

ANNAPOLIS FRIENDS MID-EAST PEACE PUBLIC FORUM

Monday, November 26, 2007

St. Anne's Church
199 Duke of Gloucester St.
Annapolis, MD

PROCEEDINGS

MR. CAROOM: Good evening, Friends, and everyone. We thank you all for coming here tonight.

My name is Phil Caroom, I am our moderator for the discussion this evening, as a member of the Annapolis Friends, or Quaker Meeting in Annapolis.

I would also like to begin by thanking Susan Dapkunas, who just played that fine solo for us, which was, I think, Suite Number 1 by Johann Sebastian Bach.

And I would also like to thank the other groups which have assisted us in getting this event organized this evening, which includes good advice from the local chapter of Peace Action, and also especially includes St. Anne's Episcopal Church who, in effect, has cosponsored the event with us.

I would like to invite the Reverend Wickizer to also extend a greeting to everyone and to say a few words.

Reverend.

REVEREND WICKIZER: Thank you, Phil, and welcome everyone. On behalf of St. Anne's, it is wonderful to see such a turnout tonight.

And I must tell you, we had, knowing this event at the Naval Academy was coming--we had planned, or were beginning to plan some sort of prayer vigil and peace event that we would open up to the community and so forth, and then Phil and others started contacting us about doing this kind of thing, and it snowballed. And I think it may be, perhaps, a paradigm, or a microcosm, of what we can do together when we bring all kinds of people with a common interest together to do something.

It may not be perfect, it may be a little messy, a little rough around the edges, but, you know, the outcome is actually far greater and far better than any one of us, as groups working individually, could possibly achieve.

And I hope that [is] certainly what happens at the Naval Academy, officially, tomorrow, and I hope that is what happens globally in all of our efforts for peace and so forth.

So, on behalf of a congregation that has been here worshiping God for 300 years or more and working for justice and peace in a variety of contexts, I welcome you and thank you for being here from the bottom of my heart, and ask you to continue to go out from here, working for the peace that passes all understanding.

Let us pray.

God of Abraham, we thank you for bringing this community together, and we ask that you continue to grow us in our hearts, in our passions for peace and justice.

We ask you to continue to move us in directions that you will. We ask you to send us into this world so that we can be your agents for a better world that is your dream for all of us.

All this we ask in your name. Amen.

God bless you.

MR. CAROOM: Another organization which is obviously central to our gathering tonight is called the Geneva Initiative. That is an organization which has been formed by private citizens of Israel and of the Palestinian people who have been working together for many years to find their own way to peace, if the governments which represent them had not been able to do so.

I would like to, before introducing our special visitors, our spokespeople this evening, to say a few more words about our position in hosting them.

I'd like to begin by quoting Winston Churchill, who once said that Americans always can be counted on to do the right thing, after they've tried everything else.

[Laughter.]

MR. CAROOM: But regardless of what anyone thinks about the timing, I think everyone here knows that peace between the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples can only be a good thing.

Some people, I think, in the Middle East-- that Americans lack the attention and the understanding to help with the problems of peacemaking over there. But even though Americans are people who would like to see their problems solved in less than half-an-hour on a television show, even though we are people who like our ideas, political ideas, short enough to fit on a car bumper sticker, there still may be hope for us.

We can find truth even in our bumper stickers.

There is a swell bumper sticker which says, "Peace also is patriotic." It is a good thing for the United States to be seeking peace, as we have begun to do with our governments this week, and it would be a good and patriotic thing for the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Another bumper sticker says, "Peace takes courage, too." It takes a brave person to sit down with his or her adversaries and just to listen to everything they have to say, not to mention making the compromises that will need to be made.

The last bumper sticker I want to mention, which should be most meaningful to us, is that, "Peace, as we discuss it, does not mean the absence of war." Peace means the presence of justice, because, without justice, there can be no peace.

Speaking of justice, it is appropriate that we meet tonight, also, across the street from one of the oldest working courthouses in the United States. There, across the streets, Americans and their attorneys face what are, for them, very difficult and angry disputes in their personal lives, in their business, in their community, everyday. And they settle those disputes everyday. That courthouse is another source of common truth which we can keep in mind tonight.

One of those truths that is often heard over there whenever people work on a difficult job of resolving their disputes is this: They say, "A good settlement is one where both sides are equally unhappy."

The unhappiness we know may offer a compromise, but it can be a compromise that we can live with, rather than a fight that we can die for.

The other truth I'd like to mention from the courthouse is the disclaimer that lawyers often give. When they're getting close to the settlement, but they're not quite there, they say, "The Devil is in the details," because those details are important to the daily lives of the people who are involved. And we know, in any difficult dispute, it takes time and attention: more than half-a-day, more than a few hours--to get these details worked out.

So, we are fortunate to have with us representatives tonight of the Israeli and Palestinian peace coalition known as the Geneva Initiative, because their founders and their organization already have spent a huge amount of attention and many years in negotiating a draft for a final status agreement, a peace plan between their peoples.

I'd like to offer one last short bit of history before introducing our special guests to tell you how the Geneva Initiative was started, and they will tell us more, I believe.

The Geneva Initiative started after the so-called "Camp David peace talks" that were initiated in the year 2000. At that time, Americans should recall that representatives of the Israeli government and of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the Palestinian authority, continued to meet until 2001.

But in 2001, there was a new administration in Washington and there was a new administration in Israel, and there was new unrest among the Palestinians, which we now call the Second Intifada.

These new governments then decided that they would no longer continue the peace talks. However, there were some negotiators who had represented the government, official representatives of the Israeli government, official representatives of the Palestinian authority, who did not want to give up.

They still saw that there was hope that a settlement could be reached. And they agreed, even though their governments no longer supported them, to continue meeting. And they did this; they continued meeting privately and unofficially. They continued to meet for nearly two years, working detail after detail, in the same way that they might have, had they been officially working with their governments' support.

Finally, in the year 2003, with the support of the Swiss government, they announced in Geneva that they had signed an agreement which had resolved the vast majority of the disputes between their two peoples. That agreement was called the Geneva Accord. The Geneva Accord is available for us to read now online. There are pamphlets, if they haven't all been taken in the back, which have the text of it.

And if you want to get a copy but do not have access to a computer to print it out, the website address is on the program, the yellow pieces of paper which were there for us to pick up this evening--then you could write your name and address on a clipboard which we will have in the back, and someone could send a copy of it to you.

The Geneva Accord was a comprehensive agreement. It provided a plan for some Palestinian refugees to return to their homelands and for other Palestinian refugees who were unable to return to receive fair compensation from a large compensation fund. That fund would have been established by mutual appraisers to decide what the Palestinians' property was worth at the time it was lost.

The funds would enable each Palestinian family to buy new land, new businesses, new property, whether in Palestinian territory, or another country that they might choose if they chose not to return to the new Palestinian homeland.

