

The Peace Process in the Middle East - 1991

Issue

Support for an orderly and sustained peace process in the Middle East as initiated by the Madrid peace conference.

Background

The State of Israel has not known a day of peace with any neighbor save Egypt. On many occasions we have expressed our shared pain with Israel over the continuing threats to her existence and have supported the use of bold initiatives to bring peace to the region.

The Madrid peace conference fulfills Israel's 40-year dream that Arab countries and Israel would sit down face to face to resolve their differences. For the first time since 1948, representatives of the Israeli government and the Palestinian people have sat together in formal discussions to seek ways to accommodate their overlapping hopes and aspirations. That the structure of the conference involves direct bilateral negotiations is in itself a major step forward; that it also involves regional discussions of economic and environmental concerns holds open the hope for the kind of long-term cooperation and stability indispensable to a real and lasting peace.

The Gulf War brought drastic changes to the Middle East which make peaceful resolution of long-lasting differences a compelling necessity. Conventional wisdom as to sources of security is called into question by the realities of modern warfare. The material costs of war stagger even the healthiest economies and come at the expense of essential social programs. The human costs dwarf the material costs.

No nation can feel secure with a state of perpetual belligerency. The threat of chemical and biological attack and the Scud missile attacks left Israelis with a new sense of vulnerability. Sober reassessment must leave all states of the region more open and more determined to find means to resolve their differences peacefully so they can turn their attention to meeting the urgent and growing needs of their peoples.

Resolution

The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods therefore:

1. Commends the United States government for its role in helping to convene the Madrid conference on peace in the Middle East and appreciates the participation of the Soviet Union.
2. Recognizes that current sessions are historic, long-awaited first steps to be followed by nation-to-nation negotiations.
3. Calls upon the participants and other states in the region to join in relevant phases of the talks and to demonstrate the necessary patience, flexibility of position, and good will for what is certain to be a lengthy and difficult process.
4. Calls upon the Arab states and representatives to take steps to build confidence and good will, including cessation of the economic boycott, termination of acts of terrorism as well as the intifada, and recognition of the State of Israel.
5. Calls upon the State of Israel to take steps to build confidence and good will, including a temporary freeze on settlements in the West Bank and Gaza and more restraint by military and police authorities.
6. Calls on the government of the United States to act as an impartial go-between if the talks should falter, without imposing a solution, and to do so in the framework of the Camp David Accords and UN

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Resolutions 242 and 338.

7. Calls upon the governments of the world to end the arms race in the Middle East in a manner consistent with the security of Israel. Such a step is indispensable to stabilize the region, without which peace will not be possible. Such a process should begin with, but not be limited to, a ban on the sale or transfer of surface to surface missile technologies as well as chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, the technology required for their production, and materials intended for use in such production.