

Israel:

Challenges at Home and Abroad

May 30, 2008



In-Depth Reports

Haim Ramon, deputy prime minister of Israel, delivered the concluding address at the Institute's 2008 Soref Symposium. The following is a rapporteur's summary of his remarks.

The importance of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has changed dramatically in the last decade. Today, it is increasingly taking a back seat to the fight against Islamic extremism, which is the main fault line dividing the Middle East. It is perpetuated and supported by countries and organizations such as Iran, Syria, Hamas, and Hizballah. The goal of this radical movement is to bring an end to democracy and freedom everywhere in the world, not just the Middle East.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is, of course, one part of this greater conflict, and is one in which extremists have a vested interest. The conflict continues to divide Israel and other Arab countries, preventing both from working together on the greater issues. Everyone knows and essentially accepts that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be a two-state solution. The main issues in the conflict are borders, Jerusalem as the capital of two states, Palestinian refugees, and security arrangements. Until November 2008, it is essential that all sides attempt to move forward, building on the groundwork laid by the Annapolis process.

The present situation will remain a threat to Israel as a Jewish and democratic state unless real efforts are made to remedy these conflicts and the forces shaping them. ❖

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