

# Israel's Strategy for Peace and Security (full transcript)

by [Shimon Peres \(/experts/shimon-peres\)](/experts/shimon-peres)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Shimon Peres \(/experts/shimon-peres\)](/experts/shimon-peres)

Shimon Peres was a leading Israeli statesman and Nobel laureate whose political career spanned seven decades and included service as president, prime minister, defense minister, and foreign minister of the State of Israel.



Brief Analysis

**O**n May 1, 2001, Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres addressed The Washington Institute's Special Policy Forum. Following is the full text of the discussion. [Read a summary of his remarks. \(templateC05.php?CID=2015\)](#)

*Note: The questions from the Q&A portion of the discussion have been summarized. The Institute's interpretations of partially audible portions of the recording of Mr. Peres' speech appear in brackets.*

**Rob Satloff, The Washington Institute:** Seven months ago, at The Washington Institute's Annual Policy Conference, our Weinberg Founders Conference, we were fortunate to host the Honorable Shimon Peres. At that time — which seems much more than seven months ago, really seven centuries ago — at that time, Mr. Peres opened his remarks by saying, "Israelis have to make three different sorts of peace: the first, surprisingly, is with ourselves; the second is with our neighbors; and the third is with the age in which we live. The three cannot be separated." Well, I'm pleased today to be able to welcome back, Shimon Peres, with at least the first of these three sorts of peace being partially accomplished, in these sense that he is today back in Washington in the capacity as minister of foreign affairs of a wide and broad national unity government in Israel. So at least progress toward peace among ourselves. Under his leadership and that of the prime minister, the pursuit of the other two objectives of peace I'm sure is at the top of the national agenda. I'd like to welcome everyone to The Washington Institute, especially the Honorable Nabil Fahmy, Ambassador of Egypt, the Honorable Marwan Muasher, Ambassador of Jordan, and the Honorable David Ivry, Ambassador of Israel. Shimon Peres's biography is of course far too long, although certainly worthy of noting at an event like this. Suffice it to say that in every decade of Israel's history he has contributed in Herculean ways to the independence, security, and search for peace which has characterized the last half-century. Ladies and gentlemen, it with great pleasure and honor that I welcome back to The Washington Institute the Honorable Shimon Peres.

## SHIMON PERES

Ladies and gentlemen, you have spoken as though we have achieved peace with ourselves — I wonder. For me, it's the second time serving in a national unity government, the first was in 1984. I was then the prime minister of the government, the mood was unsettled, and the chief rabbi called me and said, "Don't be so worried. There is a precedent to it." I asked him where. He told me, "In the bible we have a national unity government in paradise. When

Adam discovered there was no other woman but Eve and Eve discovered there was no other gentleman but Adam, they decided to form a national unity government. They called it paradise, and it rested until the snake arrived . . . So be careful!"

We are now in a very difficult period of time, all of us I think, our neighbors as well as ourselves. Late [Egyptian] president Anwar Sadat used to say that 95 to 99 percent of the problems in the Middle East are of a psychological nature, and psychologically we are deeply in distress. Today the Middle East is made up of a group of extremely angry people, and everyone has the right to be outraged and irritated. It is as though peace has lost its tongue — nobody speaks peace, everybody appeals with accusations and blames. And there are good reasons for it. The Palestinians are angry with us because of the situation in the territories, which I must admit is very, very poor, very demanding. And also because of the intifada in which they have lost many lives — many people were killed, many people were injured. They are full of accusations and suspicion. The Israelis are angry with the Palestinians because they feel in Camp David and Taba, the Palestinians were offered the most generous proposals, and we don't understand why they didn't accept. The Palestinians say they are fighting against occupation, but in Camp David and Taba the offer was to end occupation without any bullets, without any bombs.

The feeling is that for the second time, the great opportunity was missed. The first, from a Palestinian standpoint, was at the United Nations in 1947 when the Arabs were offered an independent state on most of the land of Israel. To this very day nobody can really explain why they rejected it. [The late French] president [Francois] Mitterand once said that history is like a galloping horse, when it comes nearby your home you better mount and gallop with the horse because the alternative is the horse will gallop without you. The horse in 1948 galloped without the rider. And then for a second time, actually what President Clinton suggested with the indirect consent of our former prime minister is 96 percent of the land with a 3 percent swap which is 99 percent, actually 100 percent; and a position on Jerusalem which was unprecedented — why did the Palestinians refuse? Not only that, but in the wake of their refusal they started the intifada, and the intifada creates a different reaction.

