



Ori Nir – Americans for Peace Now, Director of Communications and Public Engagement

On the night of November 4, 1995, I received a call from the news desk editor at Israel's Haaretz newspaper. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had been shot, he told me, we need reactions from Palestinian officials. I was Haaretz's Palestinian affairs correspondent at the time. I was on the phone with Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat when I heard on Israel Radio that Rabin's spokesman was about to make a statement. As Eitan Haber hushed the crowd, I started translating for Erekat: "The government of Israel announces in dismay, in great sadness, and in deep sorrow, the death of Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin, who was murdered by an assassin, tonight in Tel Aviv."

I was crying, and I heard Saeb's voice cracking as well. I had known him for many years, since he was the editorial writer of al-Quds, the popular Palestinian daily, and used to brief Israeli reporters on Palestinian politics while smoking on the steps of al-Quds' East Jerusalem office. Over the years, we laughed a lot together. I never imagined us crying together.

We cried because of the shock, but also because we realized that this was a seminal moment, that the bullets that killed Rabin were aimed at peace, and that they may very well kill prospects for peace. Crying together was an expression of the bond, the partnership, between pro-peace Israelis and Palestinians.

At that moment and during the days that followed, there was a strong sense of alliance, a sense of a common cause, between moderate Israelis and moderate Palestinians, a conviction that together we must fight the enemies of peace, the zealots on both sides. That conviction has obviously eroded in the past two decades, but I still strongly believe that together, Israelis and Palestinians can overcome the extremists in their midst and work jointly for a future that will allow them to live side by side in their own sovereign states, in security, prosperity and peace.