



Negotiating Outside the Law: Why Camp David Failed

Raymond G. Helmick

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'Ray Helmick has conducted unofficial diplomacy in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute for decades working closely with leaders on both sides. The fruit of this work is displayed in this book, an unusually sophisticated analysis of the flaws in peace diplomacy and the importance of real and perceived justice to the sustainability of any agreement. His book is all the more persuasive because he clearly cares deeply about the safety and security of the Jews of Israel but also of the Muslims and Christians of Palestine. It is hard to this book down.' Joseph V. Montville , Diplomat in Residence, American University, Senior Fellow, Center for World Religions, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution, George Mason University, Senior Associate, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC In the summer of 2000, President Clinton, Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat came together to negotiate peace between Israel and Palestine. It was a moment laden with hope, that ended in infamous failure. But why did it fail? The Camp David negotiations made headlines around the world for many months, but the real debates took place behind closed doors. Jesuit priest and longtime peace activist Raymond G. Helmick is one of the few people who remained in contact with what went on. He maintained communication with all parties -- including President Clinton -- throughout. This book is his startling account of the arguments, the relationships and the strategies that played out over the summer of 2000. Based on personal correspondence and position papers with all three leaders, and a long personal association with Yasser Arafat and a whole series of Israeli Prime Ministers dating back to 1985, this book offers a unique account of the real reasons behind the failure of Camp David. Helmick believes that a key factor in this failure was the scant attention given to international law by those involved. He explains the context of the negotiations and subsequent Taba talks, detailing the complex history of Israeli and Palestinian efforts to achieve peace, a process which had already been going on for so long. This includes an assessment of the level of communication that was reached in the Oslo accords, and the struggle for mutual recognition between the two peoples in the aftermath of the Six Day War. Helmick details the recommendations he gave, as a mediator, during the period. Written with empathy for all parties involved, the book does not stop short of drawing serious conclusions. Above all it is a hopeful book: Helmick shows that, despite the renewed violence, people have an enormous capacity to overcome animosity and despair. He analyses the prospects for reconciliation in these difficult times.

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