

**Meeting Minutes
Technical Teams Session**

Jerusalem/Mt. Zion Hotel
Sunday, 24 February 2008
12:00 – 13:30

Attendees

Palestinian side: Ahmad Qrei' (Abu Ala')

- Dr. Saeb Erekat, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department
- Fadl Kawash, Water
- Samir Hleileh, Economy
- Ghassan al-Khatib, State-to-State Relations
- Dr. Sufyan Aby Zaydeh, Civil Society & Culture of Peace
- Hiba al-Husseini, Legal Issues
- Hisham Abdel Razik, Prisoners
- Dr. Youssef Abu Safieh, Environment
- Salah Elayan
- Zeinah Salahi

Absentees: Dr. Mohammad Ishtiyeh (Infrastructure)

Israeli side: Tzipi Livni

- Udi Dekel, Head of the Negotiations Affairs Department
- Tal Baker, Political Advisor to Foreign Minister
- Uri Shani, Head of Water Authority (Water)
- Daniel Taob, Deputy Legal Advisor at the Foreign Ministry (Civil Society & Culture of Peace)
- Yoram Aryaf, Finance Minister Director-General
- Mikham, Finance Minister Director-General Assistant
- Yossi Gal, Advisor/Foreign Ministry (State-to-State Relations)
- Khazi Kogler, Infrastructure Director-General (Infrastructure)
- Mrs. Uri Livnat, PR Head at the Ministry of Environment (Environment)

Absentees: Michael Plas, Deputy Attorney General (Legal and prisoners' issues)

Livni: I welcome you in the first final status negotiations meeting and I hope we will reach an agreement. We agreed in Annapolis conference to discuss all issues. There are certain critical issues for our common future, and therefore we decided to discuss all key and technical issues so that we do not waste time. Let us begin by introducing ourselves and give a brief note about our past experiences.

Abu Ala': I welcome all from both sides. We have taken a large step with your presence today. It is no secret that we began secret talks following Annapolis conference concerning all key issues including borders, refugees, Jerusalem, security and others. Today we will expand the negotiations to include all issues that will be part of the future agreement. We hope to achieve progress.

I believe that we know each other and this is a good opportunity to talk with our counterparts.

You have all our support and we hope that you will reach an agreement on all issues assigned to you. We hope that you start discussion at once and we will keep in touch with you in case you need any help. Let each one introduce himself or herself.

Dekel: I am the Head of the Negotiation Department and I was Director of Strategic Planning Department in the IDF until a few months ago.

Livni: Udi Dekel will coordinate the work of teams and Israeli positions.

Abu Ala': Saeb will be our coordinator.

Kogler: I am Director-General of Infrastructure and I worked in Peres Peace Center.

Aryaf: I am Director-General of Finance Ministry, and I met my counterpart in a previous conference. I worked at the Finance Ministry for 15 years and after that in the private sector. I am in constant contact with Dr. Salam Fayyad.

Mikham: I am Yoram Aryaf's assistant at the Finance Ministry.

Shani: I am the Head of the Water Authority.

Zeinah: I am the legal coordinator at NSU.

Youssef Abu Safieh: I am the Head of the Environment Authority. I participated in work groups about the environment in multi-lateral negotiations and in negotiations for Gaza-Jericho First Agreement as well as in Taba negotiations. I have known my counterpart for 8 years at least and we do our best to protect the environment.

Livni: The Ministry of Environment is the only ministry that sent me a letter telling me it has started work. The environment knows no borders.

Abu Ala’: For this reason the situation in Gaza is very good.

Hiba Hussein: I am an attorney and I participated in the interim period negotiations, and Cairo, Camp David and Stockholm negotiations.

Hisham Abdel Razik: I work in the prisoners’ file.

Abu Ala’: This is the most important file.

Samir: I am an economist and I participated in bilateral and multilateral talks. I was Secretary-General at the Council of Ministers in the 9th government headed by Abu Ala’.

