

Talking Points for Dr. Saeb Erekat's Encounter with the Media on Israel's
precondition to recognize it as a Jewish State

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- The desired outcome of the negotiations process between Israelis and Palestinians is a final and comprehensive settlement of the conflict between them, including an end to Israel's 40-year occupation of Palestinian territory and the establishment of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

- The peace process is not, and has never been, about recognizing Israel as a Jewish State.
 - Peace treaties concluded between Israel and Jordan, and Israel and Egypt, do not address this issue at all and include only recognition of Israel as a state.
 - All agreements signed between the PLO and Israel have not included any such reference to Israel as a "Jewish state".
 - All states which extended recognition to Israel has extended recognition to the state of Israel rather than the state of Israel as a Jewish State.
 - The PLO has already recognized Israel as a state and its right to live in peace and security. This is sufficient and in line with international law, standards and practice under which states recognize the other states and not their characterization, be that characterization national, religious, ideological or otherwise.

- At the start of the current process, both parties agreed that there would be no preconditions imposed by either of the parties prior to negotiations. Israel is not respecting this agreement and is trying to use this issue as a pre-condition to delay the negotiations process and to shift the debate from the real issue at hand, which is ending the conflict between the parties. By doing this, Israel is blocking the opportunity to reach any substantial progress.

- We are beginning a process that could offer Israel a comprehensive peace with all of its Arab neighbors. We recognize the state of Israel, we are not seeking to destroy Israel, it's about time Israel recognized us.

- This Israeli demand is neither mentioned in the Road Map, nor in President Bush's vision. Both of these essential documents aim to achieve a settlement, negotiated between the parties, **that will result in the emergence of an independent and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbors.**

- One wonders, what does it mean really to recognize Israel as a Jewish State, when more than 20% of Israeli population is non Jewish and when there are increasing calls in Israel to encourage the transfer of Palestinian citizens in Israel. Such recognition, by the PLO or other states and entities might have severe impact of the rights of that population.
