

Award Ceremony

**for the
Human Rights Award 2002
of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung**

in honour of
the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Coalition

on Friday,
May 17th, 2002

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Human Rights Award 2002 of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

AP



INVITATION



FRIEDRICH
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Israeli-Palestinian Peace Coalition

The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Coalition (IPPC) consists of Israeli and Palestinian politicians, academics, activists of non-governmental organisations and leading personalities from the world of culture. They include representatives of the peace movement such as the former Israeli Minister of Justice, Yossi Beilin, or the Leader of the Opposition in the Knesset, Yossi Sarid, and on the Palestinian side the Minister of Information and Culture, Yasser Abbed Rabbo and the chief negotiator, Saeb Erekat.

The IPPC supports the principle of a two-states solution based on the borders of 1967, with Israel and Palestine existing side by side with Jerusalem as the capital of both sides. They share the concern about a peace process as an alternative to terror and violence. »We are firmly convinced that the interests of our two societies, and also their self-respect and human rights can only be upheld through a negotiated peace process and the end to occupation.«

In addition to the public campaigns in their respective societies in protest at the violence and occupation, the IPPC met with well-known international personalities, such as South Africa's President Mbeki and foreign ministers Fischer, Straw, Ivanov, Michel and the High Representative of the EU, Solana, in order to actively campaign for a peaceful settlement at the international level.



Award Ceremony
for the
Human Rights Award 2002*
of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

in honour of
the Israeli-Palestinian Peace
Coalition

presented by
Holger Börner
President of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
Minister President ret.

Laudatory Speech
Joschka Fischer MdB
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Short Responses by the
Laureates

Friday,
May 17th, 2002
at 11:30

in the central hall
of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
Hiroshimast. 17
D - 10785 Berlin

** The Human Rights Award of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
is financed by the Feist-Fund, the legacy of the
couple Karl and Ida Feist from Hamburg.*



Holger Börner, Joschka Fischer

Foreword

Just one year had passed since the first meeting of the Peace Coalition close to the border checkpoint A-Ram near Jerusalem and the ceremony which honoured them with the Human Rights Award 2002 of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. But the history of the Coalition's commitment went back much further.

For years, many members of the Peace Coalition, including well-known Israelis and Palestinians from the world of politics, science, arts and non-governmental organisations, had been making efforts to create understanding and peace in their respective societies. Yet there was increasingly more use of force, hopelessness and alienation between the peoples. Dedicated representatives of the two peoples were brought together by the realisation that there was both a partner and a plan for peace and that there was also an alternative to hatred and revenge: they formed the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Coalition (IPPC).

“We are convinced that national self-interests, moral integrity and human rights of the Israeli and Palestinian society cannot be brought about by violence, but by peace negotiations and an end to occupation.”

The declaration published in the Israeli and Palestinian media met with a wide response. More meetings and reactions followed. In December 2001, people gathered in the open on both sides of the border checkpoint Kalandia near Jerusalem. At the same time, thousands signed a joint appeal for peace.

The group wishes to be the voice of hope, humanity and reason. Peace is the goal, dialogue the means to achieve it. They find expression in public rallies against violence and for reconciliation. The IPPC campaigns for a solution based on two

“**We are convinced that national self-interests, moral integrity and human rights of the Israeli and Palestinian society cannot be brought about by violence, but by peace negotiations and an end to occupation.**”

states for two peoples within the borders of 1967, and Jerusalem as the capital of the two states.

The campaign group, which has no intention to wait for external help, is increasingly attracting international support and goodwill as well: it held talks with the European foreign ministers Fischer, Ivanov, Straw and Michel, and also with the foreign-policy representative of the EU, Solana; with President Thabo Mbeki from South Africa who has initiated a Middle East campaign and who was for three days host and moderator for peace talks of the Coalition.

Similarly, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung has been actively involved in Israel and the Palestinian Territories with the aim of bringing about an understanding between the two peoples. The Human Rights Award 2002 is intended to contribute to this process by supporting those who actively campaign for peace and human rights. The Prize is awarded not necessarily to honour the spectacular success, but the persistent efforts made by the laureates. At the same time the Award is to be both a rebuke and an appeal to individuals who commit acts of terror against the civilian population, propagate the use of force and refuse to take part in a dialogue, Holger Börner said in his opening speech.

IPPC

Israeli-Palestinian Peace Coalition

“No to bloodshed, no to occupation. Yes to negotiations, yes to peace”. This message of a group of Israelis and Palestinians in May 2001 was a signal. Its joint declaration was published in the Israeli and Palestinian media and attracted a good deal of attention both amongst their two peoples and at the international level. A growing number of supporters have joined the group. Politicians, aca-

“**No to bloodshed, no to occupation. Yes to negotiations, yes to peace. This message of a group of Israelis and Palestinians in May 2001 was a signal.**”

demics, representatives of non-governmental organisations and of the world of culture on both sides are today members of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Coalition.

They shared the conviction that there was an alternative to terror and war in the Middle East – and, in particular, that they were each other’s most important allies in the struggle for peace; this brought them together for their first meeting.

Notwithstanding the entrenched adversarial positions at present, the alliance is committed to a peaceful settlement of the conflict, a two-states solution on the basis of the 1967 borders and Jerusalem as the capital of the two states. The IPPC campaigns in order to mobilise the public and to bring about a change of heart on both sides by means of political education for peace and public campaigns against violence and for peace.

Although the Coalition is in favour of involving the international community in the peace process, one thing is clear: its members have no intention of waiting for outside support. They believe that they hold in their own hands the power to break the circle of hatred and violence.

The representatives of the IPPC on the Israeli side include founding members of the peace movement “Peace Now” such as Yossi Beilin (Minister of Justice in the Barak Cabinet), Yael Tamir (Minister for Immigration in the Barak Cabinet); on the Palestinian side Ghazi Hanania (deputy Speaker of Parliament) and Hanan Ashrawi, probably the best known Palestinian peace activist.

The duo of the Palestinian pianist Saleem Abboud Ashkar and the Israeli pianist Shai Wosner demonstrated how harmonious it may sound when Israelis and Palestinians play together. The Israel-born conductor Daniel Barenboim had worked with them several times and had recommended them for the ceremony, at which the two played a Mozart sonata and Ravel’s “La valse”. The harmony of the musical accompaniment caused Yael Tamir to suggest that “maybe Israelis and Pales-



„Mit Mozart auf dem Weg zum Frieden“

tinians can play so beautifully together only if Europeans write the notes” and to call on Foreign Minister Fischer “to match Mozart and to offer us the right tone”.

