

# The New York Times

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## *Palestine: The Unavoidable Issue*

To the Editor:

In your otherwise excellent editorial on "Israel's Dilemma" (May 11) you indicated that a "direct clash between Washington and Jerusalem" on the issue of settlements in the occupied territories "is bound to occur, whenever Israel and Jordan move into the negotiation process on the future of the West Bank."

Surely this reference to Jordan and the West Bank contained something of an oversight, especially in view of past Times editorials.

While Jordan may still have some role to play in bringing about a new Middle East status quo, today the Palestinian Arab factor is real and can no longer be linked solely with the future of Jordan. The national rights of the Palestinian Arab people are both internationally recognized and historically valid—more historically valid in fact than the right of Hashemite King Hussein to rule on the east bank of the Jordan.

Consequently, while Americans caution the Government of Israel to halt settlements in the occupied territories and to formulate a reasonable, comprehensive peace initiative, it is imperative not to mislead Israelis to think that they can continue to avoid the Palestinian problem—one which State Department spokesman Harold Saunders, a few months ago termed "the heart of the conflict."

In fact, a recent Foreign Policy Association opinion poll indicates that among participants in F.P.A.'s "Great Decisions" program (admittedly an international affairs elite) better than three to one favor the "right of Palestinian Arabs to an independent state." And within Israel a new committee headed by a former Secretary General of the dominant Labor party, Lova Eliav, has issued a striking manifesto affirming "That this is the homeland of its two peoples—the people of Israel and the Palestinian Arab people" and "That the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state alongside the

State of Israel should be the outcome of negotiations . . . without refusing negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization on the basis of mutual recognition." Even Israel's most respected Arabist, Yehoshafat Harkabi, has recently broken with the paralyzed policies of the Rabin government indicating that "the only obvious Palestinian body now is the P.L.O."

There will be no stable peace in the Middle East if attempts to avoid Palestinian nationalism continue. Consequently the future of the West Bank (and Gaza Strip) can not be solely determined by Israel and Jordan.

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Washington, May 25, 1976

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