

City of Ibrahim

It seems very clear that there will not be a solution for Palestinians living both inside and outside the land of Judea and Samaria anytime soon. Unless Israel is forced by the international community to give up settlements and withdraw to its pre 1967 borders, as per UN Security Council Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967, the cycle of Palestinian protest and violence against occupation will continue. The following is submitted as an alternative to explore.

A change in US policy is needed to move the peace effort in another direction. Let us suppose that a part of a long-term solution can be found by assisting to accomplish the following.

Establish an international consortium of public and private interests to purchase, or lease for 99 years, from Egypt, one thousand square miles of land in a part of the Sinai located south from Gaza, along the coast just short of Al-Arish, Egypt, and eastward inland along the Israel's border, for 150 + kilometers....the border to include a patrolled 1-km wide buffer zone.

The international consortium to be composed of U.S. government and non-government entities, the United Nations Security Council, EU member states, Arab states, members of the G8 and international commercial interests, and have the ability to put together a \$50-\$100 billion 30year soft loan package. The loan would be used to purchase - lease the land from Egypt and to construct a new Palestinian "capital city" preferably on the Mediterranean coast adjacent to Al-Arish.

The goal is to construct an entirely new city complete with requisite supporting infrastructures of low rise - mid rise housing, schools, hospitals, civic and commercial buildings, an airport, harbor, and road / rail networks for supporting agricultural and light industry sectors outside the inner core of the new capital city. U.S., European and Asian construction companies could be pre-qualified to bid on the design and engineering construction contracts as well as a source for building materials, and heavy machinery and energy.

Palestinians in the West Bank, and Gaza and those now identified, as refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and other countries in the region would then be free to emigrate after filtering through an established internationally administered screening process at a location in southern Gaza. Construction jobs, training and work camps would already have been factored into the program matrix.

The new capital city is to be called "The City of Ibrahim". It will be established as a Free Trade Zone, small light industry hub for electronics, and quite possibly as an Islamic approved Middle East banking center. Global multinational corporations would be invited to establish subsidiaries with an option for a low tax grace period. Municipal bonds could be issued in the name of the new capital city, guaranteed by a

special World Bank fund group established for such a purpose. Palestinians with professional skills, such as, doctors, scientists, engineers, academicians, construction managers, real estate developers and hotel managers now living in the Palestinian diaspora would then be invited on a salaried contract basis through the European commission to participate. This pool of talent would bring their ideas and expertise to a newly emerging Palestinian capital.

Governance would come from the European Union. It would establish for ten years an interim “governing council”. The council would put in place and sustain a western style parliamentary system based on the same rules, standards and procedures that are now prerequisites for countries seeking EU membership.

If the international community has the will to obtain the land from Egypt, build the city, and begin the creation of a bona fide Palestinian home without the politics, bullying and intimidation tactics of an entrenched Palestinian Authority or an Hamas, this scenario may have some merit. Palestinian families especially those with young children will emigrate because they are tired of their lives in refugee camps scattered throughout the region or their treatment as second class squatters in Israel. Palestinians are no different from people in any society. They want a better life for their children and I submit that they would prefer to pour concrete and lay bricks as an investment in a future Palestinian state, rather than doing those same tasks on Israeli settlement projects in the West Bank or tourist hotels in Tel Aviv.

Benefits:

Arab countries in the region now hosting large numbers of Palestinian refugees will be able to close unwanted refugee camps and the UN will no longer have to fund them.

As a regional Free Trade Zone the new City of Ibrahim connects to the Mediterranean and also the Red Sea vis a vis the Arab States. A free trade zone, with special status for Egypt as a reward for facilitating the land sale provides a hub for Middle East trade and industrial development. In the long term this has the potential to facilitate global connections to India and the Asian sub-continent.

Jordan is relieved of pressure to create a Palestinian state in Jordan while Egypt has a “buffer state” between itself and Israel. The scope of the effort shows genuine sincerity and a strong commitment by the international community to the region. It pulls the US closer to the Arab world and reduces tensions with Islamic fundamentalism. Lastly it places the US in a better position to check Chinese and future Russian ambitions in the region.

Jerusalem /Temple Mount:

The final status of the Temple Mount / Haram Al-Sharif can wait for the time being as long as all members of the faithful in the two religions have access to it. For 99 years the sanctuary becomes a type of Vatican enclave administered by an ecumenical

group in conjunction with the Jordanian Waqf that now administers the sanctuary. Visas would be required and limited to a three/day visit by the faithful. Israeli police can be assigned responsibility for law enforcement. This would be in keeping with the Torah commandment to exercise Jewish domain. If equal access is guaranteed, Jews and Muslims cannot object.

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