Two things change the feelings of a person: one thing is bullets, the other thing is television. When you see bullets, you take the precautionary measures; when you see television, you change your behavior. The two arrived, and people don't understand. Then they say, do we have a partner? Can we really make peace? What else can we do?

The Arabs say the mountain doesn't come to Mohammed, Mohammed goes to the mountain. But this time we have two mountains, no Mohammed. It's very hard to bring the two of them close enough to talk. So I would not like to underestimate the extremely difficult atmosphere, which makes the renewal of negotiations so difficult. In spite of it one should not lose hope, because the alternatives for both sides are so bad and so poor. I do not believe the Palestinians can achieve anything with bullets and bombs — they will make Israel more united and tougher. And I don't think Israel can stop bullets and bombs with other bullets and bombs. We cannot solve force with force — there must be an end to force.

We are trying to come back to a negotiating occasion. Part of it must be done discreetly because negotiating calls for a great deal of compromises and concessions, and when negotiating with the other party, you begin the negotiation with your own people. Your own people say why the hell are you giving away so much, are you crazy? And if it goes to the press, the giveaways make the headlines. It is also very hard to negotiate when there is terror and violence. In an air of shooting and killing you cannot talk sense, you cannot talk about compromises. In spite of it, I do hope that we can begin, so the beginning does not mean the end.

I want to say about the beginning two things one must understand in my judgment. One, we cannot agree about issues that were not negotiated. You cannot write a paper that can replace negotiations or come prior to negotiations. So if you want to return to the negotiations you have to respect the principle that whatever was agreed should be implemented, and whatever is not agreed should be negotiated. May I say that the things that were agreed

to and were not implemented are of the highest importance, actually, of everything in the written agreements. And I say it because in a national unity government, there are guiding lines, as you know, without which we would not have a national unity government — four [guiding lines] in relation to the Palestinian issue.

1) All agreements that were signed will be implemented provided that the two sides will do it. Actually we're referring to three agreements the Oslo agreement, the Sharm al-Shaykh agreement, and the Wye Plantation agreement. If you read carefully these agreements, you have everything there. We have to do a lot of things we may not like, the Palestinians will have to do a great deal of work about matters they wouldn't like, but we have to do it.

In Taba and Camp David, nothing was agreed. As a matter of fact, Ehud Barak said unless everything will be agreed, nothing is agreed, and President Clinton said if I shall leave office, this will be the end of my proposals. So once it was rejected, that was it — it's over. But anyway, from our standpoint, all parties that participate in the government have to honor agreements that [came] before it, they opposed it. It is not a small matter for a government with such a strong element of rightists to agree to such an item.

2) This government will not establish new settlements. Again, let's not forget that this is a government with a rightist majority, and from a rightist point-of-view it's quite an accommodation.

3) The third article in the guiding lines says that we shall negotiate with the Palestinians under UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and we will answer the Palestinian approach.

4) Finally there is a fourth article which is more of a general nature saying that the government will be ready to make painful compromises including redeployments in the territories.

These are the four [guiding lines]. We are telling our partners — the Palestinians, now the Jordanians and the Egyptians as well — that we would prefer to be lazy. Namely, why negotiate things that were already agreed? Why should we go again and re-energize their will? In those four articles we have actually everything that is needed to start negotiations. Then, trying to open the negotiations, there was an idea that all issues should be simultaneously started, that you cannot have first things first and second things second. Our position was that you must first of all have a cease-fire, otherwise nothing will move. There was a great deal of [mis]quotation and misunderstanding on this matter so I would like to be very careful with my language. We do not yet have an agreement, but we do have an understanding by all parties that if the first things will be first, then we shall have second things coming second. The first thing is really a cease-fire, and not only a cease-fire to be fair to the Palestinian position, but a cease-fire and a change in the conditions in the territories; and number two, a redeployment of the Israeli forces to the point that existed prior to the current crisis. These are the three points as an opening position. Then we shall enter in permanent status negotiations.

