



## 'VIRTUAL' MIDEAST PEACE AS HARD AS REAL THING

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TEL AVIV, Israel

Are you a world leader? Do you have what it takes to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Are you willing to make bold moves for peace?

In a new interactive game being distributed this week by the independent, Tel Aviv-based [Peres Center for Peace](#), you can do it all. You can bring peace to the Middle East by implementing a two-state solution and on the way visit Oslo, Norway, to pick up your Noble Prize. It's that easy.

As their [political leaders gather in Annapolis, Md., in the latest round of U.S.-led negotiations](#), the new computer game, appropriately called PeaceMaker, grants ordinary Israelis and Palestinians the opportunity to play the role of peace-broker on their own personal computers.

### **Be a peacemaker**

After a short installation, players can choose their preferred language and which leader they want to be. The game gives two options: either Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert or Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

I selected Abbas and a full-frame 3-D map of the region opened up. My goal was to balance the concerns of internal Palestinian factions, as well as the world community, while establishing a true partnership with Israel.

A red flashing circle on the game's map indicates a violent incident. In my game, a spot in the Gaza Strip lights up and I have a (virtual) crisis on my hands: an Israeli tank killed 18 Palestinians. Action is needed immediately.

The game presents players with three options: security, politics and construction. After the incident in Gaza, I click on the security tab and decide to maintain order by boosting the police presence.

My national approval rating immediately falls by a point. But, on the bright side, my world approval is up by three. Oslo, here I come.



Peres Center for Peace

My next step is initiating joint Israeli-Palestinian patrols, which, it is hoped, will build trust between the two sides in the long run. Easier said than done.

I receive a message that the Israelis are turning down this initiative and accusing me of being in league with militant groups. Life is not easy in the fast lane.

I now decide to give a peace speech and choose to deliver a message of "believing in making Gaza an oasis of stability"

Uh-oh! National approval rating is back to its starting point: zero.

### **Goodbye, Nobel**

Another flashing red light appears in the West Bank town of Jenin. It turns out that members of the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade launched an attack on an Israeli tank. My national approval goes up to three points but world approval is down minus 35.

Bye-bye Oslo.

The game goes on with real-life situations and events, making it far more difficult to achieve success than in many of today's popular computer war games, in which gamers' success is determined by how many (virtual) people they kill.

In this interactive game, players -- just like their real-life political counterparts in Annapolis -- wade through the political and security intricacies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict only to find that, when suicide bombers and tanks are involved, there is no easy path to peace.