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IBPP Research Associates: The Mideast

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The following is offered by an Israeli citizen in the context of an electronic dialogue with an IBPP research associate. (Unedited by IBPP with a few exceptions in brackets).

-----Opinion from Israel

As you might hear, we had a very exciting turn of events running here with the elections. On that day, afternoon I went to visit a friend who worked at the control/command room of the Sharon campaign. I stayed there & 'helped' till 10:01!!! Night! When the preliminary [preliminary] results(is it correct?) showed up! Then answered!! Some questions to an ABC!! team there. 11:00 we moved to 'Ganei-Hataarocha' where the main gathering was-also answered more questions for the Jerusalem Post & U.S news!! I felt a little like Netanyahu & other 'likud' members who were being interviewed by CNN..& many other press teams-was fun!!

About the elections:

1. I didn't vote, but let my brother do it for me! Yes, it's possible here! Of course Barak. In Khawalid, far as things were in our hands, Barak got 184 votes out of 215. Sharon 6. Others didn't appear.

2. It was Barak's Failure than being Sharon's Victory. Like everybody-I wasn't surprised! It's silly & unimportant to say, that if the Arabs in Israel would vote, Barak might have win. NO TRUE. Of course not in these elections. The low voting rate of overall Israeli population 62% with absolute bias for Sharon couldn't leave place for much imagination.

3. Remember: [I am] saying that there will be another elections-my blunt guess is within 6 months - in this unstable political situation, and the Knesset reflects that! Politically, it's quite impossible to survive!

4. Assuming Labor party goes to National unity government with Sharon (2 days ago I spoke to Minister Haim Ramon's-one of 3 potential labor future leaders-chief of staff, who is good friend of mine-& he told they don't reject (refuse?) that option at all). Then, that unity might!! survive for longer than I mentioned & peace talks will dramatically proceed forward!

5. Sharon's foreign policy/platform as a Unity prime minister(pm) will look like:

a. Palestinians: will sign pullbacks of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. But in Gaza first-Netzarim for example. As to the heart of the problems-Jerusalem (the Old City,of course!!) I'm optimistic, but never envision a close & final solution to that. Be that any government!! Not easy for both sides. The rest of east jerusalem is already solved & palestinians are the sovereign there!

b. Syria: Sharon will move ahead positively to reach (& maybe sign, depends on the governments long/short life!!) an agreement with the Assad Junior, on the Golan heights. Here's what the solution (seriously might be: -north of the Golan under Syrian control. -southern part (which includes most of the

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Israeli population) under Israeli control. -U.S advanced surveillance system in the Hermon Peaks. also, no doubt that the major conditions for such agreement will be- the whole Golan is disarmed & the agreement is an interim one: say, let's try it for x years, if all is fine, then a final (painfull for Israel, though), accords are practical. -based 242 UN resolution.

c. Lebanon: may start peace talks with Lebanon which may be a very Dramatic Step for Sharon!! but again, assuming he has a wide background!

6. remember: all of the above is to happen only if : a. Sharon succeeds to present his staff! then ratify? the Budget for next year. b. the unprecedented (correct?) Islamic fanatics' threats & maybe extremists in the right wings won't interfere!!

anyway...as we say: DAYS WILL TELL!! (Keywords: Barak, Israel, Lebanon, Palestinian National Authority, Sharon, Syria.)