Disengagement of Forces Agreement with Syria

Introduction

After several months of simultaneous fighting and negotiations, culminating in one month of intensive shuttle diplomacy by Dr. Kissinger between Damascus and Jerusalem, the Disengagement of Forces Agreement between Syria and Israel was at last ready for signature at Geneva. In accordance with established precedent, and although under no constitutional obligation to do so, Golda Meir presented it to the Knesset for approval on 30 May 1974, prior to its signature on the following day.

It was Golda Meir's last speech to the Knesset as Prime Minister. By a majority of 298 to 254 the Alignment Central Committee had chosen Yitzhak Rabin over Shimon Peres as Golda Meir's successor-designate. He had completed the formation of the Government and was ready to present it to the Knesset. Golda Meir, however, regarded it as incumbent upon her to complete the agreement with Syria, which, taken together with a similar one entered into with Egypt four months earlier, formally put an end to the Yom Kippur War.

Sitting 52 of the Eighth Knesset

30 May 1974 (9 Sivan 5734)

The Prime Minister, G. Meir: Mr. Speaker, distinguished Knesset, on May 29 the Government of Israel decided to sign the agreement on the disengagement of forces with Syria, reached with the aid of the good offices of Dr. Kissinger, the U.S. Secretary of State. On behalf of the Government, I would like to express our gratitude to the President of America, the Secretary of State and their assistants for their ceaseless efforts to attain the agreement. The document will be signed in Geneva tomorrow. The text is in front of you and there is no need to read it out, though I request that it be appended to the *Knesset Record*. Additional documents and clarifications have been and will be brought before the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. I ask the Knesset to endorse the Government's decision to sign the disengagement agreement with Syria.

As the House will recall, on January 18 this year Israel's Chief of Staff, Major-General David Elazar, signed the agreement regarding the disengagement of forces with Egypt. The Government of Israel was prepared to sign a similar agreement with Syria, but the Syrians raised

numerous difficulties....It is more than seven months since the Security Council decided on a ceasefire, but the Syrian front has not been quiet. Despite the benefits promised to the Syrians as a result of the disengagement, they continued their aggressive activities in the Golan Heights area and hardly a day passed without casualties....

Our forces in the Golan Heights, the enclave and on Mount Hermon defended themselves and the surrounding settlements, repelling the Syrian attempts to conquer positions and maintaining control of the area and positions captured in the October War. From time to time it was necessary to deploy the Air Force. We do not have precise information about Syria's losses. They are greater than ours, though that offers us no consolation.

The Syrians adopted throughout a tough and aggressive policy, refusing to release our prisoners of war or participate in the Geneva Conference. In March this year there were persistent rumors of an impending Syrian attack, and we prepared ourselves accordingly. Ever since the ceasefire decision, the U.S. Secretary of State has worked intensively through his contacts with the Syrian leaders to bring about a change in the dangerous development caused by their policy.

In addressing the Knesset in January this year, I expressed my regret at the fact that there had been no progress in our contact with the Syrian Government as regards the prisoners of war and the disengagement of forces. I mentioned Syria's refusal to release the prisoners of war, or even give us a list of their names, and permit the Red Cross to visit them. On behalf of the Government I made it clear that we would not discuss the disengagement of forces with Syria or participate in the Geneva Conference with it until it gave us the names of our prisoners of war. Dr. Kissinger invested great efforts in breaking the deadlock. On February 27 we received the list of prisoners of war from him and on March 11 they were visited for the first time by Red Cross representatives. These visits are now continuing on a regular basis....These developments enabled the process leading to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement to be set in motion.

The Agreement comprises: a mutual undertaking to maintain the ceasefire on land, sea and air and refrain from all military activity; the separation of forces by a demilitarized buffer zone in which there will be a U.N. presence; the removal from one another of the principal military forces on either side of the buffer zone, within which an area will be determined where only reduced forces and arms will be permitted; the shifting further back of long-range artillery and missiles; the supervision of the observance of the Agreement, the buffer zone and the reduction of forces by the U.N. The U.N. Force will be recruited from countries which are not permanent members of the Security Council; Israel will withdraw from the enclave it conquered during the Yom Kippur War; there will be Syrian civilian rule in the buffer zone; the prisoners of war will be exchanged after the Agreement has been signed and before the implementation of the stages has begun; the bodies of the missing soldiers will be returned. The inhabitants of the villages in the enclave and the buffer zone will be allowed to return to their homes.

In the area occupied by Israel the disengagement line corresponds with the border established after the Six Day War for the most part, except for the town of Kuneitra and Pithat Rafia. The town will be within the U.N. buffer zone, the inhabitants will return and Syrian civil rule will be restored. The positions on Mount Hermon which were conquered in October 1973 and are within the buffer zone will be controlled by the U.N. The Mount Hermon position we have retained since 1967 will remain in our hands. On the whole, the military line which was in effect prior to the Yom Kippur War remains as it was. That line ensures the defense of the Golan Heights. It is our belief that it is in the interests of both sides to reach a disengagement agreement, and we hope that quiet will reign in the north so that IDF forces there may be reduced.

In accordance with the Agreement, all the wounded prisoners of war held by both sides will be returned within twenty-four hours after the signing in Geneva...the rest to be returned one week later. The day is approaching when the suffering and isolation of our prisoners of war will end and they will all return to their families and the nation, which is concerned for their welfare....

