

II. History

The Lesson from Rabin, Arafat, and Oslo

by Harley Schlanger

Nov. 11—On Nov. 4, 1995, Israel's Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, was assassinated in Tel Aviv, while leaving a large peace rally in support of the Oslo Accords he had signed with Yasser Arafat two years earlier. The murderer was spurred by a climate of hatred toward Rabin, and Oslo, created by Benjamin Netanyahu and his allies among the extremist supporters of the "Greater Israel" movement. Netanyahu later bragged, "I *de facto* put an end to the Oslo Accords."

As he is today using the bloody Hamas attack on Israel of Oct. 7 as a justification to carry out an ethnic cleansing campaign

against the Palestinian population of Gaza, it is crucial to review the changes in thinking which led to Oslo, to gain insights into how peace can be made, in spite of a cycle of violence going back over seventy-five years.

Rabin's career as a soldier was shaped by his commitment to security for Israel based on building overwhelming military superiority over the Palestinian population and Israel's Arab neighbors. He was the commander of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) which took Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and Gaza during the 1967 Six-Day War. As Minister of Defense during the First Intifada uprising by Palestinians in December 1987, he ordered the IDF to use violent force, demolish homes and expel rioters, to suppress the revolt. But he came to realize that such tactics would not bring about a peaceful resolution. According to his wife, Leah, in her moving biography and autobiography, *Rabin: Our Life, His Legacy*, "The Intifada made it wholly clear ... that Israel could not govern another people." It became evident "that only a political solution could succeed over the long term."



U.S. Air Force/Robert G. Clambus

Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel (left), assassinated in Tel Aviv, Nov. 4, 1995, as he was leaving a large peace rally in support of the Oslo Accords he had signed two years earlier with Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority (right).



WEF/Remy Steinegger

The opportunity for such a solution came as the Madrid Peace talks—which began in December 1991 between Israel and the neighboring Arab states of Lebanon, Egypt and Syria, and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation—broke down, largely due to the intransigence of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. When Rabin defeated Shamir in the 1992 election, he called for accepting Palestinian self-government, and bringing Palestinian officials into direct negotiations, which had been rejected by Shamir; and he issued a freeze on settlements in the occupied territories.

Rabin also opened secret talks with PLO officials in Oslo, which produced the Oslo Accords, which included two economic annexes. These called for cooperation on mutually beneficial development projects, including agreements on water, energy, transportation, and industrial production. Arafat, whose renunciation of terror and recognition of Israel in 1988 had been rejected by Shamir as "not credible," reiterated that commitment, which opened the door for the handshake between Rabin and Arafat at a White House signing

ceremony on September 13, 1993, in the presence of President Bill Clinton.

At that meeting, Rabin demonstrated the quality of statecraft required to end protracted warfare. He said,

Let me say to you, the Palestinians, we are destined to live together on the same soil in the same land. We, the soldiers who have returned from battles stained with blood; we who have seen our relatives and friends killed before our eyes; we, who have attended their funerals and cannot look into the eyes of their parents; we, who have come from a land where parents bury their children; we, who have fought against you, the Palestinians; we say to you today in a loud and a clear voice, enough of blood and tears. Enough.

He continued:

We have no desire for revenge, we harbor no hatred towards you. We, like you, are people—people who want to build a home, to plant a tree,

to love, live side by side with you in dignity, in affinity, as human beings, as free men. We are today giving peace a chance and saying to you, and saying again to you: Enough. Let us pray that a day will come when we all will say: Farewell to the arms.

Arafat responded by stating:

My people are hoping that this agreement, which we are signing today, will usher in an age of peace, coexistence, and equal rights.

Rabin signed a peace treaty with Jordan's King Hussein on July 25, 1994, at the White House, and identified what is required to pursue peace:

If I raise my toast, I will raise it for those who have the courage to change axioms, to overcome prejudices, to change realities, and those who make it possible to them—for you, Your Majesty (King Hussein of Jordan); to you, President Clinton; to all those who believe and support and are ready to assist the continuation of peace in the region. *Le Chaim. Le Chaim.*

Unfortunately, the promise of the Oslo Accords was never realized. The funds being raised to begin the joint projects outlined in the two Economic Annexes were withheld by the World Bank, and then Rabin was felled by an assassin's bullet. Netanyahu's role in undermining Oslo and the legacy of statesmanship of Rabin and Arafat exemplified by Oslo, during his term in office from June 1996 to July 1998, provoked a sharp denunciation by Leah Rabin in 1998:

I hope, pray, that the days of this government are numbered. Benjamin Netanyahu is a corrupt individual, a contentious liar who is ruining everything that is good about our society. He is breaking it to bits, and in the future, we will have to rebuild it all over.

Since 2009, Netanyahu has served as Prime Minister for all but eighteen months, and has repeatedly undermined any prospect for negotiations with the Palestinians. Today, he is attempting to convince the world that killing children in Gaza will defeat terrorism against Israel, and bring peace and security. If he is not stopped, there may be nothing left to "rebuild."



Executive Intelligence Review now offers automatic monthly billing for its intelligence package. Receive *EIR's* weekly magazine and its *Daily Alert* in your inbox for \$50/month, billed monthly. Cancel anytime. Subscribe today!

Details at:
<https://store.larouchepub.com/EIR-Daily-Alert-p/eirpk-0000-000-00-001-std.htm>