

## Overview of the 2020 U.S. Peace Plan

In January, 2020, the U.S. Administration released a plan titled "[Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People](#)". The following is an overview of the context, contents, and reactions to the proposal.

### Context

There have been numerous international efforts to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In each case Israeli leaders agreed to negotiate or said yes, while Palestinian leaders said no.

#### 1937: Peel Commission

In 1920 the League of Nations [unanimously recognized](#) the land of Israel, then known by the Roman name 'Palestine', as the home of the Jewish people under international law. The Jews, an indigenous people from the area in and around Israel, who were dispossessed and oppressed for 1,900 years across Europe and the Middle East, were finally granted their right to self-determination in their ancestral home.



The British were given the responsibility to facilitate the return of Jews and rebirth of the Jewish state, while doing nothing to, "prejudice the civil and religious rights" of Arab residents and others. Unfortunately, in 1920 the British empowered a racist extremist named [Haj Amin al-Husseini](#) to lead the Palestinian Arabs. Husseini proceeded to organize violent attacks and

boycotts throughout the 1920s and 1930s to kill the local Jews and suppress their liberation movement.

In 1937, as the conflict escalated, the British Peel Commission [proposed](#) to divide the land into two states for two peoples – one for the Jews and one for the Palestinian Arabs. The proposed Jewish state represented only 20% of the land promised to the Jews by the League of Nations, but the Jewish leadership [said yes](#) to it as a basis for negotiations.





Haj Amin al-Husseini and the rest of the Palestinian Arab leadership said no to the peace plan. They refused to accept any form of Jewish independence or self-determination. They continued to incite violence, and a few years later al-Husseini formed an alliance with Nazi Germany at the highest levels.

### 1947: UN Partition Plan

Conflict continued between the Jews who sought to reestablish a state in their ancestral home and the Palestinian Arab leadership which opposed these aspirations. In response, seeking a peaceful compromise, the United Nations proposed another division of the land into a Jewish state and an Arab state. Roughly 70% of the land proposed as a state for the Jews consisted of the arid Negev Desert, but Jewish leaders said yes, and offered citizenship to Arabs in their territory.



Palestinian and Arab leaders said no and offered no alternative. Two years after the Holocaust ended, they launched a war to wipe out any possibility of a Jewish state. The UN Secretary General said, "The invasion of Palestine by the Arab States was the first armed aggression which the world had seen since the end of [World War Two]."



#### *2000: Camp David*

In 1993 Israelis and Palestinians began peace negotiations by signing a treaty called the Oslo Accords. In 2000, U.S. President Bill Clinton brought Israeli and Palestinian leaders together and proposed the creation of a Palestinian state in 97% of the West Bank and all of Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak [said yes](#).

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat *said no* – a “[colossal historic blunder](#)” according to President Clinton. Arafat refused to make a counteroffer and instead launched the 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada – a brutal campaign of suicide bombings and other attacks which murdered over 1,000 Israelis, the vast majority of them civilians. Israel responded with checkpoints, a security barrier, and other safety measures. These actions made life more difficult for Palestinians but dramatically reduced the number of Israeli deaths from terrorism.



#### *2008: Offer by Israeli PM Ehud Olmert*

In 2002 the Arab League put forward the [Arab peace initiative](#), calling for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with its capital in East Jerusalem. After initially failing to gain traction, the plan was relaunched in 2007. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert [welcomed](#) it, with reservations. In September, 2008, Olmert offered a [peace agreement](#) giving the Palestinians virtually all of the West Bank and Gaza for a Palestinian state. He agreed to divide Jerusalem so that the eastern part of the

city could become the Palestinian capital.

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas promised to get back to PM Olmert but never did. Olmert remained in office for 6 months after his offer and Abbas refused to respond. He effectively [said no](#) to peace.

#### *2014: Kerry Framework Agreement*

In 2014 negotiations began again, facilitated by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. While no comprehensive peace deal was put on the table, Kerry did propose a framework agreement on the major issues. Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly [said yes](#) to the framework. Additionally, according to a document leaked to Israeli media, there had been secret negotiations in which Netanyahu offered [many concessions](#).



Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas [said no](#) to Kerry's framework agreement. In April, 2014, Kerry shifted his efforts to focus on extending the deadline for an agreement and keeping Abbas at the negotiating table. Abbas refused, and instead chose to join with the racist terrorist organization Hamas in a short-lived unity government.

## Key Points from the 2020 U.S. Plan

The “Peace to Prosperity” plan calls for a demilitarized Palestinian state in all of Gaza, [roughly 70%](#) of the West Bank, and portions of Israeli land near those two territories. Roughly 30% of the West Bank would become part of Israel. The plan conditions the establishment of the State of Palestine on several requirements, summarized below.

The plan also calls for widescale economic cooperation across the region and a \$50 billion investment to help Palestinians improve their education system, create 1 million new jobs, and establish reliable government institutions.

### Security

- Israel retains overall security control of both itself and a future State of Palestine, including the Jordan Valley, border crossings, and ports.
- The physical presence of Israeli forces in Palestine must be reduced as much as possible.
  - New roads would allow Palestinians to travel within Palestine without passing through checkpoints.
  - Israel would have “minimum visibility” at border crossings into Palestine. A board with Israeli, Palestinian, and American representatives would focus on how to, “improve the flow and treatment of people using the crossings.”
  - Israel will use aerial equipment to reduce its security presence on the ground.
- Palestine would have a security force for counterterrorism and law enforcement, but no military. This security force is expected to cooperate closely with the IDF, building on security coordination that already exists now.
- Gaza terrorist groups must disarm and the Palestinian Authority or another body acceptable to Israel must assume control of the territory. To be part of the Palestinian government Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other terrorist groups must commit to nonviolence, disarm, and accept previous agreements with Israel.
- The PLO and Palestinian Authority must stop paying salaries to terrorists in Israeli prisons and to families of terrorists who were killed.

