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Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

Israel to release 400 prisoners

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30 May, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Israel to release 400 prisoners

BNE: Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his cabinet have approved the long-awaited release of 400 Palestinian prisoners. This latest batch is the second major freeing, following the 500 detainees who were set free in February. It is in accordance to an agreement with Palestinian Authority leader President Mahmoud Abbas as part of a ceasefire deal. Hesitant government ministers delayed the latest release until they were more certain of Mr. Abbas's implementation of his assurances to crack down on Palestinian militants. The cabinet decided no prisoner directly involved in the death of Israelis would be released. Further, a clause that stipulated only prisoners who had served two-thirds of their sentence should be released may be relaxed this time round.

Mr. Sharon warned his government before the cabinet voted that it was essential for Israel to fulfill its obligations to the new Palestinian Authority. He said it was vital to strengthen Mr. Mahmoud's position ahead of upcoming Palestinian elections on July 17. Israel is concerned that more militant groups such as Hamas, an organization branded as terrorists by the U.S. and the European Union, might win power and derail the Middle East peace process. Mr. Sharon urged his people to understand that this release and the August withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza will "not strengthen the forces of extremist terrorism". He said it is necessary "to strengthen the principal moderate element in the Palestinian Authority and honor our commitments".

WARM-UPS

1. INFO SEARCH: Talk to different partners and find out all you know about Israeli-Palestinian relations. Get information on the people, the history and the current political situation. After you have finished gathering information, sit with your partner / group. Tell each other what you found out. Was this activity difficult? Did you learn new things about the world?

2. ISRAEL: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Israel. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them.

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Ariel Sharon / Mahmoud Abbas / Palestinian prisoners / the Middle East /
ceasefires / militants / Palestine / Hamas / Gaza / Middle East peace process /
extremist terrorism*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. 2-MINUTE DEBATES: With a partner, engage in these fun 2-minute debates. Students A firmly believe in the opinions on the left, Students B support the opinions on the right. Change partners often.

- a. Prisoners should never be released early. vs. If it helps the peace process, it's OK.
- b. Israel is releasing terrorists. vs. Israel is releasing people who want their own country.
- c. Peace will never come to the Middle East. vs. Even the longest of conflicts always end in peace.
- d. Palestinians are terrorists. vs. Palestinians are fighting for their own country.
- e. The United Nations should solve the Middle East problem. vs. The situation in the Middle East is too difficult for the United Nations.
- f. Israel should withdraw from the Gaza Strip and West Bank. vs. It's Israeli land.
- g. Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas should get the Nobel Peace Prize. vs. It's way too early to award peace prizes.
- h. The Middle East is the most dangerous place in the world. vs. I disagree.
- i. Hamas is a liberation movement. vs. Hamas is a terrorist organization.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Israel will release 400 Palestinian prisoners. | T / F |
| b. In February, Israel released 500 Palestinian prisoners. | T / F |
| c. No prisoner involved in the death of Israelis will be released. | T / F |
| d. All prisoners who have served 80% of their sentence will be released. | T / F |
| e. Ariel Sharon wants to strengthen the position of Mahmoud Abbas. | T / F |
| f. Israel will hold elections on July 17. | T / F |
| g. Hamas is a group well liked by the U.S. and European Union. | T / F |
| h. Israel will withdraw from the Gaza Strip in August. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| a. release | truce |
| b. batch | middle-of-the-road |
| c. detainees | paramount |
| d. ceasefire | emancipation |
| e. stipulated | cardinal |
| f. essential | prisoners |
| g. branded | disengagement |
| h. withdrawal | specified |
| i. principal | labeled |
| j. moderate | bunch |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. the long- | peace process |
| b. set | down on Palestinian militants |
| c. in accordance to | free |
| d. crack | that stipulated ... |
| e. a clause | upcoming Palestinian elections |
| f. fulfill its | awaited release |
| g. ahead of | element |
| h. branded as | obligations |
| i. derail the Middle East | an agreement |
| j. moderate | terrorists |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the correct spaces.

Israel to release 400 prisoners

BNE: Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his _____ have approved the _____ release of 400 Palestinian prisoners. This latest batch is the second major freeing, following the 500 _____ who were _____ free in February. It is in accordance to an agreement with Palestinian Authority leader President Mahmoud Abbas as part of a ceasefire deal. Hesitant government ministers delayed the latest release until they were more certain of Mr. Abbas's _____ of his assurances to _____ down on Palestinian militants. The cabinet decided no prisoner directly involved in the death of Israelis would be released. Further, a clause that _____ only prisoners who had served two-thirds of their sentence should be released may be _____ this time round.

stipulated
detainees
relaxed
cabinet
crack
implementation
long-awaited
set

Mr. Sharon warned his government before the cabinet voted that it was essential for Israel to _____ its obligations to the new Palestinian Authority. He said it was _____ to strengthen Mr. Mahmoud's position ahead of _____ Palestinian elections on July 17. Israel is concerned that more militant groups such as Hamas, an organization _____ as terrorists by the U.S. and the European Union, might win power and _____ the Middle East peace process. Mr. Sharon urged his people to understand that this release and the August withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza will "not strengthen the forces of _____ terrorism". He said it is necessary "to strengthen the principal moderate _____ in the Palestinian Authority and honor our _____".

