# The Arab Summit

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The Arabs are of 22 states such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Morocco, Iraq and Lebanon. The heads of these states meet annually in March so as to discuss major Arab issues and, if possible, agree on binding policies toward achieving certain goals. This summit has been meeting on regular basis since 2000, but irregularity was a characteristic before that date.

The Arab leaders have so many major and important issues to discuss and provide solutions. These issues are: the Palestinian question, Iraq, the internal instability in Lebanon, the wars in the Sudan, the problems of economic development and political cooperation. The mass media all over have been talking about this meeting with enthusiasm with the assumption that the Arab leaders will break the ice and come out with practical solutions to all Arab concerns. These mass media are concentrating on the Arab quartette (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates) as the major four countries who can lead the Arabs toward tangible success.

The history of Arab summits shows that Arab meetings have generally been a failure. The Arab leaders couldn't, in their long history of inter-relations, cooperate with each other in order to face a challenge or to promote a cause. These leaders have been meeting since 1964, and the results have been far from the expectations. The first summit was held in order to curb Israel's plan to divert the waters of Jordan river which separates Jordan from Palestine. The result was that three Arab states (Jordan, Syria and Egypt) were defeated in 1967, and parts of their territories fell into the hands of the Israelis, the West Bank and the Golan Heights are still under occupation. These Arab leaders met after the aftermath of 1967 and vowed to drive Israel out of their lands, but they lost more land in 1973, and finally decided to accept what they adamantly refused such as the negotiations with Israel.

On the level of other problems, the Arab summit couldn't solve the problem between Iraq and Kuwait, the fight between Algeria and Morocco in the Desert, the internal wars in the Sudan, the conflict between Libya and Egypt, and so on. Above all, the Arab summit has failed to provide for economic development and the industrialization of Arabia. Although the Arabs have so much wealth, they import around 75% of their food needs. The Arabs have failed in the realm of science, and the scientific and technological gap between them and the industrialized world had been widening. 30% of the Arab budget is allocated for the royal and presidential courts, another 30% is wasted on corruption. The Arab public which is around 300 million have only 40% which is allocated mainly for the monthly salaries and consumption goods.

I am posing these few examples to tell the reader that these Arab leaders aren't true leaders, and they are mostly tribal leaders who care about their private interests and desires. The only noticeable field of cooperation that brings these leaders together is the field of regimes security. The ministers of interior in the Arab countries are cooperating with each other in tracing opposition elements to Arab regimes. The only unity that these regimes could achieve is that against the freedom of the Arabs.

Then why is the talk about the Arab initiative and the real possibility of solving the Palestinian problem? The Arab initiative for making peace in the Middle East was adopted by the Arab summit held in Beirut in 2002. It calls for the recognition of Israel,

normalizing the relations between the Arabs and Israel in return of complete Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the establishment of a Palestinian state. At the time, the Israelis rejected this Arab initiative, and the Americans expressed major reservations that rendered it worthless. The Arab leaders have been reiterating their consensus on the initiative in every summit, but couldn't take any practical step toward its implementation. Actually, the Arab leaders are incapable of team-work, and most of them lack the political will. Suspicion is a major characteristic of Arab internal relations, and most of Arab regimes are under the thrust of the US.

The US says now that the Arab initiative should be developed in a way to become the topic of what Rice describes as active diplomacy. Israel demands that the item concerning the return of the Palestinian refugees should be omitted if the Arab leaders want their initiative to be accepted.

Although the mass media are talking about the refugee item, I don't think that this is the issue. The Arab leaders including some Palestinian leaders believe that the realization of peace in the Middle East is impossible if the refugees insist on return to their homes and property in the land occupied in 1948. The real problem has to do with the text concerning the complete withdrawal from the land occupied in 1967 and from Jerusalem. Israel has annexed East Jerusalem, and declared all of the ever capital of Israel, and has built huge settlements in West Bank areas that are considered of strategic importance.

However, the US and Israel have been giving the Arab leaders some complementary statements concerning their initiative not because it is an alternative to the Road Map, but because they want to create an atmosphere of support for the Arab leaders who are expected to side with the US in case of attacking Iran. The Iranian nuclear capability is the prime concern of the US now, but not Palestine, and the US heightens its lip concern for the Palestinian question each time it wants to mobilize its Arab allies toward carrying out a certain mission. The US is going to use the Arab land and Arab military installations in case it decides to attack Iran, and, for the sake of absorbing any negative public reaction, these Arab leaders should appear as true national leaders who are independent of the will of the US. This was our experience in 1981 when the US mobilized most Arab leaders in a war against Iran, and in 1991 when these leaders sided with the US against Saddam Hussein.