The Government of Israel attaches supreme importance not only to the prevention of aggressive military actions but also to the complete cessation of terrorist infiltration and attacks coming from Syria. It should be noted that terrorist activity leads to bloodshed and could bring about developments which are not merely reactions. Terrorism could lead to a dangerous deterioration of the situation, as it undoubtedly aspires to do....The U.S. has expressed its recognition of Israel's right to take appropriate action to protect itself from acts of terrorism originating from across the Syrian border....The Government will submit additional clarifications on the subject to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee....

The Agreement contains the following sentence: "This Agreement is not a peace agreement; it constitutes a step towards a just and lasting peace." There are no secret clauses on any subject....In determining the disengagement line we acted on the basis of the advice of the Chief of Staff, Major-General Mordechai Gur. We took care to secure our military line and the safety and continued development of our settlements in the Golan Heights....

The Syrian attack of October 1973 forced us to fight back, advance into Syria and reach the outskirts of Damascus. Israel has made it clear that it has no desire to remain permanently in its military positions in the enclave, which we are now relinquishing in accordance with the Agreement. The Syrians are attaining a great achievement thanks to

our aspiration for peace....The Disengagement Agreement between Israel and Syria resembles that between Israel and Egypt, but differs from it in the nature of the U.N. forces on each border. The U.N. Emergency Force, UNEF, functions on the Sinai border, whereas the U.N. Disengagement Observer Force, UNDOF, has been established especially for the purpose of supervising the Syrian border....

I am glad to be able to say that the Disengagement Agreement with Egypt is being maintained....We have recently heard statements from the Egyptian leaders of their desire to develop and rehabilitate their country, and the Suez Canal area in particular. Just as we must be careful not to be misled by delusions, we must take genuinely encouraging signs into consideration. We hope that a similar process will take place on our northern border. Our Disengagement Agreement with Syria can serve to reinforce the Agreement with Egypt, since the absence of hostilities on one front has a positive effect on the other....

We are conscious of every expression of willingness to strengthen peace in the region and are especially sensitive to tendencies on the part of any country to attain stability at Israel's expense....We rejoice at any encounter or shared interests between us and other countries or peoples, as are reflected in the Disengagement Agreement and the stabilization of the ceasefire. We greatly appreciate the fact that hostilities have ceased and the process towards peace begun, and in order to attain that objective we were prepared to forego our military advantage of maintaining the Syrian enclave. Our hold on the Golan Heights is firm. The Agreement does not deprive us of the basic conditions for defending ourselves and overcoming any possible assaults on us should hostilities be resumed....

Our acceptance of the Disengagement Agreement was based on our confidence in the IDF's ability to emerge victorious in future outbreaks of fighting, should there be any...and also on our response to the demands made by countries which are friendly towards Israel and are particularly interested in stability and peace in the region.

Israel's stable existence depends first and foremost on its own strength, unity, creativity and association with the Jewish people in the diaspora. Israel's ability to withstand trials, tribulations and wars depends above all on its internal strength, the readiness of all its citizens and the willingness of the younger generation to bear the burden and risk their lives in the defense of the country. But Israel is a country which needs and deserves help. We have been under siege for twenty-six years and must make every effort to win the understanding and support of our allies. That essential interest must influence our considerations and actions. I will not deny that in deciding on the disengagement we also took account of the advice and policy of the U.S., which has been positively involved in attaining tranquillity and peace in the region. That policy of the U.S. accords with the needs of the peo-

ples of the region. The deterrent strength of the U.S. was revealed during the Yom Kippur War, and its services assisted greatly in attaining the ceasefire and the Disengagement Agreements on the various fronts. Particularly commendable is the phenomenal effort made by the Secretary of State, who did not rest and worked night and day to achieve tranquillity and the disengagement of forces.

In January I told the House that Israel had increased its strength as a result of that policy and that I had every reason to believe that the U.S. would continue to be aware of Israel's defense needs....Now that Dr. Kissinger is in the region we have spoken about the vital issues concerning our two countries and I can assure the House that what I said in January has been borne out and U.S. aid to Israel is assured....

Knesset Members, knowing that this is the last time I will address the House on behalf of this Government, I would like to say that I offer sincere good wishes to the next Prime Minister....In leaving the position I have been privileged to fill I would like to say that at this moment I have never for a moment forgotten the unbearably hard days and nights when there were battles in the north and the south, and I am glad that I can leave my task knowing that the Government and my colleagues have succeeded, by dint of tremendous efforts and without illusions, in bringing this Agreement before the Knesset today...meaning that both the Egyptian and the Syrian fronts will be quiet from now on. I hope and pray that this will indeed be the case and that the next Government will be able to announce not merely disengagement agreements from this podium but true and lasting peace agreements.

The Speaker, I. Yeshayahu: We thank the Prime Minister. The time will come for us to tell you what is in our hearts, personally, as regards your leadership of the country.

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E. Rimalt (Likud): Mr. Speaker, distinguished Knesset, the Disengagement Agreement which the Prime Minister had brought before the House today is a source of concern to many but is characteristic of the interim agreements signed with Israel's neighbors and enemies since the establishment of the state. A tremendous amount of physical and psychological energy is invested, every concession Israel is asked to make is represented as being the pivot on which the longed-for peace hinges, hopes and expectations are aroused and disseminated...but the outcome is an interim agreement which does not deal with the roots of the dispute between us and the Arabs and which does not pave the way to peace, understanding and coexistence, serving merely to defer decisions, bridge awkward gaps and permit matters to revert to the previous situation.

