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Jerusalem Peace Academy

Zippori Campus, Jerusalem Forest, P. O. Box 3353, Jerusalem 90133

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and what the EU can contribute to its resolution!

Dear and respected Audience!

I, Dr. Heinrich Eliyahu Benedikt, Founder-Director, The Jerusalem Peace Academy, Vice-President, The Club of Bidapest, Germany, want to first express my gratefulness to being invited to participate in this important Conference organized by the Crans Montana Forum und having the opportunity to share some of my major concerns in this suicidal conflict with you.

First of all please know that as a Jew and Israeli citizen I often feel ashamed about the treat and action of our Government and its attitude. I am not so much in disagreement about its analysis, but the more about its policy and ignorance and irresponsible violence and offence to our loyal Palestinian brothers.

Since the establishment of the State of Israel by the UN in 1948 countless efforts have been made from many backgrounds to consolidate the local living conditions and bring a solution which would be acceptable for all parties involved and touched.

We were discussing a [One-state solution](#) and a [Two-state solution](#),

We had

- [Peace Now](#) (1978-)
- [Rogers plan](#) (1969)
- [The Madrid Peace Conference](#) (1991)
- [The Oslo Accord](#) (1993)
- [The Clinton Peace Plan \(2000\) - Camp David](#)
- [The Taba Summit](#) (January, 2001)
- [The UNSC Resolution 1397](#) (2002)
- [The Arab Peace Initiative](#) (March 28, 2002)
- [The Elon Peace Plan](#) (2002)
- [The Geneva Accord](#) (October 20, 2003)
- [The Road Map for Peace](#) (April 30, 2003)
- [The Sharm el-Sheikh Summit of 2005](#) (February 8, 2005) and recently
- [The Annapolis Conference](#) (2008) and now
- [The Initiative of the Saudis](#);

Similarly there exist hundreds of Peace organizations and Initiatives in Israel and Palestine, but Peace is farther away then ever.

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While all these Conferences and Summits did not really achieve Peace in the area, they still had some decisive impact on many of us and led many Palestinians and Israelis to the decision to get on our own feet and of taking independent steps and initiatives to change the miserable conditions of our lives. Waiting for political leaders to achieve a real shift in the area has been proving too frustrating and inefficient so that people felt to take their destiny into their own hands and start different initiatives from below and from above (independent leadership);

We do not want to get involved in political issues, but leave their settlement to the politicians;

Considering the fact that all problems in the world – individual as well as collective – are caused by not being in tune with God and universe, we ...

Peace is not a matter of negotiations, but one of returning to divine principles and cosmic moral law.

Let us put some light on some issues.

As Israeli Jew and peace activist **I firmly request the Israeli Government to stop all kinds of harassments and provocations against loyal Arabs and Palestinians living in Israel and to offer equal human rights to all minorities sharing our land with us.**

Judaism is a religion of peace and respect, empathy and compassion, but our present Government does not abide in these values to protect its own people and also that of our neighbors.

I request the Government to stop misguiding us in painting and perpetuating the established biased stereotyped images, fears and prejudices about the “other” in our civil society and to foster a spirit of reconciliation, mutual respect and understanding and of friendly coexistence with each other.

But there is also the need of correction of the attitude of my Arab and Muslim brothers in the perception and attitude towards us as a people and Israel as a State. Firstly I request my Arab Neighbors and other Muslim States to end the neglect of the legitimate right of existence of the State of Israel and to acknowledge the existence of Israel and to establish diplomatic relations as a sign of goodwill.

Land: In Jeremiah 32 we read: ”See, the days are coming [it is JHWH who speaks] when the city of JHWH will be rebuilt from the Tower of Hananet to the Gate of the Corner, then once again the measuring line will stretch straight to the Hill of Gareb, turning then to Goah. And the whole valley, with its dead and its ashes, and all the fields beside the Wadi Kidron as far as the corner of the Horse Gate, eastwards, will be consecrated to JHWH. It shalt never again be destroyed, or laid under the ban.”

