

1 week to the MES: what to expect?

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news staff reporters



The Arab Leg conference in Riyadh, 2007

The Middle East Simulation that will take place a week from today in Konstanz,

Germany, is a much anticipated event. Great hopes lay upon this convention, but can it really help to solve the Middle East conflict? Much has been said about the abysmal disagreements between Israel and The Palestinian Authority, and it seems that nowadays new problems are likely to arise as Israel refuses to discuss an agreement without addressing the Iranian nuclear issue first, since it sees Iran as responsible for the current stagnation.

Reading the delegation's position papers one might find themselves disappointed and somewhat surprised. Although the countries have addressed important issues, they have left out several core matters.

The biggest surprise of all must be Iran's statement that it will do, "everything in its power to guarantee a positive outcome of the negotiation". What is it that Iran means by that? When asked by the US president to stop its uranium enriching, Teheran refused aggressively. Will it be willing to do so now? If not, the Iranian statement has nothing new to offer to the table. If Iran truly wishes to promote the negotiations, and shatter the Israeli strategy which portrayed it as the "villain" that the whole world should fear, then announcing it will give up its nuclear capabilities would be a good way to go. In light of recent developments in North-Korea, it appears that even the United-States' tolerance has its limits.

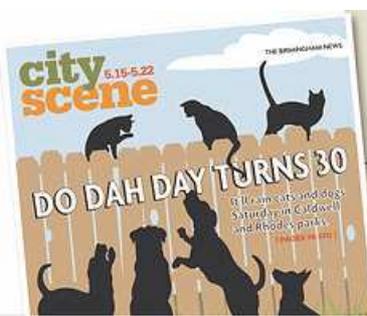
A similar argument can be directed towards Syria and Lebanon. The position papers of these countries had little news in them, and they did not address the significant issue of the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah triangle, that meanwhile grew to be a square when the constant military support Iran provides to Hamas is taken in to consideration. One more important issue for these countries, and others, is the up-and-coming elections in Lebanon. With so many countries involved, and each supporting a different candidate, the election result might change the face of the state.

A significant question might arise after viewing the Palestinian Authority's statement. Without addressing the topic of the Hamas-Fatah dispute, and presenting new orders in which both parties can work together, how can the United-States and the European Union trust that there is a solid base on which a Palestinian country can be formed?

Viewing the Israeli paper makes it clear that the Palestinian Authority is not the only one that has some thinking to do if seeking a two states solution. Despite the fact that the Israeli

statement does not explicitly declare its interest in two states with Jerusalem as both of their capitals, it does mention that it, "will discuss all available options regarding the future status of a Palestinian state". The Israeli statement is good but not enough; unless the "settlements" beyond the green line are addressed it will not be satisfactory. One of Israeli's biggest problems today is dealing with an extremist minority that does not obey the state's law. The Palestinians have a problem of multiple different legal systems; mandatory British law (from before 1948); Jordanian law, and Israeli law (since 1967). It's surprising that anyone follows such a confusing array of laws.

Long years of war, bloodshed and not enough efforts at dialogue and mutual understanding, holy places to all religions, outstanding views and an amazing mixture of cultures and diversity - so many ways to look at our area. It's a difficult task trying to lead the Middle East into a new and better future but if we don't believe and try, no one will try for us. Good luck to all the delegates, work hard, have fun and don't forget- the press never sleeps...(;



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