

## **Israel's Livni attended the 8th Doha democracy forum**

2008-04-04

14 Apr 2008

FM Livni: "Peace requires historical reconciliation. We are ready and willing to walk this path. But, all sides must choose to walk with us. The hearts and minds of the entire region must be prepared for this historical process."

Address by Vice Prime minister and minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni to the 8th Doha Forum on Democracy, Development, and Free

April 14, 2008

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to pay tribute to the State of Qatar, under the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, for hosting this conference on a topic of global concern.

I would also like to express our respect and appreciation to His Excellency Shiekh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al-Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have come here to Qatar, in a spirit of friendship and mutual respect, as a representative of the Government of Israel to an Arab state, with which we have maintained official relations, even in difficult periods, and with which we hope to strengthen our ties.

The continued dialogue between Israel and Qatar is a living testimony to the importance attached by both sides to this ongoing relationship, which serves the interests, not only of both sides, but of the entire region. We hope that other Arab states will follow the example of Qatar, as a means for promoting co-existence, understanding and peace in the entire region, especially in a period of time in which a genuine peace process is taking place between Israel and the Palestinians. To the Arab states of

our region, some represented in this conference, we extend our hand in friendship.

The road to peaceful relations – just like the road to genuine democracy - begins with dialogue, mutual recognition and the free exchange of ideas.

Democracy

We are gathered here to discuss Democracy. But what is democracy?

It may seem self evident, but it is not always so.

We all share the same understanding that:

- Democracy is not just a word.
- Democracy is a way of life.
- Democracy is a value system.
- Democracy does not belong to any specific faith or national identity. There is no contradiction between democracy and religion, or between democracy and patriotism.
- Democracy is the natural birth-right of every human being.

At its heart, democracy is a system and a set of universal values, that promotes diversity, freedom of worship and freedom of speech. In so doing, it creates the space and the opportunity for each faith, for each identity and for each individual, while reflecting local cultures, traditions and values.

Moderates and Extremists

But there are those who do not share our perception of democracy.

I am referring to the extremists, who not only reject the genuine values of democracy, but also fight to deprive others of their rights and use violence as a legitimate tool in their battle.

On the other hand there are the moderates, who accept the principles of democracy, recognize the legitimacy of others and renounce violence.

This is the greatest conflict today - between the moderates and the extremists. This is also the new challenge of the entire region.

We, the moderates of the region, are all members of the same camp, facing the same challenges posed by the extremists.

It is true that even amongst us, within the pragmatic camp, there may be differences of opinion and conflicts. Israel and the moderate Palestinian leadership are in the midst of a process in order to resolve such a conflict.

It is this vision of peace that binds together Israelis, pragmatic Palestinians and moderates throughout our region.

The extremists have, unfortunately, the ability to block or prevent our vision of peace.

Therefore, it is quite clear now that Israel poses no threat to the stability and the peace of the region. It is equally clear now that the threat comes from the radicals, who refuse to recognize our democratic rights.

When I say "our", I mean the rights of Israelis, moderate Palestinians, moderate Arab and pragmatic Moslem regimes alike.

We must cast aside the outdated perception that the Israeli- Palestinian conflict is the cause for the extremists, and understand that our ability to come to terms depends on the extremist's capability to prevent it.

The threat of the extremists to the peace process and regional stability, is also via their abuse of democracy.

Democracy and Elections

Democracy is not just a technical process.

Today, in different parts of the world, extremists are entering the democratic process via elections - not to abandon their violent agenda - but to advance it.

It is the full right of democracies to defend themselves from those who wish to exploit the system in order to reach a position of power, and then abuse that power to enforce their radical ideology and disregard the values of democracy.

This is true for both Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority, in which the political process has been infiltrated.

In both these cases, Lebanon and the PA, the outcome is a lack of stability.

We witness another breach of democracy, while three abducted Israeli soldiers are still held in captivity, for no reason, denied access of the Red Cross or a sign of life. I would like to take this opportunity to call for their release. This is a matter of human rights, not politics.

No true democracy on earth allows armed militia, or groups with racist or violent agendas, to participate in elections. I have checked this matter, and in various constitutions around the world, it is prohibited. Also in Israel, a racist party cannot run for elections.

I have called on the international community to adopt a universal set of standards for participation in democratic elections. This universal democratic code requires that all those seeking the legitimacy of the democratic process, earn it by respecting such principles as state monopoly over the lawful use of force, the rejection of racism and violence, and the protection of the rights of others.

The choice should be made before elections take place – Terror or politics - but not “political terrorism”.

The goal of such a universal code is to protect core democratic values from those determined to destroy them. The democratic process is not just a right - it is also a responsibility.

The Peace Process

According to the understanding of our new regional challenges, Israel left the Gaza Strip, dismantled all settlements, and gave an opportunity for Palestinian self rule, as a first step on the path towards a Palestinian state.

For this reason, we launched the Annapolis process, to reach a peace agreement [implementation of which is subject to the Road Map].

Peace talks are taking place with the pragmatic Palestinians, who recognize Israel's right to exist, who seek to realize their national rights but choose the path of peace over terrorism. With such partners, who support the Two State Solution, peace can be attained. The conflict is solvable.

There is no hope for peace with the extremists, who reject the two state solution, refuse to even recognize the existence of Israel and choose the path of violence.

With the legitimate Palestinian government, representatives like Mahmoud Abbas, Abbu Allah and Salam Fayyad, we share the vision of two states living side by side in peace and security.

