

The Israeli Concept of 'Peace'

The daily news is filled with the ongoing efforts of the US and Israeli governments to find a settlement to the Middle East conflict, which would cement imperialist-Zionist hegemony. More dangerous, the Palestinian and Arab right are showing willingness to entertain such solutions. We therefore find it highly relevant to focus on what the Zionist leadership means when it speaks of peace. To this end, we print a translation of a study published in «Al Ard» magazine, vol. 13, no. 5, Nov. 21, 1985.

The Israeli coalition government's idea of the settlement

Before going into the subject of the present Israeli government's conditions for negotiations, a few matters must be clarified in order to avoid oversimplification. At no time has 'Israel' specified clear, direct conditions for negotiations or peace with any party involved in the Middle East conflict. Nor has it defined or substantiated its position, or declared what it is ready to agree upon before sitting down at the negotiation table. Instead 'Israel' makes unspecified statements aimed at drawing other parties to the negotiating table, and then accuses them of rejecting peace if they do not accept negotiations under such ambiguous terms.

The established yet undeclared Zionist conditions are: (a) refusal to withdraw from any part of the occupied Arab land before beginning direct negotiations; (b) bilateral (separate) negotiations; and (c) negotiations with the Israelis enjoying unmatched military superiority. These three points are the fundamentals of the Israeli stand on negotiations, in harmony with how 'Israel' understands peace. This particular kind of 'peace' is partial and interim. Comprehensive peace remains a promise on the horizon brandished verbally, but never fulfilled. Moreover, withdrawal will not precede normalization of relations. This means that 'Israel' demands special privileges as compared to the other parties concerned in any settlement. It reserves the right to veto any measure it considers harmful to its particular idea of peace.

Any negotiations must be based on prior recognition of «Israel's right to exist within secure borders.» This basically means that 'Israel' claims the right to cultural and material invasion of the Arab country concerned, so as to guarantee both the normalization process and secure borders. The Israeli idea of peace, and the meaning of these undefined conditions, emerged clearly during the Camp David negotiations and later during the Lebanese-Israeli negotiations which resulted in the abrogated May 17th agreement. The Israeli idea of peace and negotiations stems from the nature of the Zionist state which was established as a colonial project struggling for land, disregarding the native inhabitants and using force to impose itself in the region. These three aspects determine the direction and activities which proceed from the Israeli understanding of peace.

The Israeli understanding of peace also stems from (a) the nature of 'Israel' as an instrument of war and aggression for imperialism, in line with the latter's needs for steering the region according to its interests and strategy; (b) the fact that a just, comprehensive peace basically contradicts Zionist ideology which is based on discrimination and looking down on others, and expansion at the expense of others in order to achieve «greater Israel» supposedly based on «the Jews' historical rights.»

'Israel' brandishes its well-known *no's* in the face of anyone who makes the mistake of heading towards negotiations:

(1) no return to the borders of 1967; (2) no redivision of Jerusalem or relinquishing it as the «eternal capital of the state of Israel»; (3) no to a Palestinian state, the PLO or any form which stresses the Palestinian identity; (4) no to comprehensive negotiations where all parties concerned are represented; (5) no to negotiating within an international framework with each party directly represented on its own; ('Israel', however, welcomes verbal support from any international institutions, and US participation as an observer or assistant in the negotiations); and (6) no to Soviet participation in negotiations.

These conditions are not exclusive to the present coalition government. They have been the stand of all Israeli governments since June 1967. Some of these conditions, such as direct, separate negotiations with each party, have been the demand of Israeli governments before 1967. 'Israel' has refused a Palestinian state since its founding.

Negotiations with Jordan

The policy of the present Israeli coalition government aims at dragging Jordan into direct negotiations 'without preconditions'. Despite all their own preconditions, the Israelis demand that the other party sets none. The Israeli government, however, claims that it is ready to negotiate with King Hussein or any other Jordanian official at any time and place.

Still, the Israeli conditions always come to the fore when Israeli leaders speak of negotiations. This will become clear when the position of this government on negotiating with Jordan is elaborated. The tenth clause of the basic document, which outlines the policy to be followed by the coalition government, states the following: «Israel calls on Jordan to carry out peace discussions. The Israeli government will make proposals during these talks and discuss the Jordanian proposals.»¹ This clause implies no preconditions, but the preceding clause states: «The government will continue to pursue the peace process in accordance with the framework for peace in the Middle East as agreed upon in Camp David. It will also resume negotiations towards establishing autonomy». This means that the Camp David framework is the basic condition for any negotiations, and that these will result in nothing more than «autonomy for the residents.» Thus, any negotiations with Jordan are based on the Israeli government's commitment to the Camp David accords.

The 12th clause of the government document states: «Israel objects to the establishment of a Palestinian state in Gaza and the region between Jordan and Israel...» This means that any discussion of a Palestinian state is out of the question. The 6th clause states: «The whole of Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Israel. It is one city under Israeli sovereignty and it is impossible to divide it.» This means that the question of Jerusalem is not up for discussion. The 13th clause states: «Israel will not negotiate with the PLO» and «Arabs from Judea