

Israel: Palestinian Prisoner of Conscience Marwan Barghouti on Sham Peace Talks

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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In May 2004, he was lawlessly convicted of three attacks killing five people. A three-judge panel admitted he had no involvement.

It didn't matter. Weeks later, he got five life sentences plus 40 years imprisonment. He's a prisoner of conscience.

He calls himself "a political leader, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, elected by my people. Israel has no right to try me, to accuse me, to judge me."

"This is a violation of international law. I have a (legal) right to resist occupation."

In October 2002, he called the "State of Israel directly and indirectly criminally responsible for committing specific acts of genocide, ethnic cleansing, including uprooting Palestinians by military attacks, arbitrary arrests and illegal imprisonment, administrative detention, attacks on women, children and the elderly, systematic and wanton destruction of property and homes, (and) systematic expropriation and dispossession..."

He included numerous other crimes. He accused Israel of willfully imposing inhumane conditions. He remains imprisoned. On April 15, he was interviewed.

He commented on sham peace talks. He had much more to say. Academic Adnan Abu Amer interviewed him in Arabic. More on what he said in translation below.

Last July, Israeli/Palestinian negotiation began. They were dead on arrival. They've gone nowhere. Israel demands everything its way. It offers nothing in return.

Talks are worthless. An agreed on April 29 deadline approaches. Abbas is a longtime Israeli collaborator. He agreed to extend them irresponsibly.

He said through year end. Perhaps well into 2015. In return, he demands concessions too minor to matter.

Why he'll have to explain. On April 18, [Maan News](#) headlined " 'No breakthrough' in Israeli-Palestinian peace talks," saying:

On April 17, five hours of "very difficult discussions" ended with no agreement. An unnamed Palestinian source said:

"The gap (between both sides) is still wide. There was no breakthrough." On Friday, US

negotiator Martin Indyk met separately with both sides. Nothing whatever was accomplished.

Israeli commentator Nahum Barnea compared nine months of talks to prolonged "mutual torture."

He said "Kerry keeps them going like a gambler in a casino, who insists on putting his money on the roulette wheel, in the hope that the wheel will stop on his number at some point."

"He believed that he would reach a peace agreement. Then he limited himself to a framework agreement."

"He later limited himself even further to an American proposal for a framework. And then just to ideas."

"In the end, the entire prestige of the United States is invested in a marginal, questionable deal, which will only prolong the mutual torture."

It bears repeating what earlier articles stressed. Chances for an equitable, just deal are virtually nil.

Extending talks doesn't matter. Multiple earlier rounds accomplished nothing. Don't expect this time to be different.

Barghouti had his say. He did so from prison. In May 2002, he was kidnapped, he said. Abducting him followed several failed Israeli attempts to kill him.

Over three months of grueling investigation followed. He spent several years in solitary confinement.

His cell was two meters long by 1.5 meters wide. Cockroaches, rats and mosquitos infested it.

No ventilation existed. "I was completely isolated from the world," he said. He got six books every six months. International Red Cross representatives supplied them.

He mastered Hebrew while incarcerated. After solitary confinement, he was moved to an isolation ward. He called the Palestinian situation "increasingly difficult."

Israel "thwart(s)" peace process efforts. Occupation harshness persists. "Israelis again elected government unwilling at all to end the occupation and settlements, and making peace with the Palestinians."

He blames Fatah for not reconciling with Hamas. Failure "complicate(s)" the "Palestinian scene," he said.

He supports "national unity." He said achieving it "constitutes the law of the victory of the national liberation movements of oppressed peoples."

"Reconciliation is a prerequisite for the unity of the people and the establishment of the state," he added.

He's confident unity and reconciliation one day will happen. Palestinians will triumph, he said.

Ongoing peace talks are futile, he believes. They failed because Israel prioritizes violence, instability and dominance.

He wants full Palestinian UN membership. He wants full participation in international agreements and conventions. He wants Israeli officials held accountable in the International Criminal Court (ICC).

He wants more international community help isolating and punishing Israel. He wants Israel boycotted politically, economically and militarily.

He wants popular resistance escalated. He wants all Palestinian elements involved. He wants a future Palestinian state within 1967 borders.

He deplores US involvement in peace talks. It provides one-sided support for Israel, he said. Doing so makes peaceful conflict resolution impossible, he added.

