

ROAD MAP TO WHERE?

Professor Sa'eb Erakat*

On April 9, 2003 President George W. Bush became the President of the Republic of Iraq and at the same time the President of the United States of America. When he went to the Sharm El Sheikh Summit along with President Mubarak of Egypt, King Abdullah of Jordan, King Hamad of Bahrain, Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi-Arabia and Prime Minister Abbas of the Palestinian Authority, did he go in his capacity as the President of Iraq or the President of the US?. Do the Arabs have an American President of one of their 22 countries? Is it possible that President Bush can assume the presidency of other countries of the region? Or will he rule by proxy, with existing leaders?

The Middle-East region is about to set out on a very interesting journey. By the end of the next two to three decades, its borders and peoples may change immensely. How will the transition take place? What do we have to do in order to ensure a smooth transition? Will there be a solution to the Palestinian question? Will democracy be introduced to the political life of the Arab countries?

I believe that positive answers to the last two questions will lead to a peaceful transition. The road to peace today will be through the so called 'Quartet Road Map', so what is this road map? It is most certainly a document that by no means reinvents the wheel; no, what makes it unique is the fact that it has three ingredients that were absent from all the other documents issued since 1991.

To begin with, the Road Map has real potential in terms of providing us with an end game and facilitating the ending of the occupation that began in 1967 and the emergence of a viable, independent, and sovereign Palestinian State. Secondly, it provides us with a date to which the end game will be achieved, namely, 2005. Thirdly, it calls for the presence of monitors on the ground to ensure that both sides fulfill their obligations of which, in the first stage, there are 15 Palestinian ones and 12 Israeli ones.*

* Head of the Negotiations Department of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation

** Annex 1. Israeli and Palestinian commitments

I was one of the people who took part in drafting the Road Map, and I can vouch for the fact that our intention was for the obligations to be decision-oriented, rather than negotiations-oriented. If you look at the commitments on both sides, you will find that not a single one requires negotiations, and that they are all decision-oriented.

The commitments are clear: the Palestinians are required to produce a draft constitution, an independent central election commission, and a program of action and reform in the financial, judicial, and security domains, while the Israelis are supposed to stop all settlement activities, including those involving natural growth, dismantle all settlements outposts created since March 2001, open all Palestinian offices in Jerusalem, lift the closure and the siege, and begin to gradually withdraw and release prisoners, etc.

The question now is why have we not seen a work plan benchmarked so that these obligations can be fulfilled? Do we still have a Quartet? It is a very serious business here. Palestinians and Israelis will no longer be content with using their ears, but instead, will use their eyes to assess the situation and determine the extent of the seriousness and determination as reflected by President Bush, and they will pay careful attention to the things that are being done. I think that people on both sides are sick and tired of listening to their leaders and foreign dignitaries talking about peace and making statements about peace. It won't be long before they start to ask, "Why haven't any of the articles of the Road Map been implemented, and why is there no working plan?". I think that Abu Mazen was very sincere, in Aqaba, in his attempts to define all the obligations on the Palestinian side, but what we need now is coordination, meaning that the Israelis should read their commitments and the Palestinians theirs, and then each side should define the commitments instead of asking the other what to do. In other words, I will say what I have to do and they will say what they have to do.

Abu Mazen read from the text of our obligations concerning the Road Map; Sharon, on the other hand, read out his reservations concerning the Road Map, not his commitments. We saw a lot of determination in Sharm El Sheikh and Aqaba as reflected by President Bush, and that is the type of energy that we employ: seriousness, determination and so on. So what happened? Is it a question of internal American politics? Is it the Jewish groups in the US that are pressuring Bush not to introduce the Road Map working plan? No. A huge number of Jews in the US have written to President Bush asking him to help implement the Road Map, so they cannot hide behind the internal factors of elections next year.