Here too is the position of the prime minister, Mr. [Ariel] Sharon, who thinks that if you talk really realistically, pragmatically, you cannot solve the problem with one jump. He thinks the first step should be an extended interim agreement — not that the interim agreement will be the end of the story but clearly it will be the beginning of it, and then we shall see. The Palestinians, I think, the Egyptians, and the Jordanians feel that we have to enter a negotiation that within a given period of time we have to conclude the negotiations for a permanent solution. What looks to me today as a possible compromise is that we shall start the negotiations with an aim to reach a permanent solution, but the first item on the agenda will be the implementation of the existing agreements.

So I can see more or less a frame, it wasn't yet worked out or finalized, but those are elements which will enable us to overcome at least the first steps which are necessary to restart the negotiations. There was a document issued by the Egyptians and the Jordanians which is known as the Egyptian–Jordanian non-paper. At the beginning it was not submitted to us formally. We got it for the first time with the visit of the foreign minister of Jordan, Mr. El-Khatib. He presented us with the corrected version of this proposal, because there were three or four different versions before.

And we thought it's not a bad idea. We would like to see the Egyptians and Jordanians getting involved in the peace process, playing [a role] as they did in the past a supportive role, and we on our side felt we had to do the utmost to accept every written article in the paper and limit our criticism just to the ones that we could not accept. That was the essence of my visit to Egypt and to Jordan. We provided our remarks, and the reaction of the two countries was: OK. Let us study it, we cannot tell you yes or no, we have to consult also with the Palestinians. We said that if you don't have an acceptable document it's not enough to have the input of three parties. You have to have the input of the Israeli party as well. Right now, I think our comments are in the hands of the leaders of those two governments. [In parallel], we are talking with the Palestinians informally. I think the Palestinians are very keen not to make it public ahead of time because again it may wind up as a disappointment and we have enough disappointments.

On our part in Israel, we have decided to change the situation in the territories unilaterally and unconditionally. We don't ask for anything in return, we don't ask for any postponement. Since Sunday morning, we have decided to increase the permits for the Palestinians to work in Israel. It is of great importance because it is one of the sources of income and I must say that the economic situation in the territories [has become] terrible. We have increased the number from 4,000 to 20,000 (20,000 are already working meaning 40,000 in all). This is not an easy decision for us, because we are afraid that some of them may be infiltrators and carrying bombs, so we take the risk.

We have decided to raise the number of permits for [commercial vehicles] from 1,000 to 5,000 and to lift all the restrictions on exports and imports to the territories. We have decided to open up the traffic within the territories without any disturbances so there will be a natural flow of people and goods, and have decided to facilitate the movement of cargo within the territories, among the territories, and with the outside world. On top of it, we have suggested to the Palestinians, and they have agreed, that we shall build a [water] pipeline [from our sources] to one of the most important cities in the territories — Hebron — whose water shortage has reached dangerous proportions. We have suggested together with the United States to handle the waste water from the mountains between Nablus and Qalqilya which [has] endangered the purity of the drinking water and we have suggested to the Palestinians two things: a) that they will build a power station and we shall buy from them electricity on their land, under their jurisdiction; they build a desalinization plant and we shall buy from them water, so again this gives a source of work. Also, we are now contemplating, and I think we should be able to do it in a relatively short while, to connect the Gaza Strip and the West Bank via a rail road on existing rails, making it both cheaper and quicker. This is not instead of the ideas of a bridge or a tunnel. We intend to do whatever we can to facilitate and ease the situation in the territories. As I have said, this is not part of any bazaar, it's not a quid pro quo, it's policy of our government because we feel there should be no collective punishment, that the civilians should not suffer, that the economic situation must be improved as soon and as much as possible.

Should there be a cease-fire, we shall redeploy our army to the lines that [we] used to have prior to the intifada. We are continuing to talk. The problem is really with the cease-fire. The U.S. took the initiative to have the commanders of the two parties meet to see what could be done to reduce the flame of violence and terror. Unfortunately, things that are being agreed in the meetings are not being implemented in fact, and again for us it's both hard to understand and clearly hard to agree that from Gaza mortar shells will fall on a kibbutz in Israel in the middle of the day, or in a town, one falls 50 meters from a kindergarten. [Roadside] bombs and car bombs will explode here and there, endangering people, killing people.

