

**Minutes from Plenary Session on Territory
Post Annapolis**

*Monday, 21 May 2008, 1:30 pm
Inbal Hotel, West Jerusalem*

Attendees:

Palestinian

- Ahmed Querei (AA)
- Dr. Saeb Erekat (SE)
- Dr. Samih il Abd (SIA)
- Khaled Elgindy (KE)
- Salah Elayan (SA)
- Zeinah Salahi (ZS)

Israeli

- FM Tzipi Livni (TL)
- Tal Becker (TB)
- Udi Dekel (UD)
- Dany Tirza (DT)

Meeting Summary (not verbatim):

Following a brief discussion of recent news reports regarding Israel's decision to negotiate with Syria over the return of the Golan Heights, the meeting focused primarily on the Israeli side presenting their assessment of the Palestinian landswap proposal.

AA:

- First, let me say congratulations on Syria.

TL:

- It's not official. Talks are going on through Turkey.

AA:

- Who will be first [to sign a deal with Israel], us or the Syrians?

TL:

- Our priority is to end the conflict with you.
- Was there some reaction to this in the Arab world?

AA:

- I think everyone will welcome it.
- There is also the agreement among the Lebanese.

TL:

- It's being perceived as a victory for Hizbollah.

AA:

- This is the perception, yes. It's a kind of revolution what they did... There are things that they were asking for before but were not possible, which they now got.

TL:

- This will strengthen Syria.

AA:

- I'm not saying that, but it's in favor of Hizbollah. So [by extension] it's good for Syria and Iran.

TL:

- Negotiations will help?

AA:

- You mean with Israel? No, I doubt it.

SIA:

- It will help Hamas as well.

AA:

- No, I don't think so.

TL:

- I would like to ask something about the kilometers [*i.e.*, area], because I think there is a kind of misunderstanding. When I talked to the Americans, [I began to understand what you meant]. Now, I think it is less important to be exact about which areas we relate to, but it's important for me to understand what this area [issue] means for you. [*i.e.*, it is better to speak in terms of kilometers, instead of percentages.]

AA:

- This is just a calculation.

TL:

- When you work on numbers, what is the calculation?

AA:

- It is well known to everyone.

TL:

- I ask because I'm told that that we didn't include certain areas. But even when we count everything everything [*i.e.*, the whole OPT], we came up with 6,202 [sq. km].

SE:

- You're not counting the Dead Sea. What's your number for the Dead Sea?
- I think we should just use the lines of the 1949 armistice agreement and the 1950 modus vivendi line [to guide the discussion]. I do not want to impose this on you but [as a starting point].

TL:

- Yes, Saeb, there is a problem with that...

SIA:

- 6,238 sq km.

TL:

- So where is the gap from? What is your [area for the] NML?

SE:

- 66 sq. km.

TL:

- We have 67.

SE:

- When you divide the NML in half, you have 33...

AA:

- Why is this important?

TL:

- I'm told there is confusion about the percentage we use.

AA:

- It will not make a big difference in the percentage.

TL:

- Okay.

AA:

- But what should be well understood is...

TL:

- Sorry, I made a mistake. 67 [sq. km] is East Jerusalem. The NML is 49 [sq. km].

SE:

- That's the difference then.

TL:

- So we decided not to have this argument on numbers. But can I ask, what is the difference on the NML coming from?

SE:

- Let's just use the lines of the 1949 armistice agreement. Is there a problem with that?

TL:

- Come on, Saeb. Yes, there is a problem with that... I'm just trying to check about the Prime Minister's offer [to Abu Mazen], whether it's the same number.

AA:

- It is in the Latrun and East Jerusalem... and also the Golan Heights. We want a safe passage to Banyas as well.

TL:

- What is the best way now to continue? I think we have the Palestinian proposal on our map...

AA:

- We want two things. We want to see what was offered by your prime minister – personally, I'm not interested in maps; I was against this [exchanging of maps] – and second, we want to see what you think of our very constructive proposal.

TL:

- Let's take your suggestion and see where the gaps are [between our proposal and yours].

[DT projects map of Israeli proposal (map shows hashed block over Jordan Valley area)]

SE:

- What is this striped area?

TL:

- The striped area means it will be discussed after security.

AA:

- As long as you're not going to annex it.

TL:

- I would like to annex it, but it is not to be discussed here.

SE:

- But we're not discussing security today so can we remove it?

TL:

- *[Asks DT to remove the hashed area, which he does.]*

DT:

- This is the 7.3% map *[projected map is virtually identical to what Israeli side presented previously in Territory Committee]*.

SE:

- 7.3% according to what?

UD:

- According to our calculation *[i.e., minus Latrun NML and East Jerusalem areas]*.

TL:

- In our discussion, we saw areas [that were not included in your proposal]. Clearly, we have huge difference, one being Ma'ale Adumim.