The couple Karl and Ida Feist from Hamburg initiated the Human Rights Award of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung with the aim of honouring the laborious and persistent groundwork for human rights, human dignity and peace – even if it does not attract public attention. The Award comes with 10,000 Euro. The previous laureates include the Marie Schlei Verein (1994), the Polish professor Ewa Łętowska (1995), the current Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo (1996), the Bosnian priest Petar Anđelović (1997), the Algerian journalist Omar Belhouchet (1998), Kailash Satyarthi, coordinator of the „Global March against Child Labour“ from India (1999), the association of the Committee of the Soldiers’ Mothers from Russia (2000) and the Serbian resistance movement OTPOR (2001).

Opening Speech

President of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
Minister President ret.

M Mr. Minister, dear Mr. Fischer, Excellencies, Honoured Guests from Israel and Palestine, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends, on behalf of our Executive Board I should like to welcome you today to this ceremony marking the Human Rights Award 2002 of our Foundation.

We have just heard the first movement of a Mozart Sonata for 2 pianos, played by the Palestinian pianist Saleem Abboud Ashkar from Berlin and the Israeli pianist Shai Wosner, who has come from New York to perform for us.

The fact that these two young artists have been invited to provide the musical accompaniment to this special meeting is intended to emphasize the importance attributed to the present topic. At the end, we will again hear the two pianists performing together.



Holger Börner



It is a great pleasure to me to be able to welcome you here today, Mr. Foreign Minister. You are a committed representative not only of our own country, but of Europe in the struggle for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict. There is almost no other European politician who enjoys the degree of trust that the two sides have placed in you as a person and in your policy.

This year's Human Rights Award of our Foundation goes to the "Israeli/Palestinian Peace Coalition".

With great respect we should like to extend a warm welcome to its co-founders and representatives:

For the Israeli delegation: Dr. Yossi Beilin, former Minister of Justice, Ms. Prof. Yael Tamir, Director of the Rabin Institute for Israeli Studies. For the Palestinian delegation: Dr. Ghazi Hanania, deputy Speaker of the Palestinian Parliament, Ghassan Khatib, Director of the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre.

We must not take for granted the fact that you have joined us here today in this difficult period. At the same time, your work is of particular urgency and importance in these bitter hours of constant escalation of terror and violence. Even if the hope for

peace has suffered a cruel blow we must not cease in our endeavours to build bridges.

The “Peace Coalition” – politicians, representatives from the world of science and culture and from non-governmental organizations of both sides – has been established as a platform to develop new approaches for peaceful resolutions. Cross-border dialogue and solidarity is even more important for both sides these days in order to create an atmosphere of trust without which peace will not be possible.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Honoured Guests, by taking part in this ceremony today you demonstrate not only your interest in the Human Rights Award, the work of the Foundation and the personalities and achievements of the laureates, but you express your solidarity for both sides combined with the desire for an understanding. By bestowing the Award to the “Peace Coalition” today it is our intention to draw special attention to the fact that constructive efforts for peace will never be successful unilaterally, but need to be based on dialogue and mutual understanding. This also leaves its mark on the activities of the Foundation in Israel and the Palestinian Autonomous Territories.

Ladies and Gentlemen, with today’s Award ceremony our Foundation is attempting, to the best of its ability, to contribute to the many and diverse efforts towards creating an understanding between the parties to the conflict. In so doing, we see ourselves in the tradition of Willy Brandt who stood for the values of peace, justice and balanced solutions worldwide as did almost no other politician.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends, According to the legacy of the Foundation, the Human Rights Award is not only intended to honour those who have dedicated themselves to peace and human rights, but to give a rebuke as well. In this connection, our appeal today is directed against those who have committed acts of terror against the civilian population and have agitated

“The “Peace Coalition” – politicians, representatives from the world of science and culture and from non-governmental organizations of both sides – has been established as a platform to develop new approaches for peaceful resolutions.”

for the use of force, against extremist tendencies on both sides which prevent a dialogue, and last but not least against the shameful attacks in Germany and elsewhere in the world on religious institutions and individuals visiting them.

The Award ceremony today is the ninth in the history of the Human Rights Award of our Foundation. According to the legacy of the couple Karl and Ida Feist from Hamburg, the Award is to honour not so much spectacular successes, as the laborious and persistent groundwork for human rights, peace, reconciliation and the prevention of violence.

We bestow this Award as a sign of solidarity and in the recognition of shared responsibility and the necessity for supporting the efforts for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

We are convinced: it is only by means of a political peace process that a social climate can be created in which respect for human rights and human dignity is guaranteed, and that lasting peace alone can provide the basis for reconciliation between the peoples.

Dear members of the Peace Coalition, we here in Germany observe your work and your efforts with great respect. We recognize that you are the minority on both sides at present. But your commitment in such a difficult situation inspires hope in a peaceful and just solution of the conflict. It is therefore a great pleasure to me to extend to you the Human Rights Award of our Foundation.

The document reads: The Human Rights Award of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung 2002 is bestowed on the Israeli/Palestinian Peace Coalition in recognition and appreciation of their trust in a partner and a plan for peace in disregard of the escalation of violence, their public statements against the use of force and occupation and for peace, the commitment in mobilizing their respective publics and their advocacy of a change of heart,

“ We recognize that you are the minority on both sides at present. But your commitment in such a difficult situation inspires hope in a peaceful and just solution of the conflict. ”

URKUNDE

Der Menschenrechtspreis 2002

The Human Rights Award 2002

der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

wird verliehen an die

is conferred on the

Israelisch-Palästinensische Koalition

Israeli-Palestinian Coalition

für den Frieden

for Peace (IPPC)

in Anerkennung und Würdigung

in order to acknowledge and honour the IPPC's

- ihres Vertrauens in einen Partner und einen Plan für den Frieden –
trust in a partner and in a plan for peace
ungeachtet der Eskalation der Gewalt,
against the backdrop of escalating violence,
- ihrer öffentlichen Auftritte gegen Gewalt und Besatzung und für den Frieden,
public actions to oppose violence and occupation and promote peace,
- ihres Engagements zur Mobilisierung der jeweiligen Öffentlichkeiten
commitment to mobilizing the respective publics
und ihres Eintretens für einen Bewusstseinswandel,
and working for a change in attitudes,
- ihres gezielten Einsatzes zum aktiven Aufbau von Unterstützung auch auf
engagement in actively building
internationaler Ebene.
international support.

