

MIDDLE EAST POLICY INITIATIVE FORUM

A proposal for:

AN INTERNATIONAL PROTECTORATE FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

UK, May 2003

CONTENTS:

1. Introduction: About MEPIF	P3
2. Synopsis	P4
3. Why an international Protectorate?	P5
I. Introduction: A roadmap with no vehicle	
II. An International Protectorate as vehicle	
1. The situation is extremely grave - and set to get worse.	
2. The situation has never been closer to a resolution.	
3. The parties can't solve the problems themselves - they have no exit route.	
4. Against this background, reviving negotiations at this time is pointless.	
5. Squaring the circle - an International Authority.	
6. A strategic use of international pressure.	
7. What's in it for the different parties?	
4. Members of the working group and consultants	P16

Introduction: About MEPIF

We believe this document on an International Protectorate for the West Bank and Gaza Strip offers a powerful and pragmatic means to break the deadlock in the Middle East. Here, we would like to offer a few words of introduction about the group that has developed it.

The Middle East Policy Initiative Forum (MEPIF) is based in the UK, and initially came together in June 2002 to discuss the deteriorating situation in the Middle East and the contribution we could offer, as deeply engaged third parties. The Forum includes several prominent and highly respected figures, and a range of professional expertise: Middle East experts, conflict resolution specialists, strategic thinkers, policy experts, politicians, academics and those with psychological knowledge, all of whom have a special interest in the region.

In the course of drafting this proposal, we have consulted closely with Israeli and Palestinian politicians and experts to make sure that the ideas contained therein would in principle be acceptable to both sides. But the "outsider" perspective also offers advantages: it has allowed us to take into consideration the concerns of both parties in the conflict with equal seriousness and, we hope, with impartial sympathy.

The idea proceeds from a paradox which has governed the situation in the Middle East for a long time: the majority of the populations on both sides wish for peace on approximately the same terms, but both ordinary people and their leaders have profound and legitimate fears about the intentions of the other side which so far have posed insuperable obstacles to attaining a negotiated agreement.

This proposal squarely addresses those fears. At the same time, it indicates the enormous benefits which the International Protectorate would offer to both sides on the way to full peace: the possibility of withdrawal with security for the Israelis; the end of Israeli occupation and support for building institutions on the way to statehood for the Palestinians; and a period of separation with assurance of protection for both – something necessary before peaceful coexistence can begin.

Our group has observed rules of confidentiality while developing this proposal. We believe that its moment has now arrived. The situation in the Middle East is urgent and needs a new vision. We hope you find our proposal of interest.

Synopsis

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in severe distress, threatening not only the local populations but also inter-communal relations in other countries, regional stability and world peace. Extreme animosity and sharply divergent aims preclude any prospect of the leaderships progressing voluntarily towards a peaceful settlement in the near future.

Against this, there is an unprecedented international and regional consensus, broadly supported by majority Palestinian and Israeli opinion, on the contours of a final peace settlement, based on two viable states, Jerusalem as the common capital and Israel's full acceptance into the wider region.

This paper proposes, as the most promising way forward, that a temporary International Protectorate take over formal legal jurisdiction from Israel for the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

This would give effect to the Palestinian demand, supported by a clear majority of Israelis, for a swift end to the Israeli occupation of these territories, while reconciling this imperative with the visceral Israeli fear of withdrawing in favour of the Palestinians.

The most urgent task of the Protectorate would be its peace-enforcement role – acting decisively against further mutual slaughter and other acts of violence or terror. In addition, the Protectorate would have a crucial, time-limited political mandate, intended to foster an independent, democratic Palestinian state and a peace agreement.

To this end, the Protectorate would assist in the restoration of basic services and the reconstruction of national institutions, in training security and civil personnel, in monitoring elections, in facilitating final-status negotiations with the Israeli government, in supervising the rehabilitation of incoming refugees and in managing extensive development funds and an array of internationally backed projects.

While the Quartet's roadmap has its merits, a principal weakness, as with previous peace plans, is its incremental approach and reliance on the goodwill and co-operation of both sides. What the roadmap lacks is a robust vehicle - an effective enforcement mechanism - that would finally drive the two parties to the goal of a comprehensive peace. This paper suggests that that vehicle or agency should take the form of an International Protectorate, which may be seen either as an alternative to the roadmap or as a complementary framework to enable its implementation.