Moreover, no sooner has an interim agreement been signed than differing and contradictory interpretations of it arise...so that rather

than having a calming influence it bears within it the seeds of renewed conflicts....No one can or wants to oppose the stabilization of the ceasefire, the end of war, of hostilities, of killing. The question is whether the ceasefire will last. Who does not share in the joy of our wounded soldiers and prisoners of war who will return to the homeland? In accordance with the international convention, Syria should have returned the wounded and the prisoners of war once the fighting was over, but it seems that international conventions are not binding for Syria. The same will apply to the ceasefire we wish to achieve now via the Disengagement Agreement, and by which Syria has been bound since October but has refused to honor....

Who will not rejoice with the parents who have received their sons from the Syrian captivity? We all will, together. Nevertheless, beyond the mist of the international sensation, the excitement and the anxiety in everyone's heart, we must see reality as it really is....Israel has agreed to make far-reaching concessions, to withdraw not only from the enclave—to that we have all agreed—but also to relinquish positions, territory, places of strategic importance, in return for...another Syrian undertaking to keep the ceasefire and to accept the disengagement of forces, i.e., the IDF's withdrawal.

We must ask ourselves and the Government...whether this Agreement does or does not give the Syrians clear-cut strategic advantages should they decide to renew hostilities...? If the Syrians attack us, will they be in a better position to do so or not...? Do our settlements on the Golan Heights remain within range of the Syrian tanks and cannon or not...? Our distinguished opponents in the Government tell us that our questions are inappropriate in the context of a disengagement agreement...for peace is just around the corner....But we are not talking about a peace agreement or even about a settlement involving a declaration of the cessation of hostilities, nor even an armistice agreement. All this is is a ceasefire agreement in which the armed forces remain on either side, albeit in new dispositions...and there is no way of knowing how long our enemies will honor this ceasefire.

Let me tell you about a general national consensus which once existed but no longer does. There are differences of opinion within the nation as regards secure borders in the Sinai and the western Land of Israel. But there is one issue on which there was general assent, namely that the Golan Heights are an integral part of the country, that there was to be no withdrawal from the border. The Alignment's representatives stressed this even after the Yom Kippur War. A few weeks ago the Prime Minister said as much to the nation on television.

There was widespread agreement throughout the nation, to which we subscribed, but it no longer exists. We added a proviso: saving Syrian Jewry. And at this very moment, as glasses are raised, we should remember our afflicted, persecuted and humiliated brethren in Syria.

Their rescue was not made a condition for the Agreement. Would that it were near. The border is not sacred for me, but the saving of lives and Zionist values whose protection that border facilitates are, and I am one of those who makes a distinction between Kuneitra, on the one hand, and Hebron and Jericho, on the other, for example. But if the border is disregarded and the national consensus demolished...all the lines have been obscured, including all the maps and territorial trickery that you in the Alignment have been engaged in, and that also applies to all the proposals for peace borders. Everything is open, everything is open to negotiation, to concession. Where will you stop? Where is the thin red line at which you will say: thus far, and no further? Will it be possible to believe that you will stop before reaching Jerusalem and the Erez barrier...?

Furthermore, do you really think that this is the only stage in the negotiations with Syria? What will happen at the second stage? What is there left to concede apart from maintaining the Golan Heights....And what will happen if and when there are peace negotiations, when territorial compromises will also be discussed...? Does anyone really believe that Assad will sit in idleness waiting, together with Sadat in the Sinai, for the next round...? It is easy to understand why all the inhabitants of the Golan Heights, the Etzion Bloc, Hebron, the Jordan Valley and the Sinai are in a state of uproar...because it has been brought home to them that everything is negotiable, no settlement is secure....

I suppose the inevitable question the Alignment will pose is: what alternative did we have...? Would you have preferred us to go to war...? That threat of war will accompany us throughout the long and winding road to peace negotiations....Will there not be instances when, seeing that that threat works, the Arabs will exert endless pressure and blackmail...? Was not that threat in the air during the current disengagement negotiations...? No one will convince me that the disengagement could not have been achieved on better terms....What concessions are there left to make at the second and third stages? And they will come, even though, regrettably, the Geneva Conference is not a peace conference, merely one at which Israel makes concessions, because the subject of peace has not yet been discussed there.

I hear the Alignment pointing out that my party also opposed the Disengagement Agreement in the Sinai which has brought the desired tranquillity....But how many months have passed? Have the Egyptians fulfilled all their obligations? We are not unhappy that our apprehensions have not been realized. Our contention is, however, that we, a nation of traumas, not only of the Holocaust but also of 1947/48 and the period before the Six Day War, must be careful...and not overconfident....What guarantee do you have that the threat of war will not arise again during further negotiations with any of the neighboring Arab countries...? My friends of the Alignment, do not make the same mis-

take you made before the elections and before the Yom Kippur War. You said that we were pessimists and always predicted the worst...but I say that it is better to be pessimistic than to risk another Yom Kippur War, heaven forfend.

The Syrians managed to turn an unequivocal military defeat into a tremendous political victory over the Zionist state. They know that they have broken the national consensus about not abandoning the border created by the Six Day War...and they hope that the spirit of the settlers in the Golan Heights will be broken. But they are wrong. They will not break the spirit of the pioneering settlers of Israel, from every political stream, although the danger exists....The Government of Israel has paid a heavy price for the temporary respite. The Agreement before us does not bring peace with Syria closer, for Assad does not want peace.... He wants the IDF and the settlements off the Golan Heights. He wants to help in achieving the rights of the Palestinian people....Would that I were wrong, but it is my belief that this Agreement will bring us harm, now and in the future, and we will therefore oppose it.