The Geneva Accord also provided a plan for sharing of the holy city of Jerusalem, with an arrangement for cooperative control by each side of the places most sacred to it, and with an arrangement for cooperative peacekeeping.

The Geneva Accord also provides for the security and defense of both the Israelis and of the Palestinians.

The Accord addresses almost every other concern of the people, setting out a plan where Israelis and Palestinians could be good neighbors. There are a few gaps which the negotiators without--with the help of engineers and other professionals, such as the sharing of water rights, cooperation in the court systems, and certain economic matters.

But as detailed as it was, the negotiators in Geneva realized that it was time for them to return to Israel and to educate the people about the plan, and to encourage them to understand the way that peace could be reached. And what they would--and teach them what they would need to do to live by that peace agreement.

For this purpose, to educate the people and to lead them towards peace, they formed the Geneva Initiative. The Geneva Initiative, from which our two speakers come this evening, consists of two non-profit organizations, one Israeli and one Palestinian. They cooperate with each other without side groups, and they also cooperate with the Israeli and Palestinian governments in any way that they can to move peace forward between the two countries.

Our speakers will tell you more about the Geneva Initiative in their initial statements, and a little later in response to questions from you in our audience.

But now, let me go ahead and introduce our speakers.

First, on our left is Mr. Nidal Foquaha. Mr. Foquaha is the Executive Director of the Palestinian Peace Coalition, that side of the Geneva Initiative.

He is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the group. He has published several articles and previously has served as a media and communications director for the Palestinian Media Center.

He also, recently, with other colleagues, has founded the Palestinian Liberal Forum, and serves on a steering committee of both the Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGOs Forum, and of an international group called the International Peace Research Association.

He lives on the West Bank in Ramallah. He is married and has three children.

Please join me in welcoming Mr. Nidal Foquaha.

[Applause.]

MR. CAROOM: Second, on our right, let me introduce Mr. Mossi Raz.

Mr. Raz serves on the Board of the Israeli side of the Geneva Initiative.

Previously, he was an elected member of Knesset the Israeli legislature.

Mr. Raz also works as business manager for an organization called “All for Peace,” which operates a Palestinian and Israeli radio station.

He chairs an executive committee of the Israeli political party called Meretz.

And he chairs an Israeli forum for ecological art, and serves on the board of an umbrella group for all Israeli environmental organizations.

Previously, he served as an Israeli Army officer, and he has a degree from Hebrew University in Economics and Accounting.

Please join me in welcoming Mr. Mossi Raz.

[Applause.]

MR. CAROOM: And as I’ve said, in a few moments, we will invite questions from you and our audience, and when we do that, we will have a young Friend assist us with a microphone that we will invite people to come up to in the front.

Hold the microphone not up at your mouth, but a little bit away from it. And if you do that, then we’ll be sure that everyone else in the audience will hear you, as well as Mr. Raz and Mr. Foquaha are hearing you.

To begin, though, I would like to invite our guests, taking turns, to tell us briefly about their views of the Annapolis Conference tomorrow about the Geneva Initiative and how they believe that Americans might help move this process forward.

First, I'd like to address the topic--the question to Mr. Raz, and invite you, sir, if you would tell us what you see as the importance of the Annapolis Conference tomorrow, which is called by our governments to discuss the peace process. And also, if you want to include in that, what you see as the role for the Geneva Initiative and the Geneva Accord in those negotiations.

Mr. Raz--and I don't know if your microphone is on. We should make sure it is turned on and lit up.

MR. RAZ: Okay. First, thank you, Phil, and thank you everybody for your--oh--for inviting us here, it is really a blessing how many people attended here and the interest that you have in this summit. Thank you for that.

I think that tomorrow is an historic day. Actually, I would say that every November, once in thirty years, comes an historic day in America for the Middle East.

In November 1947, November 29, exactly 60 years ago, there was the UN resolution to establish in the land of Israel a Palestinian state and a Jewish state.

This was the beginning of the state of Israel, and unfortunately, it was not the beginning of the state of Palestine.

In 1977 came the late Egyptian President Sadat to visit Israel in November '77, and then they came here to Camp David and achieved the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt.

And now, in November 2007, in the first time in the history--delegations from Israel, from Palestine, from the Arab states, and from all over the world, are coming here to start negotiations, to start the work towards peace between Palestine and Israel, between free Palestine and independent Israel.

It is very important that they come here. It is an historic day, and I'm sure that they are going to decide tomorrow about timetables and about frameworks to deal with the problem---to solve the problem.

And I want to call upon them and to tell them--Phil, I think, told you about the Geneva Initiative--the details are not important at all. I tell you why: because many Israelis and many Palestinians agreed upon this paper. This is a paper that the majority of Israelis and the majority of Palestinians can live with.

So, I call upon those leaders. You don't have to waste time, you don't have to negotiate again, you don't have to start from the very beginning again. We are talking for 40 years, and we are killing each other for much more than that. Stop it. Just stop it.

You have an agreement on the table. I call upon the leaders of Israel, I call upon the leaders of Palestine, "Accept this paper as the basis to negotiation." Then you can change something if you want to change. Then you can decide about the timetable. You should go back to your nations and tell them, "We have an agreement. We want to deliver. We can deliver." The majority in both nations want it. You can go to referendum if you want. Okay. Let's go for it.

And I want to say something about the other Arab leaders who come here. Peace between Israel and all the Arab nations is really possible. I welcome the decision of the Arab League to send their foreign ministers here. I welcome the Arab League Peace Initiative, which was launched in Beirut five years ago, emerged 2002.

And I call upon the Israeli leaders, "Accept this initiative." The example of Geneva is a very good example for peace between Israel and Palestine.

This is the good initiative for peace between Israel and all the 22 members in the Arab leagues, all those nations: Syria, Lebanon, and all the others. You can decide tomorrow, the leaders who come here--you can decide tomorrow to solve the people on the basis of the Arab League Initiative.

And then you can talk about the timeframe. You can talk about how to deliver, but this is a very good model for peace between Israelis and Palestinians--between Israelis and the Arab nations. Sorry.

I think that maybe I want to elaborate a little bit later about that, but it is very important for me to tell you that Israelis and Palestinians are not just killing each other. We have a lot of cooperation. You have here the best example, the Geneva Initiative. There is a lot of work of the civil society in both nations.

Phil mentioned the radio that I am--the All for Peace Radio Station. A lot of work that it is doing between the two societies, and we must empower the civil society of both nations. We must empower the

people-to-people activity. We must empower the joint activity of Palestinians and Israelis in order to solve the conflict.

I am sure that it is only a matter of time. It is not if. We are going to solve the conflict. It is only a matter of time.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. CAROOM: Thank you.

Let me next invite Mr. Foquaha to respond to the same query, the same question.

