CRISIS COMMITTEE APPLICATION QUESTIONS 2014

Israel-Hamas-Fatah Joint Crisis Committee

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1. What is your past Model UN experience?

This is my second year participating in Model UN; however, I have participated in a variety of debate related activities. Last year I attended BOSMUN XIII as a delegate in the Israel-PLO HJCC. I worked as the fictional Chief Legal Officer of the PLO, and received the Best Delegate award for my work in committee. I immensely enjoyed working from a Palestinian perspective to solve the regional conflicts and would like to continue to do so at your committee.

1. What do you believe are the three most important issues related to developing a final framework agreement between Israel and Palestine?

It is my opinion that the deep-rooted resentment that exists between the two parties, and persistence of both Islamic and Jewish extremism, will forever present a challenge to a lasting peace agreement. However, ideological differences are, for the most part, out of the control of diplomats. I believe that lasting peace can only be established through a two-state solution. If this solution is to be agreed upon by both parties, then the establishment of mutually acceptable boarders must be a priority. The Palestinians will not be content until they have a self-sufficient nation where they can live free of Israeli oppression. In my opinion the Israelis must be willing to allow the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza to govern themselves as a sovereign state, even if this means relocating Israeli citizens from the West Bank. While this would be a major breakthrough, many of the Palestinians will not be content unless they also have unlimited access to Jerusalem. Which brings forth the second issue. The Israeli government must recognize that they cannot monopolize control of Jerusalem, and accept that the capital of their nation will have to be based in Tel Aviv, or even Haifa. While governmental control of Jerusalem will be a problem, it is imperative that Christians, Jews, and Muslims all are allowed equal and unobstructed access. The third issue will be balancing Israel’s desire for a strong national defense with the Palestinians want and need to maintain their own military. Preventing armed conflicts and allowing both parties to exist in peace will be the ultimate goal of all negotiations. Limited offensive capabilities for the Palestinians and the presence of an international peacekeeping force are both possibilities in this area.

1. How does the unification of Fatah and Hamas affect negotiations between Israel and Palestine?

In the short term, the unification of Hamas and Fatah has obviously had a devastating effect on negotiations between the PLO and Israel. The Israelis immediate reaction to cut off negotiations is obviously going to complicate matters immensely. The unification shows excellent progress for the Palestinians, but the Israelis seem reluctant to allow them to unify. The Israeli Prime Minister has even gone as far as to say "Does he [Abbas] want peace with Hamas or peace with Israel? You can have one but not the other. I hope he chooses peace. So far he hasn't done so." (Quoted in Aljazeera). Hopefully the Israelis will be able to overcome their fear of a unified Palestinian leadership and continue to seek a solution.

1. Please discuss some of the potential outcomes of negotiations between Israel and Palestine, and the costs/benefits of each scenario.

In my opinion the best feasible solution to the Palestinian question is a two state solution. Unfortunately, the majority of diplomats on the Israeli side of negotiations are opposed to such a solution. Drawing up the boarders of Palestine would take years, and most likely would never reach a complete level of mutual acceptability. If Palestine is allowed to keep the land east of the green line, then thousands of Israeli’s will have to be relocated. In fact, Israel seems determined to continue developing the West Bank at a pace that makes a two state solution less and less feasible. Once the two separate states are established, it may be difficult to ensure peace between them. However, I feel that keeping an armed UN peacekeeping force on the border would be sufficient to prevent hostilities. Also, care must be taken to ensure the stability of the new government in Palestine. If the government should fall to extremists, or fail to provide quality living conditions to Palestinians, then a war could easily break out. If, however, all goes smoothly, then the result will be two non-hostile nations, coexisting for the first time in history.

On the other hand there is the remote possibility of a one-state solution, or the binational solution. In theory this sounds like the ideal solution, with Jews, Muslims, and Christians living as equals in one state. This would resolve conflict over religious sites, and open equal opportunity housing to all ethnic groups. Yet I believe that this plan would be doomed to failure. It would bring about the abolishment of the Jewish state that was formed in the aftermath of the holocaust. The Jewish population would likely never be comfortable living side by side with a heavy Arab population. Also, the Jews would quickly become the regional minority, with millions of Palestinian refugees returning to the state. The Jews have the right to be responsible for their own security and protection, and such a rapid population change would leave them dependent on a mostly Arab nation. The government would likely be filled with so many conflicting interests that it would be a struggle to accomplish the simplest resolutions. A large percentage of the Palestinian population would not be content living in a nation without Sharia law, and most Jews would settle for nothing less then a democracy. Deep-seated ethnic and cultural differences appear to be overriding in preventing the two ethnic groups from living under one flag.

Other plans, such as the Elon Peace Plan, seem incredibly unrealistic without extreme redevelopment. In plans of this nature cooperation of surrounding nations, especially Egypt and Jordon will be key, but appear unlikely in the near future.

5. How can Israel balance its stated desire to be formally recognized by the international

community as a “Jewish state” with its constitutional commitment to democracy? How does

this impact the negotiations process?

If Israel truly wants to be recognized by the international community as a democratic state, then it is imperative that it never allows itself to develop into a Halachic State. Allowing itself to be governed by religious law would effectively turn Israel into a Jewish version of Saudi Arabia. Israel is already recognized as the world’s only Jewish state, yet it will never be truly democratic unless it ends the oppression of the Palestinians. Israel will likely never give up their position in the world as a Jewish state, and in my opinion this is one of the main obstacles in the creation of a one-state solution. Israel will never put itself in a position that remotely endangers their national security. As a result of this, negotiations have always been slow. Many states in the international community have voted anti-Israeli in various UN resolutions. This is mostly because of their violations of international law, and their refusal to heed to various UN security resolutions. If Israel wants to be taken seriously in the international community, then it needs to begin to have some faith in the system and follow binding international law. If they do this then the negotiations process can be exponentially improved.