in the interest of the people, as Ibrahim said.

And that's why we're saying in 2005, Palestinians by 62 percent elected a president with a platform of peace, two states, agreements signed; and 2006, a year later, elected a party that (inaudible) a two-state solution.

And this is why we're saying let's have presidential, legislative elections at the same time, and whoever wins, it will be their, as Dr. Ibrahim said, and that's exactly why we want to go back to the ballots, because we should not use bullets, because bullets between us will not solve any problems as to the complexities.

Ala, I--the one-state solution is not my option. It is not my option. I know when we get angry as Palestinians, especially as Palestinians, we tend to shoot ourselves in the foot. And with all due respect, I'm a person who believes that ethnicity,

language, religion differences have been the classic recipes of wars--plus interests-we cover them and so on.

And I believe that the only option available to us is the two-state solution based on a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, to live side by side on the '67 border with the state of Israel.

But many Palestinians are telling me and even today my students who feel sorry for me that I do this and I don't write books and I don't lecture.

They tell me, "Aren't you sick and tired of this? Why can't you come back to the library and start putting things for us--books and so on." Then asks--let's have one-state solution and let's have the fight for equal rights. All right?

I believe that the two-state solution is the only viable solution if we want to live in peace and security, stability, and democracy.

Adam, whether Israelis want peace and the impact and the effects on Egypt of--don't worry about Egypt. Egypt has been there for much more before I was there. And they know how to defend their interests, and they have very good diplomats.

And as far as wanting peace or wanting--it's not about wanting or not wanting peace. It's defined by interests of the Israelis, whether it serves their interests or not.

Farikh, I agree with you. I didn't say we are perfect. I didn't say we do not commit mistakes. I said we're going through a transition as Palestinians, as a whole. I cannot sometimes define the variables of that transition. It's so difficult.

I come from a family of seven. I'm the sixth. Six don't live in my father's house in Jericho. We're scattered all over the place. Figure out this. Analyze this. Define. Bring me somebody who lives in Qatar all his life, and now he's normal--how he thinks--it's modeled here--some Palestinian who wasn't born in San Francisco.

And, you know, I tell you a story: I--when I became a negotiator--the chief negotiator in 2003, at the end (inaudible), I needed people to help me. I'm not an expert in water. I'm not an expert in settlements, compensation, refugees, and so on and so on and so on and so on.

So I established the negotiating support

unit. I have 36 kids now. Right? Not kids, ladies and gentlemen who are 25 to 30 years old. Twenty-three of them don't speak Arabic--headed by Dr. Zena Salahieh of Harvard, responsible for thinking for me. Dr. Ziad Clote from the Sorbonne, of a French father and a Palestinian mother; and Dr. Halah Rashaad, from Canada; Afir Abuyaid from Chile. They're the one ones who are, you know, coming to terms with the realities of what's needed. And that's part of the institution building. And that's part of the learning experience.

Sometimes when I have to negotiate water, I take the delegation to Abu Mazen and say, this is it. Dr. Shedarh Aktili from (inaudible) refugee camp. He's an expert in France about water. And then some group from Nabilus would come from (inaudible) your village and say to Abu Mazen, "How come nobody from Jinin? How come nobody from Gaza? How come nobody from outside or inside?"

Look. We are going through a difficult transition. We have committed mistakes. I don't think we're going to stop committing mistakes. But the ability of us to learn from our mistakes is there.

It's there.

And (inaudible) for the elections in Jericho, I (inaudible) constituency, 600 square kilometers in 2006; all right?

I ran on a platform of peace, two-state solution, negotiations, agreements signed and all these things. The people there gave me 67 percent of the vote. Figure out that, when my party lost all over.

SPEAKER: (inaudible).

DR. ERAKAT: It's okay. It's coming. It's coming. I pledge. We are coming--pledge--Fatah is moving in that direction. The sixth Congress will be convened. There will be--whoever will be elected, there will be 1,500 delegates to elect our new leaders from our women and men, and it will be open and free elections there, very soon.

SPEAKER: (Off mike) (inaudible).

DR. ERAKAT: What?

SPEAKER: (Off mike) (inaudible).

