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The following statement of Kenneth J. Bialkin, President of the America-Israel Friendship League, was released on July 24, 2007:

On July 16, President Bush issued a formal statement outlining his plans to seek to promote a process which will lead to a two-state solution. The President reiterated the policies he previously articulated reflecting the possibilities of peace between Israel and the Palestinians and the steps which must be taken. One must wonder why he selected this precise time to issue such a broad restatement of policy, a time when there is a festering civil war in the Palestinian Authority and when no one can truly believe that the Palestinians are presently able to pull together a government which can provide a unified leadership to the Palestinian people, establish law and order and fulfill the basic requirements necessary to justify their recognition as a sovereign state. Yet the President is not entirely wrong in setting out the steps necessary to permit the Palestinian people to enter into a credible process which might lead them to statehood. He is advocating what may be a last clear chance for the Palestinians to develop a sense of the reality of their position and he is offering financial and international support which might be taken up in this new period of stark reality. The President is also offering the support of the United States and the international community for a program of aid which could permit the restarting of economic growth in the Palestinian economy. In a sense, he is inviting the Palestinians to seize the opportunity to prevent their economy and society from further degeneration. He is challenging them to take up the challenge. Beyond that, he has apparently secured the agreement of Israel to do what it can to lessen some of the burdens and obstacles to living faced by the Palestinians. Israel is limited in what it can or should do - both because of the political mood of the people of Israel who will reject any significant concessions without first obtaining satisfactory assurances regarding the control of terror and violence against Israel, as well as the fact that Gaza is now an armed-camp and growing more so daily, and Hezbollah on the northern border with Lebanon is also an ever present threat of renewal of hostilities. Poets like to say that it is always darkest before the dawn, and it will require the vision of a poet to expect early results from the opportunity that the President's new program might present. Nevertheless, the President deserves credit for reconfirming the essential elements of his two-state policies and for initiating the prospect of large-scale international cooperation to provide for social and economic programs which hold out the promise of positive developments in Palestinian society. It remains to be seen whether the Palestinians will conform to the observation of former Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban that "the Palestinians have never lost an opportunity to lose an opportunity."

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