

Socialist International Attempt to Heal Palestinian/Israel Conflict

Contributed by Heather Bachman
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At their two day conference held at the United Nations, the Socialist International looked toward the future of two specific conflicted nations. With the recent Flotilla attack still fresh in their minds, the organization approved a five-pronged approach to peace.

Along with a visit to both nations by a segmented faction of the organization to investigate the recent flotilla attack, The Socialist International declared all settlement actions be halted, encouraged verbally Palestinian political parties to unify and support Palestinian democracy, and called for an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land within one year and withdrawal to the 1967 borders. Further, the organization called for the establishment of an independent, sovereign and viable democratic Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital within one year from now side by side with "a secure Israeli state" and the release of all Palestinian prisoners and the Israeli prisoner as well as the border of the Gaza Strip.

Before the final draft of this plan was announced, Secretary General Avshalom (Abu) Vilan said that Israel has always been "looking forward (while) Palestine discusses the past and you cannot change the past." Despite popular belief Vilan stated violence has seen, "a big change in the past one and a half years, more silent." In addition to an eight to nine percent growth in the West Bank over the recent year, the dialogue is "much better and now looking toward a potential solution."

Already seeing the possibility of Goodwill Ambassadors from the International arriving in the near future, he said he has always seen the international community push the two sides toward a political agreement. "Every international organization has placed pressure and both sides and (hence) we need to move forward" Secretary General Vilan said.

Discussing the July 2000 Summit where to him "everything was put on the table," he discussed local opinion and trust in Palestine was lost and when the Summit began, "everything was but on the table, Palestine refused and two months later there was violence." However, he saw the conversation that was occurring positively and called America's involvement, "Important to the peace process";

"We need a political solution where the parameters are known by both sides," Secretary General Vilan said.

Saying that there has been too much justifying of the extreme acts involving the Israeli government, Dr. Mustafa Barghouthi, Secretary General of the Palestine National Initiative called the proposed actions of the Socialist International, "positive and we welcome the investigation and findings of the facts to what happened at the Flotia." What concerned him greatly was the offer by Barack Obama from Camp David which he said was "misleading, excluded the border and western settlement areas";

"They (Israel) began building on the ground without negotiating and without involvement," Secretary General Barghouthi said. "We struggle for the future of both people, Palestinian and Israeli."

Secretary General Barghouthi continued discussing that Israel acted "as a defacto establishment system of apartheid." "This is a humanitarian crisis, (and) Israel acts to destroy the future preventing the Palestinian state by expanding settlements," Secretary General Barghouthi said.

After the final announcement of the International's decisions, both sides seemed intrigued and hopeful. Secretary General Barghouthi concluded his reaction to the approved agenda as something that, "Serves the interest of both people."

In a phone call to Secretary General Barghouthi, it was stated that no date has been set for the international meeting and investigation.