Berlin, 17. Mai 2002

Berlin, 17 May 2002



Worsitzender

President

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Der Menschenrechtspreis der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung wird aus dem von ihr verwalteten Feist-Fonds in

The Human Rights Award of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is funded by the Feist Fund,

Erfüllung des Vermächnisses von Karl und Ida Feist vergeben.

fulfilling the legacy of Karl and Ida Feist.

their specific dedication to actively win support at the international level as well.

I congratulate you on behalf of our Foundation. I should like to thank you, and all the members of the „Peace Coalition, for their work. I wish you and your peoples peace – shalom – salam.



Beilin, Hanania, Fischer



Tamir, Beilin, Hanania, Börner

Laudatory Speech

Joschka Fischer

Minister of Foreign Affairs

M Mr. Prime Minister ret., dear Holger Börner, Ladies and Gentlemen from the Parliament, Distinguished Laureates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Federal Government – as also its partners in the EU, the USA and in Russia and a great many individuals in Germany – are observing the situation in the Middle East with grave concern. A concern which is also due to the fact that Europe is geographically so close to the conflict. But this concern does not stop us from continuing to work for peace, energetically and with great determination.

In spite of, and more explicitly because of, the present aggravation of the conflict, it is necessary to look ahead into the future: the only acceptable option for the future is a Middle East with two states, Israel and Palestine, living together peacefully and within secure borders. In pursuit of this goal, people may go off the track or may get onto the wrong track, but there is ultimately no other option which is politically desirable, enforceable and ensures lasting success.

It is therefore a special pleasure to me that those who have not ceased to work for such a just and lasting peace in the face of increasingly escalating violence are being honoured today with the Human Rights Award of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. I extend my warmest congratulations to the laureates. I also congratulate the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung for their choice of laureates. The daily suffering and the many victims it involves certainly calls for a great deal of strength and courage to bridge

“The only acceptable option for the future is a Middle East with two states, Israel and Palestine, living together peacefully and within secure borders.”



the deep abyss between Israelis and Palestinians and to speak up publicly for such a process.

The two pianists demonstrated to us just now how beautifully harmonious Israelis and Palestinians can act together; if we were to achieve this in the daily life of the Middle East, a dream would certainly come true for all of us.

Yet the loss of confidence between the two peoples and their leaderships is almost complete. This is one of the reasons why this kind of dedication – based on confidence and great determination – is more necessary than ever. The Israeli/Palestinian Peace Coalition sets an admirable example of such determination for peace. The Coalition stands for the conviction that peace is possible and also for its willingness to face the truth together – as a conscious alternative to two separate forms of perception, an Israeli and a Palestinian one – which have almost nothing in common anymore and take little note of the suffering and the

sacrifices of the other side. I therefore visited the Peace Coalition in February this year. I continue to regard support for their aims and their members as a key to peace in the Middle East even in the current situation. The EU-Heads of States and Governments explicitly acknowledged the activities of the peace groups in Barcelona.

“ I continue to regard support for their aims and their members as a key to peace in the Middle East even in the current situation. ”

Two states, one peace – there is general agreement about this aim, in particular between Europe and the USA. We fully support the vision described by President Bush in the General Assembly of the UN and again in his important speech in April: the vision of two states – Israel and Palestine – side by side in peace and security.

We also welcome the initiative of Crown Prince Abdallah from Saudi-Arabia which was endorsed by all Arab states at the Summit of the Arab League in Beirut. This initiative is a signal to Israel indicating the willingness of the Arab states to maintain good neighbourly relations and to respect Israel’s fundamental interest as part of a negotiated settlement.

In the wake of renewed escalation after Easter there is again movement in the political process. Yet the parties to the conflict appear to be almost incapable at present of attaining a solution by themselves. It is therefore necessary to initiate a phased process which combines the following essential elements:

- (1) a clear definition of the political outcome of the process: two states – Israel and Palestine,
- (2) a roadmap describing the individual measures to be taken,
- (3) a binding timeframe, and
- (4) a “third party”, ensuring and guaranteeing implementation of these measures.

The latter is crucial. Without active involvement by the USA – as we all know – nothing will change for the better in the Middle East. Yet even the USA on their own have so far not been successful in settling the conflict in spite of all their efforts. This realization has resulted in a “quartet” comprising the USA, EU,



Joschka Fischer

Russia and the Secretary General of the United Nations, and is also the basis for very close transatlantic cooperation in the region.

The quartet may be the appropriate international guarantor to monitor the required strong commitments that the two sides must make. They include: mutual recognition of the right to exist; renunciation of all forms of violence; an end to terror; consistent prosecution of all terrorists; an end to the hate propaganda – to mention just the most important ones.

These commitments must be part of the decisions taken by an international conference of the kind that is being discussed these last weeks. Many details may still be undecided. We are maintaining intensive contacts with our EU-partners and the USA to ensure the success of this conference. My visit to Israel and the Palestinian Territories at the end of this month will also serve this purpose.

There must be full recognition of Israel by the Arab states at the end – as proposed by the Saudi initiative. This is the aim that both Europeans and Americans will jointly work for on the basis of the ceasefire which must be put into operation now. Without

a definite time horizon and firm international guarantees this aim is unattainable. But as long as it has not been attained, Israel's existence remains precarious. This cannot, indeed must not, be in the interest of either of us. This is why I believe that there is no meaningful alternative to continued German and European engagement in the crisis region nor to close American-European cooperation in the Middle East.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Germany has a special relationship with the State of Israel for historical reasons which must and will find expression in solidarity, in particular in difficult times. There must be no doubt about this. Germany affirms its responsibility for Israel's right to exist and the security of its citizens. I noted the other day in a different context that this responsibility is not a question of current political constellations, but a foundation, a constant in every German policy. Israel can rely on democratic Germany as a partner, now and in future. There can be no equidistance as far as Israel's security is concerned.

