

Middle Eastern Criticism of the Wye Agreement

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Brief Analysis

Some Middle East governments expressed satisfaction at the Wye agreement. For instance:

"Describing the Middle East peace process as a historical opportunity in order to protect peace and stability in the region, Turkey expresses gratification over the agreement which she believes in that it will overcome the deadlock in the peace process." ---Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem in Ankara Anatolia (10/24/98)

Others were more cautious:

"Let us wait and see. There have been so many agreements that were never enforced." ---Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in The New York Times(10/26/98)

"Everyone is afraid of the possibility that Israel will not honor the agreement." ---Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Moussa, quoted by the Middle East News Agency (10/26/98)

"The main issue is that the Israeli settlement activity continues. It is ironic that the Palestinians, not the Israelis, are the party that will begin the implementation . . . So Israel is once again putting the Palestinians to the test, and it will find enough excuses, especially with regard to security issues, not to implement the agreement." ---Hanan Ashrawi, former member of the Palestinian National Council, in an interview with Paris Radio Monte Carlo (10/26/98)

But there were also many Middle Eastern critics of the accords. What follows is a sample of such criticism:

"There's something problematic in seeing Netanyahu, Sharon, and Arafat sitting together to continue the Oslo Agreement . . . Despite the murder, Rabin's legacy continues . . . For no good reason, Israel lost 18 months in which the spirit of the process was eradicated, trust between the sides was lost, and Israel wasted international and economic assets . . . The Likud has given up the idea of the Greater Land of Israel, and adopted the positions of the Labor Party. But it has failed in their implementation." ---Ehud Barak, Israeli Labor Party leader, as quoted in Haaretz (10/25/98)

Israeli Critics:

"[The Labor Party ought to find a] middle-of- the-road solution. So long as Netanyahu appears to be implementing his deal, we should support him. If it takes three months, then we ought to offer him a safety net for that length of time. But we should not join his coalition . . . We should go to elections." ---Yossi Beilin, Israeli Labor Party MK, as quoted in The Jerusalem Post (10/25/98)

"Why did our delegation at Wye behave like a nation defeated, an army beaten in war? Haven't we won all the wars, paid dearly in blood and bereavement? The answer: we never lost on any physical battlefield, but we are defeated morally: Arafat need not fight for a Palestinian state. We have handed it to him on a silver platter." ---Editorial by Elyakim Ha'etzni in the Israeli Arutz7 News, Internet Edition, an independent radio station with right-wing leanings (10/27/98)

"Many things in this agreement depend on President Clinton's word. It is a very, very problematic word, as any newspaper reader knows. Those who believe him should remember that this President very recently admitted that

his word cannot be taken very seriously. This agreement is a failure. Even a glaring failure. We are sure to hear a lot of verbiage from Netanyahu in the coming days on his colossal achievements. The problem is that, only 10 days ago, Netanyahu promised us utterly different achievements. And there is only one explanation for this gap between Netanyahu's promises and their implementation: Netanyahu surrendered, Netanyahu failed." ---From an editorial in the Israeli newspaper Hatzofe, which is affiliated with the National Religious Party (10/25/98)

Palestinian Critics:

"From the Palestinians' point of view, the peace process has definitely failed . . . Basically, the talks were only about Hamas. Previously, the slogan was 'land for peace', now it is 'security for peace', and soon it will be 'Sheikh Yasin's head for peace'." ---Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, spiritual leader of Hamas, in an interview with Der Spiegel (10/27/98)

[The Wye River Memorandum] means the declaration of a bloody war by the Authority, in accordance with a specific timetable, against Hamas and all Palestinian forces of resistance, rejection, and steadfastness . . . The memorandum uses the Authority as a subservient tool to strike at its own people, arrest and liquidate the resistance men, and destroy the infrastructure not only of Hamas, but also of the whole Palestinian people." ---Khalid Mish'al, chief of the Hamas Political Movement, to the Amman-based Al-Majd (10/26/98)

Other Middle Eastern Critics:

"We believe the recent decision was against the interests of the Palestinian people as well as against the independent Arab nations and that such agreements will not bring peace to the region . . . We will not allow the enemies to trample on the legitimate rights of those Muslim nations making endeavors for safeguarding their independence and rights and those of the Palestinian nation" ---Iranian President Muhammad Khatami, commenting on the Wye River Memorandum, Islamic Republic News Agency (25/10/98)

"Everybody is convinced that it is impossible to achieve peace with Netanyahu still in the helm of power in Israel. Therefore, the continuation of negotiations with Netanyahu by any Arab party, no matter what the excuse, will only harm the interests of this party in particular and the interests and security of the Arab nation in general." From the Syrian government-owned Al-Bath (10/23/98)

"The previous and subsequent approaches of settlement will lead to the fragmentation of the Palestine question and to turning it into technical details, instead of reinforcing its pan-Arab and national stands . . . We should adopt means and methods to liberate man and land based on the comprehensive pan-Arab principles of liberation. The suspect plans resulting from the political settlement have pushed Palestine and the Arab- Zionist conflict toward serious turning points. The accords that have been signed since Oslo and Camp David have turned the Palestine question from a central cause in the Arabs' national and pan-Arab struggle, as well as the holy places in Jerusalem, into deals and compromises on the fate of the Palestinian people and the Arab nation. This has weakened comprehensive Arab efforts and consequently, the nation's pan-Arab objective of liberation. ---Statement by the Iraqi National Assembly, in the Baghdad Republic of Iraq Radio Network (10/26/98)

"This agreement aims to provoke a Palestinian civil war to benefit the Zionist enemy. [It] accomplished nothing for the Palestinians [and turned] the Palestinian police [into] an instrument of repression." ---Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, as quoted in The Washington Times (10/28/98)

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