### Governance

- With the help of the international community, the Palestinian Authority must:
  - Implement a democratic system governed by the rule of law.
  - Establish reliable financial institution to engage in international trade.
  - End promotion of hatred and violence against Israel.



- Achieve full civilian and law enforcement control over its territory.

### *Refugees*

- Palestinian refugees and their three generations of descendents will not be granted a right of return to Israel. They will have three options for permanent residence:
  - Return and absorption into a future State of Palestine.
  - Integration into the countries where they live.
  - Organization of Islamic Cooperation member states which agree will accept 5,000 refugees per year for ten years.
- Palestinian refugees and their descendents will be entitled to some compensation, but the plan envisions them benefiting more from large scale aid and investment in the State of Palestine and the region as a whole.
- Jewish refugees from Arab and Muslim states would have their claims to compensation addressed separately from the Israeli-Palestinian peace deal.

### *Jerusalem*

- Jerusalem would remain the “undivided capital of Israel.” This means Israel would have its capital in the parts of the city west of the security barrier. The State of Palestine would have its capital in parts of the city east of the security barrier.
- Israel would retain security control of the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif and maintain the religious status quo there, meaning Jordan would continue overseeing the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock.
- Transportation and accessibility to Muslim holy sites would be significantly improved. A tourism zone would be established in Jerusalem for Palestinians to reap economic benefits from Muslims visiting their holy sites and other parts of the city.

### *Borders*

- Roughly 97% of Israelis in the West Bank will live in contiguous Israeli territory, and roughly 97% of Palestinians will live in contiguous Palestinian territory.

- Israel will transfer parts of its own territory to a future State of Palestine, such that Palestine will be, “reasonably comparable in size” to all of the West Bank and Gaza.
- No Israelis or Palestinians will be forced to leave their homes. There will be 15 small Israeli communities within the State of Palestine which the plan calls “enclaves”. Access roads will connect them to Israel. The same will be true in reverse for small Palestinian enclaves inside the State of Israel.
- Israel will allow the State of Palestine to use sections of its ports in Haifa and Ashdod. If the security situation permits, the plan calls for the establishment of a seaport and airport in Gaza five years after the peace agreement is signed.
- During negotiations Israel must not build new settlements or expand existing ones into areas that the plan designates as part of the future State of Palestine.



### *Prisoners*

- Israel will release Palestinian security prisoners unless they were convicted of murder or attempted murder.

### *Water*

- Equitable sharing of water resources and implementation of new technologies to increase water supplies for both parties.

### *“Education and culture of peace”*

- End to incitement, glorification of violence, and hostile propaganda in education and government institutions.
- Joint commission will focus on helping Israelis and Palestinians heal the wounds from the conflict.

### **Reactions to the plan**

There were a wide variety of reactions to the plan across the Middle East.

### *Reactions from Israel*

- Virtually all Israeli commentators from right to left noted that the plan was released one month before Israeli national elections, providing important context for various reactions to it.

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his main political rival, Blue and White party leader Benny Gantz, both [expressed support](#) and willingness to negotiate on the basis of the plan. Netanyahu and Gantz both called for votes in support of the plan but these would likely only be symbolic due to the upcoming Israeli elections on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019. PM Netanyahu initially called for immediate annexation of territories that would become part of Israel under the plan, but then stepped back from this position.
- The leader of Yamina (a coalition of right wing religious parties) expressed [support](#) for annexation but not the establishment of a Palestinian state. Some members of PM Netanyahu's Likud party have reportedly expressed the same position.
- The leader of the ultra-Orthodox Shas party [praised](#) the plan.
- The leader of the center-right Yisrael Beytenu party [praised](#) the plan but criticized the timing, saying it would be used as a political tool in Israel's elections.
- The leaders of the left wing Meretz and Labor parties [expressed](#) opposition to annexation and concern that the plan would lead to one bi-national state rather than peace. They called for addressing the plan only after the March 2<sup>nd</sup> national elections.
- The head of the Arab Joint List (a coalition of Arab parties) [opposed](#) the plan and called it "the assassination of the two state solution." Arab leaders in Israel also condemned a portion of the plan that raised the possibility of some Arab towns in Israel becoming part of the future State of Palestine. Prime Minister Netanyahu reportedly [rejected](#) this idea.

#### *Reactions from Palestinian leaders*

- The Palestinian Authority (PA) unequivocally [rejected](#) the plan and threatened to cut off all security cooperation with Israel. PA President Mahmoud Abbas said, "Jerusalem is not for sale. Our rights are not for sale. The plot of the century won't pass, and it will end up in the dustbin of history."
- Hamas [immediately](#) rejected the plan as well, stating that "Jerusalem will always be a land for the Palestinians"

#### *Reactions from Arab and Muslim states*

- Many Arab states initially [welcomed](#) the deal without endorsing it in full, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, Morocco, Qatar, and Bahrain. [Jordan](#) immediately expressed opposition, as did [Iran](#), [Turkey](#), and others. Shortly after the plan was released, the Arab League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation [rejected](#) the plan. The two bodies called on member states not to cooperate with the U.S. in implementing the deal.