At the same time we emphatically and committedly support the right of the Palestinians to a life in dignity, the right to their own state. We also regard this as the best guarantee for Israel's permanent security. We welcome both democratic reforms and new elections which were announced by President Arafat the other day, and also the signing of the law concerning the reform for the administration of justice – an important condition for continued budgetary aid. Within the framework of a future peace process, Europe is willing to make a substantial contribution to the development of a democratic, a pluralist Palestine. And this Palestine has a large democratic potential. Not only the Palestinian laureates, but many others are representative of it, as I know from personal experience. It is, in particular, in connection with the return to the negotiating table that the strengthening of democratic

“Germany affirms its responsibility for Israel's right to exist and the security of its citizens. I noted the other day in a different context that this responsibility is not a question of current political constellations, but a foundation, a constant in every German policy.”

“**Lasting peace will be possible only if two democratic societies reach out their hands for reconciliation in Jerusalem.**”

Palestinian structures will make a great difference. Lasting peace will be possible only if two democratic societies reach out their hands for reconciliation in Jerusalem.

“We are each other’s most important allies in the struggle for peace”: this declaration of the members of the Israeli/Palestinian Peace Coalition describes the bridge which the two parties in this

tragic conflict can and must cross in order to live together in peace – in spite of all the horrible setbacks and frustrations. Peace starts in the minds of the people. It starts with recognition and respect for your opposite number. To have persistently reiterated this message in the midst of all the violence is the great achievement of the laureates we are honouring today. For this they deserve our recognition, our respect, our admiration – and in particular our active support in order for their dream of peace in the Middle East to come true.

Thank you.

Response by the Laureates

Dr. Yossi Beilin:

M Mr. Fischer, thank you for being the Foreign Minister of Germany in these very difficult days for our region. Mr. Börner, thank you very much for awarding us.

Your Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen.

We thank you very much and appreciate the fact that it was decided to award us with this very important prize for human rights. I was especially glad to hear that it is not a prize for a success necessarily, but for the efforts that the recipients, the laureates are making. And we promise you to continue and make all the efforts that we can make in order to achieve peace.

One day, when the story of the Peace Process in the Middle East will be unfolded and told it won't be told without the very important part of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. The story has not been told, there are many parts of it which are secret. I think that in very, very difficult days we knew that we could trust the Foundation, that it was not just a foundation which helped us



Yossi Beilin

here and there with some projects, but much much more than that. That it was emotionally and personally involved with people like Dr. Winfred Veit and many others during the last years who saw our problems as theirs and were always available when we needed them.

People are asking us what is it exactly, this Peace Coalition? The question was asked by Foreign Minister Ivanov when my colleague Yasser Abd Rabbo and myself visited Moscow some months ago, and it was February. That same morning something very strange happened in the region which, if it was a fiction, nobody would have believed it, but it was a reality. Two young mothers were shot on their way to deliver babies; one was Israeli, one was Palestinian. The husband of the Palestinian mother was killed, the mother herself was wounded, the Israeli mother was wounded, the babies were well. On this same morning, we met with Ivanov and Yasser Abd Rabbo and myself said to him, Mr. Minister this is what we are doing: We are trying to assure these two babies that they don't have to hate each other forever.



v.l.n.r.: Dani Levy, Ghassan Khatib, Samir Rantisi, Yael Tamir, Yossi Beilin,

But we know how easy it is to hate. How difficult it would be to convince them not to. A baby was born on the day when his father was shot by Israelis, wouldn't he hate me forever? And vice versa? The Israeli baby who knows that his mother was shot just because she was on the way to give him birth, won't he hate the Palestinians forever?

It is our role, it is our function, it is our mission to do whatever we can in order to tell them that they are human beings, that revenge is the last advice that can be given to them, that if we continue this cycle of violence and terrorism and retaliation we will be 100 per cent right, 100 per cent right. And we can come to you once and again trying to convince you that Israelis were suffering and that they have the right to have their own state, that they went through the holocaust, they paid a very high price and here there were the bad Palestinians who prevented them from it. And the Palestinians can come to you and tell their story. That they were there, that they were not

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Ghazi Hanania, Holger Börner, Joschka Fischer

responsible for anything which happened in Europe, that we came and invaded them and took their lands, and homes and made them refugees. You know, like in every Greek tragedy every side is 100 per cent right. But we are all wrong and we are paying a crazy price and it needs some people on both sides who raise their hands together and say: No more. We can talk to each other, we can publish ads together, we can demonstrate it, we can shout and scream in the darkest days when there is no light,

“ **But we are all wrong and we are paying a crazy price and it needs some people on both sides who raise their hands together and say: No more.** ”

and ask the world and people like you here in this meeting, like Mr. Fischer and like others: help us in this work, because we are trying to create a better world. First in our region and then elsewhere.

You know, I suspect that you look at me and you look at my very dear colleague Ghazi Hanania and you will ask yourself: ok, nice, good people, are they representing something? Are they representing any reality? Isn't it an esoteric event? No!

We are closer to peace than ever. The common knowledge, the consensus amongst the Palestinians, amongst the Israelis, in the general world, in Germany, in other countries in Europe, that somehow we tried, we failed, we are doomed, is 100 per cent wrong. Take it from me. We were very close to an agreement. We know exactly the guidelines of a solution, without even asking Dr. Hanania, I can tell you that he and myself can sign on every word, every word, not on the basis of, not generally speaking, every word which was expressed by Minister Joschka Fischer. This is not by accident. He said very clear things. He did not just say that he likes peace. We know the solution, the solution is the Saudi initiative, which is actually the Clinton Plan, which is what we all know: two states for the two peoples on the basis of '67 borders, security for Israel, a first solution for the refugees. Did I say it all? Jerusalem as the capital for the two states. We know it.



Ghazi Hanania, Joschka Fischer

Ten years ago, could I say it here in the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, in Bonn and elsewhere? Five years ago could I say it? Now it is very clear. And if we fail, and if there is no peace, despite the very clear fact that we know the solution, it is only because we were so close. It is only because we touched the moment of truth. And it was so painful, so frightening to pay the price at this time that something wrong happened, it was an earthquake, but this earthquake is not our future. It was a big disaster, a big crisis on the way to peace. And I believe that if we are persevering, that if we know what to do in the near future, through an international conference, in one stage, in two stages, but in a short while, direct into the permanent solution, we will be there and we will try to surprise you.

