

Jimmy Carter talks to AlJazeera reporter Riz Kahn about the prospect of peace in the Middle East.

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[http://au.youtube.com/watch?v=Zwj19e2hV1U&feature=channel\\_page](http://au.youtube.com/watch?v=Zwj19e2hV1U&feature=channel_page)

## Interview

Carter There is no way to have a permanent peace in the Middle East without the inclusion of Hamas. The first step as far as the Palestinians go with obviously has to be reconciliation between Hamas and Qatar and I think that all of the Arab world and the Palestinians on both sides want to see that done. So far it's been objected to and obstructed by the United States and that may change at least on the United States side in the next few months. The other thing is that I have seen that Hamas is willing some flexibility in their previous position they have told me and announced publically on this TV station (AlJazeera) last April that they would accept any peace agreement negotiated between Abu Masen and Israel if the agreement was submitted to the Palestinians in a referendum and if the Palestinians approved it or if there was a unity government that could approve. That opens up a door to an absolutely necessary fact that Hamas has got to be involved before the peace can be concluded.

Kahn You meet with Hamas for a second time this December and said it was putting all of its eggs in the Obama basket. What do you think that Hamas hopes is possible under President Obama that wasn't under Bush?

Carter I would say a basic change in everything. One is that President Bush didn't start working on the present situation until nearly the end of his term and the other thing is that when he did start working on it the United States played a very dormant role pretty well approving or accepting what Israel was doing by increasing massive numbers of settlements, increasing the number of check points, and continuing to build the separation barrier or the segregation wall as it is called. So I think that Obama will have a much more balanced point of view. Also in the previous sixteen years most of the envoys for the president in the Middle East have been openly and publicly committed to Israelis side. Some of them have been professional lobbyists for Israel. George Mitchell is a different person and he will be objective and fair. He is a tough negotiator he was able to bring peace to Northern Ireland which everybody thought was impossible and he is on the way over there now for a fact finding tour. I gave him a copy of my book ("We Can Have Peace In The Holy Land: A Plan That Will Work) at his request; I gave the first copy of the

book to President Obama so I think that at least they understand my points of view! But I don't think that there is any doubt that with this new administration in Washington and a new approach that we will see move towards peace. The other thing is that it is coming down to a choice between one state and two states and as I describe in one of the chapters of my book a one state solution would be a catastrophe for Israel because with only one state between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean sea you would at this moment have a majority of non-Jews in the population and you would very soon in just a few years have a majority of Arabs and it would be very likely that you could no longer have a Jewish state. Or the Israelis would have to force the Palestinians to leave the west bank or they would have to have a nation within which a quarter of their citizens couldn't have a vote. None of those things are attractive for Israel.

Kahn Is there anything left for there to be a two state situation? Gaza's in ruins and the west bank is fragmented.

Carter The carter centre has a full time office in Gaza, we know what is happening there but Gaza will be rebuilt. I think that the proposal by the Arab nations is a key formula that I personally espouse and is completely compatible with the final stages of the so called international quartets roadmap for peace and it is also compatible with the official policies of the United States and the United Nations resolution and the Geneva courts, that is Israel withdraws from Palestinian territory in exchange for peace and with their accommodation for the right of return and also for Jerusalem and those things can take place. I think there's one degree of flexibility that I would espouse and that is let Israel have a small part of the west bank, right around Jerusalem so that they could retain about half of their settlers in the west bank but not deep in the west bank. In exchange for that let an equivalent amount of land be given to the Palestinians.