commitments
fulfill
branded
vital
element
derail
upcoming
extremist

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'set' and 'free'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words in the gap fill. Which were new, interesting, unusual, difficult...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT MIDDLE EAST SURVEY: In pairs / groups write down questions about the Middle East.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make a mini-presentation to another group / the class on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- approved
- second
- ceasefire
- crack down
- directly
- relaxed
- warned
- vital
- branded
- derail
- forces
- honor

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What did you think the article would be about when you read the headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. Are you interested in what goes on in the Middle East?
- d. What do you know about Ariel Sharon?
- e. Do you think Mr. Sharon is a good man?
- f. Do you think it's OK to release the prisoners?
- g. Do you think releasing the prisoners will move the peace process forward?
- h. Should the U.S. and the European brand Hamas as terrorists?
- i. Will peace win the day in the Middle East?
- j. Would you like to visit Israel?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading the article?
- b. What did you think of this news?
- c. What do you know about the Palestinians?
- d. Do you think the Palestinians should have their own country?
- e. What are the biggest problems between Israel and the Palestinians?
- f. Is the prisoner release a victory for the terrorists?
- g. Is the withdrawal from Gaza a victory for the terrorists?
- h. Should Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas be awarded Nobel Peace Prizes for their efforts?
- i. Will the world be different when Israel and Palestine are at peace?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

PEACEMAKERS: You are the head of a new organization called "International Peacemakers Inc." that resolves conflicts of any kind. It is your job to create a masterplan (in pairs or groups) to bring peace to a current world, national, regional, and even a school or family dispute. Prepare your notes and suggestions in this table:

The dispute is between _____ and _____	
Describe the two sides	
Explain the history of "Side A"	
Explain the history of "Side B"	
What does "Side A" want?	
What does "Side B" want?	
What are your proposals to make the two parties totally happy?	

After you have finished, tell the whole situation and your proposals to a different partner / group. They will provide you with feedback. You comment on that feedback.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Israel to release 400 prisoners

BNE: Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his cabinet have approved the _____ of 400 Palestinian prisoners. This latest batch is the second major freeing, following the 500 detainees who were set free in February. It is _____ with Palestinian Authority leader President Mahmoud Abbas as part of a ceasefire deal. Hesitant government ministers delayed the latest release until they were more certain of Mr. Abbas's implementation of _____ down on Palestinian militants. The cabinet decided no prisoner directly involved in the death of Israelis would be released. Further, a _____ only prisoners who had served two-thirds of their sentence should be released may be relaxed this time round.

Mr. Sharon warned his government before the cabinet voted that it was essential for Israel _____ to the new Palestinian Authority. He said it was vital to strengthen Mr. Mahmoud's position _____ Palestinian elections on July 17. Israel is concerned that more militant groups such as Hamas, an organization _____ the U.S. and the European Union, might _____ the Middle East peace process. Mr. Sharon urged his people to understand that this release and the August withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza will "not strengthen the _____". He said it is necessary "to strengthen the principal moderate element in the Palestinian Authority and honor our commitments".

HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on the Palestinian prisoner release. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.
- 3. THE ROAD MAP:** Write your proposals for an end to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Show them to your classmates in your next lesson.
- 4. LETTER:** Write a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon telling him what you think of the latest round of prisoner releases. Read your letters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did your classmates have similar opinions?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. T c. T d. F e. T f. F g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. release	emancipation
b. batch	bunch
c. detainees	prisoners
d. ceasefire	truce
e. stipulated	specified
f. essential	paramount
g. branded	labeled
h. withdrawal	disengagement
i. principal	cardinal
j. moderate	middle-of-the-road

PHRASE MATCH:

a. the long-	awaited release
b. set	free
c. in accordance to	an agreement
d. crack	down on Palestinian militants
e. a clause	that stipulated ...
f. fulfill its	obligations
g. ahead of	upcoming Palestinian elections
h. branded as	terrorists
i. derail the Middle East	peace process
j. moderate	element

GAP FILL:

Israel to release 400 prisoners

BNE: Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his **cabinet** have approved the **long-awaited** release of 400 Palestinian prisoners. This latest batch is the second major freeing, following the 500 **detainees** who were **set** free in February. It is in accordance to an agreement with Palestinian Authority leader President Mahmoud Abbas as part of a ceasefire deal. Hesitant government ministers delayed the latest release until they were more certain of Mr. Abbas's **implementation** of his assurances to **crack** down on Palestinian militants. The cabinet decided no prisoner directly involved in the death of Israelis would be released. Further, a clause that **stipulated** only prisoners who had served two-thirds of their sentence should be released may be **relaxed** this time round.

Mr. Sharon warned his government before the cabinet voted that it was essential for Israel to **fulfill** its obligations to the new Palestinian Authority. He said it was **vital** to strengthen Mr. Mahmoud's position ahead of **upcoming** Palestinian elections on July 17. Israel is concerned that more militant groups such as Hamas, an organization **branded** as terrorists by the U.S. and the European Union, might win power and **derail** the Middle East peace process. Mr. Sharon urged his people to understand that this release and the August withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza will "not strengthen the forces of **extremist** terrorism". He said it is necessary "to strengthen the principal moderate **element** in the Palestinian Authority and honor our **commitments**".