You know, people are asking: what went wrong? And there will be many books, even ours, about it. Was it the massacre in Hebron by Baruch Goldstein in 1994? Was it the terrorist attacks of the Palestinians, which followed it? Was it the three years of Netanyahu in which he did all what he could in order to prevent implementation of the Oslo Process? Was it the

violations of the Palestinians? Was it the terrorist activities of the Palestinians? Was it the decision of Arafat or the non-decision of Arafat not to put an end to the Intifada when he could put an end to it? Was it corruption? Was it a visit of Sharon to the Temple Mount? Everything is true, including the wrong way in which our Prime Minister Barak handled the negotiations.

But if you ask me, there was one prominent event which changed the situation: that was the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin.

Maybe it is more emotional than rational, it is difficult for me to explain why it ended it. But somehow it broke our hearts in Israel, in the Palestinian Territories, in the world. Something awful happened. And it was very difficult to continue afterwards. We tried to pretend business as usual, but we couldn't. And I know that now there are people who are trying to kill Mr. Rabin twice. The first time we were helpless in defending him. We will not let the killing of Mr. Rabin happen for the second time, the killing of his legacy; and his legacy is equality and his legacy is a permanent solution between Israel and the Palestinians and all its neighbours, and we vow and we promise to continue the work and to implement it and to finish the job.

Ghazi Hanania:

Your Excellency, Minister of Foreign Affairs, President of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Mr. Holger Börner, Dear Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Allow me first to extend our thanks and appreciation to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and our special thanks and appreciation to the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and its President and the wonderful representatives of this Stiftung in Palestine and in Israel.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung has over the years contributed generously in support of the cause of peace in the Middle East. And it is no surprise that this year's Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's Human Rights Award has been dedicated again for the efforts of those Palestinians and Israelis who are working so hard and despite all the difficulties and against all prevailing odds in order to create a better future for the coming generation of the Palestinians and Israelis. Therefore, and on behalf of the Palestinian Peace Coalition, let me thank you again for the honour in receiving your Award.

The recent months have witnessed a very difficult and hard reality for both peoples, Palestinians and Israelis. Those who



Ghazi Hanania

believe in a just solution of the conflict have suffered the most. The voices of reason and rationality, the voices of those who have chosen the path of peace and justice, the path of ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories have been

“The scenes of death, blood and destruction have unfortunately hijacked the hope and awaited peace, by the Palestinian children and the children of Israel alike.”

muted, and instead the voices of Israel’s tanks and armoured personnel carriers prevailed. The scenes of death, blood and destruction have unfortunately hijacked the hope and awaited peace, by the Palestinian children and the children of Israel alike. And instead of coming closer to peace and justice we find ourselves today, as a result of the recent aggressive military campaign

by the current Israeli government against the Palestinian people, we find ourselves back to square one where we will have to build the hope and trust that we thought not so long ago that we had been able to build and cement.

Fortunately, the recent events, which have caused tremendous damage to the cause of peace in our region, cannot damage the basic realities, realities which without resolving would only cause the conflict and is timed to further complications and further instability. The first and foremost amongst these realities is the urgent need to end the Israel military occupation of the Palestinian Territories, an occupation that stands at the doorsteps of the 21st century as the last and oddest military occupation that continues to prevail in the modern world which prides itself in its celebration of human rights.

Only the end of occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, a real sovereign Palestinian and democratic state that is built on democracy, transparency and a reformed system of government, a state that will live side by side with the Israeli state after resolving all the issues, including the issues of settlements, refugees, borders, and in accordance to well-known international resolutions. Only such a solution can lead to peace and the



Joschka Fischer, Holger Börner

bright future for our coming generations and also for Israel's coming generations, too.

Please allow me to say some words, some personal words, in the German language.

I see here today people who went to the same university in Germany 30 years ago. They were all colleagues and were politically very, very active and even then supported all the peace initiatives in all parts of the world. One of these very active students at the time was Joschka Fischer. We all studied in Frankfurt then and there were a great many student groups such as the SDS, the Palestinian Students Union and others. And to meet again after all this time, one as Foreign Minister and the other a laureate is really something I am very happy about. Don't you think so? Thank you very much.

Prof. Yael Tamir:

Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you very much for this very moving ceremony, thank you very much to the Friedrich Ebert Foundation for all its help. I will be very brief and I apologise, I have to continue to Portugal in about 5 minutes, but I really wanted to follow the encouraging words of my friends and the very supportive speech of Minister Fischer.

Minister Fischer, you said that the pianists set an example. And I thought to myself, maybe Israelis and Palestinians can play so beautifully together only if Europeans write the notes. [applause] So it's now really up to you to match Mozart and offer us the right tone, and I'm sure you know we will play the duo, you'll bring the quartet and we'll be okay.

It's very important for all of us to realise that we are not a small minority in the Middle East. I think the people of the Middle East want peace. They want to live together and they are here to find the way how to do that. It is our role as the Peace Coalition to continue telling them that there is a way, that we can find trust, that we can find good reason in our friends, the





Yael Tamir

Palestinians, and that we can sit together and, despite differences of opinion, we can find a solution that will serve both sides. This is no more a zero-sum game. We are looking for a situation in which both sides will win, and winning for us means not only peace, not only security but economic prosperity for both sides. The economic misery both on the Palestinian side and the Israeli side now is tremendous, and certainly any move ahead with the support of the international community should take this into account. We want to offer our people a better future, we want to make them sure that they can raise their children to a really peaceful and prosperous world. And with your help we are sure that we can achieve this goal.

So thank you very much for the prize, thank you very much for your continuous help. And we will keep on struggling and we will keep on searching your support and your partnership all along until we arrive at the desirable moment of peace. Thank you.