AA:

- This is not Ma'ale Adumim.

ZS:

- Is this red and white line the Jerusalem municipal line?

DT:

- Yes.

TL:

- What we've done is taken your map and ours, so we can see the differences. Jerusalem is not included [on our map] because it's not being discussed here, but clearly we know it has to be discussed.

[News comes in of 286 new units to be tendered in Betar 'Illit.]

TL:

- We're giving up the Golan so we need more in Betar 'Illit.

AA:

- Yes, you make us pay the price.

TL:

- Let's where we are and what the differences are. The good news is that all of this area in yellow [we do not have disagreement on]. It is the beginning of something [we can work with].
- We have four huge differences: (1) on what we call Ma'ale Adumim, and I accept what you said before, but it's not only the built-up area...

AA:

- It's not even [limited to] the built-up areas.

TL:

- I know...

AA:

- If you go there today and look, you will see thousands of new units being built.

TL:

- It's not new.

AA:

- We can go there, after the meeting, and I will show you.

[Discussion on whether or not there is significant construction going on in Ma'ale Adumim.]

TL:

- This is a place where we have big differences – it's including the built-up area, but not just the built-up areas; also we have some smaller places [i.e., settlements], industrial areas, and areas of strategic importance...
- Then we have Giv'at Zeev, which is very important... Then we have what we call the fingers of Ariel and...

UD:

- Qedumim

TL:

- ... Qedumim and all these places.
- We also have big differences when it comes to the swap. The way Olmert told me is it's going to be near Gaza.

SE:

- Olmert said, Gaza and the southern West Bank.

SA:

- The swap is to be next to Gaza and the southern part of the West Bank.

TL:

- We also have some differences in the line. I would like to ask a question... Of course, we have to count the safe passage also [in the swap], as this is an issue of compensation.

AA:

- No – compensation [*i.e.*, in equal territory] is important but not as important as you explaining why you need so much land.

TL:

- Jerusalem is not being mentioned here, but that doesn't mean it is not going to be discussed.

AA:

- It seems that Nayef Hawatmeh, of the DFLP, knows more about the Israeli position than us. He is saying the Israelis are proposing to keep the Jordan Valley and all of Jerusalem... How does he know this?

[*DT zooms in on area of Bethlehem/Etzion*]

DT:

- The main difference is that Efrat and Migdal Oz are out, and all the roads, so there is no way out for Gush Etzion.

TL:

- What are the differences in percentages and sq. km?

DT:

- Gush Etzion is about 1.2%...

SA:

- And 54 sq. km.

DT:

- And about 54 to 57 sq. km.

TL:

- And yours is?

SA:

- 23 sq. km... It's not about percentages. You want to take all this empty land, and the way to Jerusalem can be cut...

AA:

- We don't want to go into these details.

TL:

- Well...

AA:

- Actually, when I see your map, I advise you to go to Syria [first]. It will help us. We cannot accept Ma'ale Adumim, Giv'at Zeev and Ariel... If this is your proposal, let us wait... I am serious.

TL:

- I could have said the same thing when you showed us your map.

AA:

- But I gave. You take.

TL:

- I think we are on the path of minimizing the gaps. This is important. There are places we need. The differences are not that much of a problem. The real problem is Ma'ale Adumim...

DT:

- [MISSING]

TL:

- Ma'ale Adumim building area [MISSING]

SA:

- This is not Ma'ale Adumim...

AA:

- This is all of Jerusalem, to close off all of Jerusalem. If this is what you have, we can wait.

TL:

- I think this would be a historic mistake.
- I said Jerusalem is something that will be added. Now I'm trying to see the problematic gaps. When it comes to Gush Etzion, [there are some gaps]. But my question is on Ma'ale Adumim. [To DT] How many people are there?

DT:

- 32,000.

TL:

- We can discuss how to minimize [the area].

DT:

- Sorry, it's 38,000.

TL:

- This is one. The other is Giv'at Zeev, which is something that can also be minimized. It's not the building area.

KE:

- This is *far* more than the built-up area of Giv'at Zeev [*referring to Israeli proposal line (same as wall line) on the map*].

TL:

- I know. It's not only the building area.

ZS:

- Why do you have to have the roads, as opposed to access arrangements?

TL:

- We can discuss it. But generally, they are for security considerations.

ZS:

- Do tunnels have the same security needs?

TL:

- I think tunnels are safer. Is that right? [To DT/UD, both of whom agree.]

AA:

- There are 30,000 people in Ma'ale Adumim. They can live under Palestinian rule.

TL:

- You know this is not realistic.

AA:

- So take them [out], like you did in Gaza.

TL:

- We are going to [take out many settlers].

AA:

- If you want peace... I was against this, but Saeb and Samih said we should do it. They put Jerusalem settlements, but this was never done in Camp David.