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Jeremiah buys a field in token of his confidence in the future of Judah:

“The word that was addressed to Jeremiah by JHWH in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. “JHWH says this: I am now going to deliver this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, for him to capture it; and Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape the power of the Chaldeans, but will inevitably be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon, speak to him personally and see him face to face. He will take Zedekiah to Babylon and he will stay there until I visit him—it is JHWH who speaks. If you fight the Chaldeans you will not succeed?”

“Jeremiah said, the word of JHWH has been addressed to me as follows, ‘Look, Hanamel the son of your uncle Shallum will come to you and say: *Buy my field at Anathoth, for you have the right of redemption to purchase it.*’ And, as JHWH had said, my cousin Hanamel came to me in the Court of the Guard. He said to me, ‘*Buy my field at Anathoth, for you have the right of inheritance and redemption; buy it.*’ I knew then that this was JHWH’s order. Accordingly, I bought the field from my cousin Hanamel of Anathoth and paid him the price: seventeen silver shekels. I drew up the deed and sealed it, called in witnesses and weighed out the money on the scales. I then took both the sealed deed of purchase and its open copy, in accordance with the requirements of the law, and handed over the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel, of the witnesses who had signed the deed of purchase, and of all the Jews who then happened to be in the Court of the Guard. In their presence I gave Baruch these instructions: *Take these deeds, the sealed deed of purchase and its open copy, and put them in an earthenware pot, so that they may be preserved for a long time. For YHWH Sabaoth, the God of Israel, says this, ‘People will buy fields and vineyards in this land again.’*”

“But now and for the same reason, this is what JHWH the God of Israel says about this city of which you say: *Sword, famine and plague will deliver it into the hands of the king of Babylon; I mean to gather them from all the countries, where I have driven them in my anger, my fury and great wrath. I will bring them back to this place and make them live in safety. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them a different heart and different behavior so that they will always fear me, for the good of themselves and their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them; I will not cease in my efforts for their good, and I will put respect for me into their hearts, so that they turn from me no more. It will be my pleasure to bring about their good, and I will plant them firmly in this land, with all my heart and soul.* For JHWH says this: *As I have brought this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring them all the good I promise them. People will buy fields in this land of which you say: it is a wasteland without man or beast, it is given over into the power of the Chaldeans. People will buy fields, pay money, draw up deeds and seal them, and witness them in the land of Benjamin, in the districts round Jerusalem in the towns of Judah, of the highlands, of the lowlands and of the Negev. For I am going to restore their fortunes — it is JHWH who speaks.*”

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In Zechariah we read similarly: *“In the days to come the mountain of the Temple of JHWH will be put on top of the mountains and be lifted higher than the hills. The people will stream to it, nations without number will come to it; and they will say, ‘Come, let us go to the mountain of JHWH, to the Temple of the God of Jacob, so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths; since from Zion the law will go out, and the word of God from Jerusalem.*

“He will wield authority over many peoples and arbitrate for mighty nations; they will hammer their swords into ploughs and their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation; there will be no more training for war. Each man will sit under his vine and his fig tree with no one to trouble him. The mouth of YHWH Zebaoth has spoken it.”

That means that even when God decided to allow the destruction of Jerusalem through the hands the Babylonians (and others) he already promised to bring the children of Israel back to the Land that He had promised to its forefathers.

No Jew has left his country voluntarily and out of free decision, but as a consequence of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Titus in 72 CA. In fact the Israelites and Jews are the only native people of the land as the descendants of Avraham, Isaac and Jacob. And we call Israel the Promised Land not because God had promised it to the Palestinians, but the Jews.

Still I believe – and the Thanakh (Old Testament of the Bible) confirms it – that we need to share the land with those who live amongst us and shall live in peace and mutual acceptance, respect and empathy.

Presently the Tibetans who are expelled from their native homeland sine several decades are facing a similar situation to that of our Jewish state.

