

15 April 2004

His Excellency Tony Blair
Prime Minister
United Kingdom

Dear Prime Minister Blair:

I am writing to you regarding the U.S. policy positions articulated yesterday in the letters of assurances exchanged between Israel and the United States.

But first I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the Palestinian commitment to the Roadmap, and express our willingness to resume fast track negotiations on permanent status based on the terms of reference agreed by the parties and the international community; land for peace, implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 242 and 338 and the end of occupation that commenced in 1967, and a just and agreed upon solution for the refugee crisis based on UN General Assembly Resolution 194.

We believe that President Bush has adopted a new set of positions yesterday that run contrary to the past 36 years of U.S. policy in the Middle East: a rejection of the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homes lost prior to 1949; acceptance of Israeli settlement on Palestinian territory, on land illegally confiscated from their rightful owners; implicit acceptance of the territorial annexation of occupied East Jerusalem; and the acceptance of acquisition of territory through the use of force. It is our view, which is supported by international law that a third party cannot take away or give up the rights of a party to a dispute. We believe that President Bush has attempted to do exactly this in his statements yesterday. The Palestinian people do not accept this position and will oppose it as firmly as possible.

A week ago we believed that Israel's evacuation from the Gaza Strip could truly be a historic opportunity as it is a step towards ending the Israeli occupation. However, the U.S. letter of assurances ensures the opposite. It gives Israel the right to control "the airspace, territorial water and land passages" of the Gaza Strip and West Bank. It also allows Israel to continue creating illegal facts on the ground and to steal Palestinian land while assuring that their illegal acquisition of land will be taken into account when deciding the final borders. Those parameters can never make the Gaza evacuation a historic opportunity, but rather one that consolidates Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.

Prime Minister Blair, no one denies the important role of the United Kingdom and you personally in upholding international law and shaping the future of the Middle East. The new U.S. policy positions undermine those roles and seriously challenge the role of the Quartet. We therefore ask you, at this very critical juncture to re-affirm yours and your government's position regarding the applicability of international law, and more specifically the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory through the use of force, which is contrary to UN Security Council Resolution 242; the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and right of return in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194.

Your longstanding support for the peace process and Palestinian rights are of great importance to ending the conflict. I hope that we can continue our dialogue and our mutual efforts to achieve a just and fair, negotiated peace with dignity and security for Palestinians and Israelis.

Sincerely,

Ahmad Qurie'a

Prime Minister

Palestinian National Authority