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## Will the Palestinians Accept Their Own State?

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World leaders are bracing themselves this week for a storm at the United Nations to be unleashed by the Palestinian Authority in its demand for a Palestinian state.

Visiting with community leaders in Toronto, Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister, Avigdor Lieberman stressed that Western nations need to understand that Israel is on the front lines defending Western democracy. "Our security problem is your security problem... if you want to survive, you must support us. The Jewish state is fighting for the entire western world" Lieberman said.

Surrounded by hostile Arab countries, Israel is indeed on the front lines of the fight to preserve fundamental Western values of democracy, freedom and human rights. Even with the Arab Spring now taking hold in parts of the Middle East, there are few emerging signs that rights and freedoms are taking hold -- particularly as they relate to women and homosexuals.

Some hoped the Arab Spring would liberate the Muslim world from its incessant hatred of Israel and true peace would take hold in the Middle East. But the situation looks grim especially after the last couple of weeks that saw a diplomatic tussle -- Turkey expelled the Israeli ambassador; the Israeli embassy in Cairo was torched and its diplomats airlifted home; and as a 'precautionary measure,' Israel recalled its ambassador to Jordan.

The Palestinian's ultimate vision, said Lieberman is to "destroy the Jewish state of Israel." The Palestinians have given Israel little reason to think otherwise. Surely, if they wanted a peaceful resolution comprised of a two-state solution they would embrace Israel rather than unapologetically refuse to recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

The Palestinians, Lieberman said, have rebuffed every offer given to them for an independent state, including the Camp David Summit in 2000 (where over 91 per cent of the West Bank and 100 per cent of Gaza was offered to Arafat) and recently, a more extensive offer by the Olmert/Livni government was rejected by current Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas. Even Ariel Sharon tried a different approach in 2005 by painfully vacating Gaza and uprooting Israeli towns to help the Palestinians see their dream of a state.

Like many Israelis, Lieberman believes that everything has been tried and that Israel must "change its concept entirely." What that concept might be will depend on what happens at the UN this week.

But it is unclear what the Palestinians will gain. They have already refused every overture made to them for a Palestinian state, including the 1947 UN partition plan for a Jewish and a Palestinian state. Ironically, unable to take Israel by force, they are running back to the same world body they rejected 64 years ago.

What is clear however is that they still want the whole enchilada. Maybe one day they will learn what every three-year-old already knows -- how to share.