

that such a nationality as "Palestinian" exists, apart from the "Arab" nationality, he concluded his remarks by saying that if peace were to occur, then the "cultural struggle will begin," not between Palestinians and Israelis, but among the Israelis themselves, between those who want a religious state of Eretz Yisrael, and those who see Israel as a secular state and a crossroads between Europe and the Middle East, Asia, and Africa.

The rabbi was passionately countered by Israeli writer Abraham B. Yehosha, who not only denounced Bin-Nun's brand of Zionism, but declared that the core of Zionism is "the right of return" of all Jews to the "State of Israel," as defined and recognized by the United Nations. He made emphatically clear that the Israeli state stands on international conventions and not on biblical texts or historical claims that are 3,000 years old.

Dr. Braverman: 'The house is almost on fire'

Dr. Avishay Braverman is president of the Ben Gurion University of the Negev, and a former senior economist with the World Bank. His speech to the Paris conference concerned desalination as the only viable solution to the water crisis. He made the following comment to EIR on the failure of the World Bank and international institutions to act quickly enough to support Palestinian economic development.

I would like to express my great concern about the pace of the economic development in the West Bank and Gaza. We are running out of time. While we Israelis are very much concerned that the peace process did not give us the security we desired, and today we experience more terror than we did before, on the other hand, when it comes to the Palestinians, there were great expectations with great fanfare about the fruits of economic development in the Middle East.

I say it loud and clear: The Middle East is a very difficult place. With a tremendous population growth of 2.5-3% a year, it needs a major transformation all over, but as far as Israel goes, the key issue for us is the economic development and the success of the Palestinians. Whatever will happen in other areas is important, but in our own backyard, it will be very difficult for us to function as a state if we are just a rich ghetto surrounded by hungry and angry people.

I am a veteran of the World Bank. I respect the World Bank; my former colleagues are trying to do an admirable job, trying to navigate the work of the World Bank. But you must know the limitations of the international organizations. As a matter of fact, I say it even more bluntly, because I feel the house is almost on fire.

Take a place like Gaza. Gaza is a small city; right now, we have a structure with the World Bank bureaucracy, the U.N. bureaucracy, now the European bureaucracy, the

Palestinian bureaucracy, and the cumbersome Israeli bureaucracy, with all their bilateral and multilateral relations. Each of these has a tendency toward slowness. You combine the five of them, and you have a nightmare. Now if we want to do things that are normally done on the international scene, then so be it, but that is a very long process. At the same time, time is so short, so scarce. The peace process can go up in flames.

So what is required, in my belief, is a completely different mechanism. It's like the story of Alexander the Great, about the Gordian knot: You have to cut through it. I would suggest an emergency action mechanism. It would probably have to be headed by a businessman who is really action-oriented. You have to start with Gaza. You have to create emergency programs for employment, sewage projects, health projects, and education. Some are for the longer term, but some must be implemented immediately. You need an action-oriented person who can swim the channel from one organization to another.

I am concerned because I feel that if the Palestinians are not economically satisfied, then Israel won't be happy about security, and the peace process may fall apart. It is not enough to move from conference to conference, and try to create new mechanisms. Look at Mexico: It was the U.S. administration and the Federal Reserve which saved it, not the IMF [International Monetary Fund] or the World Bank. The initiative has to come from people who put their butts on the line. Look at Russia, look at Ukraine and Algeria—places where there was transformation. The West was not very responsive. Talks began, but nothing followed, and now all these places are in crisis.

I think the situation is very dangerous. We raised a lot of expectations about the possibility of economic progress in the Middle East, but for me there is no new Middle East unless the Palestinians are moving. For us this is the greatest concern. Of course, there has to be political compromise, but I urge the President of the United States, I urge the key European leaders: Move to a new mechanism. If we want to move on Gaza first, if we want people to see that something has happened on the ground, we have to have a shorter, simpler, action-oriented mechanism. It's an emergency.