I know that some people say we are acting excessively, I think we are behaving with great restraint. If I should recount what happened over the last four days, it's a terrible list: more than thirty [incidents] of shooting and bombing every day. I don't know what the Washington police would do if they would have mortars in Washington or shooting in the houses of Washington's suburbs. If there is excessive shooting it's when it's being initiated, not when it's being retaliated.

Put aside who will lead the Palestinians. We don't intend to intervene in their internal policies, contrary to all the rumors. We would like to be of help to the Palestinian leadership, not to make them fall because the better they will be, the stronger they will be, a better partner we shall have, a better neighbor we shall have. But they have to show leadership, and usually it's very hard to run a country when you have more than one armed force, and in the territories you have, in addition to the armed force of the autonomy, you have the armed forces of the Jihad, and of Hamas, and recently also Hizballah. Just a week ago we celebrated the fifty-third year of the independence of Israel, and I couldn't but recall the first days I was there on the side of the founder of our country, David Ben Gurion, and one of the toughest decisions that Ben Gurion had to take was to bring an end to any dissident armed force – the Etzel or the Stern Group. He even ordered the army, as you remember, to fire against the ship that was organized by the Etzel – the Altelena. It's not a simple proposition, during a war, to shoot at your brothers when they are carrying arms that you're short of. But there cannot be leadership if you cannot really control your arms. We saw that the same system destroyed Lebanon. In Lebanon too there are three armed forces: the Syrian, the Lebanese, and the Hizballah, so there is no central government, no central policy, and the Hizballah in vain claims that they forced out the Israeli force from Lebanon. The truth is they forced us in they did not force us out. If it [weren't] for the Hizballah and the other terrorist groups we would never have crossed the border. There is nothing for us to seek in Lebanon.

In spite of all the disappointments and difficulties, we are still trying very much to reach a cease-fire and as the British say, the taste of the pudding is in its eating. It's not a matter of signing a cease-fire, it's having a cease-fire. May I say that I believe that not only our side – but also Jordan and Egypt – are interested to lower the flames of war and danger, not to let it spread all over the place, and we are clearly partners to it. I think we have shown a serious readiness.

They said land for peace. Well, land is tangible, peace is airy. When it comes to the tangibles we gave back everything, when it comes to the air, there are some problems. So as you can see there are a lot of difficulties. We are passing through a very demanding corridor of politics and exchanges, of an emotional crisis of blame and accusations where the voice of peace is minor, and occasionally words may be as dangerous as bullets. We have to stop both the incitement and the fire. My real optimism is that I am convinced that sooner or later, and better sooner, all of us will recognize there is no alternative but to return to the table of negotiation, and part from the bloody battlefields that do not produce solutions.

## **Q&A**

**Rob Satloff, The Washington Institute:** [What are you looking for from the United States right now in this process, and looking back on the past, how should we approach negotiations in the future?]

**Peres:** About the United States I speak in Israel, so when I come to the United States I speak about Israel. Basically I believe the position of the United States against terror is one of the most important phenomena that may bring us back to the table of negotiations. My feeling, if I may say, is today in the United States terrorism is something that reminds [people] of what used to be Bolshevism or Communism – an un-American phenomenon, it's not only a crime it's a sin. There are no compromises about terror, because the same [Osama] Bin Laden can threaten every place, and every person. We went over from a world of enemies to a world of dangers – enemies are infantry, dangers are like missiles floating in the air without borders without identities. I believe that even if the Palestinians want to internationalize the conflict – which I don't know how it can be done – it's impossible to do it with the United States. So we appreciate our relationship with the United States, we would like it to be continued. When it comes to the negotiations themselves, we prefer them to be face to face with the United States serving as a facilitator, not a supreme mediator or supreme negotiator. I think we've learned from experience that we can achieve more [through] a direct dialogue between the parties and the United States serving a role of a bridge – builder, supporter, facilitator, but otherwise let us sit together and work out the compromises.

**George Hishmeh, *Jordan Times* and *Mideast Mirror*:** Why do you think it's necessary to expand the settlements when so many apartments are vacant according to Israeli sources?

