

## **The Israeli Government Designed Peace Plan Devised After the June 1967 War (19 June 1967)**

Document 1, Government meeting on June 18, 1967, Clause 553, State Archives, 8-8164/7, Document 2, Government meeting June 18, 1967, Clause 558, State Archives, 8164/7-8, Document 3, Government meeting, June 19, 1967, Clause 561, State Archives, 8164/8-8, Document 4, June 19, 1967 State Archives 8164/9-8, Document 5, Government meeting, Clause 563, p. 83, State Archives 8164/8-8, The Decision on Peace with Egypt, State Archives, 7634/5-, Letter from PM Eshkol to FM Eban, State Archives 7071/5-8

### **Introduction**

On the eve of the war in 1967 the Prime Minister, Levi Eshkol, expanded the Government and established the National Unity Government. Menachem Begin and Yosef Sapir of the Herut-Liberal Bloc joined as ministers without portfolio and Moshe Dayan of the List of Israel Workers joined as well as a Defense Minister. At the end of the War discussions have begun in an attempt to set the Government's policy with regard to the territories that Israel captured. The background for the discussions was Israel's apprehension that she might be subjected to pressure for fast withdrawals, as was the case after the Sinai Campaign in 1956-57. The discussions commenced within the framework of the Ministers who were members in the Security Committee (held on June 14-15, 1967) but the members of the Committee failed to reach a consensus and the matter was moved to the full forum of the Government.

### **The background for the Government discussions**

The War ended on June 10, 1967 – the greatest military victory of the State of Israel. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) were deployed now in the Golan Heights along the Jordan River and along the Suez Canal. The IDF was in full control of the large area stretching from the Hermon in the north down to the Straights of Tiran at the southern edge of the Sinai Peninsula.

### **The Discussions in the Government on June 18**

On the morning of June 18 the Government plenum commenced the discussions. This was the first discussion of the Israeli Government with regards to the future of the territories that have been conquered and it has been continuing, in one way or another, to these days. The Foreign Minister, Abba Eban did not participate in these deliberations, because he was in New York at the time and conducted the diplomatic campaign in the United Nations against the attempts to alter the results of the Six Days War. The Minister of Tourism, Moshe Kol contested the decision of the Chairman (Eshkol) of the Ministers' committee's for Security, that the Jordan River is the security border of Israel. He argued that a decision of that nature was not to be, and if it would, then it might lead to a binational state. The Ministers discussed issues concerning the achievement of peace, including the Palestinian refugees' problem and water sources and distribution.

It was decided to continue the discussions in the afternoon.

The Minister of Police, Eliyahu Sasson opened the discussion. He contested the accepted attitude among the Ministers that conditioned the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai with the signing of peace treaty with Egypt, and the cessation of the Arab Boycott. He asserted that it should suffice if Israel would have free navigation through the Tiran Straits and the Suez Canal under the premise that the Sinai Peninsula will be demilitarized, and the Gaza Strip will not be part of Egypt. With regards to Syria, Sasson suggested that Israel will deploy its forces along the International Border (that was mostly situated east of the armistice lines that were set in 1949). He added that Israel should demand the demilitarization of the Golan Heights and reach an agreement with regards

to the sources of the Jordan River, even if a comprehensive peace will not be achieved between Israel and Syria. His approach was that it is necessary to reach an agreement, as fast as possible, even without Jordan's consent, in order to terminate Israel's control over million and a half Arabs 'because we cannot... maintain the situation of this conquest for two months.' (Document 2, Government meeting June 18, 1967, Clause 558, State Archives, 8164/7-8). None of the Ministers agreed with Sasson that Israel should not demand a comprehensive peace, but they were divided about the set of conditions for peace, and decided to postpone the discussion to the following day.

### **The Government Discussion on June 19 in the morning**

The government discussed the current proposals. But because of the decisive refusal of some of the Ministers to give-up any territory in Eretz Israel (Judea, Samaria and Gaza) the Government did not reach an agreement about a proposal that should be presented to the Jordanian Kingdom and decided not to decide on that issue for the time being. The main discord was with regards to the proposals that Israel may present to Egypt and Syria. One proposal supported the annexation of territories: 'Israel proposes peace treaties with Egypt and Syria that include security arrangements', and the second one clarified that Israel has no intentions to annex the Golan Heights and Sinai: 'Israel proposes peace treaties with Egypt and Syria, that include security arrangements, based on the international borders'. In the vote that ensued the Government approved the second proposals with a majority of ten, as opposed to a majority of nine for the first proposal. (Document 3, Government meeting, June 19, 1967, Clause 561, State Archives, 8164/8-8).

### **The Discussion at the Drafting Committee**

Eshkol and other Ministers were not satisfied by the results of the votes that differed by only one vote. Hence a committee was chosen (Eshkol, Alon, Barzily, Dayan, Warhaftig, Kol, Sasson, and Yaacov Shimshon Shapira), and assigned to reach an agreed draft on that same day.

At 3 PM the Drafting Committee met (Document 4, June 19, 1967 State Archives 8164/9-8) and discussed various versions for a decision – in Hebrew and English. All the participants, with the exclusion of Moshe Kol agreed that the Gaza Strip should be annexed to Israel. Menachem Begin requested to write 'that Western Eretz Israel is under Israel's sovereignty', but he knew that there was no majority in the Government for such an idea and he withdrew it from a vote.

### **The Final Discussion in the Government**

The entire Government convened in the afternoon. After a security review (unpublished here) the Government approved unanimously the conclusion of the Draft Committee that the following sentence stood at its center: 'Israel proposes reaching peace with Egypt [and with Syria] on the basis of the international border and the security requirements of Israel'.

The Government decision was delivered in secret to the United States. Israel did not receive positive responses from Egypt and Syria. At the end of August Arab leaders convened for a summit meeting in Khartoum and on September 2, the Summit adopted the famous decisions known as the 'nays of Khartoum' – no negotiations, no peace, no recognition with Israel. These [Egyptian and Syrian] decisions led to the end of Israel positions about making concessions about Sinai and the Golan Heights, in return for peace treaties and security arrangements with Egypt and Syria.

On October 27, 1967 Eshkol wrote to Eban 'for your information I doubt whether the Government will approve the exact conclusion from June 19, (State Archives 7071/5-8). A year later, on October 31, 1968, the

Government reached another decision: as a condition for peace with Egypt, Israel will demand to have in its possession contiguous land between Eilat and Sharm-a-Sheik (the Decision, State Archives, 7634/5-8). This preempted the June 19, 1967 decision and it is possible to assume that this decision was envisioned by Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, 10 years later when deciding to withdraw from Sinai in return for peace and security arrangements with Egypt.

The documents that appear here were gathered for the purposes of preparing a memorial volume titled: Levi Eshkol, Israel Third Prime Minister: a selection of documents from stations in his life (1895-1969).