Why an International Protectorate?

I. Introduction: A roadmap with no vehicle

‘The problem,’ according to Shimon Peres, ‘is not the light. The problem is the tunnel’. This paper contends he is right about the light but wrong about the tunnel. While it is unlikely that local political leaders, left to themselves, will ever be able to agree terms, decisive outside intervention is a different matter, and holds the key to a solution.

An international initiative to bring the conflict to a belated but final conclusion is not only imperative, urgent and achievable. It would almost certainly be welcomed, overtly or covertly, by the traumatized mass of Israelis and Palestinians locked in a deadly embrace.

The ‘roadmap’ initiative of the US-EU-Russia-UN Quartet has its merits. It keeps alive vital goals that some circles would like to see buried. It foresees an end to “the occupation that began in 1967” and the termination of all forms of violence and terror. It reaffirms the principle of land for peace in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions.

It looks forward to “the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours”. It upholds “agreements previously reached by the parties” and endorses the “Saudi Plan” – ratified by the Beirut Arab League Summit - that calls “for acceptance of Israel as a neighbour living in peace and security in the context of a comprehensive settlement”.

The roadmap establishes what it calls “a realistic timetable for implementation”, involving three phases, culminating in “a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by 2005”. That the timetable elaborated is hopelessly unrealistic is a minor point, but it is an indication of the wishful thinking and doubtful premises that permeate so much of the plan.

One notable example is the belief that the violence may be permanently ended while the occupation remains in place. But the major – and fatal – weakness is the roadmap’s lack of an effective enforcement mechanism. The Quartet will merely monitor, evaluate, assist and facilitate.

This places the roadmap, in its present form, essentially within the tradition of previous plans that likewise depended on incremental ‘confidence-building’ steps, backed up by little more than outside exhortation. On what compelling grounds should we believe this plan will not suffer a similar fate to its doomed predecessors, including the Mitchell, Tenet and Zinni initiatives, to name three of the most recent?

The plan relies upon the goodwill of both parties and their commitment to a common outcome that they must also be capable of delivering - assumptions that are far less grounded today than they were during the more optimistic but ultimately fated Oslo period. As a “performance-based plan”, it once again hands an effective veto to enemies of a peaceful settlement on both sides who have never hesitated in the past from sabotaging progress when given the chance.

Yet momentum in its favour appears to be building up. It is said to be the ‘only game in town’. And who dares defy the four-power Quartet under the vigorous leadership of the US? So the Sharon government supports the roadmap - subject to a mere one hundred amendments. The Palestinian Authority is supportive too, even though the “provisional borders” of their future state will certainly be far less generous than the ones they rejected at Camp David in summer 2000, let alone the ones that came close to being agreed six months later at Taba.

Almost everyone is paying lip-service to the roadmap, but few really believe in it. No one wants to be blamed for its eventual failure. It is indeed the only ‘game’ in town.

As it stands, the roadmap looks set to lead nowhere. If it is to achieve its destination, what it needs is a sturdy, bullet-proof vehicle – an unassailable institutional framework - which no amount of traps, diversions or land mines can derail while it drives toward a comprehensive peace based on parameters already well-known.

II. An International Protectorate as vehicle

This paper argues that the vital missing vehicle is a transitional International Protectorate for the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This international authority – which would formally replace the Israeli occupation authority as the legal power – could be seen either as an alternative to the roadmap or as a complementary framework to enable its implementation.

The proposal is based on seven pillars, most of which may be regarded as

self-evident. Strung together, they seem to point to one compelling conclusion.

1. The situation is extremely grave – and set to get worse

Peace between Israelis and Palestinians, it is widely held, is further away than ever before. Never has there been such fierce deadlock, mutual animosity or utter despair.

On one side, there is an occupation authority committing grave human rights violations and contravening the Geneva Convention more or less at will, with the apparent support of the majority of the Israeli population. On the other side, Palestinian militants are continuing their campaign to blow up Israeli civilians, again with the apparent support of the majority of the Palestinian population. Each side lives in daily terror of the other, with casualties mounting.

The outlook is even more grim. The prolonged siege of Palestinian towns and villages is leading to a humanitarian disaster, which a seriously impaired Palestinian Authority (PA) is incapable of remedying without considerable outside help.

