

**Transcript of conversation with Yitzhak Rabin recorded Friday September 1988 in Hakiryah, Tel Aviv.1988.**

**Reporter David Langsam.**

Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin promised to 'grind' the intifada and on behalf of the BBC World Service, the Sydney Morning Herald and ABC Radio Talks, I asked him his success in this field.

**David Langsam:** You said you would grind down the level of the intifada, the Palestinian uprising. Kalkilya village was under curfew for more than a week and hundreds of people were arrested. As soon as the curfew was lifted the stone throwing resumed.

**Yitzhak Rabin:** Well, what we face in the problem of the Palestinians in the territories is a civilian uprising.

We don't face terror activities in the classical form, that is to say the use of arms, standard arms. But practically 80 percent of the violent incidents are stone throwing or roadblocks.

This of course is carried out by the population along the certain guidelines that they get the outside or from within, without any real direct and specific instructions.

It's not an issue like a typical military issues that either you capture the objective or not.

It's not a kind of a confrontation that can be ended by knock-out. It can be won by points.

Therefore if I'll take in more specific terms what you asked about Kalkilya, which is a little town of 25,000 inhabitants located in an area to which is the main access for some of the Israeli settlements in the [Occupied] Territories, the number of stone throwing was increased and therefore we took measures by curfew, by collecting some of the people that we knew that they were either members of the local popular committees or people who are involved in more active ways in organizing, instigating.

There were 150 people who were arrested and will be brought before the court. And no doubt in my mind that it will reduce, and has reduced so far, the number of activities. And I don't expect that it will end once and forever any stone throwing in the area.

Therefore what we are trying in our activities against the uprising was first to bring down the violence as a whole. Second to bring down, which we have succeeded, the big violent demonstrations. Three, to prevent the establishment of the local popular committees in a way that they'll increase the number of violent activities.

In the total sum, it's a prolonged story in which we have to use whatever is allowed by our laws, the military activity, the using of juridical measures, including what we have inherited from the British the 1945 Emergency Regulations that we liberalized to what they were in use during the British Mandate time, and administrative and economic measures.

I believe the one needs patience, determination and in the long run what by force we can achieve is only two goals:

One, to reduce considerably the level of violence and to make sure that the civil administration, that the local government, will function for the benefit of the Palestinians that reside in the territories.

**DL:** While I might accept that the level of obvious violence has been reduced by your measures, some might say that the Palestinians have backed away to some extent from the open demonstration - they were too obvious a way of getting - at the same time it could be said that you're fueling the prolongation of the intifada by ensuring that the Israeli Defence Forces tough measured touch all Palestinians. I, for example, was in a cab Gaza from to Tel Aviv three days ago. The driver had been beaten by soldiers; the man next to me had been beaten by soldiers and the man behind me had had his father and brother arrested. And of course the topic of conversation in the cab was the harsh measures of the Israeli Defence Forces. Do you not think the pressure is becoming ingrained within the Palestinian Community?

**YR:** Well I believe that in 99 percent of the cases whenever and wherever there was a use of force it was aimed and directed against those involved in violent activities. Those who were arrested, they were reasons why they were arrested. Believe, we have no need to keep people who are innocent either in detention camps or in jails.

We have no reason to use force against anyone who is not involved in violent activities and while he is involved in violent activities in hot pursuit of him. Therefore I believe that the measures that are used, and after all, wherever there are violent demonstrations there is a use of force. I believe that you, the British, know it very well in dealing with your own present problems and no doubt in the past. Therefore I believe that the use of force is needed as part of the means, not the only way to do it.

**DL:** Are you personally aware of beatings inflicted by your soldiers on children as young as five and ten years? I have two cases of these in Jabalyah Camp and the nine month girl Fidah Samir Shrafi of Jabalyah Camp whose left eye was ripped from its socket by a soldier attempting to remove a rubber bullet?

**YR:** Well, unfortunately there were a few incidents in which even children were hurt. If I'll take the example of the girl ... we are all very sorry that it happened. It did happen when her mother took her in her arms and participated ... or by sheer coincidence ... was involved in a violent demonstration. And you know in this case as in every case of violent demonstration everywhere, police or soldiers will use rubber bullets and unfortunately this happened.

