

before. He did not reject everything I said out of hand. He seemed eager to make progress, but I knew that the proof of his intent would be in his actions, not his words.

After forty minutes alone, we moved into an expanded session with members of our staff. We had begun to discuss the details of the peace process when Netanyahu said that he intended to focus on the economic track.

I argued that economic opportunities could not be an alternative to political independence for the Palestinians. "What about the political track?" I pressed. "Given your history, the Arabs expect you to focus on economic and security issues at the expense of peace talks."

Netanyahu took my comments in stride and said that perhaps he should start with the political track. But he offered no concrete indication of what he might be prepared to do.

"That would be the prudent thing to do," I said, hoping to hammer the message home.

Once he had left, I reflected on where we stood. Netanyahu was a right-winger through and through, but I hoped we would be able to work together to bring a lasting peace to the region. We had the Arab Peace Initiative. We had an engaged U.S. president. Was it too much to hope that we might also have a pragmatic Israeli prime minister who would want to leave behind him a legacy of peace?

## Fortress Israel or a Fifty-Seven-State Solution?

Throughout the spring and early summer of 2009, I remained optimistic that we were on the brink of a breakthrough. There were reasons to believe that the Americans would roll out their peace plan soon. On June 4, three weeks after Netanyahu's visit to Jordan, President Obama traveled to Cairo to deliver a major speech to the Arab and Muslim world. The president spoke about the urgent need to bring peace between Israel and the Palestinians, saying:

But if we see this conflict only from one side or the other, then we will be blind to the truth: The only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security.

That is in Israel's interest, Palestine's interest, America's interest, and the world's interest. And that is why I intend to personally pursue this outcome with all the patience and dedication that the task requires.

Yet as June became July, and July became August, the progress we had hoped for a few months earlier began to look ever more distant. The Israelis refused to commit to a total settlement freeze—a necessary element in the eyes of the Arab world for creating an environment conducive to serious talks. The Israeli position defied the direct demands of President Obama, the European Union, and the rest of the international community. But this almost unanimous

international stand did little to change the position of Netanyahu, who would only go as far as announcing, on November 25, 2009, after much arm-twisting by the United States and very public confrontation, a ten-month partial moratorium on the building of new settlements in the West Bank. This moratorium excluded building in East Jerusalem and did not apply to twenty-nine hundred buildings already under construction.

The peacemaking efforts appeared deadlocked, and the hope of a breakthrough was fading. The credibility of Obama and moderate Arab leaders in the Arab world was dealt a blow. We were not working in a vacuum, and spoilers in the region did not waste any time in attacking the whole peace process as a faulty approach that was yet again proving ineffective in ending the occupation.

At one point there were indications that an American peace plan would be announced in late September when world leaders, including Israeli prime minister Netanyahu and Palestinian president Abbas, would gather for the UN General Assembly meeting in New York. At Obama's urging, Abbas and Netanyahu held their first meeting since Netanyahu's election six months earlier. But the meeting produced no results. The Israeli government would not do what was necessary to restart peace negotiations. In addition to the halting of settlement building, the Palestinians wanted the Israeli government to confirm that it recognized previous agreements. They also demanded a clear Israeli commitment to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the territories occupied in 1967 with agreed-upon land swaps. Netanyahu was adamant that he could not change his position on settlements and he would not commit to previous agreements or to any terms of reference for the negotiations.

Ever since Israel occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 1967, successive Israeli governments have approved the construction of settlements in occupied Palestinian territory. There are now about one hundred and twenty settlements and around a hundred

“outposts,” Israeli communities built in the West Bank by Israeli settlers without official Israeli authorization, as well as more than twenty settlements in Jerusalem—altogether housing more than half a million settlers, over two hundred thousand of whom live in Jerusalem. These settlements are illegal under international law, as they have been built on land from which the UN has repeatedly called on Israel to withdraw. A freeze on settlement building was an essential component of the road map of 2003. The Palestinians' position has been that ending both the construction and expansion of settlements is a necessary prerequisite to successful negotiations. The problem is that the settlements are undermining the viability of a sovereign Palestinian state. Israel likes to present a settlement freeze as a major concession (and one that, so far, it has been unwilling to make), but in fact it would simply be abiding by international law.

In the weeks leading up to the UN General Assembly meeting in September 2009, despite intense American pressure, Netanyahu refused to agree to a total settlement freeze. In fact, new settlement construction was authorized. The problem these settlements presented to the Palestinians and their Arab supporters was obvious: How could Mahmoud Abbas sit down and negotiate a peace agreement with a partner who was daily creating new facts on the ground that were changing the demography and geography of the very land where the Palestinian state would be established? If the Israeli government were truly committed to a two-state solution, why would it continue to build settlements on land that would belong to a future Palestinian state? Was the Israeli government building free housing for the Palestinians? Not likely. Its refusal to halt settlement activity raised legitimate doubts about its commitment to the creation of a Palestinian state.

