

Signs of Hope in a Troubled Region

by Dean Andromidas

May 6—As long as President Barack Obama is in the White House and Benjamin Netanyahu is Prime Minister of Israel, the prospects for Mideast peace remain largely hopeless. But for many of the people of the region—hope is all they have, to face what has been an uncertain future, fraught with poverty, the humiliation of occupation, and a denial of sovereignty, that has lasted for more than seven decades.

In the face of all this, a glimmer of hope has broken through with the recent Palestinian unity agreement between Hamas and Fatah, brokered by Egypt and Turkey. The agreement, signed by Palestinian President and Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas, and Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal on May 4, put an end to the de facto civil war between the factions, and the division between the Fatah-controlled West Bank and the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip that has existed since 2007.

In an indication of support for the agreement, the signing ceremony was attended by representatives of the United Nations, the European Union, and the Arab League, as well as Egyptian officials and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. Also attending, were Israeli Arab Knesset members Mohammed Barakeh, Talab al-Sana, and Ahmed Tibi, and former member Wasal Tah.

The agreement calls for putting together a caretaker government until elections are to be held next year.

“We are certain of success so long as we are united,” Abbas said. “Reconciliation clears the way not only for putting the Palestinian house in order, but also to a just peace.”

Meshaal declared that the Palestinians were “closing ranks in order to create one entity, one organization and one decision, in order to realize the shared national aim of a sovereign, independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza . . . without one settler and without giving up one piece of land or the right of return.”

“We don’t want to declare war on any one,” Me-

shaal said. “We want to wrench our rights and draft a new strategy for ourselves, to master all forms of power that will force Netanyahu to withdraw from our lands and to recognize our rights,” he added. “We are telling the world: stand with us.”

Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil al-Arabi also announced that steps will be taken to lift the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip by the Israelis and the international community, and supported by the previous Mubarak government. Once the border crossing is open, according to Hamas Economy Minister Alaa al-Rafati, as quoted in the Israeli media, the Gaza government plans to build an industrial zone on the Egyptian-Palestinian border. He added that 1,300 manufacturing plants have recently been reactivated, after some 3,500 of them were closed following the blockade.

Al-Rafati stated that the industrial center will take a year or two to build. Until now, only humanitarian goods have been able to cross into Gaza, and a few hundred people a week, mostly students and people seeking medical treatment, have been able to come and go. If the crossing is opened for trade, this would benefit Gaza tremendously.

The Egyptian Revolution and Peace

The Palestinian agreement paves the way for recognition of Palestine as an independent state, when the Palestinians bring the issue before the UN General Assembly in September. More importantly, it presents Israel, and all those who desire peace, a united Palestinian polity through which a permanent peace agreement can be achieved.

What made this all possible, is the mass-strike process that has been sweeping across the Arab world, whose most important accomplishment has been the revolution in Egypt. The level of prestige and credibility that the new Egyptian leadership has achieved throughout the Arab world for its role in bringing the reconciliation about, belies the fragile state of Egypt’s economy and political institutions.

The deal was brokered by Egypt’s new intelligence chief Mourad Mouafi and Foreign Minister Nabil al-Arabi. The latter is a highly respected international jurist, and a former Egyptian Ambassador to the United Nations, who played a key role mediating between the Egyptian youth in Tahrir Square and the military, to force out the regime of former President Hosni Mubarak.

Underlining the key role of Egypt, Hany al-Masri, a Palestinian political commentator who took part in the talks, is quoted by Reuters as saying, “This agreement is possible because the Egyptian regime has changed. The new administration is taking a balanced position.”

Another crucial player in the deal was Turkey, who, in the last years, has offered its good offices to mediate not only between Palestinian factions, but also between Israel and Syria, as well as Iran and Western powers over the nuclear issue. Since early April, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu was carrying out shuttle diplomacy between Damascus, the Gaza Strip, and Cairo, as part of the effort to broker the deal. Davutoglu not only met with Hamas and Fatah leaders, but Syrian President Bashar Assad, Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf, and Foreign Minister al-Arabi.

Speaking on the importance of Egypt, which he visited three times in the last two months, Davutoglu told *Today's Zaman* (May 5), “We are attaching much importance to the success of Egypt, both for maintaining regional peace and for the continuation of the Arab revolutions. Egypt needs to emerge as a success story. A strong Egypt will be the best partner for Turkey.”

The Economic Question

Ultimately, the success of Egypt’s own political development, and its ability to help create a secure peace in the region, depends upon freeing itself from the last 30 years of free-trade monetarism, to which the Mubarak government had submitted, and instead, embracing a new, just world economic order based on fixed exchange rates, and credit for long-term investments in basic economic infrastructure.