Occupation: The term occupation is often used to cover and hide the real intention: which is to neglect and finally eradicate the State of Israel from the map, or as Gamal Abd el Nasser did: to throw the Jews into the sea. My personal fear is not so much to being killed, but to being cut off from my Jewish heritage in the land of Israel (e.g. Mount Moriah) on the grounds of the growing neglect of God’s Covenant with our people in the world.

This does not justify any neglect of Palestinian rights in our country, nor the right of the Palestinians to establish their own State. It is our duty as just Jews to do everything possible to make such a step become reality.

Palestinian Refugees: In post-war Europe we had about 25 Million refugees. Yet all originating countries decided not to give a right of return. This was stated because we cannot reverse time. Otherwise we would need to redraw all borders of Europe etc.

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As for Palestine this insight was refused to be acknowledged.

Israel cannot accept a general right of return for Palestinian refugees, which would go beyond the capacity of our land and the intention of our state; Yet the government may offer compensation.

After a wait of 60 years, refugees still living in refugee camps in Arab countries have to be integrated in the countries which are sheltering them, instead of misusing them as political repression against Israel. Some may be accepted by the Palestinian Authority to return to the designated territories.

Ethnicity: We as Jews are part of the Semitic peoples, mentality and culture; there is not so much difference between the mentality of an Arab or a Jew, then between a Jew or Arab and a European.

Also there must be a meaning that God has established the State of Israel in the heart of Arab Semitic nations.

And recently results of genetic research showed that the genetic code of the Palestinians is exactly the same as that of the Jews. So some people pledged that this might be a hint that the Palestinians be one of the lost tribes of Israel. Whatsoever, the fact of ethnic and mental relatedness cannot be denied and should finally be realized in positive ways to create and develop brotherly bonds between us.

Final Borders: ... should be decided by vote of those who are residing close to the demarcation-line – so that everyone there may have the choice to be part of either side.

Cause: The roots of the conflict are threefold. They are:

1) *psychological* (emotional and mental) based on *perpetuated stereotyped prejudices, biased concepts, fears and suspicions,*

2) *political* as being based on contradicting *territorial claims, terror of Muslim extremists, unbalanced Israeli dominance and Israel's refusal to grant equal rights* to the Palestinians. Yet both – dominance and violent resistance and terror – are mainly motivated by opposing and unjust claims for superiority, power and control, which is a matter of mentality and a false psychological-spiritual attitude.

3) The third and deepest root is the religious – which is the core and essence of all and based on a *deep neglect in the Muslim Arab world of the legitimate right to exist of a 'Jewish State or entity' in their midst – and mutually responded by Jewish extremists who deny any rights of Palestinians in the territories.* This is a karmic bond going back to the times of Nimrod and the building of the tower of Babel, nowadays sustained and rekindled by religious dogmas and one-sided claims for exclusive sovereignty and governance over the Temple Mount (Mount Moriah), which is itself a result of the neglect of divine revelation (as provided in the books of the Prophets of Israel).

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In order to solve this conflict we need to deal with its causes on all three levels. But first of all we have to realize that the conflict is not a mere territorial, but one of misguided existential religious claims and wrong beliefs. Here the responsible intervention of spiritual and religious leaders is in want.

Faith: As Jews and Muslims we are also closer with each other than with the Christians or Hindus etc. by our faith. We both believe in one undivided God and see ourselves as His children. Therefore we should live with each other in brotherly love and not in hostility against each other.

Differences: should be accepted and even honored in abiding by the principle of “diversity in unity” and “unity in diversity”.

Integrity and Justice: I am convinced that peace cannot be achieved just by negotiations. It will rather be a result of our attitude towards God and each other. Scriptures say: “Peace is a reward of righteousness.” As Jews we also should remember that God’s promise to bring us back into the land and keep us there as a “kingdom of priests and holy nation”, when we become worthy of this calling. God brought us back under the condition that we stick to Him and His righteousness.

Perspective: To get to a state of peace and welfare in our area, we cannot wait and depend on our governments. We believe in joint initiatives from civil society, NGOs, private organizations and spiritual and religious leaders to intensely work towards a consolidation of our two societies and the improving of their cultural, moral, economic and other living conditions.