Saeb: You have a problem if you do not know who I am.

Sufyan: I spent half of my life fighting against Israelis and now I will spend the other half fighting the Israelis to achieve peace.

Fadel: I am Head of the Palestinian Water Authority.

Ghassan: I am a university lecturer and I have met Yossi Gal before.

Salah: I have been Abu Ala’s assistant for 20 years.

Taub: I participated in Gaza-Jericho First negotiations and now I will fight Sufyan Abu Zaydeh.

Livnat: Head of International Relations Department at the Ministry of Environment. I hope this will mark the beginning of a common relation.

Gal: Senior advisor at the Political Affairs Circle at the Foreign Ministry. I have met most of the members of the Palestinian team before.

Beker: I am the political advisor to Minister Livni. I worked previously as a legal advisor in different negotiations.

Livni: Perhaps we will start a historic but informal meeting. Even though most of you know each other and some have more experience than their counterparts, we have already given our delegation instructions.

I know that we are experts in this fight for peace but no one has the right to make fun of this process. We have decided to leave sarcasm outside this hall.

Abu Ala’ and I have decided to work discretely in spite of the media attempts to force us give out statements and sometimes speak against each other. The most important thing is to work discretely though the media seek to know everything. We work discretely and we ask you to do the same.

It is easy to find gaps, and you have to try to find common grounds, not gaps.

Michael Plas, Deputy attorney General, is absent because he is meeting with the Prime Minister who will leave to Japan. Dr. Saeb, you should try to guess what will happen in Japan.

Saeb: The safe passage and prosperity in Jordan.

Livni: Yes, they will declare it for the second time.

We have not put a list of the issues that each team has to address. What you have to do in the first meeting is to identify the agenda. The issues are interrelated and no one would like to discuss what has been discussed in another committee. After identifying the agenda, it should be submitted to me and to Abu Ala' and we will then determine a place for discussion.

You may ask how detailed should the agreement be. This is for you to decide. Each party knows the key issues that have to be included in the agreement. Each party knows what is urgent and what can be put off.

We are talking about the day that follows the agreement, an agreement that gives meaning to the idea of two states living side by side in peace and security.

There are matters happening on the ground and we do not want them to disrupt our work. We are talking about the future, and we welcome any answers you think may contribute to improving the situation on the ground.

This will give the two peoples hope that things will change. Changing the situation on the ground is important to convey a message to both peoples and convince them that the situation can be better.

Abu Ala': I want to make a suggestion. I think you will be the pulley that will help us reach an agreement if both of have a true and genuine desire to work seriously on all key issues.

Each team identifies their agenda and begins work, and we will be in constant communication with each other. Additionally, Saeb and Tal will follow up matters.

You have some experience in the previous negotiations to reach an understanding or determine the points of disagreement as well as the points of agreement in a short time. We hope that you will start work seriously at once.

Livni: I agree that you have to identify the common agenda in each team. We are ready to listen, and you should have no fear to make any queries or propose any new suggestions.

Samir: Most teams have previous negotiation experience and the issues are inter-related. But what is the assumption upon which the technical teams should base its work? Shall we say 1967 borders, for example?

Livni: We have to look into the relation between the two states in all issues irrespective of the location of borders and crossings. You are not to discuss key issues.

Samir: Yes, our assumption is the two-state solution with 1967 borders.

Livni: This is an example of what we have to avoid. You are the experts. We want to discuss economic relations between the two states irrespective of the borders.

Samir: Yes, but they are borders and not a wall or a barrier.

Baker: Yes, but this is one of the a key issues.

Samir: There is also the issue of the Gaza Strip. The West Bank and the Gaza Strip are one geographical entity. There are certain assumptions that take interests into consideration, such as our relations with Jordan and Egypt.

Livni: To put it clearly, when we talk about a future Palestinian state we actually talk about the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. But there are related issues, such as means to link the West Bank with the Strip, which Abu Ala' and I will discuss.