America isn't an honest broker. If it wanted regional peace, it would have "demanded in a clear and explicit way."

Achieving it depends "ending the occupation of the territories occupied in 1967."

In "preparation for the establishment of a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem," he added. And "implement(ing) Resolution 194."

In December 1948, it said "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage which, under the principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the governments or authorities responsible."

Israel's UN admission was conditional on accepting and implementing Resolution 194. General Assembly members affirmed the right of return dozens of times.

Israel denies them. An earlier Israeli Supreme Court decision said:

"Judea, Samaria and Gaza have been under the State's belligerent occupation. They are not part of the State of Israel."

It doesn't matter. Israel governs extrajudicially. Hardliners running things ignore their own High Court decisions.

Jews alone have rights. All aspects of life are affected. Palestinians are systematically denied what's too vital to forego.

Rights include sovereignty, land, housing, culture, education, healthcare, employment, and religious freedom among others. They include everything grounded in international law.

Failure to achieve a just and equitable peace threatens to turn a low-level conflict into a greater one, said Barghouti.

"The Arab Peace Initiative constitutes the minimum accepted by the Arabs to settle (equitably) with Israel," he added.

"But what was issued by the Arab ministerial delegation in Washington in terms of readiness to amend the 1967 borders and accept the principle of the exchange of land damaged the position of Arab and Palestinian rights."

It open(ed) the appetite of Israel for more concessions. No one has the right to modify or exchange a land border," he stressed.

He wants full Israeli withdrawal from Palestine within 1967 borders. He includes "all settlements." They're on stolen Palestinian land.

They have no legitimacy. He rejects incorporating them into Israel.

He calls "the only possible solution at this moment a two-state solution." He stresses sovereign Palestine within 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

It "must not be abandoned," he said. Occupation harshness must end. He wants Palestinian unity working for "an independent state with full sovereignty."

"Israelis should be aware that the last day at the age of occupation is the first day of peace in the region." It must "announce its willingness to end the occupation."

To withdraw outside 1967 borders. To recognize Palestinian self-determination, "including their right to establish an independent state with full sovereignty and its capital in East Jerusalem."

Barghouti demands Israeli "apartheid" end. He calls it "based on occupation, settlements and racism."

"The alternative for the failure of the two-state solution will not be a bi-national state, but a continuing and widening conflict on the basis of a conflict of existence, (one with) no compromises."

Israeli peace with regional countries won't achieve overall stability, he said.

"The Israelis are mistaken if they believe that the status quo will continue as it is, but they have to realize that the security will only be achieved in peace, and that the Arab people have changed and they can not challenge the region forever."

Abbas "missed a historic opportunity to reach peace in the past eight years," he said. He conspires irresponsibly with Israel, Barghouti believes.

He's Israel's enforcer. He "coordinate(s) an unprecedented security" against his own people. In return, Palestinian land is stolen.

Jerusalem is Judaized. Palestinians are displaced. Their homes, freedoms and futures are destroyed.

Oppressed people have a right to resist, he stressed. By "all means and methods approved by the United Nations Charter and international law."

Abbas' time is passing. Palestinians alone must choose his successor, said Barghouti. He's committed to keep struggling for their freedom, independence and peace.

He prioritizes doing so. He devoted his whole life to popular struggles. He's confident Palestinians will be free one day. Occupation's "demise" is "inevitable," he said.

He believes Arabs reject "tyranny and dictatorship, occupation and repression, and do not have to live within the confines of an Arab regime paralyzed and helpless, harrowed and subject to the subordination and domination of American political security and" military strength.

"Arab regimes failed (to) build democratic" institutions. Constitutional reform must end decades of dictatorship and repression, he said.

"(N)ew foundations must be built." Democratic rights must be established. They must be based on "political pluralism," religious rights, intellectual freedom, and rule of law principles.

Revolutionary change depends on it, he stressed. Doing so is the only way to end "subordination."

Regional peace depends on Palestinians achieving their fundamental rights. He includes sovereign independence, equity and justice.

He believes one day they'll be achieved. He'll work imprisoned or free for that day.

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

His new book is titled "Banker Occupation: Waging Financial War on Humanity."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanII.html>

Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com.

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About the author:

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html> Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com. Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network. It airs three times weekly: live on Sundays at 1PM Central time plus two prerecorded archived programs.

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