

Statement by Prime Minister Barak regarding the Camp David summit, 10 July 2000

Prior to his departure for the Camp David summit, PM Barak addressed the nation and said that the time had come for decisions, to end the one hundred years of enmity and to turn to peace, but not at any price. He repeated his red lines and negotiating principles. He also addressed the Palestinians, telling them Israel that did not wish to control their future.
Text:

As I embark on a mission of peace on the invitation of President Bill Clinton, I bear with me the aspirations of the entire Israeli people, its hopes and its prayers for peace and security in our country.

In Ecclesiastes it is written: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven... A time for war, and a time for peace." In time of war, we knew how to make sacrifices and show courage and to win. The best of my young, daring colleagues fell on the battlefields. They are before my eyes today, they and the entire family of the bereaved, and I remember them, one by one.

As Chaim Gouri wrote during the War of Independence, "The moment of truth is close, and I am prepared for it."

One hundred years of enmity and struggle meet at this point in time. Behind me, far too many lie buried there has been suffering and anguish on both sides - because there is an unbearably high price not only to defeat but also to victory. The time has now come to put an end to the conflict, to give hope to the flower of our youth, that they may flourish undisturbed.

The time has come to take decisions and to bequeath a better future to our children, a different reality from that known by our and our parents' generations. This is the time to devote our best resources to education, to reducing unemployment, to bridging social gaps, to equal opportunity, and to taking advantage of the enormous talents of our young generation.

This is the meaning of peace and security. There is no peace without a price, just as there is no peace at all costs. The dream and the ideal are lofty, and they will never be straightforward and perfect. The reality of life is highly complex and complicated. A painful compromise is required. There is no choice.

I am embarking on this mission bound heart and soul to every single part of the landscape of Israel and the heritage that has grown out of it. As a simple soldier, as a commander, as commander-in-chief, this country and its streams, its stones, were the source of inspiration for everything I did. I am bound up with its human and geographic topography, its towns and natural landscapes, throughout the country.

The negotiations will be heart-rending and difficult because they will involve not distant maps and locations, but our beloved homeland. They will involve roots planted deep in the hills, and the love of the homeland to which I am bound and committed. This is a love that cannot be divided by

any imaginary line on the map.

If we do reach a settlement that will put an end to the conflict, there will be a heavy but necessary price to pay. As Menachem Begin said, "The difficulties of peace are better than the agonies of war."

If there is an agreement, it will only be one that will strengthen the security of Israel, its economy, and its regional and international standing. Otherwise, there will be no agreement.

If there is an agreement, it will only be one that will comply with the principles, to which I committed myself before I was elected, and principles that I have consistently and repeatedly stressed:

- A united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty;
- The 1967 borders will be amended;
- The overwhelming majority of the settlers in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip will be in settlement blocs under Israeli sovereignty;
- No foreign army in the entire area west of the Jordan River; and a solution of the problem of refugees outside Israeli sovereign territory.

These are the principles - these and no others. If there is an agreement, I will submit it, as I promised, to the Israeli people for a decision. It is the Israeli people who will decide on the agreement in a referendum. I will sign the agreement only if I am convinced that it strengthens Israel and its future. Such an agreement will, I am sure, be approved and endorsed by an overwhelming majority of the Israeli people, and I am sure by a majority of the Israeli residents of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip.

If there is an agreement, it will require a compromise, not only by ourselves, but also a painful compromise by the Palestinians; otherwise, there will be no agreement.

I would like to take this opportunity, on the eve of the summit, to address the Palestinian leadership and people and ask them to clear the air of accusations, threats and gloomy prophecies, and to rise to the greatness of the hour.

We are arriving at a decisive crossroads in the future relationship between us. The choice between us is between the peace of the brave, which will put the relationships between us on a positive track of good neighborliness and prosperity; or, God forbid, will lead to violent conflict, that will lead to further suffering and victims, and will not solve anything.

The State of Israel does not wish to control you and your future. We want good neighborly relations with you based on respect and liberty, on broad coordination, on shared interests, and on a separation that will allow you and us to maintain independent identities, development and free choice.

And I look forward to Yasser Arafat coming to Camp David with the full backing of the Palestinian people to achieve a historic peace. I expect him to come full of resolution and the ability to make a decision in order, together, to achieve our goal. Together, with the help of the President of the United States, we will be able to bring peace and security to our

peoples.

This is a moment of opportunity that will not reoccur. It is accompanied by major risks. And if, God forbid, we should fail, then the risks, and not the opportunities, will come true.