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Z. Warhaftig (National Religious Front): Mr. Speaker, my teachers, the Prime Minister concluded her speech with words of farewell and I would like to begin mine by expressing my appreciation and admiration for her. I have served as a Minister under her leadership and esteem her dedication and responsibility to the State of Israel and its people.

The Agreement before us had long and difficult birth pangs. The Secretary of State of the leading world Power has been travelling back and forth between Jerusalem and Damascus for 33 days, something unprecedented in diplomatic history....We are full of admiration for Dr. Henry Kissinger and his achievements....The Agreement, which was to have been a virtual copy of the agreement between us and Egypt, is tougher and less convincing as regards the intentions of the other side. Although it is not my intention to point out its weak points, I will merely note some of its positive and less positive aspects. First, I welcome the fact that the Agreement seeks to restore normal life to the Israel-Syria border. Normalization, albeit partial, is beneficial in maintaining tranquillity and constitutes a step towards peace...each side gaining from the absence of hostilities....

On the Egypt-Israel border, too, normalization, or the start of the normalization of the return to civilian life, is one of the most important features of the Agreement. The return of the refugees to the towns along the Suez Canal and the rehabilitation of these towns constitutes a guarantee of sorts of the Egyptians' intentions of going towards peace. It is true that the return of refugees to Kuneitra and villages on the border also contains an element of danger and the possibility of terrorism...but the intention behind it cannot be solely belligerent....The two disengagement agreements will, I hope, reinforce one another....

Secondly...with all our reservations, based on past experience, about the efficacy of U.N. forces...they do have some value in preventing clashes and hostilities on a larger scale....They also provide warning of surprise attacks...and after our experience in the Yom Kippur War we are able to appreciate the value of that....The U.N. forces are also able to indicate clearly which side is the aggressor and has violated the ceasefire and disengagement agreement....This is no light matter in our day and age, and has extensive political and military repercussions....We have no intention of attacking....

Syria's refusal to include a section about preventing terrorist activities from its territory, paralleling the section in the agreement with Egypt, is suspect and requires us to be on our guard...though the U.S. undertaking to provide political support for our right to protect ourselves against terrorists is encouraging....

My heart goes out to the settlers, those heroes of the nation, who have given the best years of their youth to settling our land....Many of them have large families, and their children have grown up in the shelters. I share their anxiety. I am sure that we all esteem their sacred work and will preserve their and our right to maintain their settlements and, above all, their daily safety...for they are the emissaries of us all. We must be firmly resolved to engage in no further negotiations for a partial arrangement with Syria, except for a peace agreement.

My party group participated via its representative in the Government in the negotiations and formulation of the Agreement. We will vote for it while being aware of both its dangers and its potential. We must beware of complacency and of overreliance on a friendly country...adhering to the precept: if I am not for myself, who is for me. We must do everything we can to maintain a regime of defense, responsibility and friendship between people, as well as focusing our inner economic, cultural and spiritual forces on taking a firm and independent stand....We must all put our shoulders to the wheel in fulfilling the great missions ahead of us...."May God make his face to shine upon you and give you peace."

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Y. Sha'ari (Independent Liberals): Mr. Speaker, distinguished Knesset, today we have to choose between continuing the process of endless wars deriving from the lengthy Israel-Arab conflict and cultivating the process of political agreements which began with the Geneva Conference and the disengagement of forces with Egypt and has been continued in the Disengagement Agreement with Syria, Israel's most intransigent enemy....Both paths involve dangers. We had no alternative but to take the dangerous path of war, but if there is a chance of a shift we should try the path of political agreements which could bring us nearer

to peace, even though what is involved is a step towards peace, not an unequivocal act of peace, and even if we do not always attain everything we wanted.

MK Rimalt has criticized the Agreement with Syria attained with the help of Dr. Kissinger's unfailing efforts. The Likud always wants better terms and is sure that it could get them....It is true that this Agreement, as is always the case, is the outcome of compromises and mutual concessions. When it is evaluated as a whole...taking into account our relations with our neighbors and the U.S...it will be seen that, despite a few disadvantages, it is positive and constitutes a step towards bringing quiet to the region and settling the conflict.

The Agreement has several positive aspects...guaranteeing us tranquillity in the north and the cessation of the daily bloodshed there....The thinning of the forces, determination of the buffer zone and the placing there of a U.N. force will prevent a surprise attack like the one which began the Yom Kippur War. The Agreement will bring our prisoners of war home, and our acceptance of a new border will not endanger our defense and the reason for our presence in the Golan Heights, namely, ensuring the security of Galilee and the north....

The Likud always maintains that there should be a better border and that we must not move from the border established in the Six Day War....It is true that in strategic and military terms there is always a better border...but even when we had good borders we discovered that there was always something better....Topography is important, but it is only part of the security problem, for there must also be readiness to maintain the ceasefire. The weapons in our possession are important too. That is why the Disengagement Agreement with Egypt, which was criticized so vehemently by the Likud, has endured, and I am sure that all sections of the population are pleased with it....

The concessions we have made on the Syrian border involve a certain risk, but also give Syria motivation for maintaining the peace, following a similar pattern to that of Egypt's return to normal civilian life in the towns along the Suez Canal....The Six Day War border is not sacred and Kuneitra is not the heritage of our forefathers. The object of our being and remaining on the Golan Heights is to defend the north of the country and the sources of water....

More important than the political and general implications of the Disengagement Agreement with Syria is the fact that this does not stand alone in our political and security landscape....It constitutes the continuation of the process which began with the disengagement with Egypt and improves our situation in the region and the world. It will contribute to strengthening and stabilizing the Agreement with Egypt... and there is a feeling that Egypt wants to concentrate on building up its country, preferring political arrangements to another war...but is uncomfortable being alone in having reached an agreement with us....

