

## Post-Obama Visit, What's Next for Peace between Palestine, Israel?

Written by Ginny Grimsley  
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### 3 Obama Accomplishments and 3 Ways Israel Can Jumpstart the Peace Process, Noted by Jewish Peace Activist

Given how low expectations were prior to President Obama's recent visit to Israel, it may not be saying much to declare that he exceeded expectations. But he did, says Israeli-Palestinian peace advocate Michael Cooper, and the centerpiece was his speech to the Israeli people.

"His speech carried broad historical perspectives, a fair and moral worldview and showed warmth and friendship toward Israel, allaying fears that he was somehow anti-Israeli," says Cooper, the author of "Foxes in the Vineyard," ([www.michaeljcooper.net](http://www.michaeljcooper.net)), an Indie Publishing grand prize-winning novel that explores Israel's birth through historical fiction.

The Jewish-American pediatric cardiologist, who regularly visits Israeli-occupied territories to provide medical care for the underserved children there, reviews the accomplishments of the president's trip to Israel:

- The president's first accomplishment was successfully resuscitating the two-state solution — a democratic and Jewish state of Israel living alongside a viable and independent state of Palestine. He emphasized the possibility and necessity of peace, and the justice and hope it provides for Israelis and Palestinians. He humanized those who aspire to live in peace with each other. At the same time, he marginalized the uncompromising extremists on both sides who promise only conflict. In promoting this vision of peace to the people of Israel, Obama was preaching to the choir. A recent poll in The Times of Israel reported that 67 percent of Israelis support a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders with land swaps, a demilitarized Palestine, and the Old City of Jerusalem jointly administered by Israel, Palestine, and the U.S.

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- President Obama convinced Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to call his counterpart in Turkey and to apologize for the killing of nine Turkish activists during the Gaza flotilla fiasco. Now, Israel and Turkey are moving to restore diplomatic relations and Israel can look forward to resuming her strong military and economic ties with Turkey.
- A third positive development took place two days after the visit; Netanyahu released frozen Palestinian tax funds, transferring hundreds of thousands of dollars to the desperately cash-strapped Palestinian Authority.

Building on these positive steps, Cooper points to three things Israel might do to immediately ignite the peace process, “without waiting for outside pressure from the ‘Quartet on the Middle East’ (the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations), Israel can seize the initiative,” he says.

- Stop expansion and apply the rule of law: Stop the expansion of all settlements in disputed territory and begin to dismantle illegal settler outposts. The latter involves nothing more than applying Israel’s own laws to outposts that are illegal according to the Israeli Supreme Court.
- Quell violent Jewish settler groups: An EU report found that settler violence had more than tripled in the three years up to 2011. Israeli police and military personnel should identify and arrest violent Jewish settlers and prosecute them in a court of law. Many prominent Jewish religious figures and high-ranking government officials have already condemned the brutal acts perpetrated by extremist settlers.
- Implement good will: Establish a cabinet level Ministry of Reconciliation to oversee the establishment of good-will cultural and economic missions between Israelis and Palestinians.

“The democratic state of Israel is strong enough to defend itself against internal enemies who undermine the rule of law. Israel’s future as a secure and democratic homeland for the Jewish People demands no less,” Cooper says.

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“If Israel were to implement positive initiatives tomorrow – peace talks could start the day after tomorrow.”

### About Michael Cooper

Michael J. Cooper emigrated to Israel after graduating high school in Oakland, Calif. Living in Israel for more than a decade, he studied at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and graduated from Tel Aviv University Medical School. Now a clinical professor at the University of California San Francisco Medical Center and a practicing pediatric cardiologist in Northern California, he returns to Israel several times a year, volunteering on medical missions under the auspices of the Palestine Children's Relief Fund. Cooper's novel, "Foxes in the Vineyard," historical fiction set in 1948 Israel, was the 2011 grand prize winner of the Indie Publishing Contest. A second novel, *The Rabbi's Knight*, is due out soon.