As we leave, I and all members of the delegation are accompanied by the hopes and prayers of Israel's citizens. I am accompanied by the fear of the mother and the concern of the father for their soldier son. I am accompanied by the anguish of those among us who have suffered the greatest loss of all, and by their hope that such bereavement should not be visited on any other Israeli homes. I am accompanied by the brave suffering of those soldiers who have been wounded and disabled in battle, who bear the scars of war.

I recognize the heavy responsibility and the great privilege of being Israel's representative at this historic hour, where we will try to take advantage of this opportunity to put an end to enmity and violence. We seek to dispel the clouds of conflict and allow the light of peace and security to shine on us and on our children with a bright, promising light.

On embarking on this mission, beyond the tumult of the political arena, I hear the real voice of Israel's citizens reinforcing me with their support and their blessings. Together with them, I will conclude with the words from the prayer: "May You grant peace and benediction to us and all of Israel, Thy people. May You bless all Your people with strength and peace. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who blesses Your people with peace. Amen."

Statement by Prime Minister Barak on his return to Israel from Camp David, 26 July 2000

Back in Israel, PM Barak expressed his regret over the failure to achieve a settlement. He said that the Israeli delegation had done everything it could. Now the entire world knew that Israel had conducted the negotiations honestly and willingly. He felt, however, that despite the pain over the failure of the summit, Israel would continue to strive for peace. Excerpts: Fifteen days ago, I set out from Jerusalem, the heart of the Jewish people, on a mission of peace in Camp David.

In the name of millions of citizens raising their eyes in hope and in prayer, I embarked to try and complete the task begun by the late Menachem Begin, and for which the late Yitzhak Rabin gave his life. In your name, I set out to bring peace and hope to our children and to put an end to the 100-year-old conflict between us and our Palestinian neighbors.

I embarked to try and strengthen Jerusalem, our capital, to enlarge and buttress it for generations to come with a firm Jewish majority.

I embarked to try and ensure that a majority of the settlers in Judea and Samaria would for the first time live under Israeli sovereignty. I embarked in the knowledge that there cannot be peace at any price, but also that there cannot be peace without paying a price - a painful, difficult and heartbreaking price.

Today I return from Camp David, and can look into the millions of eyes and say with regret: We have not yet succeeded. We did not succeed because we did not find a partner prepared

to make decisions on all issues. We did not succeed because our Palestinian neighbors have not yet internalized the fact that in order to achieve peace, each side has to give up some of their dreams; to give, not only to demand.

I look into the millions of eyes in whose name we embarked on this mission, and say: We did everything we could. We turned every stone, we exhausted every possibility to bring an end to the conflict and a secure future for Israel. And we continue to hope.

Today, the entire world knows that Israel desires peace. Today, the entire world knows that we conducted negotiations willingly and honestly.

I wish to thank my colleagues, Ministers Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, Shlomo Ben-Ami and Dan Meridor, and all the members of the delegation, for the days and nights of difficult deliberations undertaken with a weighty sense of responsibility for the future of Israel, for their joint efforts, for the friendship they displayed.

We conducted difficult negotiations; we were prepared to pay a heavy price. But we knew that on three things we could not compromise: the security of Israel, the sacred values of Israel, and the unity of the Israeli people. Let every Israeli and every neighbor know that there are things that are not negotiable. And if, God forbid, we will be faced with a choice of conceding or fighting for them, the choice will be clear to each and every one of us.

I, too, am disappointed today, as are many Israelis. I truly lament the loss of a tremendous opportunity which was so near, yet remains still far. In the name of the millions of eyes still gazing with hope and prayer, I promise not to despair, not to tire, not to cease to pursue peace.

To my brothers, the pioneering settlers in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, to our brothers in the Jordan Valley, to all of you I say today: My heart is with you in your pain. Your suffering is part of the path to the redemption of the land of Israel.

Throughout most of my life I fought alongside my brothers for the security of Israel. I will not let anyone harm it or weaken it.

To our neighbors, the Palestinians, I say today: We do not seek conflict. But if any of you should dare to put us to the test, we will stand together, strong and determined, convinced in the justness of our cause in the face of any challenge, and we shall triumph.

The road to peace is strewn with ups and downs, achievements and crises. We may still face difficult moments. But the hope of peace has not been extinguished - and it will come. Until then, we will stand united, in knowledge of our strength and the justness of our cause, ready to extend our hand in peace. Sure of our strength, we shall stride forward, with the prayer of generations in our hearts: "The Lord shall give strength to His people, the Lord shall bless His people with peace."