Is it, therefore, some regional factor that is delaying thing? The answer, again, is no. To begin with, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia all took part in drafting the Road Map and undertook to fulfill what are required of them in terms of the regional changes that were mentioned at the beginning.* We have, therefore, a Palestinian leadership that is engaged and willing and Arab leaderships that are engaged and willing. We also have Europe, Russia, the United Nations, and everyone else wanting to see the implementation of the Road Map, and yet, so far, we have seen no sign of a simple three-page work plan defining the basic issues to be dealt with and a reasonable schedule. Secretary Powell came to Jericho twice. Dr. Condoleezza Rice came once, Ambassador John Wolff has been in the region since early June 2003. No comprehensive plan of implementation was introduced, no time lines and no mechanisms of implementation.

Prime Minister Abu Mazen visited Washington on July 2003, and met with president Bush and urged him to introduce the comprehensive implementation plan. This is what we should expect to happen, but will it actually happen? I do not think so, because today, things go in accordance with the way that Sharon wants them to go.

With so many transitions taking place in the region, and with so much uncertainty, why is it that Sharon is still dictating all the terms and why is he being allowed to do so? The Israelis say they have accepted the Road Map, but to which one are they referring? We asked the Americans and the Europeans, 'Are we talking about the map of the Quartet? Or will it be changed, altered, renegotiated?'. The answer was: 'No, it will be implemented as is'. I am afraid, however, that we are witnessing the disappearance of the Quartet as a committee, even though the title of the map is the 'Quartet Road Map'. I do not think that the envoys will meet again, I think it far more likely that they (the Quartet, which America needed in the past when it was still not sure about the role it wanted to play) will come and tell us that because the US has made up its mind about the extent of its engagement, it no longer needs the help of anyone else.

In my opinion, Abu Mazen needs to stand up before the Palestinian people and tell them, 'Look, we have been struggling for decades to achieve a sovereign viable, independent Palestinian State. We have been struggling for 36 years to end the occupation and now we have a

* Annex 2 – international Arab commitments

document that specifies that within two years, i.e., in 2005, the Israeli occupation will end. Moreover, we have the backing of Arabs, Europeans, the UN, Latin America, and Africa and we have guarantees from the US that it will happen, so I don't want you to use violence, because we are achieving our end game'. This is the most powerful weapon in Abu Mazen's hands; his only weapon, in fact. The problem is however, how can he stand up and guarantee to the Palestinian people that the occupation will end through peaceful means and that they need to give things a chance for two years if, at the same time, the Americans, although saying that they want to help him, have done nothing but embarrass him by creating a situation of 'Cromwell and the King', Arafat-Abu Mazen, current situation. Let's face it, the Palestinians aren't stupid and they're not likely to fail to notice that as far as Sharon is concerned, it's business as usual: assassinations, incursions, closures, sieges, sanctions, and more settlement activities.

We do not need more words, We do not need gestures and good will. What we need is an obligation-oriented work plan. I do not want the Israelis to make gestures; I want them to fulfill their commitments as specified by the Road Map, just as the Palestinians are expected to fulfill theirs. It would appear that many people seem to think that even if we repeat the same thing, we will have different results the second time around, but that's like going to the same movie and expecting a different outcome! Do it differently, that's what I say.

Produce the work plan benchmarked with timelines and dates, and then get to work. In his second time in the region since the introduction of the road map, the Palestinian delegation asked Mr. Powell, "What do you expect the people in Dheisheh, Jabalia, Gaza, Jericho and Bethlehem to think when you come here two times and go on about determination and your supporting Abu Mazen, but then leave without introducing a plan for implementation?" What, exactly, are you waiting for? We are currently witnessing a tragedy. The Road Map is a viable document, a document that embodies all the ingredients necessary for success, including support systems, so why, on earth has nobody sat down for 30 minutes and clarified things by specifying who, in the first stage, should be doing this or that? It doesn't take a genius to do that: it's a simple exercise, a very simple, clear-cut matter. Especially that the Palestinian have declared a three months 'hudna'- ceasefire.

With regard to the many obligations of the international community, there are many that appear to have been undermined, above all, the introduction of monitors on the ground. If the President of the United States can send 350,000 soldiers to the Gulf, with all the planes, bombs, ships, and technology required to fight and win war, then why can't he envisage 300 unarmed monitors

standing up throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip on 30 of August or 3 September or whenever the implementation of the plan begins and saying, 'We are going to win the battle of peace'?

