

Broken promises

Jerusalem Post

July 9,
1998

For many Israelis, the word "reciprocity" is at best another cliched slogan; at worst, an excuse not to continue with our retreat as part of the peace process. For us, the bereaved parents, reciprocity means the Palestinian Authority handing over to Israel the Palestinian murderers of Israelis.

In a recent newspaper article, Aryeh Bachrach - father of the late Ohad, who was killed by terrorists in Wadi Kelt - stated that President Ezer Weizman had "misled" him and other bereaved families.

Bachrach quoted the president as having promised to raise the issue of the extradition of terrorist murderers with Egyptian President Mubarak, and he accused Weizman of not having done so.

Bachrach went on to say that these murderers are subsequently drafted into the ranks of the PA security forces, and have the potential capability of carrying out further attacks, as was the case with the murderer of David Boim, who later carried out the suicide bombing in Jerusalem's pedestrian mall.

If Israel had demanded his extradition, that tragic bloodshed could have been prevented. Bachrach expressed the hope that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu would not give in on his demand for reciprocity, and the handing over murderers of Israeli citizens.

I too join Aryeh Bachrach in his wish, and I too am the bearer of grandiose promises which were broken.

The first person who "misled" me, in the words of Bachrach, was the president of the US, Bill Clinton. We met President Clinton about a year after my son's murder, at his graveside on

ESTHER WACHSMAN

Mount Herzl. At that meeting, along with the president, were then-premier Shimon Peres, and the US ambassador Martin Indyk, now under-secretary of state.

On a rainy day, under huge black umbrellas, Clinton placed a stone, which he had brought with him from the White House, on

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Nachshon's grave, and assured us that the arrest and extradition of Mohammed Dief, mastermind of our son's kidnapping and murder, was a top American priority.

He went on to tell my husband and myself that indeed, the very continuation of the peace process was contingent on Dief's apprehension and arrest.

Peres nodded in agreement, and we were moved by their determination, and we believed them. About six months later, my husband met with a very senior figure in the PA in Gaza, who informed him that Mohammed Dief was free in Gaza, and that he - this senior figure - could arrest him at any time, but Chairman Arafat would not allow it.

I flew to the White House, and transmitted that information to Anthony Lake, who was then the national security advisor. He

promised to look into it.

A week later, Lake called me at home in Jerusalem, and said that the Palestinian minister in Gaza had denied the entire conversation with my husband and that Dief was not in Gaza - this after the translator who was present at their meeting had been jailed and tortured. And so, Mohammed Dief is still free, and his subordinates (according to the Israeli press) are serving in senior positions in the PA.

THE American president, who made that solemn promise to us at our son's grave, is pressuring Israel to go forward with the peace process without reciprocity in the form of extradition, and our prime minister is portrayed as the one who breaks promises.

Not long ago, I received a letter from a number of senators who wrote me they had raised the issue of Mohammed Dief with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who responded that she was not familiar with the case at all!

I immediately contacted Martin Indyk, her under-secretary who was present when the president made his promise, and got no satisfactory answer, beyond the mundane reply that the US condemns terror, and was doing its utmost to apprehend known terrorists.

Thus, was I "misled" by the world's top leaders. My conclusion is that it is very easy to make promises in moments of emotional vulnerability, when facing bereaved parents at the fresh grave of their son, yet fulfilling those promises is another issue altogether.

President Clinton and prime minister Peres broke their promise to me, and so my dear Mr. Bachrach, why are you surprised at President Weizman's breach of his promise to you? The name of the game is politics.

The View From the East

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