The Agreement makes it possible for us to attain closer cooperation with the U.S. and receive increased aid from it, enhancing the "entente cordiale" between our two countries...which is a cornerstone of our policy....Our security is dependent on our receiving additional arms, not only on establishing new settlements....We should be glad that the influence of the U.S.S.R. in the region is on the decline while that of the U.S. is increasing. The Agreement is important to the U.S. as regards both the supply of fuel and the relations between the two Powers, and in my view, if the U.S. is strong, we are too....No one can guarantee how long the Agreement will last or whether it will be a step towards peace or not...but I hope that we will benefit from the period of peace, utilizing it to reorganize the IDF as well as to review our internal political, economic and social situation. A great many problems need to be dealt with....

I am not ignoring the grave problem of terrorism, which may well increase with the quiet on the northern and southern borders, because the Palestinian organizations will want to disrupt the peace....We will have to respond firmly to every terrorist attack, and have always made it clear that we regard the governments of the countries from which attacks are launched as being responsible for them....

In choosing between the process of ongoing war and that of political settlements we must choose the second course. Both involve dangers... but the promise of the latter is greater than the threat of the former....We cannot always be forced into decisions because of the threat of war.... The price we are being asked to pay for this Agreement is worthwhile.... It is the last act of the outgoing Government and Prime Minister...and I regard it as a valuable achievement and a chance for the future. I am sure that the nation will appreciate the efforts of the Government and the U.S. Secretary of State. To quote an important philosopher: "Peace does not always progress along a straight line, but sometimes goes in zigzags." Before us now lies the possibility of progress, unity and increased strength, and we will do better by taking that path with the Disengagement Agreement than without it. Let us take advantage of this opportunity.

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T. Toubi (Rakah): Distinguished Speaker and Knesset, my party group, together with all those who desire peace, welcomes the Disengagement Agreement between Israel and Syria as a step towards the desired aim of a just and stable peace between Israel and the Arab countries, assuring the just rights of all the countries and peoples of our region, including Israel and the Palestinian Arab people. We congratulate the Israeli and Arab prisoners of war on their return to their families as a result of this Agreement and share in the joy of the families....We welcome the return of the Syrian refugees to their villages, towns, land and homes and hope that from here we will march rapidly to a just and stable peace

agreement which will put a permanent end to bloodshed...and bring liberty, justice and peace to all the nations of the region.

The importance of this Agreement in the history of Israel-Arab relations...will be determined not by any particular detail, however important, but by the fact that it is a genuine step towards a just and lasting peace, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 338....The Likud is resorting to cheap and unfounded demagoguery in maintaining that Syria's objective is to destroy Israel. Everyone knows that Syria, Egypt and other Arab countries seek to attain a peace agreement with Israel based on the full implementation of the Security Council resolution.

Y. Moda'i (Likud): Assad mentioned Galilee.

T. Toubi (Rakah): Because of our aspiration to move from a disengagement agreement to a just and stable peace agreement, we issue a warning against tendencies and influences within the Government of Israel...which seek to turn the disengagement agreements into a new status quo, assuring Israel's continued occupation of the Sinai, the Golan Heights, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and perpetuating the disregard for the just rights of the Palestinian Arab people.

The statement made by the Minister of Defense on television last week to the effect that he assumes that this Agreement with Syria will be the last was a provocation calculated to foil the Agreement....Anyone who is interested in peace...must act to revive the Geneva Conference, so that there may be a just and stable peace in the region....The Likud, which irresponsibly opposes the Disengagement Agreement because it opposes peace, is trying to alarm the public by saying that the Syrians are already demanding Israel's withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Y. Moda'i (Likud): Isn't that true?

T. Toubi (Rakah): It's true, but who did not know in Israel, before signing the Agreement and during the negotiations, that not only the Arab countries but also the U.N. and the whole world demanded Israel's withdrawal from all the territories occupied in the June 1967 war, in accordance with the Security Council resolution, and the assurance of the just rights of the Palestinian Arab people, as the basis for a just and stable peace which would guarantee the rights, sovereignty and territorial integrity of an Israel without annexation?

We appeal to the new Government which is about to be formed, to all the realists in the leadership of the Labor party...to realize that anyone who is earnest in his pursuit of peace with the Arab countries must say openly that we must withdraw from all the Arab lands which have been occupied since June 1967 and recognize the just rights of the Palestinian Arab people. Stop avoiding the issue and arguing about this hill or that. It is an illusion to think that Israel can attain peace while gaining territory...as has been proved by the October War....If the leaders of the

Alignment do not take a firm stand they will be aiding and abetting the Likud's rise to power...preventing Israel from attaining peace and bringing the country nearer to the next war....

The Disengagement Agreements are not the end of the process. It is necessary to dismantle the mines on the road to peace: the illusions of annexation and new plans for settlements in the Sinai, the Golan Heights and the West Bank. It is necessary to shake off the Galili documents and other obstacles to peace. It is necessary to tell the nation openly that there is no alternative to withdrawal and courageous participation in the Geneva Conference, with all that it implies. Every other path leads to war and destruction....

There are those who would give all the credit for the new opening to peace to Kissinger's magic touch. Nothing is further from the truth. The U.S. Secretary of State's activities should not be ignored, but Kissinger and Nixon existed beforehand too. They acted to perpetuate the crisis in the region, seeking to further American imperialist ends through Israel's policy of force. The failure of that policy, as revealed by the October War, forced the U.S. leaders to change their approach, but not their objective. It is not the American imperialists who have brought peace but the aspirations of nations to implement the Security Council resolutions....

