



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

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Appendix AC

Arafat letter to Clinton, December 28, 2000

Unofficial Translation

Gaza, December 28, 2000

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you very much for your letter which I received this morning in response to my letter explaining our position regarding issues of permanent settlement, and reiterating our appreciation of your continued efforts to help us and the Israelis reach an agreement of peace and justice for our two peoples.

I value very much your continued efforts, Mr. President, your creative initiatives, and your relentless patience, to attempting to bridge the gaps that separate our positions and those of the Israelis.

Mr. President,

Please allow me to address with all the sincerity emanating from the close friendship that ties us, and the historical importance of what you are trying to do. I want to assure you of my will to continue to work with you to reach a peace agreement. I need your help in clarifying and explaining the bases of your initiative.

I need clear answers to many questions relating to calculation of land ratios that will be annexed, and swapped, and the actual location of these territories, as well as the basis for defining the wailing wall, its borders and extensions, and the effect of that on the concept of full Palestinian sovereignty over al-Haram al-Sharif.

We understand that the idea of leasing additional territory is an option we have the right to reject, and is not a parameter of your bridging proposals. We also presume that the emergency Israeli locations are also subject to negotiations and to our approval. I hope that you have the same understanding.

I have many questions relating to the return of refugees to their homes and villages. I have a negative experience with the return of displaced Palestinians to the West Bank and Gaza during the Interim Period. Because the modalities remained tied to an Israeli Veto, not one refugee was allowed to return through the mechanism of the interim agreement, which required a quadripartite

committee of Egypt, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine to decide on their return. Equally, I don't see a clear approach dealing with compensation of the refugees for their land, property and funds taken by Israel under the aegis of the Israeli custodian of absentee property.

I feel Mr. President, that the period for Israeli withdrawal specified in your initiative is too long. It will allow the enemies of peace to exploit the time to undo the agreement. I wonder if the "Period" is one of the fixed parameters of your proposal; a "basis" that cannot be changed.

Mr. President,

I have many questions. I need maps, details and clarifications that can help me take the necessary decisions with my leadership and people.

I would like you to appreciate that I do not want to procrastinate or waste time. We need a real opportunity to invest once more your determination and creativity to reach a fair and lasting peace with your efforts and during your presidency.

I remain Mr. Presidency ready to pay you a visit at the White House, in the shortest possible time if you find this visit appropriate, to discuss with you the bridging proposals and to exchange views on ways to develop them further.

Please accept my highest regards and best wishes.

Yasser Arafat

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