But I believe that if I take in total sum the way that the soldiers and the border policemen were involved and I believe that at the present over 50,000 Israeli soldiers regular, reservists, draftees, national servicemen, I believe the percentage of such events can be measured by a break for meals (hard to decipher the expression).

[The mother says the child was shot in the doorway of home when curfew was lifted. Of the countless demonstrations I attended in Australia, some of them violent, I never saw police using weapons other than batons. The same is true for many other nations. Some say the violence at demonstrations comes from the soldiers and there is ample evidence to support that contention.]

**DL:** Do you accept that the popular uprising will continue until the occupation ends?

**YR:** I'm sure that by the use of violence they'll not succeed to achieve anything- anything in terms of the basic position of Israel. All the talks now that the PLO has started since the appearance Mr Arafat in the European Parliament, talking about the UN takes over the Territories is total nonsense.

Israel will never give in, Israel will meet the violence by force and I'm sure that our capability, endurance and patience will prove that they are going to lose.

It's another example of the suffering of the Palestinian people as a result of the mistakes of their leaders. It started 1947 when then the leader of the Palestinians, Haj Amin El Husseini, the mufti of Jerusalem, led them to believe that they can oppose the notion of the creation of a Jewish state in part of former British mandated Palestine and brought disaster on the head of the Palestinians, created a Palestinian refugee problem, brought about the war that we call the War of Independence. His place was taken by Ahmed Shukeiri, that also did not help anything [for] the Palestinians and Mr Arafat continues the vicious circle of leaders of Palestinians that brings time after time another disaster on the heads of Palestinians.

**DL:** I'll come back to Mr Arafat in a moment. You've said previously that the long term solution to the trouble in the Territories is political rather than military. What pressure are you applying for a political solution and what is the solution, particularly in reference to the difference between Marach [Labor] and Likud, and the significance of Marach losing votes to the Citizens Rights Movement [Meretz]?

**YR:** Well let's see what will be the results of the elections. And I'm not sure that your description about the Marach losing votes is correct.

As you said, Israel is a democracy. In democracy the voter decides. The voter might decide be wrong but the essence of democracy is that the voter decides.

I believe that both parties [Likud and Marach] say very clearly: 'solution around the negotiation table' and by violence the Palestinians will not achieve any basic change in Israel's position.

Therefore, I as Minister for Defense, have to deal with part of the problem, not basically the political solution.

But as long as there is no political move and I don't believe there will be any political initiative before the elections in Israel, before the elections in the United States, before the new administration in the United States will assume responsibility and I don't believe that the Arab-Israeli conflict will be the first on their agenda.

Therefore for the coming six to ten months [until after Israeli and US elections and a new US administration] I don't see any meaningful political initiative in the direction that will bring about negotiations. Therefore, at the present, what we are trying here in the Ministry of Defence, through the IDF, through the other security agencies is to reduce tremendously the level of violence, to make sure the functioning of civil administration and the local government will work.

**DL:** What I was essentially getting at in that question was the difference between Likud and Marach on the giving up of the Territories in exchange for peace. I think the basic difference is that Marach will exchange territory for peace, Likud has said over and over again that it won't. Perhaps it's not right for politicians to be so hard line. We've heard what Yasser Arafat has said in

Strasbourg. Many people recognise that as a de facto or implicit recognition of UN resolutions 242 and 338. What does the PLO have to do to begin talks with Israel?

**YR:** If you are talking about peace on our Eastern border you to bear in mind that we need two partners for that. We can't have peace on the Eastern border of Israel without Jordan participation.

The line between Jordan and Israeli today is the longest of the lines between Israel and all its neighboring Arab countries. Seventy-five percent of the length of the line between Israel and Jordan is nothing to do with the Palestinian problem, only 20-25 percent of it. Between the Northern part of the Dead Sea and 80, 90 km North of it.

Second, of course, without the participation of the Palestinians that reside in the territories, in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, there can be no peace. Therefore, this makes it more complicated. Because with the Palestinians who reside in the territories [alone] we cannot achieve peace on our Eastern border, with Jordan alone we cannot achieve it.