Our source of frustration as Palestinians is that when it comes to the US government, if it is my word against Sharon's then I do not stand a chance. That is the honest truth. I can do everything in my power to fulfill my obligations, I can be the most honest, sincere person on earth, and yet in politics, a single sentence from any Israeli official will override whatever I have to say every single time. It is because of this reality that we don't want the Quartet and the American monitors to negotiate nor make concessions on our behalf, but rather, we simply want them to tell the world who is doing what they're supposed to be doing and who isn't. Take the example of the so-called 'outposts removal'. It is the job of the Quartet to ensure that the attempts to remove them are genuine, but we all know the real story in that regard. As to the other Israeli commitments, Sharon is obliged to declare Israeli recognition of an independent Palestinian state, but do we see that happening or about to happen? Are we about to see the end of attacks against Palestinians, regardless of their location, and incitement? Are we likely to witness an end to all settlement activity, including that relating to natural growth? Why should we believe that all of this is about to happen unless someone accepts responsibility for ensuring that Israel fulfills its obligations?

If the situation remains as it is, American envoys will continue to come and go, yet, in spite of all their efforts, nothing concrete will be achieved. What we need here is a work plan with specific dates for the meeting of certain obligations and I can tell you now that in the absence of such a plan, the Road Map will simply end up joining the Mitchell Report and the Tenet Understanding in the archives of Prime Minister Sharon and all those who seek to maintain the status quo of occupation.

It is true that we, the Palestinians, do not have an army, a navy or an air force. Fortunately, however, we possess certain qualities and it because of them that we cannot be defeated. The majority of Palestinians want to achieve peace, but not by using words. Today, the peace-making agenda is not about leaders signing an agreement; it is about the common people seeing the chances in their standard of living as reflected in the economic, political, social, and educational fields. Without proving to the Palestinians that it is possible to achieve independence within two years through a meaningful peace process, I am afraid that the only thing the current process will achieve will be to destroy the elements of moderation and hope and strengthen the extremists who do not want solutions.

With regard to the tendency of some top US officials, including a few in the State Department, to accuse us of hating the Americans, in spite of our having wanted an American fact-finding commission – the King-Crane Commission- not a British or French one, in 1919, let those same officials consider the following question. If the current US Administration is unable or unwilling to deliver a work plan for implementing the first stage of the Road Map, then what should Arabs and Muslims expect in the future? They go on about democracy, but nobody in the Middle East sees the Americans aligning themselves with democratic regimes. Just look at what happened with Saddam Hussein! One minute he was considered a good dictator fighting Iran, but the next, he was considered a bad one when he chose to invade Kuwait. It really amazes me to know that the Americans are surprised when some of the Arabs mistrust them.

Today, the region in which we live stands a good chance of witnessing some positive changes, but if the battle between the forces of extremism and the forces of moderation, development, etc., is to have a positive outcome, the Israeli occupation has to end and the way that the people of the area are governed improve. In my mind, there is no doubt whatsoever that if this history of broken promises and failed diplomacy continues, it is the extreme forces that will eventually prevail.

The ‘Road Map’:

Annex (1)

PALESTINIAN OBLIGATIONS – PHASE I

1. Palestinian leadership issues unequivocal statement reiterating Israel's right to exist in peace and security and calling for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire to end armed activity and all acts of violence against Israelis anywhere. All official Palestinian institutions end incitement against Palestinians.
2. Unconditional cessation of violence in accordance with the Road Map.
3. Resume security cooperation based on the Tenet work plan to end violence, terrorism and incitement.

4. Undertake comprehensive political reform, including drafting a Palestinian constitution, and prepare for free, fair and open elections.

5. Palestinian obligations in the security field:

a. End of violence and terrorism and undertake visible efforts on the ground to arrest, disrupt, and restrain individuals and groups conducting and planning violent attacks on Israelis anywhere.

b. Rebuild and train Palestinian Security apparatus.

c. Begin sustained, targeted and effective operations aimed at confronting all those engaged in terror and dismantlement of terrorist capabilities and infrastructure. This includes commencing confiscation of illegal weapons and consolidation of security authority free of association with terror and corruption.

d. All Palestinian security organizations are consolidated into three services reporting to an empowered Interior Minister.

