

## **The Israeli Peace Initiative – Presentation and Evaluation**

On April 6<sup>th</sup> 2011, a group of prominent Israeli civilians published the "Israeli Peace Initiative" - a document which offers an end to the Israeli-Arab conflict based upon the Arab Initiative from 2002. The IPI was published in respect to recent events in the Middle East and their effect on the state of Israel. The aim of the IPI is for the government of Israel to adopt it and promote a regional peace agreement according to it. The initiative was written with the help of Israeli experts and is based on all previous peace proposals and attempts, such as Camp David, Annapolis, Geneva Initiative and others. Finally, the IPI touches upon all core conflict issues of Israel and its neighbors.

The summary of the IPI: (can be found also at: <http://israelipeaceinitiative.com/>)

**Israel will accept the Arab initiative of 2002 as a basis for negotiations for peace agreements in the area, and will present her ideas on the points of dispute.**

Israel will announce that her strategic aim is to reach a permanent agreement with the Palestinian Authority, as well as permanent peace agreements with Syria and Lebanon that will put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of the following principles:

1. A solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict through “two states for two peoples”, which shall form two nation states – one for the Jewish people and one for the Palestinian people (including the implementation of the Declaration of Independence from 1948 regarding the equality of Arab citizens in Israel).
2. The establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on the basis of the 1967 lines, and territory swaps on a 1:1basis, in limited scope.
3. The Palestinian state will be demilitarized with control over its internal security, side by side with strict security measures on its borders.
4. Jerusalem will be the capital of both peoples, whereas the Jewish neighborhoods, the Western Wall and the Jewish Quarter will be under Israeli sovereignty and the temple mount shall remain under a special no-sovereignty regime (“G-d sovereignty”) with special arrangements. Israeli Jerusalem will be acknowledged as the capital of Israel.
5. An agreed upon solution regarding the problem of the refugees on the basis of financial compensation and their return to Palestinian territory only (with symbolic and agreed upon exceptions).



6. An agreement with Syria that is based on the gradual withdrawal to the 1967 borders (similar to the model in Sinai), a 1:1 exchange of territories and broad security measures on the border.
7. A peace agreement with Lebanon based on the UN decision 1701 and on significant security measures on the border.
8. A commitment by Syria, Lebanon and Palestine to prevent terror and to discontinue cooperation with hostile entities and states.
9. The establishment of regional security arrangements between Israel, Arab states and the international community.
10. The building of regional economic development in order to ensure prosperity and stability among all the people of the area.
11. The advancement of normal relations between Israel and the Arab world and Islamic countries will take place alongside progress in the negotiations, coupled with mutual commitment towards peace education and the prevention of incitement.

#### **Evaluation of the Initiative:**

Beyond the specific content, a conflict management analysis implies that there is a strong reason to believe that the IPI will manage to achieve its goal due to its nature, the people who push it and the changes which the Middle East is going through. The analysis is made by examining the goals which the initiative wishes to achieve in respect to the interests and alternatives of the actors who work it and its recipients.

The nature of the initiative:

Rather than a bilateral agreement that calls only for a solution between Israelis and Palestinians, the IPI offers an end to the Israeli-Arab conflict which includes all Arab countries and thus touches upon all sources of Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. For example, the main Israeli concern is its security status which is depended upon all Arab countries and not just Palestine. Moreover, the refugee problem concerns many Arab countries as well as economic and security cooperation. In addition, the IPI does not offer any new paradigm or idea that needs to be discussed on the national or political levels. The IPI offers pragmatic, end-game framework that have been discussed before on track 1 and 2 similar initiatives from both sides. Eventually The IPI addresses the interest of all actors in the region and proposes realistic and practical benefits for all those involved.



The people behind the IPI:

In contrast from other past track 2 peace initiatives, the people behind the IPI come from a large Israeli civilian and political spectrum: ex-military and security chiefs, academics, former diplomats, businessmen, artists and others. They are very known and respectful within the Israeli society which increases the likelihood that the Israeli public will be attuned to their words- especially when former chiefs of staff and Israeli secret service and well known businessmen support it. Moreover, the IPI's activists have no political aspirations thus their personal interest in promoting the initiative stems from true belief in its goal. The activists are volunteers and they are the ones who fund their activities and campaigns. Finally, the variant expertise, experience, networking abilities and apolitical character of the IPI's signatories help to assure they will achieve their goal.

Timely initiative:

The events of the Arab Spring have changed the Middle Eastern geo-political reality and offer new opportunities for new actors. The IPI has few advantages in this regard. First, the IPI addresses one of the major grievances which caused the uprising- economic development. A regional peace agreement could open economic opportunities such as a free trade zone, sea port to the Mediterranean, job opportunities, creating a huge tourism center, gas/water/ oil pipelines from Europe to Africa and more. Second, the IPI also offer political alternative to some regimes that so far were reluctant from cooperating under such framework – such as Syria or Libya. Israel (along with its western allies) today stands as a better alternative to the post Assad regime then Iran, due to the Iranian support in Assad's brutality and due to the beneficial economic cooperation Israel could offer Syrians. Third, Israel has also seen a recent wave of huge social protests. It will make it easier to deliver the initiative to the Israeli public as a solution for future prospers living. Fourth, the declaration of a Palestinian state and deterioration of relations with Turkey and Egypt gives an opportunity for the IPI to rise as the only viable solution to secure Israel in the long term – both in the civilian and political levels.

To conclude, in the age where Israel stands by itself in the Middle East, it does not have many options but to engage with the Arab world. The IPI offers a framework that will answer not just Israel's security needs, but addresses the needs and interests of other actors in the Middle East. A conflict management analysis of the relevance of the IPI, demonstrates that it has a better starting point than any other track 2 peace initiative, mainly due to the people behind it and the changing Middle Eastern political reality.



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