Jossi Beilin, Joschka Fischer



Saleem Abboud Ashkar, Shai Wosner

List of Participants

Delegation of the
Israeli-Palestinian Peace Coalition (IPPC)

Israel:

Dr. Yossi Beilin

former Minister of Justice

Dani Levy

Economic Cooperation Foundation

Prof. Yael Tamir

Director, Rabin Center for Israel Studies

Founding Member of Peace Now, Israel

Palestine:

Ghazi Hanania

Vice President of the Palestinian Legislative Council

Ghassan Khatib

Director, Jerusalem Media and Communication Center

Samir Rantisi

Consultant of the Minister of Information

Pianists:

Saleem Abboud Ashkar

Palästina, actually in Berlin

Shai Wosner

Israel, actually in New York



Rantisi, Andrä Gärber (FES), Hanania



Mokka aus Palästina

We need another chance

Israeli and Palestinian peace activists in discussion to find solutions for the escalating conflict in the Middle East

Frankfurter Rundschau, 27-5-2002

Representatives of the Israeli-Palestinian “Peace Coalition” (IPPC) were honoured with the Human Rights Award of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Berlin and met with leading German politicians while in Berlin, including the Foreign Minister and the Federal President. The IPPC-representatives describe how they see the chances of a new peace process in a discussion with the foreign-policy spokesman of the SPD-Parliamentary Group, Gert Weisskirchen, and the Berlin FR-Correspondent, Richare Meng; they warn that there is no time to lose and that pressure must be exerted on the old leaders Sharon and Arafat by confronting them with new expectations.

The discussion includes: Yossi Beilin, former Minister of Justice under Barak, representative of the left wing of the Labour Party, Ghassan Khatib, Director of the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, member of the Palestinian delegation at the Middle-East Conference in Madrid in 1991, Yael Tamir, Director of the Rabin Centre and founding member of Peace Now, Ghazi Hanania, deputy Speaker of Parliament under Arafat.

Frankfurter Rundschau: Are today’s leading politicians on both the Palestinian and Israeli side really able to initiate a new peace process?

Ghassan Khatib: It is difficult to discuss leading politicians from both sides in the same breath. There are similarities, but also very big differences between them. The present leadership of the Palestinians is still identical with the one that initiated and made possible the peace process together with the Israeli leadership of the time. Over a prolonged period of 20 years, it has been able to convince the majority of the Palestinians to recognise Israel’s right to exist as soon as the occupation of Palestinian territory ends. The present Israeli leadership, in contrast, was opposed to this peace process at the time. The political strategy and ideological standpoint of the current Prime Minister is completely incompatible with the underlying philosophy of this process. I would

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therefore say: the present Israeli Government is not able to make progress with a new peace process. The Palestinian side can and will do so.

Yossi Beilin: In fact, the population on both sides is now convinced that the respective other side is not ready for peace. I am afraid that this may frustrate any hope of peace for good. I certainly believe that there is not much time to lose – and, in particular, there is no time to wait for a better leadership on one or perhaps on both sides. Many peoples probably deserve a better leadership than they presently have – but what good does that do to any of us? The art of politics consists in taking the opportunities available, not waiting for the next war. This applies to both sides. What we urgently need now is new momentum resulting from an international conference such as the one in Madrid in 1991, in order to get back to serious negotiations. I believe in negotiations and I believe they will be resumed one day.

Yael Tamir: Perhaps we are offered a unique opportunity at this moment in time since it is not only the two sides who are interested in negotiations, but there appears to be some movement in that direction in the Arab world around us as well. In other words, it will not only be possible to achieve a comprehensive peace accord to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but genuine normalisation in the entire region. As long as the Sharon Government continues to ignore the peace offers of the Arab world, it is wasting opportunities of normalisation in the entire Middle East region.

Gert Weisskirchen: But does this not mean that those in charge on both sides will not achieve a new agreement?

Khatib: Why do you always mention the two leaderships in one breath? Perhaps they are really very different ...

Frankfurter Rundschau: That is not quite so clear for the Israeli peace movement ...

Beilin: Of course, I would dearly like to change our Government and, of course, we deserve a better Prime Minister than Mr. Sharon. But that is no excuse for us. To see Sharon as the sole person responsible for making peace would be the biggest mistake any peace movement could make. In fact, it is our task to make Israelis think about our share in a peace coalition; and to put pressure on the Government so that it finally starts to negotiate and follows, for example, the initiative of the Arab League in supporting the idea of an international conference and accept-

ing a Palestinian state. Even though I do not believe that Sharon supports a peace process as much as would be possible, he is of this world: he is aware of public opinion and he reads the polls.

Frankfurter Rundschau: How strong is your peace movement?

Tamir: The answer depends very much on how you view the situation. If your question refers to the contents of an agreement, we are having a majority in the country today. That is what is so interesting about it. There has never been so much support in the Israeli public, with the exception of the days of Camp David, for a Palestinian state, for withdrawal from the occupied territories, concessions in the question of Jerusalem and the conclusion of an agreement with the Palestinians, as there is at present. The problem is not so much what the final agreement would be like, but how to get there. There is deep distrust between Israel and the Palestinians. Yassir Arafat has been demonised and it is generally believed that there is no one to talk with. This is why many Israelis are supporting unilateral action. In consequence, the most important challenge for the Peace Coalition is to prove that there are partners to negotiate with.

Beilin: By the way, there are some figures about this. 50 percent of the Israelis say of themselves that they rather tend towards the political right. 30 percent state that they are more left-wing, while 20 percent call themselves Centralists. This is a snapshot description and the situation is changing rapidly ...

Tamir: ... but even on the right wing more than 45 percent are now in favour of a Palestinian state. The Likud-leadership represents a minority within the right wing.

Frankfurter Rundschau: Might Israel not need someone with moral authority who could speak for the majority of the people ...

Beilin: speak, what for?

Frankfurter Rundschau: ... and who could explain more convincingly that a new peace process is necessary while Sharon is merely playing for time?

Beilin: No doubt, Sharon is playing for time. It is really a shame that my party has remained part of the Sharon coalition because there is no convincing straightforward alternative to him now. But I still believe that it is, in fact, the task of those in the Arab world, in Palestine and in Israel who believe in peace to do everything in their power to create an atmos-

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phere which might be conducive to peace. Sharon will not actively work for peace, he will try to find excuses. But that does not mean that he might not be forced to the negotiating table because of the positive atmosphere in the country, and that it may produce results – either during his term of office or that of his successors.

Weisskirchen: If enough support did exist: what should be the role of the international community, for example “the quartet”, consisting of the USA, EU, Russia and the United Nations?

Ghazi Hanania: The region is in favour of peace as far as I can see, but not the Israeli Government. And it will again become more difficult with any new Palestinian leadership ...