**Peres:** The settlements are a living organism. You know it doesn't matter if a boy is born out of love or by an accident — the meaning of a boy is a boy, a girl a girl. This is a living organization. You have children, you have to build kindergartens, and unless we shall have an agreement that will call for a change, we cannot stop the natural growth. I know that the Arabs are worried we use natural growth as a cover for a political extension. My answer is that we ourselves introduced, in the guiding lines, the end of building new settlements, so we did it not under pressure but out of choice. We don't want to expand it, but we cannot prevent answering the needs. I visited once Iceland and the prime minister served us a beautiful dinner, and even more so an after-dinner speech. He started by saying, "We are the frozen people, you are the chosen people." I don't believe they are frozen people. People are growing and changing and you can't stop it.

**David Makovksy, *The Washington Institute*:** Should we read into this that you don't think a timeframe on final status would be helpful? And do the Palestinians need a "Palestinian Altalena"?

**Peres:** Now I don't suggest that anybody will shoot at anybody, but I think it is the task of the Palestinian leadership to bring all arms under one roof. If they can do it without bloodshed it's much better. I don't suggest bloodshed. I said in our case we were forced to do so.

We will start the negotiation without negating a final settlement, but with the first item on the agenda being the implementation of the existing agreements. From my own experience what I can say is that not everything can be decided. Many things must be matured. Things that couldn't have been done ten years ago are doable today, maybe things that [cannot be solved today can be solved in five years.] What I know is that every problem has a date, but every solution must wait for an age. If a girl at four wants to get married everybody will laugh; if the same girl at the age of twenty-four [wants to get married,] she is considered a very serious candidate for a match. So I think many things must be matured. I think some of the issues are not yet ready for a solution, and if you have a problem without a solution you don't have a problem. You have to [get] on the waiting list. You cannot force a solution ahead of time.

**Satloff:** What is necessary this time to get the signed agreements implemented, in a way they were not implemented last time?

**Peres:** First of all, I must admit we committed mistakes too. One of the mistakes was to put too much emphasis on the writing of the agreement and not enough on the implementation of it. This time we suggest a change — not to hang so much on the written letter but to really spend enough energy to realize what was agreed. I know that many people say the Oslo agreement is dead — it's not dead. The tragedy of the Oslo agreement is that it was not completed in the foreseeable time, and it was not completed because of the changes in government. At least one government was totally against the Oslo agreement and three years were wasted. Unfortunately, terror has helped to change the governments in Israel. I believe that without those changes maybe the Oslo agreement would be by now completed. Today we are halfway hanging in the air. It's very hard, for example, today to decide who is the sovereign, the real sovereign, in Gaza or the West Bank. I think it's a mistake.

**Marwan Muasher, *Ambassador of Jordan*:** Is the effort to demonize the Palestinians in the U.S. and undermine your partners in peace seen by the Israeli government as helpful? Does the Israeli government see an alternative to Mr. Arafat if the answer is in the affirmative?

**Peres:** The answer is clearly no. It's not for us to look for alternatives. Arafat was elected, he is our partner, and even if he commits mistakes, we know that partners can commit mistakes; even we can commit mistakes. We don't demonize the Palestinians, we demonize terror. We have nothing against the Palestinians, they are our neighbors, they will be our partners, they are like us, people that went through tragedies and suffering. May I say that what you

see from Jordan in Israel, we see from Israel in other countries: a great deal of demonization. When I came to Cairo, unfortunately, in the papers on the front was a very nice photo of myself dressed in a Nazi uniform with a swastika on my arm. I didn't take it as a compliment as a matter of fact. I would really like to see an end to the incitement and a change in the language: it's unnecessary, it's unfair, it's harmful. I'm not party to it.

**Harold Rhode, Department of Defense:** What makes you believe after all the experience you've had up until now that what you're advocating will work?

**Peres:** Some experiences worked. We have peace with Egypt, we have peace with Jordan, the Palestinians are the same people, they need it like us. It's true that this is an unprecedented situation. There was never before a Palestinian people. In a strange way in Oslo, Israel has helped in a way to create the Palestinian personality, the Palestinian state-in-being, the Palestinians were never in charge of the West Bank and Gaza. It's a process, a long one, a painful one, but I don't see an alternative. Stories run that a friend of Voltaire approached him and told him "Life is difficult." His answer was "Compared to what?" Compared to what?

