

Meeting Minutes
Dr. Saeb Erakat Meeting with the Negotiations Support Unit
May 5, 2009

Attendance: Dr. Saeb Erekat (SE); NSU.

SE: We are working hard on one thing: the Regional Road Map (RRM). I have shared it with Russia (Lavrov), Javier Solana, Spain (Moratinos), UK (Miliband), French, Germans. The Jordanians made comments; they want to identify their role in Jerusalem. Egypt wanted to change "Rafah" to "all crossings" and wants to change the term "terrorism." We are still waiting on comments from Syria, we should get them by the 14th. They have said they will have stylistic, not substantive changes. The Saudis said the RRM is excellent but want to add Morocco. Solana also said it is excellent. This time we are involving the Chinese and Japanese. Mitchell heard about it and said he needs a copy before Obama receives it so I gave him a copy.

[SE handed us a copy of the RRM with Saudi Arabia's and Egypt's comments integrated, as well as copies of Jordan's and Spain's comments]

We are breaking the Arab behavior of going to America and telling him what we need. Instead we are telling Obama that we can help. We can help in Pakistan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. And Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan all need to tell Obama how they can help him. I went to Kurdistan. If other countries think they can use Hamas as a card we will do the same with them. We are not running a charity. Iran is playing games; they are using Hamas as a card.

Abu Mazen is forming a new government soon. It will be headed by Salam Fayyad and will have new additions, hopefully young faces. The new government will continue to build institutions and work towards early elections.

Hamas is a tool for Netanyahu, he is counting on them to stay the course. And Hamas is counting on Netanyahu to stay the course. Netanyahu's only card is Palestinian division, and also Ahmadinejad. Everyone can see how Israel is using Ahmadinejad's comments. Ahmadinejad should be saying we want to add Palestine to the map, not removing Israel from the map. He doesn't serve our cause with his holocaust denials.

As far as contact with Israel, its business as usual. I talk with Amos Gilad and other generals. Uzi Arad and I mutually do not want to meet with each other. I want to wait to see what they present to Obama. Netanyahu is saying he doesn't want a two state solution. It is not us who are saying we don't want to negotiate. Anyone who says they don't recognize the two-state solution rejects final status negotiations. The question everyone should be asking Netanyahu is, "will you talk about Jerusalem, refugees, etc., Yes or No?"

Azem Bichara: What is the strategy for Abu Mazen's meeting with Obama?

SE: We are taking the RRM and telling Obama we consulted with everyone on earth, now it's your plan not ours. Make it your own. We can tell all the Arab countries, we got this document from Obama, are you in, yes or no? Put your money where your mouth is. We are instituting a zero tolerance policy for bullshit.

There are 4 new element in the Obama administration: 1) They are pushing for the two-state solution as an American national interest, 2) they are saying the two-state solution is the only solution 3) their strategy is not a Palestinian-Israeli track, but a comprehensive regional peace, a matrix of interests and responsibilities 4) they are urging Palestinian institution reform and Fatah reform.

Rami Dajani: Is there a risk that Obama will say the RRM is a great start but then start dissecting it, like it seems he is doing with the Arab Peace Initiative (API)?

SE: whether we like it or not, Obama will take the approach we don't want of taking baby steps. But if we give the RRM to him, it might open up his thinking. We will tell him, if you take baby steps you must define an end game and a definitive end date, and demand a complete settlement freeze.

Azem Bichara: Will you present the RRM publicly?

SE: No, not publicly. It's Obama's plan, we worked on it for him for free.

Rami Dajani: Should we send a letter to Obama prior to AM's meeting?

SE: I don't think so. Secretary Clinton already has a copy of RRM, as does Jeff Feltman, Dan Shapiro, and George Mitchell

Azem Bichara: There is lots of buildup to Netanyahu's meeting with Obama, how can we help with that? Should we write an Op-ed before AM's meeting outlining our ideas?

SE: Do one in my name. Prepare for me a good press conference after AM's meeting. We need to issue a statement right after Netanyahu's meeting.

Alex Kouttab: Do you have any concrete idea of what Netanyahu is going to propose to Obama?

SE: He is going to say "we will remove road blocks, outposts, etc. but if a settler child needs a new bathroom, we will build it." But he will continue to build E1 and demolish homes. He is a master of ambiguity.

Look at the comments from Jordan and Moratinos and tell me what you think, what we should incorporate. We don't want Jordan involved in Jerusalem.

Also, change the title. Maybe something like “RRM for a Comprehensive Peace.” But get rid of API in title.

AM and I are going to the U.S. on May 26th. The meeting with Obama is the 28th. We also have 4 other meetings: Congress, Biden, Clinton, think tanks.

Bader Rock: In Israel’s new budget law for 2009-2010 they want to raise taxes on Palestinian labor, which would make it unfeasible to work there. Can you raise this with Amos Gilad?

SE: Send me a paragraph on what you want me to say.

Azem Bichara: (overview of ‘Two-states for two people memo’)

SE: Two states for two people can be for Christians, Jews, Muslims. It’s already been written in the interim agreement and the declaration of independence. Are you trying to convince me it’s a bad idea?

Azem Bichara: Yes, it’s problematic.

SE: I promise I’ll look at it. I’ll try to convince myself.

Andrew Kuhn: Thank you for your intervention on the visa issue. It is a worrisome issue for us.

This is Khaled’s last week, he’s going to Washington.

SE: Good luck, I’ll see you in Washington.