

The way is being paved for the Hashemite Kingdom of Palestine plan

Israel, Jordan and the PLO/PA seem to be moving along on the Hashemite Kingdom of Palestine plans. Can it be?

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Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid's meeting with King Abdullah on 27 July could see negotiations being announced shortly between Israel and Jordan to create a single territorial entity encompassing Jordan, Gaza and parts of the West Bank.

This newly created entity -designated The Hashemite Kingdom of Palestine –together with Israel – will constitute the elusive and previously unattainable two-state solution – pursued by:

- the Mandate for Palestine (1922)
- The Peel Commission (1937)
- UN Resolution 181 (III) (1947)
- Venice Declaration (1980)
- Oslo Accords (1993)
- Saudi Peace Plan (1982)
- Revised Saudi Peace Plan (2002)
- Bush Roadmap (2002)
- Trump Peace Plan (2020)

... finally ending the conflict over the division of former Palestine between Arabs and Jews begun with the defeat of Turkey in World War 1.

The plan to create The Hashemite Kingdom of Palestine was first announced in *Al-Arabiya news* –owned by the Saudi Royal family –on 8 June in an article written by Ali Shihabi – a close confidante of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman – Saudi Arabia's heir apparent to the Saudi throne and the driving force behind Neom – a \$500 billion megacity of the future to be built from the ground up in an area of northern Saudi Arabia equal to the size of Israel. It was hardly noticed by the media.

A tweet issued by King Abdullah's Palace confirms that the King and Lapid discussed the subject of a two-state solution and it seems inconceivable that they would have discussed any plan other than this Saudi solution since the old version has been dead in the water for years..

It would appear that back channel negotiations have been going on since the release of the Saudi plan on 8 June to refine it to reflect – with more precision – the starting positions of Jordan, Israel and the PLO in any negotiations.

Those agreed starting positions include:

- The Hashemite Kingdom of Palestine will be ruled by Jordan's current Hashemite ruler King Abdullah – which Hashemite dynasty has ruled Jordan for the last 100 years.
- The right of return to Israel by Palestinian Arab refugees will not be pursued. Instead The Hashemite Kingdom of Palestine will integrate those refugees within its borders
- The borders of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan will include
 - Jordan with its current borders
 - The Gaza Strip
 - A-reas of the 'West Bank' inhabited by Palestinian Arabs and bordering Jordan that are contiguous and not divided into islands
 - The retention by Israel of the Jordan Valley and other areas of the 'West Bank' such as Oslo-designated Area C, where all the Jews in the region live, will be resolved in the negotiations
 - Neither the Arabs nor the Muslims will seek to expel Israel from Jerusalem. However it remains as a bargaining chip in the hands of the Palestinian Arabs in securing any agreement and giving the Holy Places in Jerusalem a special status.

Any agreement will need to be ratified by a free popular referendum by Arab voter constituencies consisting of all Jordanians and residents of the 'West Bank' and Gaza Strip and those who are stateless such as the residents of the refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria. Palestinian Arabs who are settled in other countries and who enjoy full citizenship will have no vote.

The rationale for creating The Hashemite Kingdom of Palestine is based on the fact that Jordanians and Palestinians are Sunni Arabs from the same region and integrating them will not cause any ethnic or sectarian fault lines in the long run.

Jordan has received a flurry of visits from Mohammed Bin Salman, PLO Leader Mahmoud Abbas and Israel's President Herzog, since the Saudi Plan was published.

Lapid's visit now when he is only caretaker Prime Minister is highly significant. It could indicate the commencement of negotiations is supported by the majority of Israel's political parties even though nothing can go forward until after the next government is formed post November elections.

And then - let the negotiations begin.