

Palestinians Have Never Been Offered a Viable, Independent State

Did Palestinians refuse a "generous offer" for peace by Israel? Does Israel now have "no peace partner" with whom to negotiate? Maps and eyewitness testimony prove that there was no generous offer in 2000 when Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat negotiated terms of a peace agreement at Camp David. The talks failed because Barak offered a vague version of a non-contiguous state on only 61% of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Nonetheless, the Palestinians remain willing to negotiate.

Barak's "offer" at Camp David: Neither generous, nor an offer.

West Bank Final Status Map



Proposed by Israel, May 2000
(Foundation for Middle East Peace)

◆ **The actual proposal only amounted to 61% of the occupied territories, divided into four separate areas:** Ehud Barak refused to use maps at Camp David. The map Barak published just before the Camp David talks, however, proposed three completely separate enclaves (see dark areas) for Palestinians in the West Bank and one more in Gaza. "Strategic roads" (for Israeli use only) dividing these areas would remain under Israeli control. This geographic separation of Palestine into four sections would make a functional state unlikely: trade and business; work and school; family, friends, religious sites, and hospitals would all be separated.

◆ **Continued Israeli control of Jordan Valley & all border areas:** Israel proposed maintaining long-term "temporary" control of the Jordan Valley and other territory (see striped areas) comprising over 10% of the Occupied Territories. Israel proposed maintaining complete control of all borders, so Palestinians would always have to negotiate trade with Jordan, Egypt or other countries through Israel. *"This means, then, that if Israel annexes now 10 percent of the land, 'leaving the Palestinian state with 90 percent of the West Bank', 40 percent of their 'state' are areas owned and fully controlled by Israel - areas in which they are not allowed to build, settle, do agriculture, and, in the case of the large military areas in the Jordan valley, they are not even allowed to pass there."* (Tanya Reinhart, Israeli scholar and journalist, 12/6/2000)

◆ **Large settlement areas, including East Jerusalem, retained by Israel:** Large areas illegally settled by Israelis would also have remained under permanent control of Israel (light areas). This would include 250 square kilometers of land in or adjacent to East Jerusalem, illegally annexed in 1967, which has been requisitioned as land for Israeli settlements. Under Barak's plan, only a few small villages and neighborhoods of East Jerusalem would have been left under Palestinian control, cutting off the Palestinian state from most of East Jerusalem, its main commercial and religious center.

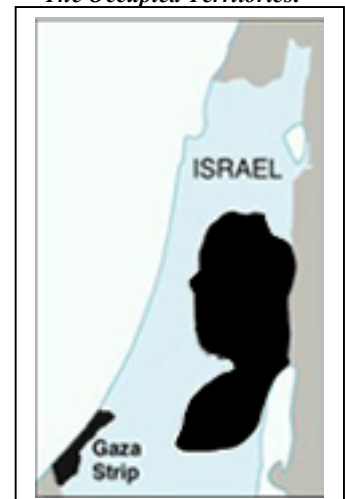
◆ **No relief for refugees:** The fate of the 4-6 million Palestinian refugees from 1948 and 1967 -- half of all Palestinians -- was discussed only in the vaguest way.

The Palestinian generous offer: The Occupied Territories, composed of Gaza and the West Bank, constitute only 22% of historic Palestine. Under the 1993 Oslo Agreement, the Palestinians recognized Israeli sovereignty over 78% of what had been Palestine during the British Mandate. *This was their generous offer.* To give up more land without the exchange of a corresponding amount of territory would have been neither reasonable nor just.

"The final and largely unnoticed consequence of Barak's approach is that, strictly speaking, there never was an Israeli offer. ...the Israelis always stopped one, if not several, steps short of a proposal."

--Robert Malley, Hussein Agha, special assistants to President Clinton and participants in Camp David talks, July 2000. New York Review of Books, Aug. 9, 2001 "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors"

The Occupied Territories:



22% of historic Palestine

Obstacles to Trust: Ongoing Land Confiscation & Settlements

As the Palestinians considered Barak's proposal at Camp David, there were other factors influencing their receptivity. Palestinian trust in Israeli intentions was undermined almost from the beginning of the Oslo Agreement.

- Illegal settlements were continuously expanded, violating conditions of the Oslo Agreement that called for dismantling of some settlements. When Oslo was signed in 1993, there were approximately 200,000 settlers in the Occupied Territories, including East Jerusalem. During the Oslo period that figure doubled. During Barak's term alone (1999-2001), 22,000 settlers moved onto Palestinian land. Expansion of settlements -- often excused as "natural growth" -- led to a 52% increase in Israeli housing units in the Territories. Meanwhile, most Palestinians were still being denied permits to build homes.
- Before the Camp David conference, Barak consistently failed to implement confidence-building measures that would have provided a foundation of trust. He reneged on the agreement built into Oslo to carry out further phases of military withdrawals from most of the Occupied Territories. Just before Camp David he broke a promise to return three villages near Jerusalem to Palestinian hands. Bypass roads proliferated, and construction of new housing for settlers continued even during the Camp David negotiations.

Barak's offer seemed to perpetuate military occupation. After seven years of Oslo, Palestinian land was ever more divided by settlements and bypass roads; checkpoints and repression had increased; freedom of movement was seriously curtailed; and the Palestinians' living standard had dropped drastically. Barak's actions and Camp David proposals seemed to be a "repackaging" of the military occupation.

“...throughout the negotiation, Barak expanded the settlements and the by-pass roads at a frantic pace. To this the Palestinians response was: "While you are arguing with us about how to divide the pizza, you are eating it."

-- Uri Avnery, leader of the Israeli peace group Gush Shalom September 15, 2001 "The Day Barak's Bubble Burst"

Palestinians continued to negotiate after Camp David: Contrary to popular myth, the Palestinians continued to negotiate with Israelis after Camp David. As both Clinton's and Barak's terms neared their end, official negotiations resumed in January, 2001 at the Egyptian town of Taba. In spite of the fact that by then the second Intifada was in full swing, and the Palestinians were suffering harsh repression at the hands of the Israeli military, the will to negotiate still existed on both sides.

At Taba, there were significant steps towards an agreement. The two parties inched closer in the amount of land they were willing to swap. The Palestinians were to be granted sovereignty over the Islamic shrines of Jerusalem, and Israel gave up its demand to patrol the Jordan Valley. Israeli negotiators conceded some territory around settlements, and relinquished control of bypass roads. Palestinians accepted the annexation of settlement blocs within the Territories, as well as 11 Israeli settler neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. They were open to Israeli control of the Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall in the Old City of East Jerusalem. For the first time, detailed discussion on refugee return began.

Barak ended Taba negotiations: Because the proposals introduced at Taba were never published, it is difficult to know just how close the two parties came to an agreement. In the end, Barak ended negotiations, promising to resume them after the elections. But he was defeated, and the Oslo process died with Ariel Sharon's inauguration.

Since early 2001, Barak has proclaimed that Arafat refused his "generous offer," and thus the Israelis have had no one with whom to negotiate. The facts of the negotiating process show otherwise, but with his statements, Barak has helped to legitimize Sharon's escalation of force and repression against the Palestinian people, taking both Israelis and Palestinians ever further from an end to occupation and a beginning of peace, justice, and security for all.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, read: <http://www.gush-shalom.org/archives/offers.doc>
www.nybooks.com/articles/14380 <http://www.tau.ac.il/~reinhardt/political/PeaceThatKills.html>

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