



## ON: Arafat's Rejection of Peace



### Arafat says NO to Camp David

In the summer of 2000, U.S. President Bill Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and Palestinian Chairman Yasir Arafat met at Camp David for final status peace negotiations. By the end of their meeting, they had hammered out the draft of an accord:

According to Dennis Ross, chief US negotiator, the proposal Arafat rejected at Camp David included:

- The creation of an independent Palestinian state
- Israeli withdrawal from approximately 95 percent of the West Bank
- Israeli annexation of the remaining 5 percent of the West Bank, in exchange for an equivalent amount of territory in pre-1967 Israel
- A road to the Temple Mount under Palestinian sovereignty
- A secure highway between the West Bank and Gaza through Israel proper
- The creation of a limited Palestinian army
- Israeli acknowledgment of "the suffering of the refugees," and the absorption of tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees into Israel, as well as the full right of return for refugees to the new Palestinian state
- An international fund for the compensation and the restitution of Palestinians

### Arafat says NO to Taba

In December 2000, two months after the Al Aqsa conflict began, President Clinton presented Arafat and Barak with the outline of another possible agreement. Senior Israeli and Palestinian officials conducted intense negotiations in Taba, Egypt, using the Clinton proposals as a starting point.

According to a paper issued by the European Union Special Representative to the Middle East Process, the deal on the table at Taba included: all concessions offered at Camp David; clearer recognition of Arab East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state; further land transfer; greater Palestinian sovereignty over the Jerusalem holy sites including the Temple Mount/Haram as-Sharif; a joint narrative of the tragedy of the Palestinian refugees; the absorption of additional Palestinian refugees into Israel; and, more territorial contiguity in the West Bank.

### No Alternative Offered

At the end of the negotiations, the officials issued a joint statement saying that they had "never been closer to reaching" a final peace accord. According to Dennis Ross, the Palestinian negotiating team was prepared to accept the deal offered at Taba, but Yasir Arafat rejected it.

Arafat not only rejected the proposals on the table at Camp David and Taba, he rejected them without offering a serious alternative. Even when Arafat was offered the option of deferring the Jerusalem issue, he refused to agree to any proposal.

In the Jordanian paper al-Ria, commentator Dr. Fahed Al-Fanek wrote, "It is entirely clear that the Palestinian side has made a mistake by missing a rare opportunity that may never return... he [Arafat] has now started to demand, in vain, to return to the negotiating table on the basis of the point where the negotiations were stopped in Camp David and Taba...the same proposals that Arafat rejected, he now demands."