

Disengagement Plan - General Outline

Following Israel's unilateral disengagement from Gaza and four settlements in the northern West Bank in the summer of 2005, the new Israeli government is formulating a follow-up plan — convergence. Convergence is how Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's government has described its intention of unilaterally withdrawing from most of the West Bank, in the event of not being able to negotiate a pullout with the Palestinians.

What follows is a document published by the Israel Prime Minister's Office, dated April 15, 2004, detailing the procedure for the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and northern West Bank settlements. The document gives an insight into the thinking behind the Israeli concepts of disengagement and convergence.

1. General

Israel is committed to the peace process and aspires to reach an agreed resolution of the conflict on the basis of the principle of two states for two peoples, the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people and a Palestinian state for the Palestinian people, as part of the implementation of President Bush's vision.

Israel is concerned to advance and improve the current situation. Israel has come to the conclusion that there is currently no reliable Palestinian partner with which it can make progress in a bilateral peace process. Accordingly, it has developed a plan of unilateral disengagement, based on the following considerations:

- i. The stalemate dictated by the current situation is harmful. In order to break out of this stalemate, Israel is required to initiate moves not dependent on Palestinian cooperation.
- ii. The plan will lead to a better security situation, at least in the long term.
- iii. The assumption that, in any future permanent-status arrangement, there will be no Israeli towns and villages in the Gaza Strip. On the other hand, it is clear that in the West Bank, there are areas which will be part of the State of Israel, including cities, towns and villages, security areas and installations, and other places of special interest to Israel.
- iv. The relocation from the Gaza Strip and from northern Samaria will reduce friction with the Palestinian population, and carries with it the potential for improvement in the Palestinian economy and living conditions.
- v. The hope is that the Palestinians will take advantage of the opportunity created by the disengagement in order to break out of the cycle of violence and to reengage in a process of dialogue.
- vi. The process of disengagement will serve to dispel claims regarding Israel's responsibility for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.
- vii. The process of disengagement is without prejudice to the Israeli-Palestinian agreements. Relevant arrangements shall continue to apply.

When there is evidence from the Palestinian side of its willingness, capability and implementation in practice of the fight against terrorism and the institution of reform as required by the Road Map, it will be possible to return to the track of negotiation and dialogue.

2. Main elements

i. The Gaza Strip:

- 1) Israel will evacuate the Gaza Strip, including all existing Israeli towns and villages, and will re-deploy outside the Strip. This will not include military deployment in the area of the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt ("the Philadelphi Route") as detailed below.
- 2) Upon completion of this process, there shall no longer be any permanent presence of Israeli security forces or Israeli civilians in the areas of Gaza Strip territory which have been evacuated.
- 3) As a result, there will be no basis for claiming that the Gaza Strip is occupied territory.

ii. The West Bank:

- 1) Israel will evacuate an Area in the northern Samaria area, including four villages and all military installations, and will redeploy outside the vacated area.
- 2) Upon completion of this process, there shall no longer be any permanent presence of Israeli security forces or Israeli civilians in the northern Samaria area.
- 3) The move will enable territorial contiguity for Palestinians in the northern Samaria area.
- 4) Israel will improve the transportation infrastructure in the West Bank in order to facilitate the contiguity of Palestinian transportation.
- 5) The process will facilitate Palestinian economic and commercial activity in the West Bank.
- 6) The security fence: Israel will continue to build the security fence, in accordance with the relevant decisions of the government. The route will take into account humanitarian considerations.

3. Security situation following the disengagement

i. The Gaza Strip:

- 1) Israel will guard and monitor the external land perimeter of the Gaza Strip, will continue to maintain exclusive authority in Gaza air space, and will continue to exercise security activity in the sea off the coast of the Gaza Strip.
- 2) The Gaza Strip shall be demilitarized and shall be devoid of weaponry, the presence of which does not accord with the Israeli-Palestinian agreements.
- 3) Israel reserves its inherent right of self defense, both preventive and reactive, including where necessary the use of force, in respect of threats emanating from the Gaza Strip.

ii. The West Bank:

- 1) Upon completion of the evacuation of the northern Samaria area, no permanent Israeli military presence will remain in this area.
- 2) Israel reserves its inherent right of self defense, both preventive and reactive, including where necessary the use of force, in respect of threats emanating from the northern Samaria area.
- 3) In other areas of the West Bank, current security activity will continue. However, as circumstances permit, Israel will consider reducing such activity in Palestinian cities.
- 4) Israel will work to reduce the number of internal checkpoints throughout the West Bank.

