

Road Map may be last chance at Middle East peace for 'long time' - UN envoy



Terje Roed-Larsen briefs Council

19 May 2003 – The Road Map peace plan may be the last chance to achieve a two-state solution to the Middle East conflict for a very long time, since ongoing Palestinian terror radicalizes both communities while Israeli settlement expansion makes creation of a viable Palestinian state ever more difficult, the senior United Nations envoy to the region, Terje Roed-Larsen, told the Security Council today.

In a briefing to an [open session](#) of the Council, Mr. Roed-Larsen, UN Special Co-ordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, called the latest suicide bombings against Israel "senseless acts that are unjustified on any moral or political grounds" while Israeli roadblocks and checkpoints were "the single largest impediment to the Palestinian economy," contributing to a huge increase in poverty and unemployment.

The Road Map devised by the diplomatic Quartet - the UN, United States, Russian Federation and European Union - calls for a series of parallel steps by both sides over the next three years towards realizing the vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security.

"The Palestinian Authority must bring those involved in planning and carrying out these attacks to justice," Mr. Roed-Larsen said. "Under the first phase of the Road Map, the Palestinian Authority is obligated to 'undertake visible efforts on the ground to arrest, disrupt and restrain individuals and groups conducting and planning violent attacks on Israelis anywhere.'"

The question of security reform was an area "in which the Palestinian Authority has tragically failed over the past two years," he added.

For its part, under the first phase of the Road Map, "Israel is required to take 'no actions undermining trust, including...attacks on civilians' and 'confiscation and/or demolition of Palestinian homes and property as a punitive measure,'" he declared. "Yet the killings of Palestinian civilians and destruction of their property continues."

He said closures and curfews continued to dominate the reality of most people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where poverty rates increased from about 25 per cent in 1998 to 60 per cent in 2002, and unemployment over the last two years rose from 20 per cent to 53 per cent, according to conservative estimates. Since the current crisis started in 2002, the closure had led to Palestinian losses of \$5.4 billion - one year's worth of national income.

Mr. Roed-Larsen said Israel's current restrictions on the entry of UN humanitarian staff to Gaza severely hampered the UN's ability to provide needed assistance to the 1.2 million Palestinians there, two-thirds of them refugees dependent on the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East ([UNRWA](#)) for health, education and social services.

He was having further meetings with Israeli authorities to try to resolve this issue, he added, but if they failed "we would expect that if Israel effectively prevents the UN from working, it would recognize and accept its obligation" as the Occupying Power to provide the needed assistance to the Palestinian people of Gaza.

"The Road Map might not be a flawless document, but I believe that it is the best chance to achieve peace that is available," Mr. Roed-Larsen stated. "In addition, it may well be the last chance for the parties to achieve a two-state solution for a very long time.

"Two factors contribute to this belief. First, continuing Palestinian terror contributes to the radicalisation of the peoples of both communities. It is difficult to imagine that a continuing cycle of violence would make the Israelis and Palestinians more willing to make peace in the near future.

"Second, Israel's ongoing expansion of settlements, construction of the separation wall, and other public works projects in the West bank would, over time, make the creation of a viable Palestinian state, part of which would be on the West Bank, more and more difficult."

[Video of Terje Roed-Larsen briefing the Security Council](#)

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