

To Achieve Mideast Peace, Suspend Disbelief

by [Dennis Ross \(/experts/dennis-ross\)](#)

Mar 3, 2013

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Washington's former chief negotiator on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict proposes a fourteen-point agenda to ensure that any new talks have a chance to be productive.

These are hard times for trying to promote, much less make, peace between Palestinians and Israelis. The rise of political Islam, Syria's civil war and looming implosion, and the Iranian nuclear imbroglio not only dominate the environment, but they also render it forbidding for peacemaking. And while all these factors make Israelis and Palestinians reluctant to take risks for peace, they do not represent the biggest hurdle for ending the conflict. The most fundamental problem between Israelis and Palestinians is the problem of disbelief.

Most Israelis and Palestinians today simply don't believe that peace is possible. I won't rehearse all the reasons both sides have lost faith. Suffice it to say that Israelis feel that their withdrawal from territory (like southern Lebanon and the Gaza Strip) has not brought peace or security; instead, it has produced only violence. Why, then, should they repeat the same mistake and subject themselves to far greater, even existential, risk in the West Bank? Meanwhile, Palestinians believe that negotiations from 1993 onward failed to produce independence but instead yielded a huge Israeli settler presence in their midst. Put simply, neither side believes that the other is committed to a two-state outcome... ❖

New York Times

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