

Camp David Summit 2000

May 18, 2022

The Camp David Summit was convened by U.S. President Bill Clinton on July 11, 2000, to bring together Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority Chairman Arafat at Camp David for intensive negotiations for a final status agreement. By July 25, President Clinton announced that the Summit had failed and that no agreement had been reached. President Clinton publicly acknowledged that Prime Minister Barak had shown “particular courage and vision and an understanding of the historical importance of the moment.”

Barak entered the summit convinced that a final agreement with the Palestinians was reachable. According to first-hand accounts, he offered Palestinians an ambitious peace package which included far-reaching concessions on Jerusalem, borders, settlements, refugees and other issues. Barak’s offer reportedly included: an Israeli redeployment from as much as 95 percent of the West Bank and 100 percent of the Gaza Strip and the creation of a Palestinian state in these areas; the uprooting of isolated Jewish settlements in the areas to be transferred to Palestinian control; Palestinian control over parts of Jerusalem; and “religious sovereignty” over the Temple Mount. In return, Barak wanted the final status agreement to include an “end of conflict” clause under which the parties would pledge that all issues between them were now resolved and further claims would not be made at a future date.

According to the accounts of the participants, Chairman Arafat refused Israel’s offer and clung to maximalist positions, particularly on Jerusalem and refugees. The Palestinian delegation did not offer any counter-proposals.

On his return to Israel, Barak said: “Today I return from Camp David, and can look into the millions of eyes and say with regret: We have not yet succeeded. We did not succeed because we did not find a partner prepared to make decisions on all issues. We did not succeed because our Palestinian neighbors have not yet internalized the fact that in order to achieve peace, each side has to give up some of their dreams; to give, not only to demand.” Barak later said that at Camp David, Yasir Arafat and his true intentions were “unmasked.”

Faced with criticism after abandoning the negotiations at Camp David and the turn to violence barely two months later, Palestinians publicly declared that the failure of Camp David was due to lack of preparation by the Americans, personality differences between

Barak and Arafat, and by Barak's "take-it-or-leave-it" negotiating posture. Many Israeli and American high-level officials who were at Camp David dismiss these excuses and say that Camp David demonstrated that Arafat and the Palestinian leadership had unrealistic expectations that they could force Israel to concede to their maximalist demands without making important compromises of their own. While there were additional negotiating sessions in October and December at the Egyptian resort of Taba, they were conducted in the midst of persistent Palestinian violence, and no agreement was reached.