Israel must not continue to labor under the delusion that American imperialism is a firm and omnipotent support. Why should Israel's acceptance of the decision of the world be exploited for its own ends by American imperialism...? Israel would be better advised to deal directly with the Arab countries at Geneva...as it will have to do sooner or later....It is time all those with any political realism stopped attacking the U.S.S.R. and distorting its true role in the quest for peace and the rights of all the peoples of the region, including Israel. The U.S.S.R. played an important role in attaining the Agreement with Syria...and opening the path to peace....It is therefore in the interests of Israel and all the nations of the region that the U.S.S.R. should be involved in all the efforts to attain a just and stable peace....My party group will support the Agreement....

The Minister of Defense, M. Dayan: Mr. Speaker, Knesset Members...on the subject of the disengagement of forces...there is almost complete agreement throughout the House...even though there is hardly anyone—at least not in the Government nor, I imagine, in the Likud—who believes that Syria has abandoned its aspiration to remove us from the Golan Heights....There is also a basic accord between the Government and the Likud regarding the need for this Agreement...though there is no foundation for the Likud's contention that we have relinquished our most important card for attaining peace, since no one in this House, least of all the Likud, thought of linking the Agreement with a peace accord....

I am prepared to concede that the Likud honestly believed that within the framework of this Agreement, which not only makes no mention of peace but does not even serve to end the state of belligerency, the release of the Jews of Syria could be secured. Although efforts were made in that direction, that could not be achieved within this framework. Possibly the negotiations were conducted unsuccessfully...though I personally doubt whether more could have been achieved....I am sure that it will be easier to obtain the release of the Syrian Jews under conditions of tranquillity than of war....

There were also no differences between the two principal parties in this House regarding the necessity of entering into negotiations with Syria. I don't know whether the Likud accepts our position of negotiations without prior conditions, but negotiations with conditions and restrictions are meaningless....It indicates either ignorance or disingenuousness if one expects the other side to accept one's terms without any give and take....Naturally, the border we drew in our initial proposal is not the one of the Agreement, though to speak of our abandoning strategic positions, as MK Rimalt did today, is quite ridiculous....Furthermore, the return of the civilian population to Kuneitra and the villages of the enclave—as was the case with the resettlement of the towns along the Suez Canal—promotes peace, facilitates a dialogue at a future date...and constitutes no more of a strategic threat to Israel's existence...than does the withdrawal of our troops to a line which is ten, twenty or even thirty miles further back....

To be more precise...there has been a basic change in the Arab attitude, not the Israeli one....Until the Yom Kippur War Egypt was not prepared to negotiate with us in any way, did not want to get the Suez Canal working and was not ready to make any interim arrangement whatsoever without our undertaking in advance to withdraw from the whole of the Sinai and return to the 1967 border....With Syria there were no contacts of any kind beforehand.

In my view, the main question regarding Syria prior to the negotiations with it was whether the Disengagement Agreement would not be made contingent on a timetable involving further withdrawals on our part. That had always been Syria's position in the past, and it was relinquished within the framework of this Agreement....

We have had four wars with the Arabs, and only at the conclusion of two of them—this one and the War of Independence—did we reach an agreement with them....I believe that the two principal elements—our withdrawal from the enclave and our granting permission for the Syrian refugees to return to their homes, as well as our withdrawal from the Suez Canal—are constructive. Not only are they worth the price we have paid for them, they augur well for the future....No one can claim that the enclave is part of our ancient national heritage...and I see no point in our remaining 30 miles outside Damascus, whereas there is a point in

the disengagement of forces...however imperfect and temporary this may be....

There are three points which are not in the Agreement. First of all, regarding the terrorists, it is not only Israel's position that the transition or implementation of terrorism from the Syrian border negates the Disengagement Agreement, and if someone does this it constitutes a violation....The Agreement with Syria, unlike that with Egypt, does not include a clause stating that neither side will place weapons within firing range of the other. This would have been desirable, but could not be attained....Nonetheless, some diminution of the forces on either side of the border was achieved....

As regards the future...there is one thing that depends on the Syrians. I imagine that we are all agreed that they have not abandoned their desire to regain the Golan Heights. But if they wanted to renew hostilities immediately they would not have made an Agreement, indicating that it has a certain lifetime....The return of the civilian population to its homes, provided this does not lead to the settlement of terrorists there, could well contribute to maintaining tranquillity on the border for an extended period of time....The agreement with Syria may have a positive effect on the agreement with Egypt. At any event, its absence would have had an adverse effect....

There is, however, a very serious problem with the terrorists operating from Lebanon....Those activities may cease or be weakened, on the other hand they may increase...eventually inflaming the Syrian border....That cannot be ignored. This brings me to my last point, our relations with the U.S. I would like to make it perfectly clear...that the Secretary of State, Dr. Kissinger, did not use threats or pressure or attempt to extort things from us for the benefit of the U.S., neither in the Agreement and negotiations with Egypt nor in those with Syria....

As far as I can see there are two fundamental trends going on around us at present. One of them, which is very negative, is the Arab trend. Even now, after having obtained an Agreement, I don't think that the Arab trend of a military and political campaign against Israel has come to an end....This involves Egypt's struggle to obtain all of the Sinai, Syria's to regain the Golan Heights, Jordan's to get the West Bank, and that of the Palestinians and the terrorists. That trend exists actively in all those countries, backed by a great deal of economic, political and military strength. We are living in that process of warlike initiative—as exemplified by the Yom Kippur War—and which is aided and abetted by the U.S.S.R....We must be fully aware of that and all that it implies....The second trend is that of the U.S.'s policy of improving its position in the Middle East and getting closer to the Arab countries.

