

Two State Solution Speech

Introduction

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you here, and to open today's conference on the subject of the Israeli-Palestinian-Conflict and the prospects for a Two-State Solution.

Will there ever be peace between Israelis and Palestinians? This has always been a leading political question for us at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. Freedom, Justice and Solidarity, the values that lead us in our efforts to have an impact and this certainly includes our work in the Palestinian territories, as well as in all other operations world wide.

We from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation truly believe in the necessity of the two-state solution. Just recently we had the pleasure to welcome President Mahmoud Abbas in our head quarter in Berlin, where its importance was emphasized. When we think of the current situation of Palestine, we think of the Israeli settlement activities, the more and more difficult living conditions in the Israeli controlled territories and the 2 million Palestinians that are suffering in the Gaza Strip.

To say in the words of our president Dr.Poettering: "Apartheid is now a common vocabulary in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This underlies urgency of altering the status quo. It was exactly 50 years ago when the Six-Day-War started. In November of this year there will be the 100th anniversary of the Balfour declaration. As none of us was alive at that time: it mentioned "the establishment of a national home for Jewish People in Palestine". And finally in December it will be 30 years after the first Intifada.

It is therefore our duty to finally begin with crucial steps within this never ending conflict. And the Two-State-Solution is certainly such a step, which will *be leading our path towards this change*.

Recent years have shown, the situation in Palestine and Israel has also undergone changes and developments; unfortunately hardly positive ones.

Tendencies

Shifting attitudes on both sides have not played in favor of the two-state solution.

On the one hand, right-winged powers favoring some sort of West Bank annexation are on the rise in Israel and the number of Israeli settlements grows. Moreover, the government, as well as the Israeli elite, show tendencies towards religious and national extremism. And it is a hard reality that from the Israeli side there are very little efforts when it comes to bringing forward the two-state-solution.

On the other hand, Palestinian authorities suffer from a loss of political and financial stability. The division within the Palestinian political factions and the declining influence of the PLO weakens the position of the Palestinians. Additionally, the dire conditions in the Palestinian territories, without prospect of improvement, keep resulting in violent outbreaks such as the knife intifada in 2015.

International level

Moving to the international realm, two significant and positive changes have taken place on the UN level.

First of all, Palestine was recognized a non-member observer state in 2012 – a step towards becoming a full-member of the international community.

Additionally, the UN Security Council Resolution signed last December is also an important move forward: It clearly denounces Israel's settlement policy and reassures the United Nation's wish to support a Two-State solution.

Although there are supporters for "alternative solutions", it is clear that if Israel wants to remain a Jewish and democratic state, the two-state solution is the only way forward.

Yet, some questions remain: Who will work on this solution? Can a multilateral approach through the UN pave the way? What will the Trump administration's take on this subject matter be?

These questions can only be answered by assertively re-opening the discussion.

Need for a solution

I believe we can all agree that the urgent need to continue pressing for a solution is undeniable. Both sides of the conflict are in a constant state of emergency. This is not sustainable in the long run and it does not help the people – all human beings- on either side. The idea that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be managed rather than solved is a dangerous one. This is further supported when looking at the regional repercussions of this crisis. The plight of the Palestinian refugees is not only a human tragedy. In fact, their situation is also a destabilizing factor in many Arab states, particularly in Lebanon.

Palestinian Independence is essential for Jewish Independence. Otherwise not only physical walls and blockholder will remain, but what is far more dangerous: many new walls of fear and hatred will continue to be built up.

We from the KAS are not for one side or against the other. Solidarity with Israel does not contradict our support for the Palestinian State project. Our values apply for both nations.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very much looking forward to the upcoming panels and to engage in a fruitful discussion with you. The fact that we are gathered here today makes me hopeful that the Two-State Solution is not forgotten in the face of the current challenges. Let us therefore work together in order to come up with new and constructive approaches.