Potentially irretrievable divides are emerging, which the situation in Iraq may well exacerbate. It is possible that prospects for a peaceful settlement – based on two states - will be buried indefinitely. Rival ideas of a one-state solution are resurfacing in some circles on both sides. These are not only ill-thought out and unrealistic, but regarded as deeply threatening by one side or the other.

On the broader scale, the situation carries a potential threat to inter-communal relations in other countries, to regional stability and world peace. The international community thus has a direct stake in its resolution, and minimally the right – if not the obligation – to intervene.

2. The situation has never been closer to a resolution

This is the other side of the paradox. According to polls, most Israelis want to withdraw from the territories, end the occupation, evacuate most settlements and live peacefully with a Palestinian state. In parallel polls, the Palestinians have consistently indicated their willingness, under these conditions, for reconciliation with the Israeli people and state.

What is more, there is an unprecedented international and regional consensus on the contours of a final peace accord, centred on two viable states, the evacuation of most Israeli settlements, Jerusalem as the common capital, the Clinton/Taba parameters regarding some of the finer details, a fair and practical solution to the refugee issue based primarily on absorption into the Palestinian state with suitable compensation, and the prospect of Israel's full acceptance into the wider region under the Saudi Plan.

All this is the fruit of a decade of negotiations. We know how to resolve this conflict. There is light. So why can't we have peace now?

3. The parties can't solve the problem themselves – they have no exit route

First, there is a complete breakdown of trust between Israelis and Palestinians, such that any concession either side may conceivably contemplate would instantly be dubbed 'reward for terrorism' or 'surrender to repression'.

Secondly, other than effective capitulation, there is nothing the Palestinians could really offer a right-wing Israeli government that would satisfy its territorial ambitions and ostensible security needs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, or its wider political and ideological agenda.

Re-casting and reforming the Palestinian administration will not prompt the current Israeli government to change its spots. Nor will a further excising of Palestinian textbooks, a prolonged abatement of violence, nor even spontaneous democratic transformations throughout the Arab world. These ends, each doubtless desirable in its own right, may be cited expediently. But they are more pretext than reason for this Israeli government's dissension from the international consensus on territorial and related questions.

Equally, the current Israeli government has nothing to offer the Palestinians that would come close to meeting their minimum aspirations for an end to occupation and independent statehood. Perceiving no prospective benefit from its standpoint, a Likud-led government may be expected further to evade or obstruct negotiations – whether they are in the form of direct talks, an international peace conference, the despatching of yet more toothless envoys or any other such device.

4. Against this background, reviving negotiations at this time is pointless

Thus international pressure to revive substantive negotiations, within existing parameters, would almost certainly founder. Yet more time would be frittered away.

None of this is to imply that Israel's security problems are fake. Threats to the existence of the Israeli state in the past from a plurality of Arab states were common, authentic and sometimes blood-curdling. More recent assaults on the lives and limbs of Israeli citizens by Palestinian terror groups have been bloody and horrific, and the menace is still ever-present.

The impact of such threats and deeds on a people whose extinction has been threatened, in a different context, within living memory, and who saw it carried through almost to the end, is especially poignant. It would be imprudent for would-be peacemakers to make light of this.

For all these reasons, many Israelis are deeply concerned about the security implications for their country, and for their personal safety, of an Israeli retreat from its current positions. It is this that accounts primarily for the support of roughly two-thirds of Israelis for Sharon's strong-arm policy of re-invading Palestinian towns and villages and dealing harshly with their inhabitants.

Coincidentally, two-thirds is about the same proportion that favours an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories: an apparent paradox that reflects the visceral fear of ordinary Israelis. While ready to give up the territories, they are not prepared to relinquish them to the Palestinians. This is the political legacy of the suicide bomber.

Even a more "doveish" government would find it politically difficult to relinquish the West Bank and Gaza Strip to a Palestinian administration. A party that stood on such a platform is unlikely to attract the support of the electorate in the first place, a supposition that appears to have been borne out by the results of the recent election.