In my view, what we should do is try to avert a rift with the U.S. In order to be able to combat whatever the Arab countries have in store for us we must attain maximal understanding with the U.S. in terms of po-

litical, economic and military aid...bearing in mind the two trends I have mentioned....I would like to conclude by saying that in these two Agreements I believe that Dr. Kissinger has found the golden path of a constructive compromise...between the interests of Egypt and Syria, of America and of Israel in terms of the disengagement of forces. I think that this Agreement is good in and of itself...and I hope that the Knesset will give it its approval.

...

S. Aloni (Citizens' Rights Movement): Distinguished Speaker and Knesset, there are no differences of opinion in the House regarding the fact that we disagree. Nevertheless, we all share a common aim: the welfare and security of this country....But if the Knesset Members think that civil rights constitute inviting demonstrators to the House to shout, cheer, disturb and interrupt the Government in conveying information required for the debate, that is very far from the truth.... Those who violate the law must be tried and punished....

It has been said here that an attempt is being made by the Government to mislead the public as regards the Disengagement Agreement with Syria....Who is misleading the public, I wonder? How can one tell the public that we are giving in, that we are withdrawing in the north and the south? Was the IDF ever an army of conquest? Was it not established and educated to be an army of defense...? The object of the recent war and conquest in Syria was not so that we could remain in the enclave....We embarked on this terrible war knowing that the military campaign would be followed by a political one....That has now begun. For thirty days and nights people have sat and worked in order to achieve an agreement, so that the bloodshed in the north might cease.... But you do not say what the alternative to an agreement would be.... Would you want us to be at war once more...?

The present Agreement may not be very long-lived. But there is no doubt that it represents the first attempt to take a different course. The initial attempt has been made to divert the focus from the Syrian arena, which is an arena of blood, to that of the conference chambers of Geneva....The people who took that course, responsibly and dedicatedly, are to be congratulated. We hope that the Agreement will endure. It is unfair to say—as the demonstrators outside have done—what did our children die for? The IDF's policy is to fight on the enemy's territory. Are we going to make every inch of enemy territory sacred and settle there? Is every attempt at a dialogue a withdrawal...?

It can be claimed that you would have conducted the negotiations and reached the Agreement differently....But it cannot be claimed that this means that everything is going to be returned...and that it is merely a matter of time until we give up Jerusalem....I think we should give one another more credit than that and realize that no steps are taken in an unconsidered way....I think that the Agreement before us,

taking the general situation and the alternatives into account, is to be welcomed....We will vote with the Government.

...

The Foreign Minister, A. Eban: Mr. Speaker, Knesset Members, there are only four months between the Agreement signed with Egypt and the one due to be signed with Syria tomorrow. There are points of departure between them as regards their conditions and circumstances, but upon hearing the anxious cries of the Likud we may recall its earlier anxiety. What was not said about the dreadful fate which awaited us as a result of the Egyptian Agreement? I quote: "The reduction of our security." "Beware lest you bring additional disaster on the nation." "Our enemies and their mighty supporters have conspired against us and you intend to deprive our children of their homeland."...

I am not saying that the existence of the Disengagement Agreement with Egypt...is a hard and fast guarantee for the future, but the experience of the past four months...is not negligible. I doubt that there are many inhabitants of Israel who regret that Agreement today, even though it was castigated so vehemently in this House and the media. That Agreement did indeed embody a risk of being violated, but it also offered a hope of tranquillity....The Government invested something in the hope, in full awareness of the hazard. It was not a blind investment. We refused to compromise to the extent of endangering our security. We insisted on instructions, balances, reductions and political support in order to ensure that even if the Agreement was violated the security of the state would not be impaired....

I am not making any commitment as regards the future, but four months of quiet on the Egyptian front can create an additional dynamic regarding the next four months. At all events, it has been proved that the disaster which the Likud prophesied does not necessarily have to come to pass. I am not proposing that this young precedent should be regarded as annulling all the apprehensions voiced by the Likud, but it should encourage a certain restraint in expressing them with regard to the Agreement with Syria....What you should have done was ask yourselves whether the situation created by accepting the Agreement would be preferable to that created by turning it down. In other words, what is the practical alternative you are proposing? What is the sole real alternative? Our remaining on the eastern line of the enclave accompanied by a continual war of attrition, daily casualties, the constant threat of war with the possibility of the increased involvement of a hostile Power, the continued captivity of our prisoners of war...the inability to deal with any other aspect of the system, dialogue and coexistence, the continued bombardment of our settlements and the omission of an opportunity to strengthen our ties with the U.S....

How is it possible to speak of the dangers of the Agreement while ignoring the greater risks of refusing to approve it? The Government went

into these negotiations with its eyes open. I recall that in the initial stages our doubts were greater than our hopes, but we would have been failing in our responsibility had we not made the effort. We decided to try, asking the U.S. Secretary of State to use the good offices of his country, in addition to his own outstanding ability....How then can his coming here be described as that of someone who sought to impose his will on us? The effort began on April 28. After that the sequence of events is known. It is known in general by the House, and in detail by the members of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. And now the Agreement is before us, after having been approved unanimously by the Government, which is no light matter. Tomorrow the Agreement is to be signed, and the day after that the prisoners of war will begin arriving. By the end of the week they should all be here. Within twenty days the fresh disposition of forces along the new border should be completed and there will be a new balance of arms. We are not guaranteeing that the Agreement will be kept, and certainly not that peace will be attained. But none of the dangers you have listed will exist....