The best way for you to work is to avoid key issues or issues that do not directly relate to the issues that you address. Key issues should not affect your work because I hope to solve them with Abu Ala'. If you have any questions or queries to make, Abu Ala' and I will be ready to answer them.

Tal: If we want to engage in debate we should specify where to do it and not to do it just anywhere.

Abu Ala': The only assumption is that the borders are the 1967 borders and any possible modifications will be subject to discussion.

Livni: There are issues related to the borders and issues, such as the issue of the prisoners, that are not related.

Abu Ala': If the prisoner, for example, is from Jenin, we would like to know where he is and how the situation in Jenin is so that we can bring him back home.

Livni: You can make an assumption and the Israeli side can make a different assumption. If it is impossible to put forward a case without finding a solution to it, then you have to put it aside.

Saeb: I want to make clear what Livni is saying. No agreement on anything before agreeing on everything.

Livni: This is what we agreed on.

Saeb: You have to leave political discussion to decision makers. We will not have an agreement without borders. Give it a chance. Perhaps the agreement on key issues will cover 20 pages, but agreement on issues you want to discuss may cover 1000 pages.

I would like to say that I appreciate one thing, i.e. that a person has been chosen from the Foreign Ministry and not from the Ministry of Defense. This is how things should be in order to discuss state-to-state relations.

I think this time we have to finish work quickly. Abu Ala', Livni, Dekel and I are all here to help you. I do not want to waste time. We have ten months to reach an agreement.

Livni: Saeb's advice is important. We do not want to lose the trust we have built as we try to find a common ground about issues we have not agreed on yet. Do your best.

Hiba: We want your guidance. The more answers you give about key issues that you look into and the criteria that you identify will help us in our work and remove all ambiguity from our minds.

Aryaf: We want an efficient and effective process. I want to return to the subject of overlap between teams. Some may say that economy is a wide field, and thus I want to differentiate between macro and micro economies and how to coordinate the two because we will face a problem. Economy will work in accordance with an economic system, and other issues will deal with what is partial but of course both will be coordinated.

We can put two or three models on the table and see how each will affect the treaty. But there may be a problem of coordination among the teams.

Abu Ala': Why?

Aryaf: Because we may say that anything that is not military is economic.

Livni: But you can say that all issues are related. They are things that are not related which can be reinforced without waiting to reach an understanding. Progress in these things, such as people-to-people case and water even, could enhance the negotiations.

I am not sure about issues that cannot be discussed.

Saeb: Abu Ala' suggested that each committee puts an agenda for its work upon the agreement of the heads of both teams. Two or three weeks later we will meet with you to listen to your reports. At this stage we do not want to overburden you.

Livni: We have our internal work and you have yours. We do not want every decision to come to us. Most issues, not borders or Jerusalem, etc., can be solved within the teams without a political opinion. All issues aim at the same goal. Abu Ala' and I do not want to waste time discussing them, but we would like to have detailed answers from experts.

Abu Ala': We have a recommendation to make: We are trying to reach a final agreement and therefore we have to imagine the kind of relation between the two sides and there will not be another interim agreement.

We are looking for means of future cooperation. In the end there will be one common agreement.

Tal: When we talk about two-state solution, we have to ask ourselves: What kind of relation do we want? Legal relation, for instance; we will look into that and into all other partial issues as well. What we want from you is to specify what you would like to see in all the different issues. The first step is to draw and have a common map or plan.

Livni: We also need to think about interim arrangements.

Abu Ala': The mentality to reach an interim agreement is completely different. The idea of the agreement for the next day is to change the reality of today and reach a final solution to all problems.

Each person can sit with his or her counterpart and agree on a time to meet.

Livni: We have this trust among us. The important thing is not to involve the press or any other third party as much as possible no matter the pressure exerted on us. If anyone asks you, tell the others so that we can coordinate our responses and know what kind of questions are asked.

Abu Ala': We can deny we know each other.
