HAIM RAMON, a vice prime minister of Israel, recently stated that Israel hoped to reach agreement with its Palestinian negotiating partners by the end of 2008 on a "declaration of principles" for peace, but not on a detailed peace treaty. At this time of escalating violence and diminishing hope, the call for such a declaration offers an opportunity for revitalizing the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

To represent a dramatic breakthrough, a declaration would have to go beyond a vague, general commitment to a two-state solution, and lay out the fundamental principles on which such a solution must be based if it is to be perceived as fair and just by the two populations and offer them a positive vision of their future relationship. The statement must address the key final-status issues — notably borders, Jerusalem, settlements, and refugees — that a viable two-state agreement would have to resolve. In essence, the statement would frame the envisaged final agreement as a principled peace, based on a historic compromise that meets the fundamental needs of both peoples, validates their national identities, and declares an end to the conflict and to the occupation consistent with the requirements of fairness and attainable justice.

To concretize the components of a statement of basic principles for framing a negotiated agreement, I offer the following hypothetical draft of what such a statement, issued by the two leaderships, might contain, in the hope that it might stimulate thought.

**Israeli-Palestinian joint statement of principles**

The parties agree that the land that has been in dispute between the Jewish and the Palestinian peoples — the land that includes the State of Israel and the occupied territories (the West Bank and Gaza) — belongs to both peoples: both have historic roots in it, both are deeply attached to it, and both claim it as their national homeland. We are convinced that there is no military solution to the conflict resulting from these competing claims.

The attempt to impose a solution by violence has caused pain and suffering to both peoples for generations, which we deeply regret. The conflict threatens to destroy the future of both peoples and of the land itself. We are therefore committed to ending the conflict by negotiating a principled peace, based on a historic compromise in the form of a two-state solution. We agree to share the land in a way that allows each people to exercise its right to national self-determination, express its national identity, and fulfill its national aspirations in its own independent, viable state within the shared land.

The details of a peace agreement that concretizes this historic compromise have to be negotiated, but we are committed to certain basic principles, dictated by the logic of this historic compromise, that must be followed in resolving the key issues in the negotiations. Specifically:

- The borders between the two states will follow the 1967 armistice lines, with minor, mutually agreed-upon adjustments, based on an exchange of West Bank territories that contain most of the Israeli settlements for Israeli territories of equal size and value, and with a secure link between the West Bank and Gaza. These borders are necessary in order to enable the Palestinian state to meet the criteria of true independence, viability, governability, and contiguity within the West Bank. Palestinians can accept the fairness of these borders because they conform with international legitimacy, as expressed in appropriate United Nations resolutions.

- Jerusalem will be shared by the two states and contain the national capital of each state, in recognition of the central importance of the city to the national identities of both peoples. Jerusalem's Jewish neighborhoods will be under Israeli sovereignty and its Arab neighborhoods under Palestinian sovereignty, with jointly administered arrangements for security, freedom of movement, and...