

The Text of the Arab Peace Initiative

The API consists of seven points, and is divided primarily into Arab and Israeli obligations.

The Arab Peace Initiative (The Beirut Declaration)

The Council of the League of Arab States at the Summit Level, at its 14th Ordinary Session,

- Reaffirms the resolution taken in June 1996 at the Cairo extraordinary Arab summit that a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East is the strategic option of the Arab countries, to be achieved in accordance with international legality, and which would require a comparable commitment on the part of the Israeli government.
- Having listened to the statement made by his royal highness Prince Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz, the crown prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in which his highness presented his initiative, calling for full Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied since June 1967, in implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, reaffirmed by the Madrid Conference of 1991, and the land for peace principle, and Israel's acceptance of an independent Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in return for the establishment of normal relations in the context of a comprehensive peace with Israel.

[The establishment of “normal relations” (*‘alaqat tabi‘iyya*), although not as strong as “normalization” or the “full normalization” of Crown Prince Abdullah’s original initiative, marks significant progress over earlier Arab League formulations, such as Fez and particularly Khartoum of 1967, which famously announced “no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it.”]

- Emanating from the conviction of the Arab countries that a military solution to the conflict will not achieve peace or provide security for the parties, the council:

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1. Requests Israel to reconsider its policies and declare that a just peace is its strategic option as well.
2. Further calls upon Israel to affirm:

- a. Full Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied since 1967, including the Syrian Golan Heights to the lines of June 4, 1967, as well as the remaining occupied Lebanese territories in the south of Lebanon.

[This formulation is at odds with Resolution 242, which calls for withdrawal from territories, not all the territories. By stipulating that the withdrawal on the Golan must be to the lines of June 4, 1967, the API rejected the international border, which had placed the entire Sea of Galilee in Israeli hands, and effectively placed the Syrians on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Israel's main water source. Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 was certified by the UN as a withdrawal to the international border.²⁸]

- b. Achievement of a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194.

[This resolution is commonly interpreted by the Arabs to enshrine a Palestinian "right of return" to the homes from which they left or were expelled following the Arabs' rejection of the 1947 UN partition of Palestine into two states (UNGA Resolution 181). Israel has always rejected Resolution 194 in principle, since it would undermine Israel's Jewish identity and, eventually, combined with an Arab Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, lead to two Palestinian states, not a Jewish and a Palestinian one. In effect, two states for one people, not two states for two peoples. However, ostensibly, by stipulating that the solution to the refugee problem would be "agreed upon," Israel might have some kind of input into the nature of the refugee solution. Yet even so, this stipulation is rendered inoperable by the stipulations on refugee resettlement in section 3(a).]

- c. The acceptance of the establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian territories occupied since the 4th

of June 1967 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

3. Consequently, the Arab countries affirm the following:

- a. Consider the Arab-Israeli conflict ended, and enter into a peace agreement with Israel, and provide security for all the states of the region.

[This is the first time the Arab states, as a collective, have stated that pursuant to Israel fulfilling its obligations according to the API, they would consider the Arab-Israeli conflict to have ended, without further demands.²⁹ Moreover, they promise to provide security for all the states in the region, which includes Israel.]

- b. Establish normal relations with Israel in the context of this comprehensive peace.

[Again, while short of Abdullah's original "full normalization," "normal relations" represents significant progress over past resolutions. In Arabic, the term normalization (*tatbi'*) carries with it a connotation of training or house-breaking animals, and in classical Arabic also "filth" or "infection."³⁰]

4. Assures the rejection of all forms of Palestinian patriation which conflict with the special circumstances of the Arab host countries.

[If there is a deal-killer in the API, it is this section. If the Arab countries can reject "patriation" (Arabic *tawtin* – read resettlement, but the official translation is patriation) of refugees, then the refugees would have nowhere to go but Israel. Israel, of course, would not agree to this, and therefore this article renders any agreement on the refugees as stipulated in section 2(b) a logical impossibility. Muasher himself realized that the inclusion of this clause would make it very difficult for Israel to accept the API.³¹ The Final Statement which accompanied the API was even stronger on the refugee issue, explicitly demanding all of the Palestinians' rights, including "guaranteeing the right of return (*ta'min haqq al-'awda*) for the Palestinian refugees on the basis of the resolutions of international legitimacy and the principles of international law including General

Assembly Resolution 194,” and rejecting any solutions that involve “reselling [of the Palestinians] outside of their homes (*tatwinihim kharij diyarihim*).”

5. Calls upon the government of Israel and all Israelis to accept this initiative in order to safeguard the prospects for peace and stop the further shedding of blood, enabling the Arab countries and Israel to live in peace and good neighborliness and provide future generations with security, stability, and prosperity.

[As Crown Prince Abdullah did in his speech at the summit, this article appeals for peace directly to the Israeli people, and promises them a good future together with the Arab countries.]

6. Invites the international community and all countries and organizations to support this initiative.

7. Requests the chairman of the summit to form a special committee composed of some of its concerned member states and the secretary general of the League of Arab States to pursue the necessary contacts to gain support for this initiative at all levels, particularly from the United Nations, the Security Council, the United States of America, the Russian Federation, the Muslim states and the European Union.

