

# "A time to build up, a time to break down ... And a time to every purpose under Heaven"

For nearly 30 years, Peace Now in Israel and Americans for Peace Now have called for Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Starting this week, there will be no doubt: the time for building up Israeli settlements in Gaza is over, and the time for breaking down Israel's occupation over the Palestinians has begun.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon--who helped create many of the settlements during his long career--deserves credit for finally recognizing the demographic, economic, and security burdens that settlements impose on the State of Israel. As the prime minister recently explained, "it is...not possible to control densely populated areas for prolonged periods without those populations eventually having to receive rights."

He also should be applauded for having the fortitude to overcome tremendous challenges to his evacuation plan and for having the courage to face down his former allies in the settlement movement. At the same time, it's important to recognize the deep pain and trauma that the evacuation process is causing those people involved directly in it.

Settlers who were enticed by earlier Israeli governments to build their homes and their lives in the occupied territories are being asked to start over again inside Israel's borders.

Israeli police and soldiers--some of whom may have philosophical disagreements with the plan--are being asked to carry out a difficult assignment, often in the face of threats and blows from militant opponents of the pullout.

And the Israeli people--who largely support the evacuation--has had to endure Palestinian suicide bombings, as well as powerful challenges to their democratic system from a vocal minority that has at times displayed little regard for the decisions and institutions of their elected government.

Yet all of the sacrifices and tears associated with the Gaza evacuation will be for naught if Israel cannot capitalize on the opportunities that this initiative has created. Israel now has a chance to finally address the problem of settlements and outposts that remain in the West Bank.

Israel now has momentum for finding a way back to the negotiating table with the Palestinians. Indeed, most Israelis believe that there will be further settlement evacuations from the West Bank after the current pullout is completed. As Israel withdraws settlements, the US must lead in overseeing the building of a law-abiding, peaceful and prosperous Palestinian state, as mandated in the Road Map peace plan.

Americans for Peace Now stands with the Israeli people as the pullout takes place. We encourage them to continue working with their neighbors to create a time for peace, and we ask our friends in the U.S. to support us in our vital work.

**Save the Date: September 22, 2005**

**APN Peace Awards Dinner honoring Ruth Messinger, Mark Rosenblum and Gail Pressberg.  
For further info call Hiam Simon at 212-62-PEACE.**

To learn more about how you can help promote Shalom Achshav and APN's efforts here in Chicago, across the US, with our elected officials in Washington, and in Israel, see our local web site at

**[www.chicagopeacenow.org](http://www.chicagopeacenow.org)** or contact:

## Americans for Peace Now

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