



[30 Years After Oslo Agreement: Disaster for the Palestinians](#)

By Jacob Van Veldhuizen

The Oslo Accords have taken on many meanings since they were signed 30 years ago. Originally, it was a sign of hope and a chance for peace. Slowly, it has evolved into a tool for Israeli oppression. Oslo failed to achieve the immediate goal of laying the groundwork for a more comprehensive peace deal. In failing to do this, it also failed to achieve the long-term goal of creating a peace agreement between Israel and Palestine.

When the Oslo Accords were signed, hopes were high that it would lead to peace between Israel and Palestine. Even some of its detractors, who pointed out legitimate flaws in the process, had some hope that these accords would eventually lead to a more comprehensive peace deal.

There were multiple issues with the Oslo Accord. The most fundamental of these was the disconnect between the intentions of the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators. One of which is the failure of Israel to recognize Palestine as a legitimate state. The Palestinians entered the negotiation with the primary goal of being recognized as an independent state by Israel. Then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin stated that he was open to it, but would not be able to get it through the Knesset. What was happening on the ground painted a very different picture. Israel continued to expand its settlements and build new ones. Because of this, it is apparent that Israel never intended to recognize Palestinian statehood, rather, they saw an opportunity to pacify armed Palestinian resistance. They did this in multiple ways, of which the most consequential was making it a condition of negotiations for the Palestinian Authority to denounce terrorism. This seems like a reasonable enough request. However, this engrained the idea that all armed resistance against Israeli occupation was terrorism. This option was now removed from the table.

Another issue was the failure to agree on fundamental issues. It is logical to make smaller agreements in order to build a foundation of trust. However, ignoring some of the core grievances can and did make the earlier negotiations inconsequential. Instead, they only offered to recognize the Palestinian Authority as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The issues of the right of return for Palestinian refugees and the ownership of Jerusalem also would have likely prevented a more comprehensive peace agreement. Solutions are available to these issues; it is a matter of each side negotiating in good faith to find a solution that they both find palatable.

Though there were issues with the accords themselves, there were also external factors. Outbreaks of violence greatly hampered negotiations. Both the Israeli army and Hamas launched attacks that stressed negotiations and limited the amount of trust that could be built between the two sides. The 1994 massacre of Palestinians at Hebron's Ibrahimi Mosque/Tomb of the Patriarchs by the American-Israeli extremist Baruch Goldstein was the catalyst for much of this violence.

Originally, Oslo was supposed to lay the groundwork for more negotiations. Unfortunately, this interim agreement became a permanent reality. The current situation on the ground starkly contrasts with 30 years ago. The Oslo

Accords did fail to complete its original goal, but many of the policies are still in use today, often to the detriment of the peace process. Israel still occupies Areas B and C. Under the agreement, Area A was to be completely controlled by Palestine, and Area B was to be governed by Palestine while Israel controlled security. Area C was entirely under Israeli. The agreement was to slowly withdraw from these areas and cede complete control to Palestine. This withdrawal was never completed. Even in Area A, constant raids by Israeli security undermine any perceived sovereignty. In practice, Israel still has control over the entirety of Palestine.

The political instability on both sides of this conflict also hampers any effort to revive negotiations. Israel finds itself under the control of a far-right, extremist government. This government is full of criminals and racist agitators like Itmar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich. It continues to enable settler violence, destroy Palestinian homes, siphon resources out of Palestine, suppress Palestinian identity, and kill innocent civilians. Israel is also on the verge of a constitutional crisis as Prime Minister Netanyahu and his allies work to dismantle the remaining checks on their power. The Palestinian side is not faring much better in terms of stability. The leader of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, is quickly losing his popular mandate. His popularity continues to decline as the situation worsens in Palestine. There have also been accusations of corruption and collusion with the Israeli government. Abbas refuses to hold elections, further hurting his legitimacy at home and abroad. Gaza is still under a blockade that has destroyed its economy and led to increased poverty. It has also become increasingly dangerous in Palestine, as more and more Palestinians are being killed by Israeli security forces.

As it stands, there is very little chance for the revival of the peace process with the two governments in place. The Israeli government lacks the will, and the Palestinian government lacks the ability. Open negotiations have halted and there is little political will to begin them again. Israel's expansion of settlements has made the 2-state solution impossible. The power dynamic has changed to such an extent (largely thanks to the unconditional military support of the United States) that even if negotiations were somehow set up, there would be little chance of success. There is still debate on which method would work the best. There are still many proponents of the 2-state solution, but as stated earlier, with the continued theft of Palestinian land, it is impossible to establish the borders needed for this to succeed. The 1 state solution is a promising option, but the current political climate in Israel does not allow for this.

The legacy of the Oslo Accords is that of failure, but the prospect of peace is not entirely lost. There are groups in both Israel and Palestine that continue to advocate for negotiations. The existence of the far-right government in Israel remains the biggest roadblock at this time. Peace cannot be achieved as long as Netanyahu and his allies are in power. This is not the only roadblock. Future negotiations must be in good faith. We must realize that peace is a necessity to ensure the future of both countries.