I believe that one has to distinguish between the need to bring the Palestinians, mainly those who reside in the territories, that their fate and future will be decided in the peace negotiations, to take part in it. When it comes to Palestinians as a whole, I would say that I'm ready to talk to any Palestinians that will fulfil the following conditions:

- 1) will not see the Palestinian Covenant as his Koran;
- 2) will accept resolutions 242 and 338 of the United Nations Security Council as the sole basis for the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict;
- 3) will renounce and avoid use of violence and terrorism; and
- 4) will be ready to negotiate peace with Israel.

I don't believe that the essence of the PLO, the core of existence can mitigate with these four conditions. Therefore I distinguish between the need to involve Palestinians, mainly those who reside in the territories, in the peace process, but at the same time I will not negotiate with the PLO.

**DL:** But you're saying that if the PLO was a representative body of the Palestinians within the territories and they accepted in writing, through the PNC, those four conditions, then that form of a PLO, a very different PLO of the one of today, be a partner?

**YR:** I didn't say so ...

**DL:** I'm asking you.

**YR:** ... and I will not say so. I clearly distinguish between the Palestinians who reside in the Territories - as you know who declares that he is a member of the PLO is subjected to be brought before the court and sentenced to imprisonment.

Therefore, if a leadership of the Palestinians in the Territories come and say, 'We are your partners', it's fine with me. If they'll come and say 'We are your partners, we would like to negotiate with you', it's okay with me. If they'll come and say, 'We are a mailman to Tunisia', with mailmen I am not negotiating.

**DL:** They say that the PLO represents them - and I've spoken to very many Palestinians and it was I myself who conducted the survey in 1985 that established that the PLO was a representative body of Palestinians - they say that they are represented by the PLO in the same way, perhaps not as democratically, as Israel's government represents Israeli people. Certainly some would say the PLO is more democratic than other Arab regimes in the neighborhood. Can the PLO be a representative organization and if they accept those four conditions, could an Israeli government negotiate?

**YR:** Allow me to say that I heard this question, in the last over 20 years. What will happen if the PLO will accept these four terms?

It reminds me a Jewish story, the essence of it is: 'What would happen if Grandma will have wheels? Then it will not be Grandma, it will be a bus.'

Therefore, I don't like to deal hypothetical questions and allow me to say, Mr Arafat's speech at the European Parliament was a clear cut sign that he has no courage to raise the glove that King Hussein throw over seven weeks ago, to the Palestinians and the PLO.

He reiterated the two basic conditions of the PLO that we knew is the core of their philosophy and policy. Resolution 181, which means a return to '47 Partition and the right of return of the Palestinians to their homes in original Israel within the lines prior to the Six Day War.

A million and a half Palestinians Israel has to absorb, in addition to a Palestinian State along the Partition plan. It's a national suicide to Israel and I'm not aware that there are many people in Israel who are ready to commit national suicide.

**DL:** Last question and I'm sure [advisor] Eitan Haber will be greatly appreciative that it is the last question. Whilst you're saying quite unequivocally that the current PLO is not one that you would talk to and you're perhaps a little bit deliberately vague in saying that you won't to them in the future either, are you in fact creating what I like to call the 'Menachem Begin ground' that by being tough, the Israeli public might trust you to negotiate with Arafat or other Palestinians, whereas the prospects of another leader doing the same are quite remote.

**YR:** No. Unfortunately, I cannot say that you are right, because this was my position for the last 20 years.

I believe that any Israel leader that accepts in principle, negotiating with the PLO, accepts from the very beginning the creation of an independent PLO Palestinian State between Israel and Jordan.

I oppose this idea and I'll do my best to prevent it happening.

At the same time, I realize that ignoring the Palestinians reside in the territories, 1.4, 1.5 million, to be represented in negotiations, separately from Jordan for only interim arrangement, or with Jordan, preferably in joint delegation, peace can be achieved. Without the Palestinians of the territories and Jordan negotiate together with us a solution to the problem, there will be no peace on our Eastern border.

**DL:** Yitzhak Rabin thank you very much for your time.