What do you think is the importance of the Annapolis Conference tomorrow, and what role do you believe that the Geneva Accord and the Geneva Initiative may have in helping to move that forward?

MR. FOQUAHA: Hello.

First, allow me to thank you, Phil. Thank you very much for your effort, which enabled us today to appear here in Annapolis, just one day before the official conference, and to thank also the Annapolis Friends meeting and the Quakers.

Really, I would like also to thank you, to thank everybody of you--now, I really do feel that we are not alone in the work of peace, and we have supporters, and we have allies everywhere, even here in the United States, where it is some 5,000 miles away from the place of the conflict.

So, thank you very much, thanks to everybody here, where tomorrow, Annapolis will witness a very important meeting, an historic event which we in the Palestinian Peace Coalition and the Palestinian Peace Force, in a broader term, do really believe that this conference is a real and very important and serious step that creates a new positive approach in the whole peace process between the Palestinians and Israelis, which we also do believe, at the end of the day, it will lead to solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and to put an end for the cycle of violence, which renewed or restarted seven years ago with the collapse of the Camp David [talks].

The Annapolis Conference, we believe, is an important issue, important for both Palestinians and Israelis, and it is in this regard we really do call upon our leaders who will be here tomorrow to exert every effort possible towards negotiating an endgame settlement for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the principles

outlined in the relevant international resolutions, in the vision of Mr. Bush for 2002, for the road map plan, and also for the Arab Peace Initiative towards ending the Israeli occupation, which started in 1967, and the establishment of a Palestinian independent state that lives side by side in peace and security with Israel, and reaching a just and agreed upon solution for the problem of the Palestinian refugees.

This issue will--if it happens here--or if the process for achieving it started here from Annapolis, will be really recorded in the history, and will be mentioned even after generations to go.

Within this context, we do not forget the role of the international community, mainly the American role in this regard. And in this occasion, we in the Geneva--we call upon the international community, mainly the United States-- in order not save any effort possible in helping and trying to assess for the leaders of Palestine and Israeli to reach an agreement.

And then, to keep support and help for the implementation of this agreement within timetables and time schedules that--within a process that leads, at the end, to solving the conflict and establishment of a Palestinian state.

As a person who represents Geneva, and as my colleague Mossi just said, we say to them, "Don't say it is impossible." We say it is possible. Peace in the Middle East is possible. And peace between Israelis and Palestinians is possible. And the proof on this? That we are working together. There, in the region, we are working together on a daily basis.

And the example of Geneva, and the model of Geneva, which was done and completed within some two-three years of serious and with sincere efforts by people who originally, by the way--they were participating in the official Palestinian and Israeli negotiation. They built on what has been achieved in Camp David, and in Clinton's parameters, and took the responsibility upon their shoulders, and went to every place in the world, until finally concluding an endgame solution or model for solving the conflict which was announced and launched in December 2003 in Geneva.

This model provides for a detailed solution for the main issues of the conflict.

We have the issue of Jerusalem, which is one of the most important issues of the conflict for both Palestinians and Israelis.

We have also the issue of refugees, which is really when I say it is an issue of life and death for Palestinians, I'm not revealing a secret. It is really a very important issue, which, in Geneva, stipulates for its solution.

And the issue of the borders, which is addressed and in details--detailed by the Geneva Initiative, where we are the one who seriously, not only presented, but really agreed upon the basis of having the land swap within a certain percentage agreed upon that does exceed 3 percent, and this is to be a mutual--where Israel will take some of the Palestinian land, and the Palestinians will do the same. So, in Geneva, there is the main guidelines of the solution.

And you may say, or an official may say, "Okay. We do not agree with this certain issue." Fine with us. Take it as a reference. Take it as a model. At least you may agree with us on other issues. And if we are going also, to take the Arab Peace Initiative, which is, by the way--is the main basis for the presence of the different Arab countries who are participating now in Annapolis. They participated based upon the Arab Peace Initiative presented in 2008 in Beirut, and then affirmed, or confirmed by the Arabs once again in 2005 in Riyadh, the Arab Peace Initiative provides a general framework for solving the conflict.

And within this general framework I think we still have the opportunity to rely on the plan which Geneva provides for solving the different and the small issues of the conflict.

It is true that there is an Arab position where the different Arab states take one position regarding the participation in Annapolis, but when it comes to the details of the conflicts, it is a conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis, Syrians and Israelis, Lebanese and Israelis, and those concerned parties will sit around the table and discuss the details of the solution, so we, the Palestinians, and they, the Israelis, who will sit around the table, and who will discuss the details of the conflict, which we do believe will not be, at the end of the day, that far from the main guidelines of the Geneva Initiative.

Thank you.

MR. CAROOM: Let me offer one more question for you each to respond to individually, and then we will begin to invite questions from anyone in the audience who would like to offer other questions.

The second question I'd like to start with, Mr. Foquaha, is--obviously, we have been hearing about the peace negotiation itself, which is an important part of the Geneva Initiative, to try to move that forward; however, the other part which we have heard that the Geneva Initiative works on is preparing the people in the Palestinian land and in Israeli land to live together and to cooperate in a better way.

So, Mr. Foquaha, could you please describe for us some of the more important activities of the Geneva Initiative in that people-to-people part of the program?

And also, if you can combine with that if there is anything that you think Americans can do to help that part of the process, in addition to encouraging our politicians. If we can do anything to help the people-to-people part of the process, what would that be?

MR. FOQUAHA: Thank you for this good question.

When really, in fact, you have such a political idea--an important political model--solution for such a conflict, a conflict by the Palestinian and Israeli--that related back to history for long years, you need a strong momentum behind it.

And to keep on this drive, we went, since the very beginning to establishing two organizations in order to follow up and to administer the whole process of promoting the concept of the Geneva.

So, we set up offices in both Ramallah and Tel Aviv, where we are working on a daily basis in such offices, on different issues. And mainly here comes, which is most important, our work with the grassroots.

Among the important work which we do, we educate our young children. We educate our students in universities. We educated our professionals, our graduates. We educate, in general, our people on peace, on tolerance, accepting the other, on all noble values that lead to peace.

So, we do have a program--a program for the whole year, if it is to say it like that--a systematic program where we do work, first, on a unilateral basis. As Palestinians, we work in the Palestinian territories. We approach the Palestinian community and the different segments within this community, and the Israelis do the same, but we do not forget the importance of bringing people together.

So, one of the main issues which we are working on is bringing people together. And due to the nature of where in the region, in fact, it is not easy to bring a number of Israelis and Palestinians together in the region. It is not possible.

Palestinians cannot move to Tel Aviv and travel to an Israeli city, and it is the same for the Israelis, due to the nature of the conflict. And this is, by the way--this is what complicates the whole process, because even we do have now a generation of Palestinians and Israelis who know nothing about the other.

The Palestinian young generation, what they know about the Israelis is an Israeli occupation army, and Israeli settlers who cause the misery of the Palestinians.

And for the Israelis--and for the young generation of the Israelis, what they know about the Palestinians is a suicide bomber and a terrorist. And it is our obligation and it is our main task to change such stereotypes and to change the image of the other on--for the other.

By the way, we will have, next week, as one--I will give one of the examples. Next week, we will bring some 30 Palestinians and Israelis together in Turkey, in a city in Turkey.

There we will provide a room for some 15 Palestinians and some 15 Israelis who are parliamentary assistants, to talk openly, freely, and everybody of them to express his opinion, his attitude on the main issues that raise in his mind. Sometimes there are issues of main interest for both Palestinians and Israelis, and mainly for those who work in a similar field.

So, we are bringing journalists together, we are bringing teachers together, we are bringing young leaders together, we are bringing school students together, and also we are bringing politicians together.

We kept having our programs for bringing politicians from within the institutions in Palestine and Israel, even during the most severe situations and circumstances of the conflict. In 2004, 2005, and 2006, we used to bring them together, and we still, and we will continue to bring them together and to try with them the model of the Geneva.

Well, as you may see, by the type of the work which we do, in fact, this is huge work, which needs a lot of support, and we do really rely on the international support as an organization--a civil society organization, we rely on the moral and financial support of the international community. For now, we do have support from the

EU organizations and even states. And we do now, also--we rely, also, and we hope that the Americans will be more helpful in this regard, the issue of making peace. The industry of making peace is really something that needs the efforts of all, and we do need, in this regard, the efforts of the Americans as public, and the efforts of the American administration, and the issue of the political--and trying to practice its influence upon both Palestinians and Israelis, and mainly on the Israelis for reaching and concluding a settlement and solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

MR. CAROOM: Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. CAROOM: Let me invite Mr. Raz on the Israeli side to speak to the same question.

What is the importance of the people-to-people work of the Geneva Initiative, and what do you think Americans might do to support that?

MR. RAZ: I think the importance of the activity of the Geneva Initiative is not only the field of people-to-people.

I think that the Geneva Initiative--I am talking now about the Israeli side--by the launching of the agreement--of the Accord four years ago, on December 1, 2003, in Geneva, after three years of intifada, of thousands of Palestinians and Israelis killed in the nation, I think the launch of Geneva showed to Israelis and to Palestinians, and to all over the world, that peace between Israelis and Palestinians is possible.

There is a model, because until 2003, mainly from 2000--from the--in Camp David, most of the Israelis said, "Okay. Maybe we cannot do that. There is no way to do that." And this was a change. Everybody saw that there is a model. By the way, surprisingly, the Israeli public opinion, the problems are not refugees, because almost every Israeli can live with the written solution of Geneva about the refugees question.

And even though Jerusalem--because I think a large majority of Israelis can live with the written solution of Geneva about the future of Jerusalem--not easy, but the majority of Israelis can live with that.

The problem is the settlements, and many Israelis cannot live with what is written in Geneva, that tens of thousands of settlers will have to leave. And there is no other choice. By the way, this is exactly why a few weeks later, after the launching of Geneva, the previous Prime Minister Sharon announced that he is going to

disengage Gaza, because he understood what the Israeli public understood, that the settlements is the problem, and then he wanted to evacuate the settlements.

So, it has a lot of--the launching of Geneva changed the Israeli political map. Many people came to understand and to believe that we can solve the problem. Before that, very few people thought in those terms. People thought, "Okay. Palestinians are extreme, we are extreme, there is no way to solve the problem." Now, the campaign is all the time. Even now, when we are talking here in Annapolis, last Saturday night, Peace Now and Geneva Initiative mobilized hundreds of people to demonstrate in front of the residence of the Israeli Prime Minister in a public square in Jerusalem, calling the Prime Minister to make compromise with the Palestinians here in Annapolis. So, it is a campaign that is lasting more than four years--or almost four years, and of course, we will need to go on with this.

Part of this campaign is the people-to-people activity, which is--I find it very important, extremely important, because you just have to understand, Israelis are listening to the Israeli radio, watch the Israeli TV, read the Israeli newspapers. They believe that Israelis are the victims. They really believe that, because that is what is written in these newspapers, that is what they watch in those TV channels. They watch only the Israelis suffer. They don't show the Palestinians suffer. They show only the Israeli views. They hardly show the Palestinian views.

And the same on the Palestinian side, the focus on the Palestinian suffer--the Palestinian views, and every Palestinian--it shows that the Palestinians are the victims and the Israelis are the bad guys. Now, both of them are right and both of them have a mistake.

There is no--not so easy that there is a bad guy and a good guy. It is not like that.

And then you take Israelis to meet Palestinians, when you take Palestinians to meet Israelis, they understand that, "Okay, not all the truth is in my pocket. The reality is what I thought until I came here to meet Palestinians. I am not the only victim that--the other side is a victim as well." And it has made a tremendous change in the view of those people who have participated in those people-to-people activities, and that is why this is very important.

The problem is that we cannot mobilize seven million Israelis to meet five million Palestinians. So, we have to figure out about other ways to do that. And one of the ways is radio, websites, every other way that we can do to help us to bring the Palestinian message to Israelis, bring the Israeli message to Palestinians, and then both of them will understand that the reality is a little bit more complicated than they think.

But there is a possibility to solve the problem, and in that way, we hope to mobilize people to support the Geneva Initiative and Peace for All.

MR. CAROOM: Thank you.

[Applause.]

MR. CAROOM: I am going to invite one our young Friends, Martin Kraft to come up here and to person our microphone.

So, if there are questions that anyone in the audience would like to ask--what we're going to request is that you come to the front and Martin is going to give you this microphone so that we can hear you and our guests can hear you.

And before you begin to speak, also, if you would also please introduce yourself: Say your name and give us your question, please.

MS. KEEPER: Is this okay?

Good evening, Mr. Foquaha and Mr. Raz, my name is Susan Keeper [ph.], and my husband and I yearn deeply for peace between your two countries, and we thank you for coming here tonight and also for all the work that you've done with the Geneva Initiative to promote peace in Palestine and Israel.

My question is, Mr. Raz, you said that the answer is not in the details. Could each of you tell us what are the two or three major things that are preventing this peace agreement from happening?

MR. CAROOM: Do you want to start this time, perhaps--Mr. Raz to respond to that question?

MR. RAZ: Do you want me to respond or just to hear all the questions, or...

MR. CAROOM: Go ahead and respond.

Her question was, "Could you identify, perhaps, two or three of the things that you think are the most important obstacles to overcome in the negotiation?"

MR. RAZ: Yes, I think that the settlements is the most--the most difficult obstacle, because here the government of Israel will have to evacuate tens of thousands of people, probably more than 100,000 people, from their homes.

Their homes are in occupied territories, and they should have understood years ago that it will not work, that this is not really their homes, but it is still their homes. Some have lived there for 40 years. Some of them have even grandchildren there. I think it is going to be very difficult.

We have seen how difficult it was to evacuate 9,000 settlers from Gaza Strip two years ago. It is not easy. This is, I think, the biggest obstacle.

The second is the fact that I think leaders of both sides, Israel and Palestine, I am sorry to say that, are not brave enough to say, "We want to go. We want to do that. We are willing to pay the price. We are willing to go to the people. We are willing to go to referendum and to ask them to vote for that." They hesitate.

They know, unfortunately, unfortunately, at least on the Israeli side, they remember what happened to late Prime Minister Rabin who was assassinated because of his will to peace.

And I believe that Palestinian side, President Abbas is hesitating, too. And this is really sad.

MR. CAROOM: Mr. Foquaha. I don't know if you want to agree or if you want to identify if there are perhaps a couple of issues that you think are the most difficult.

MR. FOQUAHA: Yes, a couple of sentences.

As you may all know, following signing the Oslo Agreement and establishment of the Palestinian Authority as an interim authority which will--for an interim period which will end in 1999--and then there will be the permanent status.

During that period, five issues remained pending or not tackled. Those issues are: Jerusalem, the refugees, the borders, settlement, and water.

And I think the first attempt since then, when there was an Israeli-Palestinian attempt to tackle such issues was made in Camp David in 2002, and we all know and remember the results of Camp David. I think, upon reaching the issue of Jerusalem and, mainly, the refugees, because there is maybe no concession between

the two parties on certain issues. And I think if there is a concession in certain issue--of those can be taken on the account of the other issue.

But mainly, I think the main obstacle will remain Jerusalem, the refugees, and the settlements.

MR. CAROOM: Thank you.

Next, ma'am, if you want to, again, introduce yourself and tell us--

MS. KATKHOUDA: Ryme Katkhouda with the Free Speech Radio News, Pacific Radio Network, and the People's Media Center.

Besides the points that most of you mentioned, I would love to hear some more comments of the likelihood, if at all, of a practical peace initiative with the subtraction of Hamas, which was democratically elected Palestinian leadership, from the table, in the shadow of an Israeli world constructed on Palestinian land and fracturing the Palestinian territories, United States dollars funding both this war and the Israeli army and state, and the United States and European blockade around Gaza as we speak.

MR. CAROOM: Let me ask that Mr. Foquaha speak first to especially address the question of Hamas and its participation.

MR. FOQUAHA: Yeah.

Well, you know, in 2006--in January 2006, there were general elections in Palestine, and Hamas won the elections. Hamas won the elections by the majority--they took the majority of seats by minority of votes, by 42 percent.

This is not the issue. They were democratically elected, but since their election, in fact, a lot of the problems arise.

First of all, they were even not that ready for playing part of the Palestinian political system.

And unfortunately also, the whole world was not ready to deal with them, but endless attempts were made since then until June 2007 in order to integrate them within the Palestinian political system.

They were given the chance to establish a Palestinian government, which they did, until April 2007, where Mecca Agreement was concluded and signed between Fatah and Hamas. Fatah was represented by President Mahmoud Abbas, and Hamas by the then Prime Minister, where a National Unity Government was

formed with the participation of the different Palestinian political groups and factions, and where this government started to deliver, though within limited percentage.

But unfortunately, we were all, not only surprised, but shocked, with the coup that Hamas has made or launched on the 14th of June, where many Palestinians lost their lives. But still, we do believe, really, that this is internal Palestinian hallmark, and this issue will always remain on the top of the Palestinian agenda, and that requires to be solved.

Now, the Palestinians are represented at the Annapolis Conference by President Mahmoud Abbas, who is elected by the majority of the Palestinians. By the way, he is an elected Palestinian president, and the majority which elected President Mahmoud Abbas is much more than the majority which elected Hamas. And he was directly elected by the people, so he has the full and complete mandate to represent the Palestinians.

Well, in fact, I would like also to comment on the issue of the Wall. The Wall is a real problem, and the Wall is now one of the main obstacles, also. The Wall has created what we call the status quo on the Palestinian territories, and continuing the Wall, and increasing the Wall--we always warn that this Wall may make the principle of a two-state solution no more possible, and which lead us back to a one-state solution, which is no solution at all.

MR. CAROOM: Thank you.

And Mr. Raz, if you want to comment on the same question, and perhaps, if you might, since we had Mr. Foquaha comment about the political strength that President Abbas would need to go forward with the peace negotiations, you might also comment about the political strength that would be necessary for Prime Minister Olmert to do the same thing, since he also has some difficulty with his popular support at this time.

MR. RAZ: Yes. I want to say that, first of all, with Hamas, this is--this is an interior Palestinian issue. It is not for us to decide who is representing the Palestinian people.

And if today the representative of the Palestinian people are not moderate enough, I believe that, tomorrow, they will be moderate enough.

You say that Hamas was elected in democratic elections, maybe according to American standards, not according to the Israeli standards, but it is up to you to decide.

According--for your question about the Wall, I am sorry not to agree with you. I think that the Wall--first, building a wall on the '67 border--on the border between Israeli and Palestine, is legitimate. This wall is not on the border, and this is the problem with this wall, which violates human rights, which confiscates lands, and which is making a lot of problems.

But believe me, the problem is not the Wall, the problem is the settlements. This wall will fall in one day after the decision. No single settler is going to protest. It is easier--I am telling you, I know that it is easier to demolish 700 kilometers of wall than one house in a settlement, and we will have to demolish tens of thousands of houses. So, the Wall is not the problem.

It is the problem right now, yes, of human rights, but vis-à-vis the question of the final status agreement between Palestine and Israel it is nothing, nothing. There is no reason to talk about that at all.

And according to the political situation in Israel--first, according to Israeli law, if Olmert wants to make a compromise in Jerusalem, he must first get 50 percent of the votes in the parliament, in the Knesset, and then go to a referendum.

So, for every--let's say, for every deal between--real deal between Palestine and Israel, every peace agreement, we will need a referendum.

I am optimistic. I believe that, even if today the majority of Israelis cannot accept the conditions, in the right day, they will accept that.

And we have seen in the past that it happened again and again: people opposed to solutions, and when they saw that this is on the table, they accepted that.

MS. KATKHOUDA; [Off Microphone.]

MR. CAROOM: Let me ask that we let some of our other questioners get their questions in.

But before we do that, let me add something else, and I'll ask our speakers if they agree.

In our preparation for this program, we had discussed the question of the strength of support politically for President Abbas and for Prime Minister Olmert. And I believe each of you gentlemen had said that you believe that there was a possibility that if a successful agreement was reached, that could boost their popularity

and boost their support, because, currently, the surveys show, I think, roughly two-thirds of the public, both Israeli and Palestinian, support the concept of a peace agreement.

Is that a fair statement, Gentlemen?

Okay. Sir, if you want to, again, introduce yourself and then give us your question.

MR. SMITH: My name is Dan Smith. I am a local merchant here in the Annapolis--

MR. CAROOM: And let me ask you to hold it close to your--

MR. SMITH: Okay. Is this better?

My name is Dan Smith. I am a local merchant here in the Annapolis area.

This is for Mr. Raz and Mr. Foquaha. You gentlemen are obviously optimistic. Thank God for that optimism, because without it there would be no hope.

But unfortunately, there seems to be an 800-pound gorilla in the room. Whether we like to talk about it or not, what we have is a majority is we think we have--that 800-pound gorilla, also known as those who hold the power and those who are actually making a profit by having conflict, have sway and are in control, and a large part of the government and a large part of the media.

My question is simple and yet it is not simple at all. How do you go forward? How do you deal knowing that there is an 800-pound gorilla in the room?

Thank you.

MR. CAROOM: So, your question, I guess--let us start with Mr. Raz--is we know that there are people in business who sell weapons, who support the defense industry, which provides \$3 billion per year in support to Israeli, and \$150 million, one-twentieth of that amount of support, to the Palestinians Arabs.

There are Americans making a profit from the conflict. What do you think that Americans might do to respond to that economic interest that perhaps some may have in continuing the conflict?

MR. RAZ: I am not sure that I know what to tell the Americans to do.

And unfortunately, people all over the world, it is not only Americans: it is Israelis, it is Palestinians, and all over the world--want money, want to make business, want to earn money, and they sell weapons.

But I want to tell you one thing. I feel that, in America, you have--what?--200 million guns or something like that. It doesn't mean that everybody who has a gun, who owns a gun, uses a gun, and I believe that the same should be in the Middle East: Not everybody who owns a gun or weapon should use it.

And I hope that people will not make a business of that, but the fact--nations, Israeli, Palestine, other nations, have an army doesn't say that they must use this army. Hopefully both will not have to use their army.

MR. CAROOM: Mr. Foquaha, do you want to say something about the profit, the business question in the conflict.

MR. FOQUAHA: All I can say--stop this type of business. It is not only the work of--the profitable is poor, although it did--but still, I think there is always a chance for business, for investment, for doing profits in peace and in times of peace, where investments and joint projects, international ventures can be done in the Middle east at the time of peace, but not in a time of war--is what I can say in this regard.

MR. CAROOM: Millions of new Palestinian customers.

Our next question, sir, if you want to introduce yourself first and then tell us your question.

MR. CAYMEN: My name is Jay Caymen [ph.], and I'm from the One Voice Movement.

And I'd like to say, for everyone in the room, as someone also working in the Middle East in conflict resolution, how much respect everyone from One Voice has for yourselves and everyone doing the very important work that you are at Geneva.

And my question to you is about how you deal with the enemies of peace. And I come here today with at least some hope about kick-starting a process--you know, no real hopes for any massive steps forward over the next couple of days, but really that President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert might be able to get a process moving in the right direction again.

And it was really disheartening to hear, I think, at 11:30 a.m. tomorrow, at Gate One, there is going to be a group of people protesting against the Annapolis Summit, against the very idea of negotiations and these leaders coming together--not even on the content, just the idea of working towards this solution.

And I wanted to know what you would advise myself and the good people in this room--and, I mean, I am hoping that these people in this room will be joining me at 11:30 to protest against them rather than to

support them, but how you deal with those people who are intrinsically, ideologically, against the very idea of leaders coming together to try to find a way out--not even dictating what that way out might be?

MR. CAROOM: I've been informed that some of the sound quality is not good in the back of the room.

So, what we want to do is--we're hearing that the microphone which is in the hand of our young Friend, Martin, is working better than these microphones.

So, we're going to pass this microphone up here. And then, afterwards, we'll invite questioners to come up to this microphone.

Our friend who asked that question was, I think, asking, "Is there anything that either of you think would be helpful to kick start the process?" I think that was the question.

Mr. Raz, do you want to say anything to respond to that?

MR. RAZ: Yes, I saw--me and Mr. Foquaha, we saw today the demonstration downtown against the Summit, and probably more protesters will come tomorrow to protest.

I don't call these people "peace enemies," because this is a democratic country, Israel is a democratic country, too, and people, if they want to protest--there was a very large protest against the Summit yesterday night in Jerusalem. There was thousands of participants. This is their right to protest, to demonstrate. They are not enemies. The enemies are those who use guns, use violence against the peacemakers. And I hope that we will not find such enemies. If we do, we will have to deal with them in the way that a country deals with violent people. We have a law, and we will have to deal according to this law.

MR. CAROOM: Let me ask if you are hearing in the back.

AUDIENCE: I think it actually made it worse.

MR. CAROOM: Okay. Well, I am going to give this microphone back to you, but the answer to the question that Mr. Raz has given us is that it is a free country and protestors should be allowed to be heard. It is just the people who use violence against peacemakers that the country will have to deal with as nations deal with violent people.

And I'm going to give you this mike for the next answer.

And Mr. Foquaha, do you want to comment on that?

MR. FOQUAHA: Today, we have this experience of meeting people who protest against the Annapolis--but I want to say--that now the conflict is no more in the same way it was years ago.

However, now, a conflict also between the moderates and the extremists--I think the extremists on both sides, the Palestinian and Israeli side, do have a common interest--do have one interest.

And for the moderates, they also do have one interest, which we really shall fight for and shall defend and advocate. And for the guy--I think he is from the One Voice Movement--I think they had such an experience last month in the region where they found themselves even in a position to cancel a program which was scheduled to take place in both Jericho and Tel Aviv.

It was a joint project, and it was a project where extremists stood against.

MR. CAROOM: Okay. Let me, I guess, invite you to come up and use this microphone, if you would.
And...

MS. GORMAN: My name is Heather Gorman, and earlier you had said you are trying to change the stereotypes that each side of you have against the other side, and accepting each other's differences, and accepting each other.

I was wondering, even though you say the conflict is no longer as it used to be, have there been any efforts made to encourage forgiveness on both sides for the wrongs that have been committed by the other party against the other, so that true peace can endure for a long time.

That's it.

MR. CAROOM: Thank you.

Let me, I guess--okay.

The question was, "Has there been an effort to encourage meetings of Palestinian and Israeli people to basically ask forgiveness to make amends for some of the harm that has been done on both sides?"

And I have forgotten where we are and who was going first. I think maybe it is Mr. Foquaha's turn to answer the question first.

Do you want to respond to that?

MR. FOQUAHA: Well, now, we have occupation of the region. Israel occupies Palestine, but they show forgiveness, tolerance, accepting the other, as many show--which we do work on nowadays.

We do educate a culture of peace. This is a curriculum approach by Palestinian civil society organizations. We go to schools, to universities. We go to communities and the refugee camps, try to create a new atmosphere, a new culture, on the other--based on forgiveness and tolerance.

Frankly speaking, let me tell you something that this--this is, by the way, not an easy process, and so far, the occupation is still--and I think we will have the best opportunity to talk about forgiveness and creating a new reality in the Middle East immediately after putting an end to the occupation.

MR. RAZ: I have nothing to add.

MR. CAROOM: Okay. Thank you.

Sir, do you want to come up and--hopefully, this microphone will work better.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, My name is Steve Johnson. I am an Annapolis resident and a member of First Presbyterian Church in Annapolis, and I want to thank both our hosts and our guests this evening. This is a wonderful event.

My question is this. My impression is that, both in Palestine and Israel, there is a real tension between those who see the rule of law as the basis for peace and those who see the rule of force as the only answer for their society.

And there are many that think the U.S. government has not played as creative a role as it could in discouraging those who favor the rule of force.

I was wondering if you can comment on your ideal vision of the role the U.S. government ought to play going forward in this situation.

Thank you.

MR. CAROOM: That would be for Mr. Raz first.

MR. RAZ: For my opinion, the role of the U.S. government should be in three parts.

First, I think that the U.S. government must cooperate with others, mainly the EU. I think that they have to work in cooperation, because, in a way, if you look at the U.S., the Palestinians look at the U.S.--of

course, I am exaggerating a little bit--like, pro-Israeli, not as, you know, neutral. Israel looks at the United States as the best friend of Israel.

If you look at Europe, Israelis look at Europe as anti-Semites, anti-Israeli, and, of course, pro-Arab. The Palestinians see Europe a better way.

I think if they cooperate, they can impose--yes, I would even use the word "impose"-- a kind of agreement on the Israelis and Palestinians. They can take Geneva Initiative, for example, and to say--the U.S. should say, "The Israeli government, you must accept that."

EU should say, "The Palestinian government, you must accept that."

Now, they do the opposite. U.S. has no credibility among the Palestinians. They tell them what to do; they don't do.

EU has no credibility among the Israelis. They tell them what to do; they don't do. They have to do exactly the opposite.

And then, to tell them, "You have to do 'one,' 'two,' 'three,' according to the agreement that you just signed."

Let's take a look at the road map. Four years ago--this is President Bush--the road map was violated by Palestine, was violated by Israeli, but was violated by the United States by not imposing, by not monitoring, was violated by Europe by not monitoring the road map. That is what they are to do, according to the road map. So, they should do that. This is the rule according to the road map. They should impose--this is their role according to the road map.

And the third track should be an empowering--encouraging people-to-people activity, peace activity, joint activities of the Israelis and Palestinians. I think if they work at those three tasks, Europe and U.S. can achieve much more than--actually nothing that they achieve now--is all the efforts--a lot of efforts. I appreciate those efforts, but not in the right direction.

MR. CAROOM: Thank you.

Mr. Foquaha, do you want to respond as to what you think the best role for the U.S. government could be?

MR. FOQUAHA: Well, in addition to what my friend Mossi just said, I think the American administration now is asked to assign a number of staff and American--and a number of officials who are educated and well acknowledged by--in the affairs of the region, in order to help both parties to negotiate the different issues immediately following the Annapolis--limiting their policy on having frequent visits by the state--the Head of the State Department by Mrs. Rice is not by itself sufficient. They need to have a staff who is existing in the region who has a direct and close contact with the two sides of the conflict in order to reach a solution.

MR. CAROOM: Sir, do you want to come on up to this microphone in front?

MR. SALUM: Good evening, gentlemen.

My name is Fareed Salum [ph.], and I appreciate your coming in, and thank you, and certainly applaud the work you've done.

The question I have is, and we've touched on a little bit, and I was hoping you might be able to articulate it a little bit better--I have always felt that the solution needs to--always felt that Hamas needs to be part of the solution, and I was curious about your perspective on that.

You--Mr. Raz, you mentioned that Abbas got elected--or maybe Foquaha--I'm not--by the majority, which is great.

The problem with peace is not the majority, it is the minority; it is the extremists, as you know.

And so, I am kind of curious about your perspective on Hamas being part of the solution rather than dealing with everybody else.

Thank you.

MR. CAROOM: And let me ask Mr. Foquaha to speak to that question first.

How can Hamas be brought into the process?

MR. FOQUAHA: Well, unfortunately, Hamas has elected to be part of the problem but not part of the solution.

As I said in my presentation, they were given the opportunity, in fact, to be part of the Palestinian political system to establish government, to--a role--but unfortunately, to no avail.

Now, Hamas, as a party, as a Palestinian party, and as I said and repeat, this internal Palestinian issue will be tackled internally and will be solved internally by the Palestinians leadership.

But at the end of the day, the Palestinians are now represented here by President Mahmoud Abbas.

And Hamas is growing now in the Gaza Strip. I see this sort--the balance of weakness--now, the Palestinians are suffering from this division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the role of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and working to create, really, a real tragedy to the Palestinians, the life there in the Gaza Strip, unfortunately, is a type of misery. The people there are suffering.

And now, even the public opinion polls are showing decline [in the] majority of Hamas. The Hamas percentage in the Gaza Strip is declining now between a day and another, and this represents the dissatisfaction and the disagreement of the people of the Gaza Strip on what Hamas is doing there.

MR. CAROOM: Mr. Raz, do you want to say anything about bringing Hamas into the process?

MR. RAZ: Not really.

As I said before, Hamas is an interior Palestinian issue, and I always hope that my neighbors will be more and more moderate, and my friends or my brothers in my country will be more moderate, and then we will solve the problem easier and earlier.

MR. CAROOM: Thank you. We have time for one or two more questions, and then we need to move to our conclusion in order to finish by 9:00.

Okay. Mr. McClelland.

MR. McCLELLAND: Good evening and thank you very much for coming. I sincerely appreciate it.

I wanted to ask a question on something a little off the focus but right in the immediate area, and that is, "What do you see the role--and how to get more cooperation, especially with these Geneva Accords--the role of Syria and Lebanon, and what they can do to further this peace process, and maybe put--do you see any help from either of those two, maybe, in helping you deal with Hamas, which obviously is a very big thorn here?"

Whichever one wants to take it first.

MR. CAROOM: That will be Mr. Raz.

MR. RAZ: I think the role of Syria and Lebanon is quite clear.

As I said before, I totally accept the Arab League Initiative. And they say it in so many words, that Israel has to withdraw to '67 borders, meaning to withdraw from the occupied Golan, and then all the 22 members in the Arab League should make a peace agreement and normalization with Israel.

And this includes Lebanon, but there is some disagreement about lands between Israel and Lebanon, but it is not really disagreement, because those lands that the Lebanese say that Israel occupied, Israel says--and actually, this is the reality, that Israel occupied from the Syrians.

So, the only question is, "Is it Syrian or Lebanese?" And this is for them to solve between them, but I think that Israel should withdraw from the Golan, and all the 22 members, the Arab League, should make peace agreements with Israel.

MR. CAROOM: Mr. Foquaha, do you want to say something about the role of Syria and Lebanon?

MR. FOQUAHA: Well, maybe on the role of Syria, what I can say is, as we all know, that they are among the very few supporters of the Palestinian extremists in Syria.

And what I say in this regard--now, the Syrians are participating in the Annapolis Conference, and in this occasion, I'd like to call upon even them and others that Syrians must stop using the card of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict for achieving their own interests and purposes. They can deal with Israel in a different way, but not through the Palestinians and not through using Hamas or any other Palestinian faction in order to achieve some of the Syrian interests in this regard.

We don't have any problem with the Syrians having direct negotiations with Israel for returning back the Golan Heights, which we consider an occupied Arab land, but we don't like the way in which Syrians and other states--in which they are trying to support Hamas and to support other Palestinian extreme forces against the Palestinian legitimate government.

MR. CAROOM: Thank you.

Sir. Again, we will ask you to introduce yourself and then give us your question.

MR. RIFKEN: My name is Earl Rifken [ph.], and I am a resident of Annapolis.

Thank you both very much for being here. Thank you, organizers, for organizing this.

My question is this. You've spoken a lot about the primary issues that are holding up a peace agreement, and people that have been involved with a process know what the issues are, and they also know what some of the solutions will be, particularly when it comes to settlements, and the Geneva Initiative is not talking about getting rid of all the settlements; you're talking about a land swap, and, in a sense, a population swap as well, along Gaza, along the West Bank, around Jerusalem So, that's a political question.

Even Jerusalem, the city of Jerusalem, as volatile a question as that is, you're talking about land.

It would seem to me that the more difficult question, because it gets to the psychological basis, which is beyond a political basis, of the impasse, is the refugee return--return of the refugees.

When Palestinians say that--what they are saying is that Israel is responsible for everything that happened, and the only way Israel can rectify is by giving back everything--

MR. CAROOM: Sir, is there a question?

MR. RIFKEN: Yes, there is. When Israelis hear that, you're saying that you want to destroy Israel as a Jewish state. So, there's this deep, deep psychological conflict here.

How do you get to the practical basis of working with that question and coming up with a settlement that both sides will live with, no matter how much they hate it?

MR. CAROOM: Thank you.

Okay. We may have time for yet a few more questions, but let me, I guess, invite--I think it is Mr. Raz's turn to respond to that first--to respond to that question.

There, I guess, is a great psychological fear that goes with making the commitment to work on the refugee problem.

What would you say in response that?

MR. RAZ: Mr. Rifken, you are absolutely right.

The Geneva Initiative deals with a very, I would say, in front of my friend, a very positive way vis-à-vis the Israeli public opinion in this question, because, actually, we will criticize even on that, of course, but actually, Geneva Initiative doesn't even mention the term "right of return," and there is a kind of a solution--more or less, of course I am summarizing it. It is not 100 percent, but every refugee will declare what is his will, to go to

Israel, to go to Palestine, to stay where he is now, or to go to a third country. And every refugee can go back to Palestine.

Third parties, third countries, including Western countries, Muslim countries, Arab countries, and Israel, will accept refugees. Every country, including Israel, will declare what is the number of refugees they are willing to accept.

So, I think this is a solution I think 80 or 90 percent of the Israelis can live with, because it is to Israel to declare what is the number of refugees Israel is willing to accept.

And you have to know that Israel is accepting refugees all the time, by, you know, marriage, and other ways of accepting refugees.

So, okay, they can declare about 1,000, 10,000, 100,000 in one year, two years, twenty years--I think every Israeli can live with that.

I would say, even more important than that, look at what the Arab League Initiative--and here, it is not only, you know--the Geneva Initiative is--okay, it is part of the Palestinian people, yes, and part of the Israeli people. Look at the Arab League Initiative supported by the 22 members--state members in the League, including Palestine. They say--agreed solution to the question of refugees, meaning Israel has to agree. And this is what 22 Arab states are declaring.

So, I think that, yes, you're right. This is a very problematic issue, but, yes, we can solve this issue according to Geneva Initiative or Arab League Initiative. More or less, it is the same.

MR. CAROOM: Thank you.

Mr. Foquaha, do you want to respond to that question?

MR. FOQUAHA: Not at all. Thank you. Not at all.

MR. CAROOM: Okay. Thank you. I need to apologize to the folks that have been waiting patiently with questions.

We heard a moment ago that St. Anne's said we can stay longer if we want, and then we heard from the Annapolis Police Department, who are ready to direct our traffic when we leave--they're saying, "You can't

stay,” that we have to stop at 9:00, and that was our plan when we began. So, again, let me thank everyone for their patience.

Before we conclude, I want to invite our pianist and our leader for a final song. And at the same time that we’re preparing to do that, I want to invite some members of the Quaker Meeting to pass out candles, which we are going to encourage everyone to carry as we leave the church, a candlelit procession back to the community, back to our homes.

As we make these arrangements to get ready for the closing song for the candlelit procession, for a moment of silence to conclude, I would also like to say this, that although we have a limited time this evening to speak to our visitors from Israel, from Palestine, from the Geneva Initiative, members of the press who want to speak to them later are welcome to do that, and can make an appointment if you are not able to stay this evening.

And members of the public who are here, and your friends--others that you are believing may want to support the peace process, we encourage you to contact the peacemakers at the Geneva Initiative also. You can do that by one of two ways. You could contact them, perhaps, through the Annapolis Friends Meeting, the Quaker Meeting. We’re in the phonebook, and we’ll offer to be a conduit. Or you can alternately go to their website, which is in the bottom of the program, which is www.Geneva-Accord.org, and they have a “contact us” link, and I can tell you from experience they will contact you. They will respond.

So, if you believe that you might, at your public high school, or your other school, want to sponsor Palestinian and Israeli exchange students to help them get to know each other, to help them get to know what it is like to live in a country where people of different backgrounds can be friends, please contact the Geneva Initiative.

If you have other experiences that you think could be useful to them, if there is a student government process that someone could show to the young people in the Israeli and Palestinian lands, how democracy works, so that they can practice it themselves, please contact them. If you know someone in television who thinks that you could help them to start the Palestinian or Israeli Oprah show, where people from different backgrounds could come and talk with Fatima or the equivalent and get to know each other in a more entertaining way, please

contact them. Any ideas and support that you may have from your personal background, I think, would be welcome.

We are not soliciting funds. We are not asking people to take partisan political action, to vote for one person or another, but we are asking and suggesting that you contact your elected representatives and urge them to support the peace process.

[Whereupon, at 8:53, the open forum concluded.]

[MUSIC]