Initial steps by the interim government toward making a priority of food self-sufficiency, and toward improved cooperation on water development in the region, show an intention in the right direction. Leader-



Wordpress

A long hoped-for Palestinian unity agreement has been signed by Palestinian President and Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas (above right) and Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal. London's Israeli puppet Netanyahu is not pleased. Also shown: a recent demonstration in the West Bank city of Ramallah.



Alternative Information Center

ship from the trans-Atlantic community, particularly the United States, will obviously be required for Egypt to follow through.

Back in 1982, the movement of American economist Lyndon LaRouche, was cooperating closely with members of the Egyptian government on water, energy, and agricultural development projects, which need to be revived today. LaRouche had become famous among the nations of the Non-Aligned Movement for his development of a plan for a “debtor’s cartel” to declare a debt moratorium on the IMF’s usurious and genocidal debt. Now, a review and update of these economic projects has been produced by Helga Zepp-LaRouche’s Schiller Institute, in the form of a video called “North Africa: The Blue Revolution.” It is being closely studied among leadership circles in Africa and the Middle East, and can be found at www.schiller-institut.de in English and German, and will soon be available in Arabic at arabic.larouchepub.com.

A Sign of Hope in Israel

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu’s reaction was to declare the agreement to be a “tremendous blow to

peace and a great victory for terrorism.” Coherent with the fact that he is a top British agent, he made the statement while on a visit to London. The next day, in Paris, he made a similar statement. He was joined in his denunciations by his fascist Foreign Minister Avidgor Lieberman, while Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz has threatened to cut off transfer of the customs duties that Israeli collects, and is obligated to turn over to the Palestinian Authority, for imports into the Palestinian territories that transit through Israel.

By contrast, the very day that Abbas first announced a preliminary agreement with Hamas had been reached on April 28, the Palestinian President met with a delegation from Israel representing the newly created Israeli Peace Initiative.

Created earlier this month, the new private Israeli peace initiative was initiated by 40 top retired security and military officers, business people, and seasoned peace activists.

Among the signers of the initiative are former Shin Bet chiefs Yaakov Peri and Ami Ayalon; the latter was also commander of the Israeli Navy, a former member of the Knesset, and initiator of earlier peace initiatives. Others include former Mossad chief Danny Yatom, former Chief of Staff Gen. Amnon Lipkin Shahak, and former Labor Party Minister Moshe Shahal. Another signatory is retired general and former leader of the Labor Party Amram Mitzna, who has recently announced his intention to run again for the leadership of the Labor Party. Dalia Rabin, the daughter of slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and head of the Israel Corporation Idan Ofer also signed.

The initiative emerged following the release of a letter last November, co-authored by another signatory, Yuval Rabin, the son of Yitzhak Rabin, proposing an Israeli answer to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. Its successful launching last month was a response to the absence of a peace process and the developments in the region, especially in Egypt.

The initiative follows closely the so-called Clinton peace plan, announced by President Bill Clinton just before he left office in 2000. This includes a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, with limited exchanges of land with its capital in East Jerusalem. It calls for a peace with Syria, and its withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Israel Corporation head Ofer told Ynet that Israel must have its own peace initiative ready when the Palestinians unilaterally declare a Palestinian state. He

fears that if Israel doesn't back a Palestinian state, it will end up like South Africa under apartheid, which had sanctions slammed against it. Ofer, whose Israel Corporation is deeply involved economically with the Palestinian Authority, wants to see a peace agreement with the Palestinians as a way of opening up economic projects with the other Arab states, including the building of desalination plants.

For these hopeful signs to bear fruit, both Netanyahu and Obama will have to be thrown out of office. Even now, Netanyahu's days as prime minister could be numbered. His ragtag coalition of right-wing parties could fall if Lieberman, who has been under investigation for corruption and fraud, is indicted, as expected. As he is leader of the second-largest faction in Netanyahu's government, his replacement could touch off a coalition crisis.

The far bigger problem is in Washington. Obama has to go. It is only through a strong American Presidency, prepared to extend tremendous economic support to the region as a whole, that there can be any real hope for peace in the region.

Lyndon LaRouche ON Glass-Steagall AND NAWAPA:

The North American Water and
Power Alliance



"The greatest project that mankind has ever undertaken on this planet, as an economic project, now stands before us, as the opportunity which can be set into motion by the United States now launching the NAWAPA* project, with the preliminary step of reorganizing the banking system through Glass-Steagall, and then moving on from there."

"Put Glass-Steagall through now, and I know how to deliver a victory to you."

Subscribe to **EIR Online** www.larouchepub.com/eiw
1-800-278-3135

For subscription rates: <http://tiny.cc/9odpr>