Minutes of Negotiations Session on January 25, 2001

Hilton Taba Hotel
Taba, Egypt
3:00 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.

I. Attendance:

On the Palestinian side: Ahmed Qurei, Yasser Abed-Rabbo, Hassan Asfour, Samih Al-Abed, Nabil Shaath, Mohammed Dahlan, Omar Dajani, and Amr Shalakany.

On the Israeli side: Yossi Beilin, Giddi Grinstein, Gilaad Sher, Shlomo Yanai, Daniel Levy, ••.

II. Summary:

The meeting was a plenary session. Palestinian and Israeli negotiators from each of the three “tracks” presented a summary of the issues discussed and points of agreement/disagreement reached so far. The plenary meeting broke off, with agreement to restart the separate track negotiations at 6:00 p.m. the same evening.

The Israeli team left to Eilat for the afternoon. Following the news on the Tulkarem incident, the Israeli team did not return to Taba that evening.

III. Details:

[Earlier conversations: YB: convert to reform Jew and emigrate back to Israel based on law of return. GG: redistribution and restitution – the mailise of P society before 1948 bis that there was no middle class, the backbone if any healthy society]

Yossi Beilin (“YB”): On refugees, we presented draft language which will refer to two issues: First, the narrative, what really happened; and, second, the variety of solutions for the refugees, including compensation, special compensation for those who have assets and assistance to the host countries. We are trying to work together on the various institutions involved, their role, because they will deal practically with the situation, while taking into account a preference for the refugee camps in Lebanon. The next move should be to start drafting, and see how many “I’s” and “P’s” we have.
Nabil Shaath: We haven’t started yet on that paper, but all our exercise thus far has been leading to that paper. We found our discussion very useful, made some use of the Camp David papers, and we’re continuing some work, not starting from scratch. So long as you are also making progress in the other tracks. We don’t want to you send us negative messages. We don’t want to make progress in the most difficult issue if you are not progressing on the rest.

Ahmed Qurei: With respect to territory, and after long reluctance from our Israeli colleagues, we received a map which we don’t like. We made our remarks. The map came with 8% annexation of land to Israel. We reduced it pencil marks on the map to 6%. Two points. First, we cannot accept the principle of lease, because we are working towards an independent state, which may then conclude an agreement for leasing with Israel – but not before that. Secondly, there are settlement blocks we have serious problems within, basically in the North, near Ariel, in the Latroun, around Jerusalem (such as Giva’at Ze’ev and Maale Adumim). We said our remarks, and then showed a map which is very hard and difficult for us, it is tough for us to draw a map that’s keep some of the settlements. The map is 3.1% including Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, we cannot accept Israeli annexation of Maale and Givaat, they will close off Jerusalem. The road into Gush Etzion is tough since it closes off the Hebron – Bethlehem road. This is what we proposed, it is very realistic, and we can reach a deal.

Hassan Asfour (“HA”): In the Declaration of Principles (“DOP”), we agreed to discuss Jerusalem, not just “East” Jerusalem.

Gilaad Sher (“GS”): My main question mark remains whether our Palestinian colleagues have accepted Clinton’s proposals or not? I could not find in the Palestinian map any thing that corresponds to Clinton’s parameters. It incorporates about 60,000 Israeli inhabitants in Judea and Smaria [HA: it’s called the West Bank. YBjokingly]: You get the name West Bank only if you behave!]. I believe that by now, all of us know our needs and concerns. They do not only relate to settlements and strategic needs, and not only inhabitants. It also includes development and this is why we need about 8% of the Wet bank territory. Also any long term arrangements like lease. We do need about this much Palestinian territory to keep the settlers. I believe the notion of lease is a good one as put by Clinton, it will be a reciprocal one. We can use leasing to deal with the small number of Palestinians who will inevitably be included in the annexation. As for land-swap, we did request to see a map, but haven’t seen any yet. Last but not least, Jerusalem. To all our understanding until now, it is not part of the West Bank, not to be included in calculating the territory annexed or the settlers remaining. Residents in East Jerusalem are not settlers. [HA: How can you call them not settlers?] I am simply reporting now on what happened in our track. I am not making a new argument. We’ve been under siege in Jerusalem before, and we can’t do it again, we have a strategic need for the Eastern gate of Jerusalem, this is why we need a corridor going to Ma’ale and Mishor Adumum. You’ve seen the new maps, the annexation stops immediately after Ma’ale, it’s not extending to the Jordan river valley, that’s what we need for compensation.

AQ: I have some clarification:. First, from the beginning, we said we have reservations on Clinton’s parameters, therefore it is not the base. Second, if you want

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to speak about strategic needs, we have a lot of them too. Don’t ask questions you
know the answers to – it’s the end of the game. Three, with respect to leasing, we
cannot accept it now. After independence, perhaps OK. Four, East Jerusalem is part
of the occupied territories. Where ever they are living, settlers are still settlers. The
UN Security Resolution 465 calls them illegal, and so does the entire world. Fifth,
Ma’ale and Giva’at will kill Palestinian Jerusalem, they will suffocate it.

NS: If we’re applying Clinton’s guidelines, then we should apply them all. Namely,
with respect to the Palestinians, there should be minimal annexation, contiguity, etc.
The question now is how to accommodate Palestinian needs. How can we manage
with a viable Jerusalem, a non-suffocated Bethlehem. If we cannot accommodate
Ma’ale Adumim settlers, then put them in other settlements if insist on the 80%.

Shlomo Yinai (“SY”): On the security track, we discussed emergency deployment,
use of airspace, and did not have much time to deal with the Jordan Valley issue. We
are somehow back to square one. Yesterday, we enumerated five issue that we are
discussing in detail, namely multinational presence, types of weapons systems
Palestine will use, cooperation in combating terrorists, early warning stations,
cooperation mechanisms and regional cooperation. All other issues were not
discussed.

AQ: Can we say there is an understanding on the above?

SY: Today, we started to hit earlier rejections, namely whether we can proceed in the
tough issues of air space and emergency deployment.

Mohammed Dahlan (“MD”): We are only discussing Israeli requirements, and
haven’t discussed Palestinian requirements. In SY’s points, four issues can be
discussed and we can make progress: types of weapons, anti-terrorism, early warning
stations, and mechanisms for Palestinian - Israeli coordination and regional
cooperation. SY has two other points: emergency deployment and airspace and
electromagnetic sphere. I say the first five points we can negotiate them without
trouble. However, we cannot accept the Israeli position on emergency deployment
stations and airspace.

YB: Let’s look at each issue, try to bridge the gaps, and then bring what remains to
the leadership for them to deal with.

AQ: Let’s continue with the sessions, and then move on to a plenary.

YB: We do not have to reach an agreement on every thing in order to start drafting.

AQ: It is not so difficult to draft. Each draft should include the principle,
mechanisms, schedule for withdrawal, and maps. Later there will be guarantees for
implementation.

YB: I would like to have some chart. So we know who is working on what? When
you compare the maps, we have never been closer.

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[An exchange follows in which YB pushes for more concrete drafting sessions and the Palestinian side resists hesitantly.]

AQ: Fine, let's start drafting, but no one tells the media.

YB: Ok, and if the media asks us anything, we will say drafting does not mean an agreement, it's a technical exercise, there are gaps, difficult gaps.

[Plenary split up for separate track meetings at 6:00 p.m. The Israeli team left to Eilat for the afternoon. Following the news on the Tulkarem incident, the Israeli team did not return that evening.]