

NEWS RELEASE

Zionist Organization of America

Jacob & Libby Goodman ZOA House, 4 East 34th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016

(212) 481-1500 Fax: (212) 481-1515 email @ zoa.org www . zoa . org

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Contact Morton A. Klein at: 917-974-8795 or 212-481-1500

Attn: NEWS EDITOR

ZOA EVENT ON CAPITOL HILL; PROF. MARTIN SHERMAN

REEVALUATES THE “PEACE PROCESS”

Recently, the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), working with **Congressman Doug Lamborn (R-CO)**, hosted **Dr. Martin Sherman** for a Capitol Hill briefing reevaluating the Arab-Israel “Peace Process.”

Congressman Lamborn and dozens of congressional staff from various House and Senate offices were in attendance.

Dr. Martin Sherman, currently the Visiting Israeli Shusterman Scholar at the University of Southern California and the Hebrew Union College, delivered a robust and detailed power-point presentation which argued that the current international approach to resolving the Middle East conflict is simply impossible. Dr. Sherman’s compelling talk cited a mountain of evidence and quoted various Arab leaders and Left-leaning Israeli politicians to demonstrate that the unworkable nature of the current approach to the conflict has actually been widely recognized by Arab leaders and by left-leaning Israeli politicians, many of whom who still advocate the policies that have led to the current

dangerous morass. Indeed, many of these quotes help illustrate that the proponents of the process once clearly understood that Israel cannot afford to live with a hostile entity established in Judea and Samaria, and that many of the Arab leaders who have been involved in various stages of the conflict and of the “peace process” see Palestinian nationalist aspirations as merely a tactical maneuver designed to lead to the destruction of the Jewish State of Israel.

As Dr. Sherman put it:

“A dispassionate evaluation of the events of the past two decades inexorably compels one toward an increasingly evident conclusion: The Palestinians seem far more focused on annulling Jewish political independence than attaining Palestinian political independence, far more committed to deconstruction of the Jewish state than to construction of a Palestinian one.

“In spite of almost universal international endorsement of their claims, highly supportive international media coverage, decades of super power patronage, enormous international financial aid, highly accommodative Israeli regimes which not only acknowledged but identified with their claims...“the Palestinians have failed miserably in establishing any semblance of a stable, productive self-governing society or producing any capable, credible, and competent leadership likely to advance them along the path towards that goal.” Indeed, they have, instead, the “corrupt kleptocracy” of Fatah, the “tyrannical theocracy” of Hamas and the “chronic chaos” of the Palestinian Authority.

“In this sense, the Palestinians by their manifest inability to achieve statehood despite the highly conducive conditions that prevailed in their favor, the Palestinians appear to have failed the “test of History”-- thereby casting severe doubt as to whether they are worthy of such statehood.

“But even if one is convinced that the Palestinians are undeserving of a state, the question still remains as to whether they are genuinely desirous of one. In this regard, there are two competing -- indeed antithetical -- hypotheses by which to explain the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the motivations behind it. According to the first of these hypotheses, the fuel of the conflict is the lack of Palestinian self-determination, and all that the Palestinians aspire to is the establishment of their own state. There is however an alternative explanation, whereby the fuel of the conflict is not the lack of Palestinian self-determination but the existence of Jewish self-determination, and that as long as Jewish self-determination persists, so will the conflict. Moreover, according to this alternative explanation, the goal of the Palestinians is not to establish a state for themselves but to dismantle a state for others -- the Jews.

“Accordingly, further pursuit of a Palestinian state is likely to prove both futile and detrimental. For as past precedents strongly suggest, it will advance neither peace nor prosperity, but only serve as a platform for further violence against Israel.”

Further, Dr. Sherman demonstrated the importance of the geographic dimension “which is a crucial element in the national power of any state and comprises two components: territorial size and topographical structure. These factors determine to a large — albeit not exclusive — degree, the strategic vulnerability of a country” or, in other words, “the ease with which vital strategic targets within its borders can be struck.”

“Given Israel’s minuscule territorial dimensions, this is a consideration that assumes acutely critical importance – and is one which needs to be adequately addressed before any responsible Israeli government can contemplate relinquishing control of Judea and Samaria (the “West Bank”) to a Palestinian regime. For from the slopes of limestone hills that rise just beyond 1967 frontier and comprise much of the territory designated for the envisioned Palestinian state, all of the following objectives will be within easy range of weapons being used today against Israel from territories previously relinquished to Palestinian rule: Major airfields (civilian and military) including the country’s only international airport; Major sea ports and naval bases; Vital infrastructure installations (power transmission, water systems, and communication networks); Main land transport routes (road and rail); Principal power plants; The national parliament and most government ministries; Crucial centers of civilian administration and military command; and 80% of the civilian population and of the commercial activity in the country.”

