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## Radical action needed after Oslo's decline

Media Mention of Hussein Ibish in The National - April 19, 2012 - 11:00pm

<http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/editorial/radical-action-need...> [1]

In 1993, when the Oslo Accords were signed and the Palestinian Authority was born, the senior Israeli politician Yossi Beilin was a leading advocate for Palestinian self-rule. The accords, and the Authority, were intended to pave the way for permanent solutions on borders, refugees and two-state control.

Nearly 20 years later, Mr Beilin is again pushing a radical idea. But this time it's to dismantle and reorganise the approach to peace that he had championed. President Mahmoud Abbas "has to do something unilateral", Mr Beilin said in an interview with The National published yesterday. Negotiations are "a bad joke". Oslo, Mr Beilin says, is dead.

Many Palestinians will find little comfort in this acknowledgement. On Tuesday, 1,600 Palestinian prisoners went on indefinite hunger strike to condemn Israeli prison conditions. Palestinians are now taking matters into their own hands, and high-profile hunger strikers, such as Khader Adnan and Hana Shalabi, have won concessions from Israel that Mr Abbas's government can no longer promise.

Look no further than the recent gathering of Israeli-Palestinian negotiators with the Quartet (the US, the UN, the EU and Russia) in Washington last week. The talks were so insignificant that none of the major western papers even covered them. That is proof, says Hussein Ibish of the American Task Force on Palestine, of how moribund diplomacy has become. As Palestinian negotiators brought a list of demands to Israel on Tuesday, there was little hope that the Netanyahu administration would change course.

What peace needs, and what Mr Beilin has rightly called for, is a shake-up, a "declaration of the end of the Oslo process" and the start of something else. The practical implications of this would be immediately jarring, turning daily control of Palestinian lands to Israel. But this is essentially what Israel already has - through the hijacking of Palestinian taxes, continuing settlement construction, its draconian security policies and the continued erosion of any possibility of a state based on 1967 borders.

Naturally, were Oslo to be buried, the immediate question would be: now what? In the interim, the Palestine Liberation Organisation would return to the forefront of talks, if and when they resumed. Palestinians also must ask for - and receive - support from the international community that can condemn Israel's abuses in a fair manner. As last year's abortive statehood bid at the UN proved, most countries recognise the just claims of Palestinians. It

would be wrong to remain hostage to biased US policy.

Whether another two-state plan, or even a one-state federal option, will prove viable remains to be seen. But a change is urgently needed when one of the most effective tools in Palestinians' arsenal is self-starvation.

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