

Yaalon: Israel Must Free Itself from Failed '2-State' Paradigm

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by Maayana Miskin

(IsraelINN.com) Minister of Strategic Affairs Moshe (Boogie) Yaalon believes that the time has come for Israel to “free itself from the failed paradigm” of the “two-state solution.” Yaalon spoke Tuesday at a meeting of MKs dedicated to finding an alternative to the creation of a Palestinian Authority-led Arab state.

While the creation of a PA-led state in Judea, Samaria and Gaza is perceived as a necessity both in Israel and worldwide, such a state would not solve the Israel-PA conflict, said Yaalon. In fact, he said, it is doubtful that the possibility of creating such a state exists, due to Arab and Muslim reluctance to take any step that would imply recognition of Israel or compromise on Arab claims to the entire Land of Israel.

Israel's Mistakes

Israel's mistake lies in accepting a-symmetrical talks with the PA, Yaalon said. From the beginning of talks, he explained, Israel has accepted the idea of a Palestinian national movement with the PA as its representative, while the PA has resolutely refused to accept the Jewish national movement of Zionism or the idea of a Jewish homeland in the land of Israel.

Furthermore, while the PA demands that Arabs and Muslims be allowed to live in Israel, Israel accepts that a PA state would not have Jewish citizens, he said. And while Israel gives in on crucial issues such as the status of Jerusalem or the borders of a PA state, the PA refuses to bend in the slightest.

Israel has also been mistaken in assuming that the Israeli presence in Judea, Samaria and Gaza is the cause of Israel-Arab tension, he said. Arab attacks on Israel began well before the 1967 Six Day War in which Israel gained control of those areas, he said, and the Arab world's real goal is not a state in those areas, but rather, on the ruins of the State of Israel.

For this reason, he said, the PA is actually uninterested in a “two-state solution.” Former PA Chairman Yasser Arafat waged war on Israel in order to avoid the creation of a PA state, he argued.

“There are those who will argue that the PA wanted to establish a state in the 1967 borders but was unable to do so,” he said. “I say the problem was not one of ability, but of desire.”

If the PA does not desire an independent state in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, and will not accept such a state as the fulfillment of its national goals, the “two-state solution” has no chance to bring peace, he concluded.

The Solution

Israel must give up on seeking to fully solve its conflict with the PA and the Arab world as a whole, Yaalon said. “I believe we should not approach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with the phrase

'solution' in the foreseeable future," he told his audience. "Instead, we should seek 'crisis management' or long-term coping strategies."

Israel should still seek a solution in the long term, he added. However, the process of seeking a solution should be "bottom-up," and not "top-down." Instead of hoping that a diplomatic agreement with the PA will lead to peace and security, the PA should prove that it is capable of self-rule prior to the signing of a diplomatic agreement, he argued.

Yaalon presented five crucial elements of the "bottom-up" process:

Educational Reform:

The PA currently teaches Arab children that the entirety of Israel is an illegal colonialist entity, Yaalon said, and denies any historic Jewish connection to the Land of Israel. In addition, the PA teaches Jihad (holy war) against Israel and honors suicide bombers.

Changing the PA school system to teach the value of life, not of death, and to accurately portray Jewish history is crucial, he said.

Economic Reform:

In order to create a viable economy, the PA must strengthen small businesses and create a stable middle class, Yaalon said.

Attempts to create a PA economy through international aid have failed due to a corrupt PA leadership that misappropriates funds, and terrorist groups that attempt to keep PA Arabs living in poverty, he said. To avoid the problems posed by corrupt leadership, the world should focus on PA businessmen and support their initiatives.

Political Reform:

Beyond creating a political entity, the PA must allow for freedom of expression, freedom of the press and protect human rights.

Yaalon referred to "the American mistake" of supporting strong dictators over true democratic activists. Activists who seek true democracy and freedom should win encouragement from the West, he said.

Legal Reform:

The goal should be "One authority, one law, one weapon," Yaalon said, referring to the disarming of rogue terrorist groups and the enforcement of law throughout the PA territories.

Security Reform:

The PA must begin to truly fight terrorism, Yaalon said. Among other things, the PA must rid itself of the "revolving door" by which terrorists serve only light sentences, and the sentencing of terrorists who murdered Israelis for "harming the public interest" instead of "murder." These things encourage terrorism, he said.

The PA must be able to fight terrorism properly on multiple levels, he said, from gathering intelligence information to putting terrorists on trial.

No Guarantees

There is no guarantee that the "bottom-up" proposal can be put into effect, Yaalon said, because it relies on the Palestinian Authority to take the necessary action.

In order to increase the chances that the PA will do what is necessary, Israel must make it clear that the PA has no chance of defeating Israel, he said, or of forcing further Israeli concessions and withdrawals without making concessions of its own.

"The Palestinians' extreme violence does not stem from despair over their situation, as the West tends to assume, but rather from hope – hope that the State of Israel will disappear," he said. "Destroying the hope of defeating Israel will encourage new ideas."

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