Indeed, the Israeli Labour Party under Amram Mitzna had advocated direct negotiations with the PA, including with its president Yasser Arafat. Should these fail to reach agreement, he favoured a partial unilateral withdrawal from the territories. But such a move would entail no commitment on the part of the Palestinians, including on security questions, and would fail to satisfy their

political aspirations, supported by international opinion, for a full end to occupation and the establishment of a viable, contiguous state based on the 1967 borders. Nor would it lead to an end of conflict.

Furthermore, the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon under Ehud Barak prior to his summit at Camp David with Yasser Arafat is viewed by many Israelis as having rewarded Hizbollah violence and thereby as having encouraged a strategic turn to violence by the Palestinians. This has led to a reluctance to repeat such a measure.

All these factors have contributed to the present stalemate. What is required at this time is a mechanism to reconcile the aspiration of ordinary Israelis to withdraw with their fear of the consequences of so doing - and with the need to secure the future of the Palestinians. As indicated, the two peoples, left to their own devices, have no current prospect of achieving this. The answer lies not with gentle coaxing toward further incremental measures – a serially discredited method - but with a more direct and comprehensive approach.

5. Squaring the circle – an International Authority

A transitional International Protectorate would deal directly with the heart of the issue by taking immediate steps to end the Israeli occupation, rather than attempting to establish another diversionary procedural mechanism which somehow, eventually, might meander toward the same outcome.

An International Protectorate would provide urgent, impartial protection to each side from the violence of the other, and generally create a breathing space. For this, it would need serious muscle. But the aim is not to contain the conflict but to end it. So the security role is not enough. It must be accompanied by a political mandate.

Among the Protectorate's specific tasks would be to assist the Palestinians in restoring basic services, reviving civil society, and rebuilding national institutions, with the explicit end of fostering the establishment of an independent, democratic Palestinian state after, say, three-to-five years.

It would generate development funds, monitor national elections to international standards, oversee the training of security forces and other vital personnel as appropriate, and generally ensure good governance.

It would facilitate and mediate final-status negotiations, initiate a refugee return and rehabilitation programme to the nascent Palestinian state, and generally co-ordinate an array of internationally sponsored projects that the drive towards independence is likely to require and excite.

Virtually none of these vital tasks could be carried out properly or at all as long as Israel remained the occupying power, both because it would continue to provide a magnet for Palestinian attacks and because it would retain an effective veto over any initiative.

These two factors, together with the persistent contravention of the Geneva Convention, further underline the cardinal need for a 'switch in mandate' through a once-and-for-all change in the identity of the occupation authority.

Variations on the theme of an International Protectorate have been put forward by different proponents of the idea over the last year or so, particularly as regards its structure and scope. As envisaged in this paper, the structure would rest on three tiers.

The upper tier would confer international legitimacy and legality on the Protectorate and its scope of authority through a UN Security Council resolution, which would also chart the broad parameters of an envisaged final settlement based on the aforementioned international and regional consensus. The resolution would designate, as the second tier, a 'Mandate Authority' to oversee the work of the Protectorate. A likely candidate would be the 'Quartet' of the US, EU, Russia and the UN, possibly expanded to include other appropriate powers.

The third tier, the Protectorate administration, would be divided between the civil and security tasks, with military personnel drawn from countries assented to by both the Palestinians and the Israelis. One proponent, the New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, has suggested designating the security task to NATO. Alternatively, it could fall to a 'coalition of the willing and acceptable', which may include troops from the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, possibly Turkey, possibly Egypt, possibly Jordan or others. It is hard to imagine this working without the US playing a prominent role.

As for its scope of authority, again there are different views. For example, Martin Indyk, former US ambassador to Israel, has suggested that the mandate would initially embrace Oslo Areas A and B, comprising some 42 per cent of the West Bank, with a possible extension to 52 per cent to provide better contiguity.

But this minimal model is unlikely to attract much support among the Palestinian mainstream which may fear the boundaries of the Protectorate, without cast-iron assurances to the contrary, will delimit the borders of their future state. This could lead to a further layer of mistrust and risk the Protectorate being perceived and treated as another hostile occupation.

To allay these fears, it is envisaged that the Protectorate, under the authority of the UN Security Council, would claim formal jurisdiction over all the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in place of the Israeli occupation authority.

It would then pragmatically delegate back, in part or in full, interim *de facto* authority over designated areas of territory or programme to either the Israeli occupation authority or the Palestinian Authority. The aim would be for agreement among the parties at every stage where possible, based on a general picture of the end-game but without prejudice to matters of detail to be determined in final-status negotiations.