On September 23, President Obama delivered an important speech. In his address to the UN General Assembly, he declared:

We continue to call on Palestinians to end incitement against Israel, and we continue to emphasize that America does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements.

The time has come—the time has come to re-launch negotiations without preconditions that address the permanent status issues: security for Israelis and Palestinians, borders, refugees, and Jerusalem. And the goal is clear: Two states living side by side in peace and security—a Jewish state of Israel, with true security for all Israelis; and a viable, independent Palestinian state with contiguous territory that ends the occupation that began in 1967 and realizes the potential of the Palestinian people.

In this speech and in that of June 2009, Obama set out U.S. policy in clear terms. We in Jordan describe this policy position as the “Obama terms of reference” for negotiations to reach a just and lasting peace that would be in the interests of Israel, Palestine, America, and the world.

As the hope of spring turned into the disappointment of fall, the American administration became preoccupied by a whole raft of urgent problems: Afghanistan and Pakistan; new developments in Iran’s nuclear program; health care reform, which Obama placed at the top of his domestic agenda; and the continuing global economic crisis. These remained the overriding concerns for the United States through the first months of 2010, preventing the administration from giving the peace process its full attention. By now we were facing a major crisis. As encouraging as Obama’s words had been, they had done very little to change the reality on the ground. Frustration replaced hope.

As this book goes to press, we are just one year short of the twentieth anniversary of a peace process that started in Madrid in October 1991. But the contrast between now and then could not be greater. We are in a far darker place than we were nearly twenty years ago. Then, Palestinians and Israelis met face-to-face to begin negotiating a shared future. Both sides looked to the future with anticipation. By any measure we have regressed when we no longer speak of direct negotiations but of “proximity talks,” as an intermediary (the United States) shuttles between Israelis and Palestinians.

The proximity talks initiative emerged in early 2010, following a nearly yearlong effort by U.S. Middle East special envoy George Mitchell to launch direct negotiations. Thus far, his efforts have not produced the necessary progress, as Netanyahu has essentially maintained his uncompromising position on settlement building in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and continues to refuse to resume negotiations on the basis of the agreements the Palestinians reached with previous Israeli governments after the Oslo Accords.

All Arab states backed the Palestinian leadership’s participation in the proximity talks as an alternative to no talks at all, with the hope that they would soon transition to direct and serious negotiations. But we knew we were grasping at straws. We supported proximity talks because we believed a vacuum in peace efforts would only benefit hard-liners, who would exploit the failure to revive the negotiations to push their extremist agendas. And Netanyahu would benefit most from a Palestinian decision not to engage in proximity talks. As he came under increased American and international pressure for continuing to build settlements and thereby blocking the resumption of negotiations, he was eager to provoke the Palestinians and Arab countries into withdrawing from the peace efforts, so that he could once again claim he had no negotiating partner.

In April 2010, I traveled to the United States and met with President Obama in Washington. Again, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was at the center of our discussion. We were both disappointed and concerned that more progress had not been made in the last year and hoped that the proximity talks would soon pave the way to direct negotiations. After the meeting, it was clear to me that the United States was not yet ready to roll out its plan to push the parties toward a final settlement. The administration wanted the parties to begin proximity talks and would then assess the situation at some point before throwing its own ideas into the negotiations.

I came out of the meeting assured of the president’s continued commitment to resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. But I knew that it would be some time before real progress could be achieved, given Netanyahu’s intransigence. Accordingly, I felt that our task

would be to keep the hope alive until America was ready to bring its full weight to bear on the parties to resume serious negotiations with the intention of advancing toward a settlement. The region could not afford to lose hope yet again. That would mean war.

Back in March, right when U.S. vice president Joe Biden was visiting Jerusalem, the Israelis announced plans to build sixteen hundred new settlement homes in occupied East Jerusalem. The Israeli move embarrassed and angered the vice president and effectively challenged American authority. George Mitchell canceled his next trip to the region and Hillary Clinton called Netanyahu to lodge a formal complaint. Harsh exchanges followed between Washington and Tel Aviv. The diplomatic row came on the heels of a very public disagreement between the U.S. administration and Israel the previous fall over the question of a settlement freeze, amid increased international criticism of Israel for derailing the peace process. The European Union was particularly vocal in slamming Israeli settlement policies and their impact on peacemaking efforts. On December 8, 2009, during the Swedish presidency of the EU, its Foreign Affairs Council expressed serious concern about the lack of progress and called for the urgent resumption of negotiations that would lead “within an agreed time-frame to a two-state solution with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.”