Frankfurter Rundschau: ...you mean in the post-Arafat era?

Hanania: Yes. This is why the international community must not remain inactive. It has to put more pressure on both sides to force them back to the negotiating table. Then we shall see whether Sharon is ready for peace or not. Whether Arafat is ready or not. Otherwise we will continue to talk and talk.

Frankfurter Rundschau: Do you believe that Arafat will hold genuinely free elections on the basis of clear democratic principles?

Hanania: He has no choice. After all, what do we mean by reforms in the Palestinian Territories? They need to be comprehensive – not because that is the desire of Germany or other countries, but because we Palestinians want it and because we are already working for it.

Frankfurter Rundschau: Should this include the option of voting Arafat out of office?

Khatib: If he stands for elections he will win against other parties. We must distinguish two things here: there is some criticism about how he runs the Palestinian Authorities; and there is a great deal of discussion about his management deficiencies with regard to the new rule of law, not to mention corruption. He is being criticised a great deal in that respect. Yet his political positions in the conflict with Israel are still extremely popular. If this were a vote on his negotiating positions vis-a-vis Israel, 80 percent of the Palestinians would say that he stands exactly for what they wish to see in place. Elections will strengthen his position. And Arafat's attitude is the most moderate compared to all existing positions. Any alternative to him would be less flexible.

Weisskirchen: It has generally been assumed in Europe so far that there is merely a small minority in support of your positions in both Israeli and Palestinian society. What is the future of your Peace Coalition?

Beilin: Undoubtedly, as a movement we are a minority – but not a marginal one. You are speaking with a former government minister. Some of us continue to hold important positions in Parliament. We are important and it looks as if internationally we have the support of those parts of public opinion who continue to stand by Israel. Paradoxically, our main problem is to convince our own constituency of how to achieve a peaceful solution. And I think I also speak on behalf of the Palestinians when I say: we have not yet convinced our constituency of the fact that the respective opposite side is ready for peace and that there is a realistic chance for it. The people are still too much in despair.

Tamir: The greatest problem is, of course, terrorism, the suicide attacks. It is extremely difficult to find support under these circumstances and to convince people to think logically ...

Frankfurter Rundschau: ...and political pressure from outside would be helpful under the circumstances?

Tamir: We need another chance more than we need external pressure – a chance for both sides to recognise what they would gain in the event of peace. As far as it concerns Israel, a serious economic crisis appears to develop, at least in the background, and that applies to Palestine in any case. I believe that where we really fail is in offering an economic perspective, a message of prosperity. There is distrust at the political level and lack of hope of any economic improvement at the same time. This is why the road to peace is so stony.

* * *

Together for Peace in the Middle East

An Award for a Courageous Israeli-Palestinian Alliance in Berlin

Manfred Pantförder, Berliner Morgenpost, 18-5-2002

Israeli and Palestinian politicians at the same table. They are discussing a way out of the crisis in the Middle East. In Berlin. What appears to be almost inconceivable at present in the tense atmosphere of the conflict area between the Mediterranean Sea and the river Jordan is developing into a courageous public relations campaign for peace on German soil.

“We have no time for interim solutions” says Yossi Beilin. The former Israeli Minister of Justice and one of the architects of the Oslo Peace Accord of 1993 speaks up for rapid negotiations with the Palestinians in order to reach a final agreement. “We know the solution”, says the experienced peace negotiator. Two states, with the borders of 1967, Jerusalem as the capital for both sides, security for Israel, a fair solution for the Palestinian refugees – that is the brief summary of the top politician.

Together with the deputy Speaker of the Palestinian Parliament, Ghazi Hanania, and other politicians from both sides, Beilin was awarded the Human Rights Award of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Berlin yesterday. Last year, it was the Serbian students’ movement Otpor who received the prize; it had made a considerable contribution to the overthrow of the autocratic Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

At the award ceremony yesterday, Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer acknowledged the commitment of the unusual Israeli-Palestinian Peace Coalition. Again, he spoke up in favour of an international conference in order to settle the conflict. To find support for such a conference is the purpose of the visit which will bring him to the crisis area at the end of May. In view of the daily suffering and the pointless sacrifices it would need a great deal of courage to bridge “the wide abyss” between Israelis and Palestinians, said Fischer.

The Peace Coalition was founded in January. But the group had met before: with much public attention at the checkpoint between Jerusalem and the autonomous City of Ramallah in May of last year. It was the first signal of peace since the onset of the Palestinian uprising at the end of September 2000. “It is our task to make sure there is hope”, said Beilin.

After a prolonged period of apathetic inactivity, the Israeli peace movement also came back with a major peace rally a few days ago. Yael Tamir, former Minister for Immigration, regards this as a positive outcome of the difficult information process in their own society.

Although the members of the heterogeneous Coalition emphasise very much what they have in common, there are obviously also differences of perception amongst them. On the Israeli side it becomes clear that Beilin and his fellow campaigners are very much aware of the need to find support for a settlement in their own country. Even in their own party. Beilin sharply condemns the fact that his Labour Party is part of the Sharon Government. The prominent politician, who worked with Itzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak and Shimon Peres on the political scene, openly speaks of leaving the social-democratic party if its present chairman, Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, remains in office. No such internal discord is apparent on the Palestinian side. Both Hanania and Samir Rantisi, Adviser of the Palestinian Minister of Information, quote the end of Israeli occupation as a condition for peace. This condition is the key issue – and politically an obstacle. (...)

