

Is Kerry Cooking Up a Recipe for War in the Middle East?

On Friday, just as he was about to return to the United States from Jordan, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry announced that he had finally gotten the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Israel to agree to resume “stalled peace talks.”

His sigh of relief was almost as palpable as it was audible. After a round of media reports about imminent consent on both sides to negotiate a “two-state solution,” Kerry was desperate to make the false rumors come true. Otherwise, he was going to have to go back to Washington empty-handed and with considerable egg on his face.

What he did, instead, was cook up a hasty omelet.

“The agreement is still in the process of being formalized,” Kerry said, modifying the so-called good news. “So we are absolutely not going to talk about any of the elements now.”

But he did want to assure everyone that it was a done deal—not a peace deal, mind you, nor anything close to actual consent on the part of the PA even to engage in negotiations. Still, there was enough ostensible acquiescence for Kerry to work with.

To not lose the illusion of momentum, Kerry scheduled a tentative meeting in Washington at some point in the near future between PA professional negotiator Saeb Erekat and Israeli Justice Minister-cum-peace-processor Tzipi Livni (accompanied by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s confidant, attorney Yitzhak Molcho.)

No sooner had Kerry boarded his plane, however, than the Palestinians began to reiterate their terms—again, not for peace, but for talks. These preconditions include an Israeli

commitment to a withdrawal to the 1967 borders; a settlement freeze; and the release of 104 terrorists with gallons of innocent Israeli blood on their hands. As was reported by Israel's Channel 10 News, Netanyahu has capitulated on the terrorist issue—though his intention is to release “only” 82.

Meanwhile, senior PA official Nabil Shaath told Maan News Agency on Sunday that a resumption of negotiations “depends on two steps we asked the American side to agree on. If they agree, we will go to the next step, which is preliminary negotiations in Washington to discuss the rules and the terms of direct negotiations.”

Though he did not specify the nature of these “steps,” one can assume that peace is nowhere in the vicinity of the ladder, let alone at the top.

This is a safe assumption based on vast experience. The Palestinians never have relinquished their ultimate goal, which is not statehood but the demise of Israel. Hamas readily admits and acts on this. The PA also acts on it but only spells it out in Arabic. It is a key part of an overall strategy.

Indeed, as Kerry was declaring his success at getting the sides to come to the table on Friday, PA Religious Affairs Minister Mahmoud al-Habbash was giving a whopper of a sermon—broadcast on PA television and reported by Palestinian Media Watch—in which he explained the wisdom of reaching fraudulent peace pacts with Israel.

“The Palestinian leadership's sense of responsibility towards its nation made it take political steps about 20 years ago [signing the Oslo Accords],” he orated. “Despite ... much opposition by some, it brought us to where we are today: We have a [Palestinian] Authority and the world recognizes the [Palestinian] state. All this never would have happened through Hamas' impulsive adventure, but only through the

wisdom of the leadership, conscious action, consideration, and walking the right path, which leads to achievement, exactly like the Prophet [Muhammad] did in the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah."

"The Hdaybiyyah peace treaty," explains the Palestinian Media Watch report, "was a 10-year truce that Muhammad, Islam's prophet, made with the Quraish tribe of Mecca. ... Two years into the truce, Muhammad attacked and conquered Mecca."

The sermon ends with Habbash asserting, "This is the example; this is the model."

The late Abba Eban, who called the 1967 lines the "Auschwitz borders," once said that "the Arabs never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." Many complacent Israelis employ this quote in relation to peace negotiations with the Palestinians. "Nothing to worry about," they say. "The Palestinians always screw up and storm off, no matter what Israel concedes."

The trouble is that the form such tantrums take is the slaughter of Israeli civilians, alongside the Israeli leadership's steadfast adherence to its territorial and other concessions.

This is not a recipe for peace. It is a guarantee of war. Kerry can feel free to take full credit for what he is precipitating.

Ruthie Blum *is the author of* To Hell in a Handbasket: Carter, Obama, and the 'Arab Spring.'

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