TL:

- I know but...

AA:

- Okay, so we wait.

TL:

- The problem [in that case] is that you'll see more and more on the ground.
- My question is why you cannot have a state that represents *most* of your aspirations? You will get some compensation.
- Maybe the right thing to do is let the experts continue the discussion.

AA:

- Maybe they will be more practical.

TL:

- Why do you insist on 98%? Why not 92%.

AA:

- That's why I'm saying, I hope peace with Syria is a success. Maybe it will help us, maybe not. [Our situation in the region is difficult.] Iran is against us. Qatar is against us...

TL:

- If this is the proposal, you think the Arab world will say no to 90-something [percent]?

AA:

- The Arabs and Muslims, they will say [it's not for you to give away Jerusalem].
- Even Mubarak said he will not accept any agreement that is unfair to Palestinians.

TL:

- I know that you are going to get – not most – almost *all* of your desires, and compensation for things you don't get. Saying there will be no state unless it's 1967, would be a shame.

ZS:

- That's not the point that Abu Alaa is making. [Notes the main underlying interests, and the only one Palestinians agreed to accommodate was minimizing the number of settlers that need to be evacuated, which the Palestinian proposal does.] You are taking all these empty areas for roads, and so on. But if it's about roads, there could other arrangements made for access, etc. You rely on annexation instead of exploring

other options – like access arrangements to roads or tunnels from the settlements. Have you looked at alternatives? It's about the big picture.

TL:

- I understand, and I don't underestimate how hard it is for you to do this.

AA:

- I was against this, but Saeb and others they convinced me.

TL:

- I said "narrow" [the gaps]. It was not done yet. So maybe the thing to do is for the experts to meet and work on narrowing the gaps. I don't know if the gaps can be bridged, but narrowed.
- Maybe that should be done by you [the experts], and knowing that it will be up to Abu Alaa and me whether or not to accept it. Of course, it will be the prime minister who will decide.

SE:

- I appreciate what you're saying, Tzipi. But these experts – us – we heard your prime minister and Abu Mazen talk about 7.3%...

TL:

- We didn't speak about percentages, but basically it's the same position.

AA:

- One position, the Israeli position.

SE:

- Now, what is the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea are shaded for security. They're not included in the percentage, and Jerusalem...

TL:

- It is not mentioned here but it will be discussed.

SE:

- But it's not calculated in the percentage.

TL:

- The percentage doesn't change dramatically.

SE:

- So the Dead Sea and Jordan Valley are included [in the 7.3%]?

TL:

- Yes.

SE:

- And the Latrun?

TL:

- No.

SE:

- And when you say, go work. Are these discussions going to take a needs-based approach?

TL:

- Yes.

SE:

- So what Zeinah is saying about the roads...

TL:

- Yes. This is the best question I heard to today.

SE:

- And this area around Ariel, it is essential for water, especially since it is on the western aquifer.

TL:

- Yes. Now I have a better understanding of something than I did before.

AA:

- Here is Giv'at Zeev. They put a boulder on the road to Beitunia. [MISSING]

TL:

- Please put up Giv'at Zeev. I need to see it.

DT:

- Here is Giv'at Zeev.

AA:

- [MISSING] close to the Wall.

UD:

- This is a security fence. It is not a border. Don't take this as [MISSING].

AA:

- How? But they will take [even] Abu Mazen out of his car and make him switch to another car.

UD:

- This was another reality, built under conditions of terror.

TL:

- Our interest in the area is people.

SA:

- There's not many people there.

TL:

- How many?

SA:

- And your line is basically the same as the Wall.

TL:

- The Wall takes about [MISSING].

SA:

- If it's a question of security, why have special security arrangements? It is going to be part of Israel, so the security should come from Israel.

TB:

- [There are security implications on the ground.]

SE:

- I agree with Tzipi. Unfortunately [MISSING]. We want to continue on a needs basis. We don't want Palestinians to become Israelis and we don't want Israelis to become Palestinians.

AA:

- I don't mind if Israelis become Palestinian citizens. Let them stay.

TL:

- You know this is not realistic. They will kill them the next day.

SE:

- If we're going to make an agreement, we need to minimize the differences. I really believe this. But not to take the "souk mentality"...

TL:

- [*Talking about Jerusalem*] In adding it to the common denominator you don't change the percentage. Anyway it looks like you will get some of it.
- I want to ask also: in some places, if we take 1967, it cuts Palestinian villages and families.

AA:

- We can talk. We said some modifications to the line.

SE:

- Let's take a needs-based approach. Are we going to be guided by necessity? Can we say water aquifers and [Palestinian] population cannot be prejudiced?

TL:

- To take into consideration our needs and your needs.

SE:

- Okay. Yes.

[END]