There is nothing easier than to look at the map and reach the simple conclusion that all the advantage is now Syria's, since the aims of Israel and Syria were not identical or even symmetrical. Syria's objectives in the negotiations were solely territorial, while Israel's were not, since the IDF's victory in the war of October 1973 ensured that the areas to be negotiated would be those of Syria and not of the Land of Israel. Kuneitra came into our hands not because of our desire to attach it to Jewish history but because of our defensive action in 1967.

The Zionist drama was never supposed to take place in those parts of the country. Our criterion regarding them is perfectly simple: what our defense needs demand and prohibit. Woe betide us if there ever were negotiations which did not refer to Arab lands. Consequently, it was clear from the outset that in any negotiations on the disengagement of forces only Syria would expand its territorial control, not Israel...and that the advantages sought by Israel would be in another sphere....We sought tranquillity instead of a war of attrition; we sought an end to the hostilities and the casualties; we sought to prevent a surprise attack rather than all-out war; we sought the release of the prisoners of war and the return of the bodies of the fallen; we sought the reinforcement of the chance that the atmosphere of an agreement would give us to struggle with greater success and with the support of a world Power for the redemption of Syrian Jewry. We saw that there was a chance of strengthening the influence of a friendly Power and weakening the monopoly of a hostile one. We sought the removal of a stumbling block to any continuation of a dialogue; we sought the reinforcement of the Agreement with Egypt by advancing the impetus of rapprochement; we sought the assurance of our overall security in the long and short term by the additional strengthening of our ties with the U.S. In other words, we sought

advantages in the area of general security as well as in the political and personal spheres. None of these advantages appear on the geographical map, but they are deeply engraved in the map of future history.

Some of these objectives have been guaranteed. Others have a chance....But that chance would not be fulfilled were it not for the Agreement. I sense a feeling of relief throughout the country, and the gloom of the Likud's representatives in the House does not represent the general mood....What makes matters worse is the Likud's inconsistency in adhering blindly to the arbitrary borders of the Six Day War, countenancing our withdrawal to a line 20 miles back, but regarding a withdrawal of 22 miles as endangering Israel's security....

I call on the Knesset to refrain from supporting the totally unfounded claim that Israel's security is endangered....We have enhanced Israel's security by signing this Agreement without imperiling our settlements...and have maintained a realistic view of its limitations....In that the Government is united, and the majority of the Knesset and the nation is behind it, realizing that we have gone forward, not backward, to the chance of dialogue and coexistence. Even if the Agreement is violated, we will be able to prevent this from harming us.

All those who participated in the negotiations were inspired by the example of the Prime Minister, and had the highest appreciation for her ability to decide. For that is the essence of leadership: deciding between real alternatives rather than between reality and vision. We must thank our lucky stars, or rather our historical justice, which has enabled us to bring this Agreement to fruition during the term of the outgoing Government, the Government of recovery, of victory, rapprochement and dialogue....I reject the claim that Syrian Jewry has been abandoned. Is the chance of saving them greater in an atmosphere of peace or in one of tension as a result of the failure of the negotiations?

In conclusion, I hope I may be allowed to share with the House some thoughts about the political horizons opened up by this Agreement. MK Rimalt cast aspersions on the very concept of interim agreements which involve an element of withdrawal in exchange for situations which do not constitute peace....The Government, in its experience and responsibility, thinks that there was no alternative to taking this course. In effect, this debate has been about the basic concept of interim agreements. At the Geneva Conference all the participants agreed to give priority to negotiations on disengagement agreements. For the last five months we have been acting in accordance with that national and international decision. What are the alternatives before us? There are only three: negotiating for an overall peace, perpetuating the current situation until peace is attained, or making interim agreements which constitute a partial thawing of the conflict....Does anyone think there is a realistic chance that Syria will agree to make peace with us...? As far as perpetuating the existing situation is concerned, I regard it as my bound duty

to issue a repeated warning against the dangerous illusion that it is possible to maintain a stable ceasefire in that kind of situation, without continual political activity of the kind we have been engaged in since December....As I told the Knesset a year ago, our policy must be designed to thaw the situation, not perpetuate it....That is the only way to progress towards gradually eroding the hostility towards us and erecting the building of peace....

The perpetuation of the political situation inevitably leads to the renewal of war. That is why the action taken by the Government this month is not an isolated step and should not be viewed separately from the overall political situation caused by the times and the circumstances. That is the logic, one which has been tried and tested, which will guide our representatives at the signing ceremony in Geneva tomorrow. It is the right step at the right time and in the right direction. And it is in that spirit that we will welcome our prisoners of war and bow our heads before the coffins of our fallen as they return home. I therefore appeal to every citizen, even if he is consumed by doubt, to trust the hope embodied in our work of the past month, the hope of escaping from the vicious circle of tension and hostility. The road is hard, but it is one which starts with rapprochement and may well end in peace.

...

A. Yaffe (Alignment): Mr. Speaker, distinguished Knesset, on behalf of the Alignment, National Religious Front, Independent Liberals and Citizens' Rights Movement party groups, I propose the following concluding resolution:

The Knesset endorses the Separation of Forces Agreement between Israel and Syria, as brought before the Knesset by the Prime Minister today, 30 May 1974.

The Vote

Those in favor	76
Those against	36
Abstentions	3

(MK A. Jaffe's concluding resolution is adopted.)