

Speaker: Caspi visited Eugene to inform Jewish communities about Israel



ZANE RITT | PHOTOGRAPHER

Deputy Consul General Omer Caspi speaks at Oregon Hillel about the future prospects of peace between Israel and Palestine.

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he said he titled "Beyond Disengagement" because the disengagement, or pullout of West Bank and Gaza, "is all over by now."

The threats to peace extend beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Caspi said, and include Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia, from which a missile would take only one to 15 minutes to reach Israel. Because their militaries are larger and more powerful in almost every way, he said, peace treaties are the only way to survive.

As for the Palestinians, Caspi said there's no way terror and peace can coexist after the disengagement, which was Israel's contribution to the peace process.

Caspi cited the 8,700 Israelis who left their homes in Gaza and the northern West Bank.

"We had to pay this price," he said, "and again, we hope it will land both sides back at the table to discuss the peace agreements."

"Since there wasn't any partner on the other side ... we decided to

leave now and put the ball in the Palestinian court."

Caspi said Palestinian President Abu Mazen needs to be a leader of his newly acquired land.

"What we fail to see is leadership on the other side. We fail to see a partner on the other side," he said.

Caspi visited Eugene for his first time to bring news of Israel to Jewish communities. His regional coverage includes Northern California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Alaska. He will speak in Corvallis today.

In Jan. 2003, Caspi was appointed to the Israeli Consulate after working as a projects manager in Israel's Global Operations Department, first secretary at the Northeast Asia Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and second secretary for the Israeli Embassy's Cultural and Academic Affairs in Beijing, China.

On Tuesday, Caspi said the greatest threat to peace is terrorism, which has claimed more than a thousand Israeli lives since Sept. 2000, 70 percent of whom

were civilian.

The main support of this threat is the Hamas movement, Caspi said. Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah, meaning "Islamic Resistance Movement," is the Palestinian Islamist paramilitary organization trying to spread Islamic theocracy, he said.


Caspi laid out what he called good, bad and ugly scenarios for the future. The good: Palestinian authorities rule. The bad: Anarchy by the terrorists, and the ugly: Hamas rules.

"Soon enough, both sides, us and them, will meet to talk about the peace scenario," Caspi said.

Former University journalism school Dean Arnold Ismach said after the event that he enjoyed the positive message.


"There are opinions all over the land as to what strategies to take," Ismach said, "but he was very positive and I hope he was right."

Contact the campus and federal politics reporter at nwilbur@dailyemerald.com

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