Over the years, international interventions have played a key role in various conflict situations around the world, their mandates varying with circumstances and needs. Examples include Namibia (1989), Cambodia (1992), Rwanda (1993), and more recently East Timor (1999) and Kosovo (1999). Within the region, a multinational task force in Sinai and a UN force on the Golan Heights have operated successfully for many years.

6. A strategic use of international pressure

It may safely be said that this proposal – like all proposals that would deny their agenda – would meet with the vehement opposition of the current right-wing Israeli government. To win its compliance, it is highly likely that considerable international pressure will be needed.

However, this would be true for any major proposal. How else, for example, could the present Israeli leadership be prevailed upon to engage seriously in the Quartet's roadmap? How else could it be forced into participating in an unwanted international conference – an important feature of the roadmap - or into sitting face-to-face with unwelcome Palestinian negotiators? And how else, once there, could it be influenced into making any sort of meaningful concessions?

Yet, if misdirected, there is a danger of international pressure being wasted, discredited and easily undermined. The focus of any pressure needs to relate to the end-game, not to the devising of new forums for direct or indirect negotiations as if setting up the process were somehow an achievement in its own right.

Once sufficient international political will is engaged – still seriously lacking at this time - a point may finally arrive when a Likud-led Israeli government would have to choose between acquiescing in the International Protectorate idea or facing a progressive sequence of sanctions designed to force its hand. In these circumstances, even such a government may divine the writing on the wall and enter into negotiations to try to salvage what it may from the new, sharper, reality.

The repercussions for Israeli society of an end to a 36-year occupation of the land and lives of a neighbouring people and the return to Israel of large numbers of settlers, some of their militant and bitter, will be mixed and profound and far too numerous to contemplate here. Naturally, there will be dislocations. But the continuation of the occupation is itself causing severe internal rifts. This is made worse by intensive economic distress within the country due in part to the financial cost of sustaining the occupation, which would not be possible without huge US annual subventions. It cannot be assumed that these will be so readily forthcoming in future years.

If the surgery is delayed for much longer, the combination of the external and internal pressures may imperil the future nature, if not the very existence, of the Israeli state. This is a consideration that any Israeli government – whatever its political bent - will have to weigh seriously sooner or later.

7. What's in it for the different parties?

The proposal for an International Protectorate, once disseminated and debated, could have far-reaching effects within both Israeli and Palestinian societies. Within Israel, by driving a wedge between the security and ideological arguments, it could help crystallize the issues, isolate the ideologues, and inject a new political current around which disparate groups may unite and campaign. It could provide the bemused pro-peace constituency with a badly needed fillip.

Within Palestinian society, it could drive a parallel wedge between the mass of the population who desperately want the Israeli occupation off their backs so that they may get on with the business of building their state, and the ideological merchants who will only be satisfied, if ever, when Israel is extinguished from the political and geographical map.

For most Israelis, unburdening themselves from the occupation will be an enormous relief. Daily fear of terror attacks should markedly recede and they may be able to travel freely again, both at home and abroad. A serious peace process and normalisation of relations with their neighbours and the wider Arab region should lie ahead. Relations with the rest of world should pick up again. A united – if shared - Jerusalem would at last be recognised as Israel's capital city. Embassies would move there, tourists return, the economy revive and the social fabric stop tearing itself apart. Above all, it would restore a sense of future.

In some Palestinian circles, the proposal may be regarded initially as yet another device for delaying independence. But in reality, far from statehood lurking around the corner, the drift is in the opposite direction. The Palestinians of the occupied territories today are effectively a nation incarcerated. The termination of the Israeli occupation and the entire paraphernalia of repression would mean a new start – politically, materially and psychologically.

It should reverse the creeping humanitarian disaster and herald the end of crippling physical restrictions. Daily fear should also be removed from their lives. The Protectorate should lead to a practical and acceptable resolution of the refugee problem and to a fully functioning, independent, democratic Palestinian state taking its place as a full member of the United Nations. For Palestinians too, it would restore a sense of future.

