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## Path to peace in Mideast needs more participants

BY JOHN DUKE ANTHONY

**T**he Middle East peace process sits once more at a crossroads, as violence, suicide bombings and Israeli retaliations continue.

The personal hatred between Yasser Arafat and Ariel Sharon continues to widen diplomatic gaps in the region. And recently, the Israeli prime minister's Likud Party voted not to recognize an independent Palestinian state.

As the two sides start to move further away from the path to peace, we must ask ourselves: Isn't the end of the Middle East conflict too important to leave to Israel and the Palestinians to decide by themselves?

Neither the United States, nor the Arab world, nor Israel alone can solve this problem. Only the commitment and involvement of the world's peace-seeking leaders can solve this problem and move toward a

path of peace.

The League of Arab States's 22 member countries recently adopted unanimously Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Abdullah's peace proposal. It is the most far-reaching Arab offer to date.

The United States, Great Britain, Russia, China, France and the European Union have all expressed support for the initiative. In addition, 60 other heads of state and more than half the Israeli population have endorsed the proposal.

The proposal contains everything Israel has asked for, including normalization of diplomatic and commercial ties with the Jewish state, pan-Arab recognition of Israel, and a guarantee of regional security in which there would be no attacks against Israel, or by Israel against an Arab country, of any kind.

From an Arab and Islamic world perspective, the question is when will Prime Minister

Sharon take "yes" for an answer?

Rather than accept the unprecedented Arab peace offer, Sharon and his Likud leadership have taken a different strategy — that of discrediting Saudi Arabia.

The Israeli leadership's reluctance to embrace the crown prince's proposal is irresponsible in light of the fact that Saudi Arabia has repeatedly and unequivocally condemned terrorism.

President Bush, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and others among our country's top leaders have repeatedly stated that Saudi Arabia has been and continues to be fully cooperative with the United States' efforts to fight terrorism.

The kingdom's leaders have

repeatedly and forcefully stated that there is no justification for terrorism, no matter what the cause or reasons behind it. The false claims to the contrary of some Americans and Israelis are more than outrageous. They are an incitement to extremists.

**U.S., Arab and Israeli leaders need to stop pointing fingers.**

What Saudi Arabia, the United States and numerous other aid donors are doing in concert is helping Palestinians who are victimized by violence.

Together with U.S. taxpayers, the Saudi government is extending aid with humanitarian institutions, such as the United Nations, the Red Cross, the Red Crescent, and other charitable agencies. The aid includes helping the orphans and widows of those killed and disabled.

The assistance extends food and shelter to those who have

lost family members and homes. It ensures that clothing and emergency health care services reach those in need. It provides money to restock hospitals and clinics that have no medicines, to rebuild schools, and to restore electricity, water, and communications.

U.S., Arab and Israeli leaders need to stop pointing fingers and searching for scapegoats. In support of peace, they need to focus on the solutions at hand.

To do this, the United States must provide the world with more than a vision. In pursuing the path toward peace, something of immense importance is missing. The world waits for its champion. It is the establishment of a U.S.-led coalition to bring about peace between Arabs and Israelis.

The so-called "Quartet" — a loose grouping of the United States, Russia, the United Nations and the European Union that intends to convene a con-

ference this summer on the issue — is not enough.

A foursome does not come close to constituting the kind of internationally concerted action required to put this conflict to rest.

A coalition ended the Iran-Iraq war. It is what liberated Kuwait. It is what is now routing the remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaida.

A grand orchestra of allies is needed to bring the occupation to an end and the independent State of Palestine into being.

Let's forge that now. Before more innocent blood is shed.

*John Duke Anthony is president of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, a Washington-based nongovernmental organization dedicated to educating Americans and others about United States' interests and involvement in the Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world. It was founded in 1983.*

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