6. In the field of building Palestinian institutions:

a. A credible process to produce a draft constitution based on strong parliamentary democracy and cabinet with empowered Prime Minister. (done).

b. Appointment of (Interim) Prime Minister, (What is required in phase II has been accomplished, appointment of a Prime Minister with full powers), and from an empowered cabinet.

c. Genuine separation of powers, including any necessary Palestinian legal reforms for this purpose.

d. Establishment of independent Palestinian Elections Commission. (done). PLC reviews and revises election law.

e. Continue Palestinian reforms in all security, judicial and financial fields.

f. Prepare to hold free, open and fair elections.

PALESTINIAN OBLIGATIONS – PHASE II

1. Option of creating an independent Palestinian State with provisional borders and attributes of sovereignty, based on the new constitution, as a way station to a permanent status settlement.
2. This goal can be achieved when the Palestinian people have a leadership acting decisively against terror, willing and able to build a practicing democracy based on tolerance and liberty, and establishment of reformed civil and security institutions.
3. Hold Palestinian elections.
4. Continued comprehensive security performance.
5. Ratification of a democratic Palestinian constitution, and hold further elections if required.
6. Formal establishment of office of Prime Minister and form a reform cabinet.
7. Consolidation of political reform.
8. Continued comprehensive security performance, including effective security cooperation on the bases laid out in Phase I.

PALESTINIAN OBLIGATIONS – PHASE III

1. Consolidation of reform and stabilization of Palestinian institutions.
2. Sustained effective security performance on the bases laid out in Phase I.
3. Israeli-Palestinian negotiations aimed at a permanent status agreement in 2005 on all issues.
4. Parties reach final and comprehensive permanent status agreement that ends the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2005, through a settlement negotiated between the parties based on UNSCR "242", "338", and "1397", that ends the occupation that began in 1967, and includes an agreed, just, fair, and realistic solution to the refugee issue, and a negotiated resolution on the status of Jerusalem that

takes into account the political and religious concerns of both sides, and protects the religious interests of Jews, Christians, and Muslims worldwide, and fulfills the vision of two states, Israel and sovereign, independent, democratic and viable Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security.

ISRAELI OBLIGATIONS – PHASE 1

1. Israeli leadership issues unequivocal statement affirming its commitment to the two-state vision of an independent, viable, sovereign Palestinian State living in peace and security alongside Israel, as expressed by President Bush, and calling for an immediate end to violence against Palestinians everywhere. All official Israeli institutions end incitement against Palestinians.
2. Supportive measures undertaken by Israel to enable the Palestinian side to undertake an unconditional cessation of violence.
3. Resume security cooperation based on the Tenet work plan.
4. Israel takes all necessary steps to help normalize Palestinian life.
5. Israel withdraws from Palestinian areas occupied from September 28, 2000 and the two sides restore the status quo that existed at that time, as security performance and cooperation progress (note a conditional point).
6. Government of Israel facilitates Task Force election assistance, registration of voters, movement of candidates and voting officials. Support for NGOs involved in the election process.
7. Government of Israel reopens Palestinian Chamber of Commerce and other closed Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem based on a commitment that these institutions operate strictly in accordance with prior agreements between the parties.
8. Israel takes measures to improve the humanitarian situation. Israel and Palestinians implement in full all recommendations of Bertini report to improve humanitarian conditions, lifting curfews and easing restrictions on movement of persons and goods, and allowing full, safe, and unfettered access of international and humanitarian personnel.

9. Government of Israel immediately dismantles settlement outposts erected since March 2001.
10. Consistent with the Mitchell Report, Government of Israel freezes all settlement activity (including natural growth of settlements).
11. Government of Israel and Palestinian Authority continue revenue clearance process and transfer of funds, including arrears, in accordance with agreed, transparent monitoring mechanism.
12. Government of Israel takes no actions undermining trust, including deportations, attacks on civilians, confiscation and/or demolitions of Palestinian homes and property as a punitive measure or to facilitate Israeli construction; destruction of Palestinian institutions and infrastructure; and other measures specified in the Tenet Work Plan.

