

'Right' Israeli pullout from Gaza could help bring Middle East peace - UN envoy



Terje Roed-Larsen

23 April 2004 – The top United Nations envoy for the Middle East, Terje Roed-Larsen, gave the Security Council a cautiously upbeat assessment today of developments in the area, now poised between choosing a new era of peacemaking if Israel withdraws from Gaza in the right way and more violence if the withdrawal is wrongly handled.

In an [open briefing](#) on the latest developments in the region, Mr. Roed-Larsen, Special Coordinator for the [Middle East](#) peace process, said the right withdrawal should not just be a military deployment but "should be full and complete and lead to the consolidation of Palestinian control over its territory and international crossings."

Complete withdrawal would confront Israel with a security dilemma, but this problem could be solved by "temporary, internationally supervised security arrangements," he said.

If approved by the parties, the arrangements could enable Israel to withdraw completely and the Palestinians to live normally, "fighting terrorism and violence in cooperation with regional and international players," Mr. Roed-Larsen said.

He did not share the pessimism of many about Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's announcement earlier this year that Israel will withdraw from almost all of the 40 per cent of Gaza that it still controls and part of the West Bank, Mr. Roed-Larsen said.

Noting that he had expressed optimism about the plan at his Council briefing in February, Mr. Roed-Larsen said, "I still do believe that the Gaza withdrawal, if carried out in the right way, can usher in a new era of peacemaking in the Middle East.

"I also continue to maintain that if such a withdrawal is implemented in the wrong way, it will lead to more violence, quite possibly bringing us to a new low in the dismal annals of the Palestinian-Israeli tragedy."

This is the crossroads today, Mr. Larsen said.

Only a rigorously engaged international community, led by the diplomatic Quartet - the UN, European Union, Russian Federation and United States - and the Security Council could help the parties to make the right choices, he said.

"The international community should certainly lend a hand to see the Palestinians recover their land in Gaza and to ensure that other steps in the same direction follow in the West Bank," he said.

 [Video of the Council meeting](#) [26mins]