The council said that “settlements, the separation barrier where built on occupied land, demolitions of homes and evictions are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible.” It urged the government of Israel “to immediately end all settlement activities, in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank and including natural growth, and to dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001,” as required by phase one of the road map of 2003.

The council noted that it had never recognized Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem, emphasizing that “if there is to be a genuine peace, a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of

Jerusalem as the future capital of two states.” In subsequent statements, the EU strongly condemned Israel’s announcement of new settlement plans.

In April 2010, former Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni lamented Israel’s deteriorating standing in the international community. “The world today,” Livni wrote in an article, “does not, at best, know what the policy of the Israeli government is, and, at worst, does not trust its intentions.”

Shortly before my trip to Washington, I attended an Arab League Summit meeting in Sirte, Libya. The summit reiterated its support for the Arab Peace Initiative, but with every passing day that sees no progress, pressure builds to abandon negotiations as a means to solve the conflict. Tensions in the region are running high on more than one front. Gaza continues to be a virtual prison, with its more than one and a half million people living in desperate conditions. Jerusalem is a tinderbox and Israel is playing with fire by trying to change its identity and empty it of its Christian and Muslim population through house demolitions and evictions, and by refusing to allow Arabs to build in the city. Further afield, on the Lebanese-Israeli front, we appear to be on the verge of witnessing another confrontation as Israel continues to occupy Lebanese territory in the south and Hezbollah develops its military capabilities. In the background of all of this is the crisis with Iran and its implications for regional security.

Proximity talks were officially launched in May after a number of visits by Mitchell to the region. Abbas went into the talks with the support of the Arab League, whose ministerial committee on the Arab Peace Initiative met on May 1 and said it would reconvene in four months to assess progress. The hope was that these talks would agree on terms of reference for direct final status negotiations.

We supported these talks, as they seemed to be the only alternative to complete disengagement, which would have been a dangerous blow to our decades-long efforts to achieve peace. The

hope was that the talks would bring the two sides close enough for them to resume direct negotiations. And yet by July, no agreement had been reached on the terms of reference for direct negotiations. Jordan's position was that failure was not an option, and we continued to work with all parties to ensure that progress was made to bring the Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table.

Senator Mitchell worked with the Palestinians and the Israelis to an agreement on conditions for the resumption of direct negotiations. His efforts hit a deadlock. The Palestinians wanted the proximity talks to address the borders, security, refugees, Jerusalem, and other complex final status issues. Abbas presented Mitchell with fully developed position papers on all these issues. He told him that he wanted borders and security addressed first, because an agreement on the borders of the future Palestinian state would facilitate the resolution of the problem of settlements, while an agreement on security arrangements would tackle Israel's top concern.

Netanyahu, however, would not engage in any substantive discussion on the issues. He continued to speak in general terms about his commitment to peace but would not put any ideas on the table. He held that such engagement would have to be made in direct negotiations.

The Palestinians and others in the region were growing more frustrated by the day with the failure to make progress. Hopes that the U.S. administration would salvage the situation by putting forward its own proposals to get the process moving vanished as Mitchell and other U.S. officials made it clear that Washington would not risk offering proposals that either party could reject out of hand.

As the September deadline for the end of the settlement moratorium loomed, in what many in the region saw as a major turnaround in the U.S. position, Washington stopped demanding a total freeze of settlement building as a requirement for the two sides to engage in direct negotiations. The Obama administration started to push for a resumption of direct talks even absent a settlement freeze, and to pressure Abbas to agree to the new terms. The

Palestinians argued that they could not directly engage the Israelis without ending settlement activities or at least announcing clear terms of reference for the new round of talks.

All of us who had supported the proximity talks were severely criticized by those in the region who believed the exercise was futile. Abbas in particular was accused of succumbing to U.S. pressure and compromising the interests of his people. He felt it would be political suicide for him to move to direct negotiations without identifying as the objective of these negotiations the establishment of a Palestinian state on the basis of the 1967 borders with minor land swaps. The picture was getting bleak again. But we knew we had to keep the hope alive to find a way out of this hole. Abandoning the process before exploring it to the fullest was not an option. This would have meant surrendering the region to a state of hopelessness that would put it on a new vicious course of conflict and war.