DR. ERAKAT: No, no, we're talking about Fatah elections. Fatah elections. Fatah and you go to the ballots and you have candidates, and you

choose. There could be 100 candidates taking seats available.

SPEAKER: (Off mike) (inaudible) will fit, and it could be from now, because they will never allow (inaudible).

DR. ERAKAT: If they win the elections, that is therefore right. I know some Senators in the U.S. Senate who have served for 49 years. Joe Biden, my friend, who is now the Vice President of the United States--I've known him for 25 years. He's been a senator for 38 years.

As long as you go to the elections and win, that's legitimate. So.

SPEAKER: (Off mike) (inaudible).

DR. ERAKAT: I intend--no, no. I'm a (inaudible).

SPEAKER: All right. You told me that you will go back and take your (inaudible).

DR. ERAKAT: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Elections is elections--democracy. You don't know the outcomes of the elections before you count the votes. And people have the right within my party to choose whoever they

want, and whoever will be elected directly in these elections, in our sixth Congress, will be our leader. Okay.

Dr. Ibrahim, I think I made my point very clear. It's precisely that we want to form a national unity government--what do we have before the end of the year? Eight months? Okay. Seven months? This government will do two things, because what people don't know--When President Mahmoud Abbas wants to leave (inaudible) to Aman, do you know how he leaves? (inaudible) they send me his name, ID number, people accompanying him. I go to the Israelis and make the arrangements for him to leave the bridge.

We are not an independent country. When we buy cars or refrigerators or glasses or water from outside, it comes through Israeli harbors. The Israelis charge that taxes--the customs, and at the end of each month, the Minister of Finance, Palestinian Minister of Finance, goes to the Israeli Ministry of Finance. They take a three percent surcharge for their efforts, and give us the 97 percent.

So how can you have a Minister of Finance in

a Palestinian government who says I don't deal with Israelis. I don't recognize Israel. It's--I'm not asking you to be--to side with me or--just to figure out the situation.

If you know before the elections of 2006 all the parties that ran for the elections and knew that (inaudible) is the Council of limitations. It's a Council of limitations. They knew that your not independent; that you are not sovereign; that you have restrictions--you have limitations.

And you run for these elections knowing what it's all about. And yet, after winning the elections, you want to say that because I won the elections, I want to change these things. How can you transfer it wanted person from Jinin to Aman Hospital? You have to coordinate with the Israelis.

I know but--I mean, look. The truth is much closer to the (inaudible), and this is why I'm saying we're not asking Hamas.

Now if the game here is to say that we want to sabotage the whole system; we don't want Oslo--we don't agreements; we don't want a Palestinian Authority, go to the elections. Win these elections.

We promise you you can then decide what you want to do. But let us go to the--do it by ballot and not bullets.

And as far as my appearances, look, Ibrahim. There is nothing more difficult in life than to be a Palestinian. It's very difficult. I don't like to talk about it. But believe me, I agree with you. I agree with you.

As a university professor, I would love to stay at my university to teach and write. And there are not too many specialists in the field of conflict resolution and negotiations.

And we need to address the Western media and so on. I mean, it takes people who--I'm not saying that we don't have. We have. But it's our--part of our duties and requirements. And in many times, I know that my wife tells me it's about that you're going to be appearing in the cartoon channels, you know.

But it's really part of what needs to be done. And it's okay. That's the least of my problems.

Hady, the Arab Summit, it depends on what

you expected from the Arab summit. You know, the Arab summit is a reflection of its numbers; right? And my expectations came true. What I expected in the communiqué, which we shared those things in drafting, you know, support the Egyptian efforts to and the reconciliation process from more Arabs is there. The Arab peace initiative is there. And how do deal with the Obama administration and the (inaudible) administrations vis-à-vis the needs of stopping settlement activities and so on and so on--it's there.

Arabs make decisions. Arabs talk too much, but I think Arabs should learn that before making decisions, they should learn something that people usually put mechanisms for implementation before they take decisions. I hope that we as Arabs will learn this very soon. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. AMR: I'd like to thank the speaker, the audience, the staff. We've kept you late. Thank you for your patience. I think we still have--I know it's very late, but I think we still have some refreshments in the other room. I hope you'll stay and I hope to see you all soon.

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