ISRAELI COMMITMENTS – PHASE II

1. Furthering and sustaining efforts to normalize Palestinian lives.
2. Security cooperation based on the goals outlined in Phase I.
3. Creation of an independent Palestinian State with provisional borders through a process of Palestinian – Israeli engagement, launched by the international conference.
4. Implementation of prior agreements.
5. Enhance maximum territorial contiguity.
6. Further action on settlements in conjunction with establishment of a Palestinian State with provisional borders.

ISRAELI COMMITMENTS – PHASE III

1. Israeli-Palestinian negotiations aimed at a permanent status agreement in 2005.
2. Continue security cooperation on the based laid out in Phase I.
3. Support progress toward a comprehensive Middle East settlement, including Lebanon and Syria.
4. Abstain from obstructing the Palestinian reform agenda and institution building.
5. Parties reach final and comprehensive permanent status agreement that ends the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2005, through a settlement negotiated between the parties based on UNSCR "242", "338", and "1397", that ends the occupation that began in 1976, and includes an agreed, just, fair, and realistic solution to the refugee issue, and a negotiated resolution on the status of Jerusalem that takes into account the political and religious concerns of both sides, and protects the religious interest of Jews, Christians, and Muslims worldwide, and fulfills the vision of two states, Israel and sovereign, independent, democratic and viable Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security.

Annex (2) :

ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS – PHASE I

1. Begin the work of the monitoring committee at all levels {Quartet representatives begin informal monitoring and consult with parties on establishment of a formal mechanism and its implementation}.
2. Arab states cut off public and private funding and all other forms of support for groups supporting and engaging in violence and terror.

3. All donors providing budgetary support for the Palestinians channel these funds through the Palestinian Ministry of Finance's Single Treasury Account.
4. AHLC reviews the humanitarian situation and prospects for economic development in the West Bank and Gaza and launches a major donor assistance effort, including to the reform effort.
5. Continued donor support, including increased funding through PVOs/NGOs, for people programs, private sector development and civil society initiatives.
6. Lay down specific mechanisms to move from one phase to another. Implement US plan for rebuilding and training, resume security cooperation in coordination with external oversight board (US, Egypt and Jordan). The Quartet supports efforts to reach a comprehensive and permanent cease-fire.

ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS – PHASE II

1. The active support of the Quartet and the broader international community in establishing an independent, viable state.
2. Progress into Phase II will be based upon the consensus judgment of the Quartet of whether conditions are appropriate to proceed, taking into account performance of both parties.
3. Obligation to normalize Palestinian lives.
4. Assistance to hold Palestinian elections to start Phase II after that.
5. Support the creation of a Palestinian State with provisional borders.
6. Convene the international conference, in consultation with the two parties, after Palestinian elections.
7. Support the reconstruction of the Palestinian economy.
8. The international conference would be open, based on the principles described in the preamble to

this document: "242", "338", "1397", Saudi initiative, principle of land for peace, Madrid reference and signed agreements (including peace between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon).

9. Arab states restore pre-intifada links to Israel (trade offices, etc.).
10. Revival of multilateral engagement on issues including regional water resources, environment, economic development, refugees, and arms control issues.
11. Enhanced international role in monitoring transition, with the active, sustained, and operational support of the Quartet.
12. Quartet members promote international recognition of Palestinian State, including possible UN membership.

ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS – PHASE III

1. Progress into Phase III will be based on consensus judgment of Quartet.
2. The Quartet will continue to monitor implementation and performance by both sides.
3. The Quartet convenes the international conference, in consultation with the parties, at the beginning of 2004 to endorse agreement reached on an independent Palestinian State with provisional borders.
4. Formally launch a process with the active, sustained, and operational support of the Quartet, leading to a final, permanent status resolution in 2005, including on borders, Jerusalem, refugees and settlements.
5. Support progress toward a comprehensive Middle East settlement, including between Israel and Lebanon and Israel and Syria.
6. Continued comprehensive, effective progress on the reform agenda laid out by the Task Force in preparation for final status agreement.
7. Support the Palestinian economy and the stabilization of Palestinian institutions in preparation for

final status agreement.

8. Arab states accept full normal relations with Israel and security for all the states of the region in the context of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace.