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THE ROADMAP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the Roadmap?

On 30 April 2003, the U.S. Administration officially announced a “Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict”. The document, which came to be known as the Roadmap, was endorsed later that month by the Quartet. On 19 November 2003, it was officially endorsed by the UN Security Council in Resolution 1515.

The Roadmap is a U.S.-backed peace proposal that sets out clear phases, timelines and benchmarks for resuming the Israeli-Palestinian peace process through mutual and parallel steps to be taken by Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the political, security, economic and humanitarian fields. As outlined in the Roadmap, the final destination of this peace plan is “a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israel-Palestinian conflict by 2005.”

2. Why has the Roadmap become so important now?

The Middle East has never been more unstable. Nonetheless, a revived and credible Israeli-Palestinian peace process carries unprecedented potential. The Roadmap enjoys broad support from the international community as a mechanism to achieve comprehensive peace.

Notably, the Roadmap cites with approval the Arab Peace Initiative endorsed by the Beirut Arab Summit in 2002, which provides for a regional settlement of the conflict at large. It also provides a framework to end Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land and to establish a viable, independent and sovereign Palestinian state.

3. Does the Roadmap include the 14 “reservations” made by Israel?

Absolutely not. While the Roadmap was endorsed both by the Quartet and by the UN Security Council in Resolution 1515, neither endorsement makes any reference to Israel’s unilateral pronouncements on the content of the Roadmap.

4. Have Palestinian obligations of the Roadmap been met?

Most Palestinian obligations in Phase I of the Roadmap are ongoing obligations, not static or one-time actions. Creating and maintaining effective security institutions is a continuing effort involving both internal measures and external assistance. That being said, most of the Palestinian Phase I obligations have indeed been met since 2003 when the PA conducted broad and sweeping reforms, appointed a prime minister and began strict control of its finances, while Israel did nothing to help on security cooperation. Israel also refused to withdraw Israeli troops to the pre-Intifada lines, freeze settlement activity, including natural growth, dismantle outposts or lift the roadblocks that suffocate the Palestinian population.

Furthermore, Palestinians carried out several other obligations including reiterating Israel's right to exist in peace and security and calling for a ceasefire, as well as calling for ending armed activities against Israelis.

5. Can it be said that Israel has met its Phase I obligations following Olmert's declaration of a settlement freeze?

No. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's declaration falls considerably short of the comprehensive settlement freeze required by the Roadmap. Whereas the Roadmap obligates Israel to freeze "all settlement activity (including natural growth of settlements)," in his November 19 statement, Olmert said only that Israel would not "build new communities" or "expropriate lands" and that it would "remove the illegal outposts." As such, Olmert's statement merely reiterates a number of "loopholes" employed in the past to allow settlement construction to proceed more or less unabated.

In particular, Olmert's declaration would allow Israel to continue building new settlements under the guise of building settlement "neighborhoods", as well as for the unlimited expansion of existing settlements.

Likewise, the ostensible ban on "expropriating" land is similarly meaningless since Israel has already expropriated most of the land it seeks for settlements and their future expansion, leaving Israeli settlements with an expansion reserve amounting to more than 40% of the West Bank. Moreover, it also allows Israel to continue seizing Palestinian land for settlements and settlement infrastructure through "requisitions", by declaring it 'state land' or simply by invoking unspecified "security" pretexts.

The same is true of Olmert's pledge to remove "illegal outposts". All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law. Thus, the Roadmap rightly makes no distinction between "legal" or "illegal" outposts (i.e., under Israeli law). The Roadmap makes it clear that Israel must dismantle all settlement outposts established since March 2001, regardless of their status under their Israeli domestic law.

Furthermore, Israel's settlement freeze obligations must be carried out immediately and simultaneously with those of the Palestinians. As the Roadmap explicitly states: "In each phase, the parties are expected to perform their obligations in parallel, unless otherwise indicated."

To meet the obligation imposed by the Roadmap, a settlement freeze must therefore include an end to all: 1) settlement and settlement-related construction; 2) subsidies and economic incentives for settlements and settlers; 3) planning and authorizations for settlements; 4) land confiscations, home demolitions and other property destruction; and 5) migration of settlers into the occupied Palestinian territory. Finally, the freeze must apply to all Palestinian territory occupied by Israel in 1967, including East Jerusalem, and should remain in effect until the implementation of a permanent status agreement.

6. In terms of timeline, the Roadmap gave two years to reach a permanent status agreement. Is it feasible to conclude an agreement before the end of Bush's term next year?

The Roadmap's original timetable was meant to be 'performance based', meaning that timelines are flexible and driven by implementation of various obligations. There is no reason to postpone implementation as the Roadmap envisioned commencing permanent status negotiations within 8 months from the start of Phase I. Since many of the obligations in both Phases I and II have already been met (particularly on the Palestinian side), 6-8 months is more than sufficient to conclude a permanent status agreement. That's what we have been asking for: to reach an agreement before the end of President Bush's term.

7. How can the PA implement the Roadmap, especially in terms of security, when Gaza is not under the control of the PA?

The current internal crisis and the radicalisation of the Palestinian street, especially in Gaza, are a result of the protraction and perceived failure of the political process, with Israel neither agreeing to a clear political horizon for the end game nor allowing any improvements to people's lives on the ground. The way to win back the confidence of the people is therefore to demonstrate that negotiations are the only effective way to reach a just and lasting peace, with freedom and independence for the Palestinian people. Positive resolution of the situation in Gaza is directly linked to political progress. Hence, if there is demonstrable progress on permanent status negotiations allowing the PA to reassert its legitimate authority in Gaza, then the PA will be able to reassert legitimate control and deliver on security in Gaza.



8. **UN Resolution 194 is not mentioned in the RM, does that mean that Palestinians have discarded the issue of the refugees?**

No, Phase III of the Roadmap clearly states that both parties will reach final and comprehensive permanent status agreement that includes an “agreed, just, fair, and realistic solution to the refugee issue.”