

# Palm Beach Daily News

PalmBeachDailyNews.com

January 20, 2008  
Front Page

## Rivals agree: Two states key to peace in Mideast

By MICHELE DARGAN  
Daily News Staff Writer

Two peacemakers on opposite sides of the Middle East conflict agreed Thursday that peace is possible in the near future and the only resolution is a two-state solution.

Ami Ayalon, a member of the Israeli parliament and former commander of Israel's navy and secret service, and Saeb Erakat, the Palestinian Authority's chief negotiator, drew 800 people to Temple Emanu-El to hear the discussion.

Erakat said he believes that a settlement can be reached this year.

"I believe we have finished the negotia-

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### PEACE

#### 'Never too late'

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tions," he said. "It's time for decisions. Maybe within the next two months, we will be able to know whether we as Palestinians have the ability to deliver and whether Israelis have the ability to deliver or not."

Ayalon said both sides "do not have the luxury" of being pessimistic.

"The concept of two states is the only way Israel will be a Jewish democracy," Ayalon said. "This is why when people ask me if it's too late, I say it will never be too late. ... I will do everything in order to see it happen."

Palm Beacher and Slim-Fast founder S. Daniel Abraham sponsored the event through his Center for Middle East Peace and Economic Cooperation. Working extensively in support of the Middle East peace process, Abraham co-founded the center, a group based in Washington, D.C., that has supported the Oslo peace accords.

Abraham's book, *Peace is Possible*, is a compilation of his experiences during his 15 years of peacemaking efforts in the Middle East.

Martin Indyk, director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, moderated the event.

Indyk said Abraham never misses an opportunity to say, "Let's get going, let's finish this conflict," and he praised Abraham for his efforts.

"Public opinion on both

sides — in Israel and among the Palestinians — supports this effort to try and achieve a peace between Israel and the

Palestinians based on a two-state solution," Indyk said.

Indyk pointed to President George W. Bush's recent visit to the Middle East.

"President Bush for seven years determined there was no opportunity for peace and is now suddenly coming off the sidelines and demonstrating a peace commitment to try and achieve a peace treaty between the Israelis and the Palestinians in his last few months," Indyk said.

Erakat said Palestinians want peace, but not because they feel sorry for the Israelis' suffering.

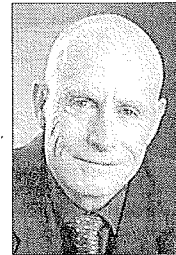
"We're doing it for ourselves," Erakat said. "There's no need more important to us than achieving an endgame — a two-state solution ... things are changing. Today there are 70 percent of Israelis and 70 percent of Palestinians who acknowledge that the endgame is a two-state solution."

Ayalon said Israelis understand the implications.

"Today we understand that the Middle East is not divided between Arabs and Israelis or Palestinians and Israelis," Ayalon said. "The Middle East is divided between pragmatics and radicals — between people who understand that diplomacy should work and people who understand only the leverage of power. We have to take it (the peace process) from here and show our children that we are able to do it."

— mdargan

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Ayalon

'Only way' Israel will be a democracy.



Erakat

'Endgame' a two-state solution.



Abraham

Sponsored the event through his center.