**Wat Cluverius:** How do you view the prospect of the United States leaving the Multilateral Force Observers (MFO)?

**Peres:** I feel like yourself. It's too early I'm afraid.

**Barbara Slavin, USA Today:** Is Israel prepared to withdraw from Abu Dis to allow the Palestinians to create a state on what they already have control over?

**Peres:** Whatever is written and agreed should be implemented, provided it be done by the two sides. There is also a long list of things that the Palestinians have to do. If the two parties agree to implement, it will fly. I wouldn't like to go into all the details because it will complicate my life.

**Janine Zacharia, Jerusalem Post:** Who speaks for the Israeli government? Limor Livnat speaking here said the complete opposite, and the prime minister speaks very differently. Who should we look to for the message of the Israeli government?

**Peres:** We are a government which is extremely rich. I would recommend reading the guiding lines, not the individual declarations. What I quoted were the guiding lines, and I think both the prime minister and minister of defense criticized Mr. Arafat, but none of them said he's not a partner, and none of them say we want to see him fall. It's really very hard to speak in British understatement in the face of bombs and rifles and bullets. But there is a policy, and ministers are [entitled to speak their minds.]

**Satloff:** Why has the violence gone on so long?

**Peres:** I'm not sure that I have a good explanation. I can say partly because there are some dissident groups, and partly because the forces under Arafat are not disciplined. They themselves participate, some of them, in the shooting and killing occasionally without even the knowledge of Arafat and without bringing it to his attention. But the Palestinians must show a capacity for central control of discipline and of performance. Otherwise, they will pay, in my judgment a very heavy price in the eyes of world public opinion.

**David Schenker, The Washington Institute:** Is it true that an agreement was made between yourself and Yasir Arafat that he backed out of, leaving [Hosni] Mubarak in the lurch?

**Peres:** No. It's not true. What happened was I told the president we reached an understanding, not an agreement. The problem was I suggested that he [Mubarak] speak to the Israeli press and give a message of hope. I appreciate the fact he did it, but he spoke in Arabic and when it came to the translation — there were two, not one — one said "an agreement" the other said "an understanding." I remarked later on that there was a mistake in the translation but some papers wouldn't do me a favor and said there was a mistake by the president, which I regret very much. I clarified it and the incident is over.

**Mohammed Wahby, *al-Musawar*:** We need to hear more words like your own from the prime minister.

**Peres:** To be fair about the prime minister, I know that some foreign ministers that have visited Israel have referred to the fact that he suggested 42 percent of the land. They ask how come, and he answered very clearly this is not the end of the story. He has even said publicly that this proposed lengthy interim solution is not the end, it is the beginning. He explained that he drew this lesson from what happened in the past — dates were set and not met. Now it fits the Jewish tradition, you know, because the Swiss people introduced the watches, we introduced eternity, so for us a little bit more, a little bit less doesn't matter.

**Amos Perlmutter:** What is this negative attitude that is developing in the European Union, especially lead by France, to end the special relationship with Israel in terms of free trade? Is there anything in it?

**Peres:** I visited France three weeks ago and found no hostility either in my meeting with President [Jacques] Chirac who I've known for many years or Prime Minister [Lionel] Jospin who has been a personal friend of mine for a quarter of a century. I think Israel has a problem with the way things have been shown over the television. A real problem. A television shows a picture and doesn't tell the story. When you have a boy against a tank, everybody will be on the side of the boy. So we have a real problem and it's evident on French television and British television. But there is always a problem with what the French call *la petite difference*, you cannot expect the French to take American policies as their own. That's not only on this subject. As you know there are is a line of subjects on which the French feel they are entitled to have their independent policy. I wouldn't jump to conclusions even now. I went to France in happy days and on disappointing occasions, and I always felt there was a great deal of empathy for Israel among the French people.

**Satloff:** What is your message here in Washington about what you would like the United States to do to diffuse any possible escalation on the northern front?