We need to initiate joint initiatives, which are based on a shared vision of brotherly coexistence and for a life in dignity, peace and well-being with each other and on a solid commitment of joining forces and abilities in order to realize this vision and practically building a new life with each other.

It is amazing to see that the best and most flourishing organizations in Israel are led by a couple of co-chairs one being Jewish the other being Palestinian and acting like twins.

And nowadays even some of the most conservative Rabbis understand and promote the idea that only in supporting the Palestinians in their endeavor to build up their own state and helping them in their struggle for economic survival can bring a change in the area, instead of harassing and blocking them.

Altogether we all need to help to create a sound and balanced Palestinian State.

As for the International Community, Europe and Arab neighbors I believe that the support we need is this:



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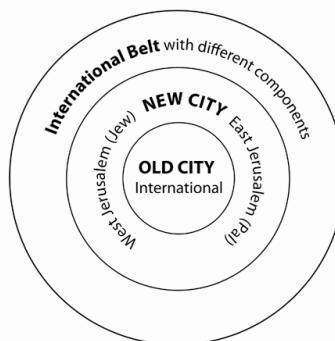
First of all I do see the need for international involvement not in telling us where to go and how to solve our problem, but in mediating between us, supporting our initiatives and helping us in our endeavors to build up and develop our countries, its educational system, its economy and to help in controlling illegal deals with weapons and misuse of international funds for the purchase of weapons and the like.

I believe that especially the Arab nations could be essentially contributive to establish a state of reconciliation and coexistence in the area by stopping all kinds of kindling emotions and hatred, integrating the long-term refugees living in their land (in refugee camps etc.) into their respective communities and support Palestinian private initiatives and entrepreneurs with generous and controlled funds. It is the rich Arab countries like Saudi Arabia and the Emirates who could fulfill their duties and responsibilities towards their Palestinian brethren, and not that of the Europeans.

According to the responsibility following the Holocaust and the Second World War, I envision Europe and Germany as the key factor in granting security and protection to the Jews and their country. This would be a real act of restoration and repair, not payments.

Jerusalem: As for Jerusalem our approach is social, economic, spiritual and not political. We promote the idea to develop **Jerusalem as an open, cosmopolitan and equal World Center** being the metropolis of our Jewish heritage as well as one of Christian and Islamic faith. Yet it should not just be a place of the three Abrahamic religions of the book, but rather a city representing, **offering and serving the real essence of what these religions teach - to bring light and wisdom, worthy life and blessedness to its people and the whole of mankind.**

A conceptual model for Jerusalem



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We - that is the Jerusalem Peace Academy, and its local and international partners - want to see Jerusalem as a flourishing open city whose citizens may rejoice in the establishment of perfect conditions for living in dignity and blessedness.

According to its natural geographic structure we envision Jerusalem consisting of

- a) the Old City being established as an International core or Corpus Separatum,
- b) the New City as being a physical undivided, but politically divided such that it may be the administrative center or even capital of two states, and
- c) being surrounded by an international belt consisting of all kinds of components which pertain services, educational, research, cultural, economic, interreligious and spiritual initiatives and organizations and a center of intrareligious and interreligious study, dialogue, peace education and cooperation.

Meaning we are dealing only with the lively issues of its social, economic, spiritual and cultural issues and leave the political agreements and decisions to the politicians. We have suggestions, but will not get involved politically unless being invited by the relevant authorities.

To attain our goal we need to firstly translate our vision into practical projects and initiatives, based on the idea of cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians and also Israelis, Palestinians and Internationals.

As a second step we want to initiate several task forces which are in actually planning, fostering and realizing specific aspects of the general goal, such as social, educational, economic, cultural, spiritual and interreligious.

These task forces can consist of coalitions between religious, social, economic and political actors.

In this way we can transform and develop Jerusalem into a cosmopolitan, open metropolis including the head-offices of the traditional institutions of the three religious faiths.

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