Through such reasoned analysis, geographical and topographical maps and simple common sense, Dr. Sherman demonstrated that the “retention of defensible borders by Israel implies that a Palestinian state is untenable,” because Israel must hold the high ground in the West Bank and areas along the Jordan River to maintain its basic security and defensive capabilities. Yet the “establishment of a tenable Palestinian state implies indefensible borders for Israel.” So simply from a basic security perspective, the two-state solution is unworkable: “...the structure of the bargain required to be struck between [Israel] and the Arabs seems inherently irresolvable. For whatever appears to be even minimally adequate...for Israel, seems to be totally inadequate... for the Arabs.

“Thus, both political prudence and intellectual integrity inevitably militate toward the distinctly politically incorrect conclusion that establishment of a Palestinian state must be removed from the international agenda as an objective that is either desirable or feasible — and certainly as an objective that can be reconciled with long-term survival of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people.

“However, even if the Palestinians’ spurious political demands for statehood are removed from the discourse, the grim realities of the Palestinians’ humanitarian predicament remain. This is the issue that Israel and the international community should focus on.”

In a serious effort to shift the analytical and policy framework, Dr. Sherman outlined a solution to the current stalemate that is beyond the usual terms of discourse in the region. As Dr. Sherman [outlined it](#):

“To be comprehensive it would need to entail three constituent elements, all eminently libertarian. Two involve eliminating discriminatory practices against the Palestinians (a) as refugees and (b) as residents in Arab countries. The third involves facilitating free choice for individual Palestinian breadwinners to determine their own and their families’ future.

“...the proposal begins with the refugee issue and the body responsible for dealing with it, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). While a detailed account of the pernicious and obstructive role UNRWA plays is beyond the possible scope of this [talk], I must stress that it is a highly anomalous organization that perpetuates a culture of Palestinian dependency and the unrealistic narrative of “return.” All the refugees on the face of the globe are under the auspices of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) — except for the Palestinians. For them a unique separate institution exists — UNRWA. Unlike the UNHCR, UNRWA’s definition of refugees includes migrant and temporary workers who were resident in Mandatory Palestine for less than two years and their multigenerational descendants. The far-reaching significance of this can be condensed into the remarkable fact that if the universally accepted UNHCR criteria for refugees were applied to the Palestinian case, the number of “refugees” would shrink from close to 5 million to around 200,000. These figures starkly illustrate that both the scale and the durability of the Palestinian refugee problem is fueled by the distorted parameters of its definition. There is growing consensus that without abolishing UNRWA and folding its operations into UNHCR, no way out of the Palestinian-Israeli impasse is possible.

“Folding UNRWA into UNHCR would of course have significant ramifications for large Palestinian populations living in the Arab countries, who would no longer receive the anomalous handouts paid to them. This leads to the second element of the proposal: the grave ethnic discrimination against the Palestinians residing in the Arab world, where Palestinians have severe restrictions imposed on their freedom of movement, employment opportunities and property ownership. But most significantly, they are denied citizenship in the countries where they have lived for decades. Palestinians living in these Arab countries overwhelmingly desire this citizenship — as numerous opinion surveys indicate. Accordingly, with the abolition of UNRWA and the accompanying changes in eligibility for refugee aid, a diplomatic drive must be mounted to pressure Arab governments to end their ethnic discrimination against the Palestinians; to desist from perpetuating their stateless status and allow them to acquire citizenship in countries where they have resided for decades.

“This brings us to the third and final element of the proposal: Allowing individual Palestinians under Israeli administration to exercise free will in determining their destiny. While the first two elements of the proposed solution are directed toward easing the plight of the Palestinians in the Arab world, this measure is aimed at those inside Israeli-administered areas.

“In essence, it involves enabling individual Palestinians free choice in charting their future and that of their families. These efforts should focus on two major elements:

“(a) Generous monetary compensation to effect the relocation and rehabilitation of the Palestinian residents in territories across the 1967 “Green Line,” elsewhere in the world, presumably predominantly — but not necessarily exclusively — in Arab/Muslim countries.

“(b) “Atomization” of the implementation by making the offer of compensation and relocation directly to the heads of families and not through any Palestinian organization that may have a vested interest in foiling the scheme.

“Although some may raise a skeptical eyebrow as to the proposal’s acceptability to the Palestinians and its economic feasibility, two points should be underscored.

“Firstly, substantial statistical data indicate that a large portion of the Palestinian population would enthusiastically embrace such a measure. According to a 2004 poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion, only 15 percent would refuse any financial offer that allows them to seek a better life elsewhere, while over 70 percent would accept it. Indeed, given the choices of a life either under the rigors of Israeli control or worse, under the regressive regime that the Palestinians have hitherto provided, who could blame them?