* * *

On the Toad To Peace with Mozart

taz die tageszeitung, Pfingsten 2002

Mit Mozart auf dem Weg zum Frieden

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung würdigt die Arbeit von israelisch-palästinensischer Friedensgruppe mit Menschenrechtspreis

BERLIN taz ■ Ein bisschen politische Wahrheit lag gestern bei der Verleihung des Menschenrechtspreises der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung selbst in den Witzern: „Ich liebe Mozart, vor allem dann, wenn ein israelischer Pianist ihn palästinensischer spielen“; bekannte Außenminister Joschka Fischer (Grüne), der nach einer Sonate für zwei Klaviere die Laudatio auf die Preisträger hielt. „Also kommen Sie in den Nahen Osten“, kontierte daraufhin Yael Tamir, Gründungsmitglied der israelischen Friedensinitiative „Peacemakers“ und eine der Preisträgerinnen. „denn vielleicht kommt Israel und Palastinenser nur zu-

sammen spielen, wenn Europäer die Noten dazu schreiben.“ Mit dem mit 10.000 Euro dotierten Preis wurde gestern die „Israelisch-Palästinensische Friedenskoalition“ (IPPC) ausgezeichnet, ein Zusammenschluss

von israelischen und palästinensischen Politikern, Intellektuellen, Vertretern von Nichtregierungsorganisationen und Künstlern, darunter der ehemalige israelische Verteidigungsminister Jossi Beilin und der palästinensi-

sche Chefunterhändler Saeb Erekat. Die Gruppe ist seit Mai des vergangenen Jahres aktiv. Sie setzt sich mit öffentlichen Aktionen und Demonstrationen für eine Zwei-Staaten-Lösung auf Grundlage der Grenzen von 1967 und Jerusalem als gemeinsamer Hauptstadt ein.

„Wir wollen mit dem Preis nicht unbedingt den spektakulären Erfolg, sondern vielmehr die mühsame und engagierte Arbeit in dieser bitteren Zeit würdigen“, sagte Holger Börner, der Vorsitzende der SPD-nahen Ebert-Stiftung. Nur gegenseitiges Verständnis und Dialog könnten zu einer konstruktiven Lösung in diesem Konflikt führen. Sowohl

israelische wie palästinensische Vertreter der Delegation machten deutlich, dass sie weiter an den Frieden glauben, auch wenn es „heute schwieriger als noch vor zwei, drei Jahren“ sei. Jossi Beilin betonte, dass jetzt keine Zeit mehr für Zwischenlösungen wie eine erneute palästinensische Interimsregierung sei. Die sofortige Wiederaufnahme der Verhandlungen zwischen Israel und Palastinensern sei notwendig.

Auch Fischer sprach sich klar für eine internationale Konferenz zur Beilegung des Konfliktes aus. Seine Reise in die Krisenregion am Ende des Monats diene dazu, eine solche Konferenz zu rufen, auf der beide Seiten das Existenzrecht des anderen anerkennen und sich zu einem Ende der Gewalt verpflichten müssten.

SUSANNE AMANN

"Nothing can be changed unless there is hope"
Interview with Israel's ex-Minister Yossi Beilin

Neues Deutschland, 18-5-2002

The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Coalition (IPPC) was honoured with the Human Rights Award of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung for the year 2002 yesterday. The IPPC consists of Israeli and Palestinian politicians, academics and representatives of non-governmental organisations. They include the former Minister of Justice, Yossi Beilin, and the Palestinian Minister of Culture and Information, Yasser Abed Rabbo. ND spoke with Yossi Beilin on this occasion.

Neues Deutschland: You are one of the laureates of the Human Rights Award of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. How do you view the prospects of peace in the Middle East given the current situation?

Beilin: The situation is undoubtedly more difficult at present than two or five years ago. We, the members of the Peace Coalition, have been able to talk to each other for the first time after months – here in Germany. It was close to impossible in Israel at the end. Yet I am not really pessimistic. Again and again it was demonstrated in the Middle East that the situation became more difficult the closer one had moved at the negotiating tables. In fact, the solution is self-evident: Israel's withdrawal to the borders of 1967, Jerusalem as the capital of both states etc.. Prior to the negotiations in Madrid in 1991, there had not even been agreement about the goals. Now there is agreement, but the road towards its implementation is stony.

What are the main reasons for it?

Both sides believe that they are 100 percent right with regard to their current actions. The Palestinians justify their use of force with the occupation and Israel quotes the terrorist attacks as the reason for their acts of military retaliation. This vicious circle must be broken.

What can be your contribution as the Peace Coalition?

Nothing can be changed unless there is hope. We, the Peace Coalition, therefore attempt to inspire hope. We make efforts to convince the population that there is a partner for peace and a peace programme such as the Clinton-Plan, the Saudi-Plan, and that it is imperative to implement

them. What matters to us most in this situation is to gain the support of the silent majority.

Is it conceivable in your eyes that the Likud decision to reject a Palestinian state will considerably change Israeli public opinion?

The decision will not greatly influence public opinion. Everyone in Israel knows that sooner or later there will be a Palestinian state. No one accepts the Likud decision at its face value – it was a completely anachronistic decision. In particular since Sharon seems inclined to disregard it to a large extent.

And what about the next elections? Can we expect more support for the Labour Party which is propagating the solution of two states, similar to the majority of Israelis in opinion polls?

You may be right provided the public regards the Labour Party as a genuine alternative to Likud. As long as the Labour Party is part of the Government, it will be very difficult to convince the public that it has an alternative option to offer.

This automatically brings to mind the question of leaving the coalition. Is this imminent?

I spoke up for it in the Central Committee in January this year. I failed. A large majority preferred to remain part of the coalition. I announced that I would leave the party if the present head of the party, Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, were to be nominated as candidate for Prime Minister in the next election campaign. I will not be the only one. The Labour Party would then be at risk to break up.

How realistic is the prospect of a change of government policy at present in your eyes?

I am not entirely pessimistic – not because Sharon is seriously interested in it, but because of growing pressure on him. Suggestions about an international conference, his statement and that of US-President Bush that there will be a Palestinian state are first encouraging signs of this. Sharon's statement is a victory for the peace movement – not because it expressed what he believed, his statement was purely tactical in nature. But it shows that he senses growing support in the country for a two-states solution. This was demonstrated not least by the big peace rally in Tel Aviv last weekend; it had been organised without the support of the Labour Party, which regards itself as the party of peace, and brought

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together hundreds of thousands of demonstrators. The same applies to Arafat's announcement to democratise the Palestinian Authorities. I cannot tell how serious he is about it. But again, the timing of the speech shows that he is under pressure to achieve a peace solution for the Palestinian people. And it is the pressure on both sides that matters. To say that it is impossible to make peace would make it too easy for politicians on either side.

But the prospects of peace would be better with a different government?

Of course, the prospects of peace would be better with a peace government. But we cannot wait for this to happen. It cannot be our role to remain inactive until a new government comes to power. What really matters is to create an atmosphere in Israel which forces any government to support a peaceful solution.

Questions by Martin Lang