The global benefits could be huge. If, finally, it lanced the abscess of this conflict and led to its resolution along lines now well-known, it would remove a major thorn in international, regional and, frequently, personal relations. It would – indubitably – require a major commitment from the international community in terms of political, economic and military resources. However, the potential rewards are vast and the opportunity surely should be grasped while it is still available.

If the roadmap is not to avoid the same ignominious fate as its predecessors, it should be amended to incorporate an International Protectorate as vehicle and

enforcement mechanism. Failing this, the Protectorate idea should be further developed and held in reserve against the future collapse of the roadmap.

Meanwhile, even as world attention is diverted elsewhere, a groundswell in support of an International Protectorate may be built up: both in preparation for later participation by the US and other powers, and as a means of influencing global policy in this direction.

The Middle East Policy Initiative Forum (MEPIF) is a UK-based think tank comprising specialists from diverse fields. Any queries to Gabrielle Rifkind, the group convener: +44 (0) 20 7794 9914, gabriellerifkind@talk21.com); or Dr Tony Klug, the principal author: tonyklug@compuserve.com

Members of the working group and consultants

Dr. Scilla Elworthy is director of the Oxford Research Group. Her Ph.D. from the University of Bradford was on the subject of British nuclear weapons policy; she has three times been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for work in conflict resolution.

Paul Hilder is co-founder of the global debate network openDemocracy.net and co-editor of *Peace Fire: Fragments from the Israel-Palestine Story*, which gathers perspectives from all sides to explain the collapse of the peace process from Camp David to autumn 2002.

Dr. Eva Hoffman grew up in Poland and lived in the U.S. before moving to London in 1992. She has a Ph.D. in literature from Harvard University, and was senior editor at *The New York Times*. She is the author, among other works, of *Shtetl*, a history of Polish-Jewish relations. She has lectured widely on cultural and political subjects.

Dr. Tony Klug is an international relations specialist who has been writing about the Middle East for many years and proposed a two-state solution in the early 1970's. His Ph.D thesis was on Israel's rule over the West Bank. He has travelled extensively in the Palestinian territories and in Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt. He has formerly served as head of international development at Amnesty International.

Judith Large is an independent consultant and practitioner working in conflict research, analysis, policy, education and training. Her practical experience has been focused in the Balkans and extensively in Indonesia. She has made working visits to Egypt and Israel.

Dr. Susie Orbach has investigated how social and political structures shape our psychology and emotional lives and our political potentials. She has been advisor to the World Bank. She is a visiting Professor at the LSE and the author of ten books and numerous technical and popular articles.

Anne Pettifor co-founded the international Jubilee 2000 campaign for the cancellation of third world debts – which led to a G8 agreement in 1999 to cancel \$110bn owed by 41 countries. Ms. Pettifor is now a Director at the New Economics Foundation, London.

Gabrielle Rifkind is the convener of this group, a group analyst, an adviser to the Oxford Research Group and specialist in conflict resolution. Her special contribution is to the group process and what occurs beneath the surface in any kind of political dialogue if we wish to facilitate change. She has initiated and facilitated a number of Track II roundtables.

Professor Paul Rogers, until recently Head of the Department of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, joined O.R.G. as part-time paid consultant on nuclear and security issues in May 2001. Paul has worked in the field of international security and peace research for over 20 years. He is author/editor of 15 books and about 100 papers, including, most recently, *Losing Control: Global Security in the Early 21st Century*, Pluto Press, (2001).

Lord Stone of Blackheath became a Labour Peer in 1997 in the New Labour Government. He was the Joint Managing Director of Marks and Spencer Plc and believes that trade and commerce must play a key part in any lasting peace settlement. He is a former member of the Israel British Business Council, a governor of the Weizmann Institute of Science and the Tel Aviv University, and sits on the European Council of the Ben Gurion University.

Consultants

We have consulted very closely with **two Palestinian specialists** in the region, who have advised the PLO/ Palestinian Authority and been involved in previous Israeli/Palestinian peace talks. They wish for us to respect their confidentiality. They were well placed to state what they considered would be acceptable to the Palestinians, and have made a very serious, constructive and detailed contribution over several months.

A number of **Israeli experts** have also been consulted over the period.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind, who was the Minister of Defence in the British Government in 1992- 1995 and Foreign Secretary from 1995 – 1997, was part of our first roundtable on this initiative, and has kept in contact and acted as an advisor as appropriate.