**Peres:** To help Lebanon regain its independence and its territorial integrity. Today Lebanon does not exist in fact. You have not one Lebanon but three armed groups. Now, the Syrians have their deployment on Lebanese soil with a force 30,000 strong. At the beginning they entered because they said Israel was there, well we are out — they must feel extremely lonely. We fulfilled completely UN Resolution 425, according to the secretary-general. According to that resolution, the Lebanese army is supposed to redeploy itself alongside the border. The Syrians wouldn't let them, and by not letting them they permitted the Hizballah to position itself alongside the border and shoot at Israel. As I have said the Hizballah claims that they have expelled our army. They forget that they forced us to come in. We don't want to return. Prime Minister [Rafiq] Hariri comes here and explains his position as a result of his political weakness, but we cannot compensate for his weakness. If you want to have a country you have to take certain measures to run it. You cannot allow it to run wild — it's unforgivable. Lebanon was destroyed by the terrorists, and we pray to the Lord that Lebanon return to herself. There is nobody more interested in a united, independent, peaceful Lebanon more than Israel.

**Hillary Mann:** Can you please comment on what would be a constructive role for the UN in both the Israel–Palestinian situation and also along the northern border?

**Peres:** There are several issues that are on the agenda and I shall mention them briefly. In a matter of a week or even earlier, there shall be a gathering of the non-aligned nations in South Africa; I think there are 110 members. The impression is that the non-aligned group will become an alliance against Israel, and will destroy our respect for the United Nations, because there will be a group that automatically supports any anti-Israel resolution without Israel having a chance to defend itself. That's number one. I called it to the attention of the secretary-general who plans to participate at the conference to try and prevent them from doing it. It reminds me always of what Stephenson used to say about the famous lawyer who appeared before the jury. He said, "Your honor, the following are the conclusions

upon which I base the facts." We cannot be in front of such a jury.

There is also a conference on human rights, which is again an occasion to attack Israel. And I told the secretary-general that among other human rights, there is the right to remain alive, and we consider it a human right, surprisingly. Then there is a third issue, and that is an attempt on the part of the Palestinians, in my judgment mistakenly, to create an international force that will try to impose the Palestinian view upon Israel. There is no chance whatsoever. Peace and imposition do not go together. Peace is a result of agreement, not of impositions. Under the auspices of the United Nations, you cannot force anybody. Our [record] at the United Nations is not perfect as you know, our chance to win a case at the United Nations is extremely limited, practically non-existent. We respect the United Nations and would like that they play a role, but they have to play a role of bringing people together with great patience and tolerance. The UN has an army that doesn't fire, doesn't shoot, but they have a prestige which can be of great help. [We would also like their help] with the captured soldiers by the Hizballah, on our side of the border, against the United Nations resolution, and the secretary-general took a very clear position.

Hizballah is behaving with such a sort of cruelty which is unbelievable. We are not talking now about the exchange or release of the prisoners, but we are asking that the Red Cross go and have a look at them so that they will be able to tell the mothers and fathers and the family what happened to their children. They play on the nerves of the parents. [Hassan] Nasrallah is an extremely cruel person, and the fact that he speaks in the name of the Lord doesn't make him more accepted. I have much respect for Kofi Annan. I think he is an outstanding secretary-general. I don't criticize him personally. I think his performance at the Amman meeting was positive and I told him so. I think he can really play the role of a bridge, but not the role of force — he shouldn't. Those were the main points of our discussion.

We would like to become a contributing member of the United Nations, we don't want to remain just passive. But we won't remain the only subject of a group of interested nations, [called non-aligned] who wrongly make Israel their reason for union. Remember the non-aligned group was formed by Tito, and we can see the legacy of Tito in his own land; by Fidel Castro who has many admirers, I'm not sure you'll find many in this room; it was an organization supported by the Soviet Union. So when you look at the history of it, there is much to be desired.

*These remarks were transcribed by Michael Moskowitz. ❖*

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## RECOMMENDED

### BRIEF ANALYSIS

#### [Unpacking the UAE F-35 Negotiations](#)

Feb 15, 2022

◆  
Grant Rumley

(/policy-analysis/unpacking-uae-f-35-negotiations)



## [How to Make Russia Pay in Ukraine: Study Syria](#)

Feb 15, 2022



Anna Borshchevskaya

[\(/policy-analysis/how-make-russia-pay-ukraine-study-syria\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

## [Bennett's Bahrain Visit Further Invigorates Israel-Gulf Diplomacy](#)

Feb 14, 2022



Simon Henderson

[\(/policy-analysis/bennetts-bahrain-visit-further-invigorates-israel-gulf-diplomacy\)](#)

### REGIONS & COUNTRIES

[Israel \(/policy-analysis/israel\)](#)