“As for the overall economic cost, the proposed plan would be comparable to any alternative under discussion — establishing a new state, developing its infrastructure and presumably absorbing a large portion of the Palestinian Diaspora within its constricted frontiers.

“Finally, it should be remembered that for the prospective host nations, this scheme has a distinct economic upside. Given the scale of the envisioned compensation, the Palestinian immigrants would not be arriving as destitute refugees, but as relatively wealthy families in terms of average world GNP per capita. Their absorption would entail significant capital inflow into the host economies — typically around half a billion dollars for the absorption of every 2,000 to 3,000 family units.

“The time has come for imaginative new initiatives to defuse one of the world’s most volatile problems for which remedies hitherto attempted proved sadly inappropriate. Accordingly, there seems ample reason to seriously address an alternative proposal, which at least, prima facia, will:

“Defuse the Palestinian humanitarian predicament

“Inject billions of dollars of funds into the economies of host nations

“Ensure the continued survival of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people

“Israel, the Palestinians and the international community can ill afford to dismiss it without a serious debate of its potential payoffs as well as its possible pitfalls.”

Joshua London, Co-Director of Government Relations for the ZOA, said: “Given the hectic and dynamic schedule of congressional activity, the interest and turnout from folks on the Hill was good. Dr. Sherman’s detailed and methodical approach helps to highlight and underscore several of ZOA’s messages to policy makers and legislators. For instance, given the current unworkable approach, throwing more money and resources at this problem only serves to harm U.S. policy goals and interests, as well as that of our strongest ally in the region. U.S. money and resources are being lavished on the Palestinian Authority (PA) and on UNRWA in total disregard for the PA’s record of violence, incitement to violence and murder, terrorism and terror facilitation, and in total disregard to UNRWA’s thoroughly malicious role in perpetuating conflict, incitement, hatred and the Palestinian’s violent, irredentist ideologies. As Dr. Sherman makes very clear, any negotiated, diplomatic accord that would supposedly end the conflict, would almost immediately run aground against the deeply entrenched UNRWA administered and exacerbated refugee population of nearly 5 million people determined to win the conflict, not some mid-ground negotiated settlement. Of course, any such final status negotiation would have had to be carried out without any effort to take seriously the dismal record of the Palestinian Authority in keeping to any of its previous and current accords and peace commitments.”

Daniel Pollak also Co-Director of Government Relations, said: “Dr. Sherman’s remarks were very well received by the foreign policy professionals in attendance. Many seemed particularly struck by the emphasis on humanitarian treatment of Palestinian populations in Arab countries. We are used to hearing demands for action from Israel on civil rights issues, but it is remarkable how infrequently the issue of basic human dignity of refugees in Lebanon and Jordan surface. We have always known these individuals have been used as pawns by the Arab regimes for generations now, but it is refreshing to see a proposal to make their plight the centerpiece of a positive proposal to move the cause of peace forward. One of the questions we get most often is to explain what options there are for peace if we do not move towards the so-called ‘two-state solution.’ The real solution is the eventual ending of Arab hostility to the idea of a Jewish State in the region. Until that happens, Dr. Sherman’s ideas show a possible path to improving the lives of refugees throughout the region”

ZOA National President Morton A. Klein said: “Dr. Sherman reminds Congress at this critical moment that any solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict must have as its core Arab acceptance of a Jewish State in the Middle East. This conflict is not about territory, and it is not about the political rights of Arabs. As Dr. Sherman proves over and over again, it is about Arab rejection

of a Jewish country anywhere in the region. Any American or International peace effort which does not recognize this fact has no chance of success. The record of failure of every initiative based on the Oslo process bears testimony to the truth- there has been no progress at getting the Arab side to stop incitement and hatred in their schools, youth movements, sports teams, newspapers, TV and public statements by officials. "

"The ZOA has long maintained that Mahmoud Abbas, the PA that he heads and the Fatah party that controls it and which he co-founded, are unreconstructed supporters of terrorism and not genuine moderates and peace makers. In fact, it is incumbent upon all civilized people to call Abbas and Fayyad as evil leaders of an evil regime. They have not arrested and incarcerated terrorists, as required by numerous agreements, but have instead glorified them as martyrs."

"Given this shocking record, we renew our long-standing call for the Obama Administration to desist from ignoring the incitement to hatred and murder within the PA and to insist in talks with Abbas and other PA officials that the PA takes immediate action to comprehensively end this glorification of terror. Only when Palestinians reject the idea that it is a religious and national duty to murder Jews and to celebrate those among them who act on this instruction will there be any prospect of peace."