We recognize the fact that the Palestinian people have legitimate rights and aspirations. We have no interest in ruling their lives. Israel is committed to the establishment of a Palestinian state, as a nation state for the Palestinian people and a peaceful neighbor to Israel.

Equally, the people of Israel are entitled to those same rights. There is no place for terrorism, and no justification for terrorism. Just as a Palestinian State is an Israeli interest, so Israeli security must be a Palestinian interest.

Israel is deeply engaged in a peace process. The attainment of peace is an Israeli strategic objective, and it is clear that it entails further territorial concessions. Stagnation is not our policy. We have no interest in wasting time, or establishing facts on the ground that will impede the creation of a Palestinian state.

As the Israeli chief negotiator, the responsibility lies heavy on my shoulders, as this concerns our future. The talks are based on trust, and some principles:

- The talks are bilateral only.
- Everything is on the table, yet nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.
- We do not share information with the media, or the public. There is a price that we pay. Lack of information leads to an incorrect image that nothing is happening. But the right thing to do is to continue to work seriously and discretely.
- Any future agreement is subject to full implementation of the first stage of the road map, for we cannot afford an additional terror state in our region. We are in need of a legitimate Palestinian government, like the one in the West Bank, which has effective control of both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

This is evidently clear with the violent takeover by the Hamas of the Gaza Strip. Although Israel fully withdrew all its forces from the Gaza Strip, dismantled all settlements and allowed for self Palestinian rule in this territory, instead of coexistence, we have received terror in return.

Gaza is not just an Israeli problem. It has become an obstacle to the formation of a Palestinian state.

In parallel to the negotiations, we must make changes on the ground. We must advance on the issue of security for Israel (terror attacks continue), and capacity building and economic promotion for the Palestinians.

We have also decided not to allow the daily frustrations to stop the talks. Although it is not easy for Israel to negotiate peace in days of terror, and not easy for the Palestinians while Israel acts against terror in Gaza. But we must continue – for stopping the talks serves the interests of those who do not want peace.

The role of the Arab and Moslem world

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Peace requires historical reconciliation. We are ready and willing to walk this path. But, all sides must choose to walk with us. The hearts and minds of the entire region must be prepared for this historical process.

Some of the states in the region, including Qatar, have taken important steps forward in this effort. By encouraging dialogue and acceptance of each other we can teach our children the blessings of coexistence. We can create the environment in which a genuine, dignified and lasting peace is possible.

We can promote mutual understanding by removing incitement and hatred material, and replacing it with messages of hope and mutual acceptance. This is the only way. To create public support for the decisions the leaders need to make.

I would like the public to understand that the region is changing – as is evident and demonstrated in this wonderful gathering.

To succeed in these efforts, all peoples of our region must have the courage to recognize the fact that we, Israelis and Arabs alike, face common challenges. We must together take responsibility for our region's destiny, engage in dialogue, promote mutual projects and deny the extremists the ability to dictate the agenda.

In conclusion,

Democracy is a choice and an ongoing responsibility.

From its founding, Israel made a choice to be a genuine democracy. We are both a Jewish State and a democratic one, and there is no contradiction between the two. We respect the equal rights of the Arab citizens, who are also represented in our parliament.

There is much for us to do – we do not deny that Israel is still a young democracy, and we do not claim to be a perfect one.

This International Conference on “Democracy, Development and Free Trade” is an ideal venue and surrounding for a rich and creative exchange of ideas and experiences.

I wish you all a successful and enriching conference. The countries of the world and of the region can only benefit from this distinguished gathering.

Thank You.

Israeli FM ends historic visit to Qatar

Web posted at: 4/16/2008 1:38:36

Source ::: AFP

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni (centre, sitting) listening to a band during her visit to the Shafallah Centre for Children with Special Needs, in Doha yesterday. (AFP)

Doha • Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni left Qatar yesterday after a rare visit to an Arab country during which she lobbied for support against Iran’s nuclear drive and urged Arab states to forge ties with Israel.

Livni arrived in Doha on Sunday to address the Democracy Forum, but she also met Qatari leaders and her Omani counterpart during her stay.

The only Arab countries which Livni visited previously were Egypt and Jordan, both of which have peace treaties with Israel.

Meanwhile, Israeli television reported yesterday that Israel has asked Qatar to consider selling it natural gas, a deal that could help warm ties between the Jewish state and the Arab world.

Channel Two television said Tzipi Livni met Qatari Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy and Industry Hamad bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah to discuss a possible gas purchase that would be worth as much as \$11.4bn. A Livni spokesman in Jerusalem could not immediately be reached for comment.

The head of Israel's trade office in Doha Roi Rosenblit declined to comment on what was discussed at the meeting, although he confirmed Livni and Al Attiyah met.

Israel is looking to diversify its energy supplies and would like LNG to be part of the mix, an industry source said. Livni told reporters on Monday that she had sought the backing of Arab leaders to confront Iran's nuclear ambitions.

The West and Israel suspect Iran's nuclear programme is aimed at acquiring nuclear weapons — a charge Tehran denies. Qatar and other Gulf Arab states have repeatedly called for a diplomatic solution to the dispute.

Israel, which has never admitted to having a nuclear arsenal but is widely believed to have around 200 warheads, is the only Middle Eastern country not to have signed the Non- Proliferation Treaty.

In her address to the Democracy Forum on Monday, Livni called for Arab states to forge contacts with her country, saying they could adopt a gradual approach to establishing ties.

Before leaving yesterday, she toured the government-funded Shafallah Centre for Children with Special Needs .

Israeli officials have visited Qatar before. But ties with Israel remain a highly controversial issue in the Arab world in the absence of progress in reaching an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement.