



Richard Falk endorses One State in Israel-Palestine

Dr. Richard Falk's Message to the Conference on One Democratic State held 23-24 October in Dallas, TX: recorded 16 October 2010.

Dr. Falk presently serves as Special Rapporteur to the United Nations Human Rights Committee regarding the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Videos are available on YouTube:

Part 1:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfYrXty1Ft0

Part 2:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=3v0_a04xWgQ&feature=related

Transcript:

Dr. Richard Falk: I am very honored to have this opportunity to talk with the audience that is attending this important conference that considers the Houston Declaration* on an peaceful solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. I wish that I could be there with you in person, but scheduling conflicts prevent this, including my obligations as Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories to make a presentation to the United Nations General Assembly at the end of next week.

I have been a strong admirer of the [Houston Declaration](#) that I think morally, legally, and politically responds in an inspiring and convincing way to the terrible ordeal that continues to confront the Palestinian people and that has been misleadingly diverted by this charade of international negotiations between representatives of the State of Israel, of the

Palestinian Authority and the mediation of the United States Government. This is a charade in two different ways. One is that it creates a cruel deception that, somehow or other, there is a sincere search for a just settlement of the conflict. And secondly, it creates the view that the contours of a just settlement involve the establishment of two separate states in the

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historic Palestine Mandate. That deception is very misleading at this stage, given the encroachment on post-67 occupied Palestine by way of the settlements, by the construction of the security wall, and by a series of house demolitions, imposed residence requirements--all sorts of deliberate undertakings by Israel to make a viable Palestinian distinct state a political impossibility. And yet at the same time Israel, with U.S. backing, pretends that a solution would involve two separate political entities.

My judgment, coinciding with the orientation and the various assertions of the Houston Declaration, is that the genuine search for a just peace at this stage depends on building a strong political and moral consensus in favor of a one-state solution: the state being of secular character, equal to all people living within its borders, comprising the whole of the territory that was constituted by historic Palestine, and bringing human rights and democracy and dignity to both of these embattled peoples.

It is a difficult political path to move from the existing state of affairs in the direction of the Houston Declaration and the idea of a one-state

solution. It is in contradiction to the Zionist project of establishing a Jewish state, a project that has been intensified by the right-wing drift of Israeli politics that now goes to the extreme of enacting a law that requires non-Jewish applicants for Israeli citizenship to proclaim their loyalty to a Jewish State. Such an ethnocratic state is inconsistent with human rights, and consigns the 1.4 million Palestinians living in Israel as Israeli citizens to a permanent condition of second-class and humiliating citizenship. So that in terms--practical terms--of solving the conflict, of overcoming discrimination against Palestinians, of providing an equal kind of access for the Palestinian and Jewish Diaspora, there is a very powerful case, a practical case, in favor of a one-state solution. But how one achieves the kind of political consensus that would translate this legal and moral consensus into a just solution is the challenge that faces all of those of us that seek peace and justice for the two peoples.

So I wish that I could be with you to attend this historic occasion that launches in a serious way the Houston Declaration and a campaign for support to the ideas that are contained within it, but I know that the organizing efforts of the conveners will produce a meaningful initiation of this important campaign and will bring about a change in the dominant dialogue, which up to this point has not given the attention that is needed to a one-state solution. And it should be mentioned, just in concluding my remarks, that it is more than just a practical matter of adapting to the realities of the current situation on the ground in Israel and Palestine. It is also a matter of fulfilling a conception of how people should live together well. The notion of separating people by their ethnic and religious identities is a very regressive idea and so I'm very much attached to this vision of a single state in historic Palestine that brings peace and justice to both peoples.

ODS: *What do you think the hopes and aspirations of this conference should be?*

Dr. Richard Falk: I think that the conference should clarify any concerns. It should also indicate that, although the moral and legal case is very strong, the political obstacles are quite formidable, and that it will not be easy to translate this campaign into a successful outcome because one assumes that Israel will use all of its

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capabilities to resist such a development because it means, effectively, the end of Zionism and that would challenge the beliefs and commitments of many Israelis and their Jewish supporters in this country, and probably also the Christian Zionists that number some 16 or 17 million people in this country. So that one should not underestimate the difficulties. But at the same time, since the two-state solution is not viable, this seems to me to be the only path that has any promise at all of bringing an eventual, just solution and fulfilling legitimate Palestinian aspirations for self-determination. So I see it as far from a quick fix, but at the same time, as the appropriate path to take at this stage in the conflict and probably the appropriate stage to have taken long ago. It's something that Edward Said and other prophetic Palestinian voices had, have long understood. They've long understood that, that the two-state approach is neither leading to a viable or sustainable peace and is also a diversion from the pursuit of the one kind of resolution of this conflict that could produce genuine reconciliation and a better future for both peoples.

ODS: *In your vision, how do you see the one-state solution, the benefits of it, in a sense of on the ground, people living in one state, what would be the benefits of that?*

Dr. Richard Falk: Well of course there are many variations of how a one-state solution would be actualized in practice, and so it's hard to anticipate exactly how it would work. But it would overcome, if it was well implemented, this sense of hatred and hostility between these two peoples and convey the sense that they're sharing land, resources, and political destiny, and that

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this represents the best hope of the modern vision of a sovereign state. It never was thought to be a custodian for one particular religion or one ethnic identity and that's a perversion, in my view, of the idea of a political community in the 21st century.

So I see it as a bold and courageous experiment in living together that is the only alternative to the perpetuation, indefinitely, of the current ordeal that has afflicted the Palestinian people and in a sense robs the Jewish residents of Israel of dignity and respect in the world as a whole, because the only way they can maintain the current established condition is through oppressive measures denying the Palestinian people elementary human rights, inflicting great suffering on the overwhelming mass of Palestinians living within the occupied territories, and consigning this enormous refugee population, both within the occupied territories and in neighboring countries, to a long-term condition of servitude.

So there are many reasons, it seems to me, why a single state that has the same borders as historic

Palestine can live in a decent way internally and would be most likely to find acceptance within the region--which is also an important consideration: that so long as there are these two separate states, or two distinct entities, or a single Israeli apartheid state, there will be hostility and enmity throughout the region. So if we want regional peace as well as peace for the two peoples, the one-state solution seems to me to be the only way to go.

ODS: *Your message to the people attending the conference and activists on the ground who are not at the conference?*

Dr. Richard Falk: It's a message of some hope arising from the degree to which the Palestinians are now winning what I call the legitimacy war: that is, there is a growing solidarity movement throughout the world in support of Palestinian self-determination, human rights, and a just solution to the conflict. That is a real shift, I think, to a more effective way of waging Palestinian resistance to occupation and should encourage those attending the conference to use their energies with more optimism about the achievement of important results. At the same time, as I've tried to indicate, it's very important to shift the debate from the so-called peace process among governments to this more grassroots campaign to build support for a one-state solution, that initially will have to be a civil society project of advocacy, as none of the relevant governmental entities has so far been willing to endorse such a vision. And that includes the Palestinian Authority and, as far as I know, includes Hamas. So one is urging those attending the conference to be energetic in discrediting the existing approach and equally energetic in disseminating support for the one-state vision of a just Palestine. □

* Full text of the Houston Declaration for One Democratic State in Palestine is available here: <http://www.onedemocraticstate.org/declaration>.