4. Military installations and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria

In general, these will be dismantled and removed, with the exception of those which Israel decides to leave and transfer to another party.

5. Security assistance to the Palestinians

Israel agrees that by coordination with it, advice, assistance and training will be provided to the Palestinian security forces for the implementation of their obligations to combat terrorism and maintain public order by American, British, Egyptian, Jordanian or other experts, as agreed with Israel.

No foreign security presence may enter the Gaza Strip or the West Bank without being coordinated with and approved by Israel.

6. The border area between the Gaza Strip and Egypt (Philadelphi Route)

Initially, Israel will continue to maintain a military presence along the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt (Philadelphi route). This presence is an essential security requirement. At certain locations security consider-

ations may require some widening of the area in which the military activity is conducted.

Subsequently, the evacuation of this area will be considered. Evacuation of the area will be dependent, inter alia, on the security situation and the extent of cooperation with Egypt in establishing a reliable alternative arrangement.

If and when conditions permit the evacuation of this area, Israel will be willing to consider the possibility of the establishment of a seaport and airport in the Gaza Strip, in accordance with arrangements to be agreed with Israel.

7. Israeli towns and villages

Israel will strive to leave the immovable property relating to Israeli towns and villages intact.

The transfer of Israeli economic activity to Palestinians carries with it the potential for a significant improvement in the Palestinian economy.

Israel proposes that an international body be established (along the lines of the AHLC), with the agreement of the United States and Israel, which shall take possession from Israel of property which remains, and which will estimate the value of all such assets.

Israel reserves the right to request that the economic value of the assets left in the evacuated areas be taken into consideration.

8. Civil infrastructure and arrangements

Infrastructure relating to water, electricity, sewage and telecommunications serving the Palestinians will remain in place.

Israel will strive to leave in place the infrastructure relating to water, electricity and sewage currently serving the Israeli towns and villages.

In general, Israel will enable the continued supply of electricity, water, gas and petrol to the Palestinians, in accordance with current arrangements.

Other existing arrangements, such as those relating to water and the electro-magnetic sphere shall remain in force.

9. Activity of international organizations

Israel recognizes the great importance of the continued activity of international humanitarian organizations assisting the Palestinian population.

Israel will coordinate with these organizations arrangements to facilitate this activity.

10. Economic arrangements

In general, the economic arrangements currently in operation between Israel and the Palestinians shall, in the meantime, remain in force.

These arrangements include, inter alia:

- i. The entry of workers into Israel in accordance with the existing criteria.
- ii. The entry and exit of goods between the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Israel and abroad.
- iii. The monetary regime.
- iv. Tax and customs envelope arrangements.
- v. Postal and telecommunications arrangements.

In the longer term, and in line with Israel's interest in encouraging greater Palestinian economic independence, Israel expects to reduce the number of Palestinian workers entering Israel. Israel supports the development of sources of employment in the Gaza Strip and in Palestinian areas of the West Bank.

11. Erez industrial zone

The Erez industrial zone, situated in the Gaza Strip, employs some 4,000 Palestinian workers. The continued operation of the zone is primarily a clear Palestinian interest. Israel will consider the continued operation of the zone on the current basis, on two conditions:

- i. The existence of appropriate security arrangements.
- ii. The express recognition of the international community that the continued operation of the zone on the current basis shall not be considered continued Israel control of the area.

Alternatively, the industrial zone shall be transferred to the responsibility of an agreed Palestinian or international entity.

Israel will seek to examine, together with Egypt, the possibility of establishing a joint industrial area in the area between the Gaza Strip, Egypt and Israel.

12. International passages

- i. The international passage between the Gaza Strip and Egypt

- 1) The existing arrangements shall continue.

- 2) Israel is interested in moving the passage to the “three borders” area, approximately two kilometers south of its current location. This would need to be effected in coordination with Egypt. This move would enable the hours of operation of the passage to be extended.

- ii. The international passages between the West Bank and Jordan:

The existing arrangements shall continue.

13. Erez crossing point

The Israeli part of Erez crossing point will be moved to a location within Israel in a time frame to be determined separately.

14. Timetable

The process of evacuation is planned to be completed by the end of 2005.

The stages of evacuation and the detailed timetable will be notified to the United States.

15. Conclusion

Israel looks to the international community for widespread support for the disengagement plan. This support is essential in order to bring the Palestinians to implement in practice their obligations to combat terrorism and effect reforms, thus enabling the parties to return to the path of negotiation.