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## Arab peace or Durban war?

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As the Annapolis negotiations end without apparent progress, hopes for peace are refocusing around the revived 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. But while the promoters of this effort highlight the breakthrough in accepting the legitimacy of Israel and an end of conflict, many of our potential Arab partners are promoting demonization through another round of the Durban process. The use of terms like "apartheid," anti-Semitism both new and old, and efforts to promote academic and other boycotts are the exact opposite of the peace arrangements proclaimed in the Arab initiative.

This blatant contradiction was highlighted in Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's recent speech calling for continued peace efforts, while denouncing the "process of delegitimization of the State of Israel as a Jewish state... especially in Europe," as exemplified in the 2001 Durban conference.

This UN forum, ostensibly called to combat racism and discrimination, was abused by Arab states, Iran and the radical NGO network to promote anti-Israel incitement and a revival of the "Zionism is racism" slogan. While Israelis were being murdered by suicide bombers, Israel was assailed for "genocidal policies." The goal of this deadly political warfare is the same as its military equivalent - to wipe Israel off the map through soft power and the highly distorted rhetoric of human rights.

A few months after the Durban debacle, the Saudis presented a peace package to the Arab League, which adopted the plan, but following the demonization of Durban, it lacked any credibility.

NOW, THE process is being repeated, in the form of the Durban Review Conference, scheduled for Geneva in April 2009. Livni declared that "Israel would not participate and would not legitimize the conference," noting that the documents which were

prepared "indicate that it is turning, once again, into an anti-Israeli campaign, singling out and delegitimizing the State of Israel - which has nothing to do with fighting racism." She also called on "the international community not to participate in this conference, which seeks to legitimize hatred and extremism and anti-Semitism under the banner of a fight against racism." Canada was the first to pull out on these grounds, the US is likely to follow, and perhaps also a few European states.

If the Durban-based political warfare against Israel is to end, the Arab states must also reverse course. The crude anti-Israel rhetoric in the documents under discussion for the Durban Review Conference were presented by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and adopted in the UN's Asian regional preparatory meeting. Major Arab countries, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia are active members of the OIC, and Libya chairs the committee meetings that are negotiating the texts and the ground rules for the conference. If the Arab peace program were serious, the Saudis, who originated the initiative, Egypt, and the Arab League, which formally adopted the document, would reverse course in the Durban Review Conference, but there is no sign that this is even being considered.

The same hypocrisy is found in the Palestinian Authority, whose representatives in Geneva are among the most vocal in the demonization, at the same time as leaders such as Mahmoud Abbas and Ahmed Qurei are participating in the US-sponsored peace talks in Jerusalem. The "Palestinian Grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign," which hides information on its funding sources and leaders from public view, is active in setting the stage for another poisonous conference. And pro-Palestinian NGOs based in the Israeli Arab sector, such as Ittijah, (funded by the European Union, the New Israel Fund, Christian Aid in the UK, and other generous donors), publish screeds encouraging participants in the Durban Review Conference to replicate the political attacks based on boycotts and "lawfare" highlighted in the first conference.

This disease has also infected many European leaders who press Israel to embrace the Arab peace initiative, while failing to demand an end to the demonization. There was some hope for change when French President Nicolas Sarkozy declared: "France will not allow a repetition of the excesses and abuses of 2001... if ever our legitimate demands are not taken into account, we will disengage from the process." But since this declaration almost a year ago, France, which holds the presidency of the EU, has failed to take any action to oppose these "excesses and abuses." In addition, the EU,

as well as Switzerland and Norway, continue to fund many NGOs that use the UN and Durban as platforms to preach rejectionism and anti-Israel racism.

In declaring the failure of efforts to prevent the second Durban conference from emulating the first, the Israeli government has set down a clear marker. If the Arab states and the Europeans are seriously committed to a peace initiative based on mutual acceptance and an end to conflict, they will need to actively disassociate themselves from such virulent anti-Israel campaigning.

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