On July 23, I received a phone call from Obama. The president was by now determined that direct negotiations were the only way to break the impasse. He reiterated his commitment to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, stressing that he would go all the way to make sure a solution was reached. But unless the Palestinians agreed to talk to the Israelis directly, his administration would end its involvement in the process. Obama was clear: the Palestinians could either work with him to solve this issue through direct negotiations and count on his full commitment, or walk away and be on their own. The president delivered the same message to other leaders in the region.

A choice had to be made. Three days later, on July 26, I received Abbas in Amman. We agreed that the conditions were not ideal for transitioning to direct negotiations. Netanyahu's refusal to accept the earlier terms of reference and to stop building new settlements was discouraging, as was the unwillingness of the United States to commit to rolling out its own bridging proposals to rescue the negotiations should they reach a dead end. But to say no to Washington would be very costly to the Palestinian people and their

quest for statehood. Abandoning the peace process was not a decision to be made lightly. The biggest winner would be Netanyahu, who would blame the Palestinians for aborting the peace efforts, and would go on creating new facts on the ground that would make the establishment of a Palestinian state impossible. At the same time, the Palestinians could not justify moving to direct negotiations that would reinvent the wheel, disregarding progress made in previous rounds of talks over the two decades since Madrid. We agreed to explore all possible options, and to consult with other Arab leaders over the next steps. We also agreed that discussions with the American administration to find a way out should continue.

The next day I received Netanyahu in Amman. It had been over a year since his last visit, and I felt that the time was right for another face-to-face discussion, given the urgency of the situation at hand. In a one-on-one conversation we had before meeting over lunch with our staff, I told the prime minister that we had a unique opportunity to give our people the peace that they yearned for. If we missed this opportunity, the Israelis, the Palestinians—all of us in the region—would have to live with the terrible consequences of more devastating wars. Netanyahu again spoke in broad terms about his government's commitment to reaching a peace deal with the Palestinians. But he said Israel must be assured of its security first. I told him that reaching a peace agreement with the Palestinians within a comprehensive framework that would ensure normal relations with all Arab and Muslim countries would be the best guarantee of Israeli security. I urged the prime minister to halt the building of settlements so that serious discussions over borders and other essential issues could begin.

Over lunch with our staff, we discussed the economic potential of the region in the event of a peace agreement. Netanyahu spoke of his plans to build railroads up to the borders of Jordan and Syria. I mentioned that Jordan too was in the process of building railroads that would link up with a new Saudi railroad to the southeast and with Syria in the north. If we had peace in the region, Israel could link to our railroad and thus be connected with the Arab countries in the Gulf and with Europe through Syria. But under current

circumstances, Israel's railroad network would stop at its border. We discussed other regional infrastructure projects that Israel could plug into if we succeed in reaching comprehensive peace. I was hoping that by emphasizing the willingness of all Arab and Muslim countries to build normal ties with Israel and by highlighting the great potential of regional cooperation, I would encourage the Israeli prime minister to take the necessary steps to push the peace efforts forward. The meeting ended in a positive spirit as we discussed the potential for growth in bilateral economic cooperation between our public and private sectors. But we needed more than lofty visions of future economic cooperation to get us out of the bind we were in. And positive words had not translated into actions in the past. But the stakes were too high and I was determined to leave no stone unturned in my efforts to push for progress.

In the meantime, pressure on Abbas was mounting. Before a meeting of the Arab League Follow-Up Committee on the Arab Peace Initiative in Cairo on July 29, Abbas spoke of the difficult choices he was facing. "Never in my life have I been faced with as much pressure as that the United States and the European Union are currently putting on me to resume direct negotiations with the Israelis," he said in a press interview. The moment was critical and the Arab foreign ministers meeting in Cairo realized that. After long discussions and hard work by Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Palestinians, among other moderate countries, the foreign ministers agreed to the principle of resuming direct negotiations, but said it was up to Abbas to decide when to do so. The ministers drafted a letter that would be sent to Obama outlining the necessary conditions for the talks to resume. Among these were the articulation of clear terms of reference for the negotiations and the halting of settlement activities. Abbas was empowered by the Arab League to assess the situation and decide accordingly whether to hold direct talks with the Israelis or not.

On August 12, I met with President Mubarak in Cairo on the quickly developing situation. Mitchell and other U.S. officials had floated the idea that Egypt or Jordan host the relaunching of the

direct talks and that Secretary Clinton be invited. We both felt this was not sufficient. If the talks were to be resumed, we agreed, the United States must have ownership of the process. President Obama would have to demonstrate his full support of the process if it were to have any realistic chance of success. That meant that Obama would have to either host the relaunching event in Washington or attend the event if it was to be hosted by Egypt or Jordan. We also agreed that a formula would have to be found for giving the Palestinians some assurances about the terms of reference for the negotiations. After the meeting with Mubarak, I met with Abbas, who was also in Egypt to see Mubarak.

Mubarak, Abbas, and I all recognized that continued U.S. engagement in the process was essential. And we did not want the Palestinians to be blamed for the collapse of peace efforts. Creative ideas were needed to ensure that the negotiations would not be a futile exercise that would trigger another endless process and compromise Palestinian interests.

In the days that followed, and after intense discussions that involved many Arab countries, the Palestinians, the Europeans, and the Americans, it was agreed that the talks would resume in Washington on September 2, following a relaunching event hosted by Obama the previous day and attended by Mubarak, Abbas, Netanyahu, Tony Blair (representing the Quartet of the European Union, Russia, the United States, and the United Nations), and myself. Before that, the Quartet would set the stage for the negotiations by issuing a statement declaring that the objective of the negotiations was to reach a final settlement on the basis of a two-state solution.

On August 20, the Quartet issued a statement in which it reaffirmed its members' support for "direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians to resolve all final status issues." The Quartet reiterated positions it had adopted in previous statements, particularly those announced in Moscow on March 19, 2010. These stressed that negotiations should "lead to a settlement, negotiated between the parties, that ends the occupation which began in 1967 and results in the emergence of an independent, democratic, and

viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbors."

The Quartet called on the Palestinians and Israelis to join in launching direct negotiations on September 2 in Washington. It expressed its "determination to support the parties throughout the negotiations, which can be completed within one year," and urged both sides to refrain from provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric. The Palestinians considered the Quartet's statement to be terms of reference for the negotiations.

Invitations to the negotiations were issued by Secretary Clinton on the same day. In the letters she sent to the Israelis and the Palestinians, Clinton emphasized the commitment of the U.S. administration to a comprehensive Middle East peace. She said, "As we move forward, it is important that actions by all sides help to advance our effort, not hinder it. There have been difficulties in the past; there will be difficulties ahead. Without a doubt, we will hit more obstacles. The enemies of peace will keep trying to defeat us and to derail these talks. But I ask the parties to persevere, to keep moving forward even through difficult times, and to continue working to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region."

Clinton called me that afternoon to brief me on the preparations and to deliver my invitation. I spent the following days discussing steps that could be taken to ensure progress with fellow Arab leaders. I met with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia; King Hamad Al Khalifa of Bahrain; and the emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. I also consulted on the phone with King Mohammed VI of Morocco and Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. None of us had any illusions as to how difficult the situation was. But most were of the view that despite the apparent concessions the Palestinians had to make by engaging in the negotiations without a full settlement freeze or terms of reference or even an agenda for the negotiations, the talks represent an opportunity that must be supported.

I left for Washington on August 29. Before leaving, I felt it was important to address the Israeli public directly, to try to explain how

important it was for them to support courageous decisions. In an interview with Israeli television that aired on August 28, I said that more than ever, we needed politicians with backbones who were prepared to make the difficult decisions necessary for peace. And because politicians tend to get nervous when they face issues of any real magnitude or controversy, they would need to know they had the support of the people to muster up the courage to move forward.

Unfortunately, people on both sides had lost faith in the process. Failure to deliver over numerous rounds of previous talks had led to an alarming erosion of public support for negotiations. Since the Oslo Accords, Israel had gradually shifted to the right—abandoning the Labor Party in favor of more nationalist and religious alternatives. Many of those who had supported the peace process after Rabin's assassination had given up hope or left the country. The Arab world had also been shaken by decades of false promises and reversals. The "security barrier," the land seizures and arbitrary arrests, the Gaza war and the invasion of Lebanon had all taken their toll—and so too had the climate of suspicion and antagonism surrounding the Iraq War. Skepticism was particularly high this time around due to Netanyahu's reputation as an uncompromising hard-liner and to the perception that the Palestinians had been forced to make major concessions by giving up on the requirement that settlement activities halt before talks could begin.

I knew that by supporting direct talks against the backdrop of such public opposition, Mubarak, Abbas, and I would lose political capital among our people, who did not believe much would come out of the negotiations. But we felt the price of abandoning this last chance was too great. We could not afford another period of U.S. disengagement. Here we had a U.S. president who was putting his personal weight behind the process. We could not throw this opportunity away; it would only benefit the spoilers. When I had seen Obama in Washington in April 2009, I had told him that this time the Arabs would not leave him to do the heavy lifting on his own. We were at a decisive crossroads. And we had to make sure we moved in the right direction.

All eyes were on us when Obama, Mubarak, Abbas, Netanyahu, and I walked through the door to a room full of cameras at the White House on the evening of September 1. We were there to send a message of hope and to show that serious action was being taken to resolve a conflict that had for decades evaded the efforts of many good men. That was not an easy message to send amid the general mood of disappointment and disbelief prevailing in the region. People wanted action, not words, and action was what we hoped to achieve in the intense rounds of discussions that would immediately follow. President Obama spoke of his unwavering commitment to resolving the conflict. Mubarak was clear in stressing Arab support for a solution, and I pointed to the difficulties ahead but warned of the disastrous consequences of failure. Netanyahu went to extreme lengths to present himself as a man of peace and addressed Abbas directly, saying he came to Washington to work for a historic peace. Abbas was grand and said he wanted dignity, freedom, and peace for his people and for the Israelis alike.

The public speeches were followed by a dinner hosted by President Obama. Abbas and Netanyahu sat next to each other. Obama emphasized the need for the two leaders to help each other succeed, and said that we would all be there with them as they moved on the difficult path of peace. Abbas and Netanyahu engaged in serious discussions throughout the dinner. Could these two men succeed in brokering a peace deal that would finally free our region from the threat of war? We would have to wait and see. A litmus test was only twenty-three days away. On September 26, the partial moratorium on the building of settlements that Netanyahu had announced in November would expire. The future of the negotiations would hang on his decision of whether or not to renew that moratorium.

The next morning, Abbas and Netanyahu met at the State Department for the first round of negotiations. After an expanded meeting that included members of the Palestinian, Israeli, and American delegations, Netanyahu, Abbas, Clinton, and Mitchell held a smaller meeting before Abbas and Netanyahu met on their own. The parties agreed to refrain from any public statements in order to

avoid any provocative announcements that could jeopardize the process. Only Senator Mitchell would make a statement to the press.

Mitchell characterized the talks as “long and productive.” He reiterated his belief that the negotiations could be completed in one year and said that Abbas and Netanyahu were committed to approaching the negotiations in good faith. He reiterated their commitment to the “goal of two states for two peoples and to a solution to the conflict that resolves all issues, ends all claims, and establishes a viable state of Palestine alongside a secure state of Israel.”

The parties agreed to start working on a framework for a permanent status agreement. Abbas and Netanyahu agreed to meet every two weeks, and the next meeting was set for September 14 and 15. The next round of talks took place in Sharm El Sheikh on September 14 in the presence of Clinton, and continued the next day in Jerusalem under the shadow of the fast-approaching deadline for the end of the moratorium. Mitchell was again the only one to report to the press. This time, he said that the two leaders had reiterated the commitments made in Washington and started to tackle tough issues. He said that the United States would remain engaged as a serious partner. He tried to sound optimistic, but everybody in the region was concerned that the talks were nearing collapse, as all indications from Israel were that settlement building would resume on September 26.

Once the two leaders began to tackle details, the difficulties became more apparent. Abbas told Netanyahu he wanted to move forward on final status issues and presented the Israeli prime minister with the Palestinian positions. He again suggested that they begin with borders and security. But the talks ended on a negative note as Netanyahu insisted that any security arrangement must ensure a continued Israeli presence on future Palestinian eastern and western borders to guard against potential threats. Abbas said he would agree to security mechanisms, including the presence of international forces, but could not accept the presence of any Israeli soldiers on Palestinian land.

The situation deteriorated further over the following days as Israeli politicians made inflammatory public statements saying that settlement

building would resume immediately after the end of the moratorium. The Palestinians were emphatic that they would walk out of the negotiations if the Israelis did not extend the moratorium. A crisis seemed inevitable.

President Obama, like all of us, was concerned that all the difficult work that had gone into getting the two sides to the table would be useless unless we could find a way out of the moratorium dilemma. He took advantage of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York to send a powerful message about the need to proceed with the negotiations. “We believe the moratorium should be extended,” he said. “We also believe that talks should press on until completed.” He told all the gathered heads of state and diplomats, “This time we should search for what’s best within ourselves. If we do, when we come back next year, we can have an agreement that will lead to a new member of the United Nations—an independent, sovereign state of Palestine, living in peace with Israel.”

Unfortunately, the Israeli government did not heed the call of the U.S. president, of the international community, and of all of us in the region. No sooner had the moratorium ended than announcements were made that more than 840 new units would be built in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The Palestinians immediately suspended the negotiations but delayed a formal decision to abandon them to give efforts to resolve the deadlock a chance.

I met Abbas on October 3, six days before a scheduled Arab summit in Libya on October 9. He was frustrated with Israel’s failure to renew the moratorium for even a limited period of two to three months during which time he hoped to tackle borders. We explored creative scenarios that could offer diplomacy a new chance. The challenge was to keep the door open for a breakthrough. But the ball was in Israel’s court. Before meeting Abbas that day, I received Senator Mitchell, who had just concluded rounds of talks with Israeli leaders and was set to see Abbas in Amman following our meeting. We were all committed to finding a way to break the impasse. I told him that it would be impossible for Abbas to continue with the talks

if the issue of settlements was not resolved. Mitchell said he would continue his efforts.

On October 8, Abbas told the Arab League committee that he would withdraw from the negotiations if the Israeli government did not renew the moratorium on settlements. If the freeze was not extended, Abbas said the Palestinians would consider other options, starting with requesting a unilateral U.S. recognition of a Palestinian state. Should the United States refuse to do so, the Palestinians would ask the Arab League members to collectively demand a UN Security Council resolution recognizing a Palestinian state and would seek a UN General Assembly resolution to put the Palestinian Occupied Territories under a UN trusteeship if the United States vetoed such a resolution. "We have exhausted all options," Abbas said. The Arab League committee backed Abbas's decision, but decided to give the United States a month to try and salvage the negotiations before moving on to the options presented by Abbas.

As this book goes to press, direct negotiations are on the verge of collapse. We are two weeks away from the expiration of the one-month period given by the Arab League to the United States to get the negotiations back on track. Netanyahu shows no sign of compromise. His argument is that his coalition partners would not support an extension of the moratorium and his government would collapse if he pushed for such a decision. He would need to offer them sufficient incentive to convince them to extend the moratorium, incentives that the United States would have to provide in the form of a new package of financial and military assistance. In frenzied back-channel negotiations, the United States has offered major inducements to Israel to extend, even for as little as three months, the settlement freeze. But Israel, astonishingly, has so far thumbed its nose at these offers.

The United States continues to conduct extensive diplomatic efforts to break the deadlock, but the chances of success are getting slimmer by the day. Many in the Arab world are concerned that the staff changes that are expected to follow the U.S. midterm elections will give a more prominent role in the peace process to Dennis Ross,

currently a special assistant to Obama. Because his hard-line positions did not help in moving the peace efforts forward in the past, the fear is that a growing influence by Ross will only be a complicating factor.

It is astonishing that a peace agreement that would open the door for Israel to have normal relations with all of its neighbors was not incentive enough for the Israeli government to give the peace talks a chance by halting settlements for even a limited period. That is a very negative signal to send to the Arab world and to all members of the international community who seek peace in the Middle East as a pillar of global stability. It is a message that will only empower those who have all along bet on our failure. It is also a major blow to all forces of moderation in the region, particularly Abbas. If the Israeli government collapses, Israelis will elect a new government. But if Abbas loses his credibility with his people or is so demoralized that he decides to step down, the whole world would lose a credible partner for peace that cannot easily be replaced.

Abbas told me personally and has made it clear in public that he will make all necessary sacrifices for peace. But he cannot do it on his own. Claims by some in Israel that he could not deliver because of the challenge to his authority by Hamas are mere excuses not to go forward. What Abbas needs is a credible deal to present to his people. Were he to secure such an agreement, he would put it to the people to vote on in a referendum. Nobody would then be able to stand between the Palestinian people and their right to freedom and statehood. But in the absence of an agreement, we will all have to reckon with the real possibility of the total collapse of public support for the peace process and the complete bankruptcy of moderate policies, setting the stage for extremists to take over.

I had hoped, when I set out to write this book, that we would by now be celebrating the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and marking a new era of comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Instead, everyone in the region increasingly fears that we will soon be plagued by yet another devastating war. Israeli policies are mainly to blame for this gloomy reality.

So to the people of Israel I say: do not let your politicians endanger your nation's security through blind and thoughtless choices that continue to isolate your country. Almost one-third of the countries in the world do not have normal relations with Israel. Even North Korea has a better standing in the international community. A two-state solution with the Palestinians essentially means a fifty-seven-state solution, ensuring that Israel has normal relations with fifty-seven Arab and Muslim states that support the Arab Peace Initiative. If your leaders continue to choose conflict and war, each of you can make a decision to choose peace. For, in the end, only a fair peace with your neighbors can guarantee Israel the security it aspires to.

We don't need to look far into the future to see the problems on Israel's horizon. Simple demographics will alter the composition of Israeli society over the next decade. Currently, Arab Israelis make up around 20 percent of Israeli society. If there is no peace, and Israel continues to control the West Bank, then Arabs will become the majority. How will the Israeli government tackle this situation? If we fail to come to terms and to hammer out a two-state solution, which offers the promise of peace and security for all, the only other option is a one-state solution. That means that the Israeli government will have to give the Palestinians their full political rights as citizens, thereby eroding the Jewish character of the state. The other option would be for Israel to continue to disenfranchise a large proportion of its population, keeping the Palestinians under military occupation and denying them equal rights as citizens, thereby creating a new apartheid state and keeping the whole region hostage to the threat of war.

There are no alternatives. Some voices in Israel have spoken of what they call the "Jordan option," whereby Jordan would become the homeland for the Palestinians. That simply will not happen. We will not allow it; the Palestinians do not want it; and Israel cannot force it, for any attempt to do so will mean war and will expand the area of conflict. Nor will Jordan play any security role in the West Bank. We will not replace Israeli tanks with Jordanians tanks. The

only role we will play is to continue to work for regional peace by helping the Palestinians in their effort to establish a viable independent state that will live in peace side by side with a secure Israel.

Israel has a clear choice. Does it want to remain fortress Israel, peering over the ramparts at increasingly hostile and aggressive neighbors? Or is it prepared to accept the hand of peace offered by all fifty-seven Muslim states and finally integrate itself into its region, accepted and accepting?

My father spent more than forty years searching for a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and for a comprehensive peace in the region. But even though he struggled until his dying day, he did not see it come to pass. My great-grandfather, Abdullah I, was assassinated in Jerusalem, paying the ultimate price for his pursuit of peace in a climate of war. We all hope that this conflict does not claim more brave leaders and continue through future generations.

In 2009, I named my oldest son, Hussein, crown prince in accordance with the Constitution, which states that "the Royal Title shall pass from the holder of the Throne to his eldest son" but gives the king the right to select one of his brothers as heir apparent. This was a difficult decision. I would have preferred that he avoid the extra scrutiny that goes with the position, and be blessed with teen years as unpressured as mine were. But in the end I felt that it was best for the country, and for my son, to be clear about where I saw destiny taking the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Hussein is now sixteen. My most fervent hope is that when, in the fullness of time, he assumes his responsibilities, he will not be struggling with the same conflict that took his great-great-grandfather's life.

Over a decade ago, in the last months of his life, my father raised himself from his sickbed to address Yasser Arafat and Benjamin Netanyahu at the signing of the Wye Accords. He understood how fragile the dream of peace could be and was under no illusions as to the difficulties that lay ahead. He said, "I think such a step as is concluded today will inevitably trigger those who want to destroy life, destroy hope, create fear in the hearts and minds of people, and

trigger in them their worst instincts. They will be skeptical on the surface, but if they can, they will cause damage, wherever they are and wherever they belong.”

My father spoke at a time when trust between Israelis and Palestinians was high and many hoped the leaders on both sides would build on this foundation to achieve a lasting peace. The last decade of neglect has seen trust and hope fall to new lows and has strengthened those bent on destruction.

Every family, in East Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv, in Ramallah and in Jaffa, in the end, wants the same things: a peaceful and dignified life; the ability to fulfill their potential and to secure a better future for their children. Our better nature compels us to always look toward the light. I cannot believe that the people of Israel and Palestine want to continue to kill and be killed. We must all pray that their political leaders will give them the opportunity to live in peace and dignity.

Unless we see some positive breakthrough in the next year, I fear that we will miss our last chance for peace in a generation, and condemn our region to suffer another cycle of violence, war, and death. I fear that we are slipping into the darkness. But that does not have to be the future for our region. Our people want peace. It is our responsibility as leaders to make this much-eroded dream come true.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Not that long ago, I was speaking to some friends about how remarkable it was to me that more than ten years had passed since I had become king. We talked about the extraordinary series of events that Jordan, the Middle East, and the world had been through in that decade and my hopes that the next ten years would see greater safety, prosperity, and opportunity for all our citizens. Most of all, we talked about my conviction that the world is at a crossroads. In early 2009, it seemed to me that the stars could be uniquely aligned to give us a chance to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and to achieve the regional peace that had eluded past generations. I said that I would continue to do everything I could to make that happen.

During that discussion, one of my friends suggested that this would be a good time for me to write a book about what I had seen and done, and what I dreamed about for the future.

I had never given much thought to writing a book. My army training leads me to prefer courses of action with timelier outcomes. And besides, I thought, I'm a young man who, God willing, has only just begun his time as King of Jordan. But someone pointed out that my father had published a book, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, in 1962, the year I was born, describing his first ten years as king. I have always found following my father's example to be a wise course, so I began to give it serious thought.

The first step was to find a publisher who might be interested in bringing this story to a wider audience, and Andrew Wylie and Scott Moyers of Wylie & Company, one of America's most respected literary agencies, helped me to navigate the complex waters of