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**Two State Solution is the only answer to the Palestine/Israel question,
says journalist and author Ian Black at the Edinburgh International Book Festival**

“In the wake of the Second World War, the international community recognised that the only way to resolve the conflict in Palestine was to create two states. I think that remains the only way to deal with it,” said the journalist and writer Ian Black.

Black, a long-time reporter on the Middle East for *The Guardian*, and also a former correspondent for the *Jerusalem Post*, was speaking today with the Palestinian lawyer and writer Raja Shehadeh, to a sold out audience at this year’s Edinburgh International Book Festival.

The author of *Enemies and Neighbours: Arabs and Jews in Palestine and Israel, 1917-2017*, added: “Given the reality of the last 70 years, the only way to resolve the Palestinian issue is to recognise that the Palestinians have been the victims of this long historical process and that they need to be given the right, by the international community, to their own independent state,” says the journalist and writer Ian Black. “I just don’t see any other way out of it”

“Of course this is very contentious and difficult territory,” he admitted. “There is an argument, held by many Palestinians and their supporters, that the whole thing is about racism and apartheid and based on a fundamental injustice that must be swept away. Yet I don’t see how those arguments can be turned into a practical solution.

“In 2018, what you have as a reality is the State of Israel, which exists as a powerful existing force, home to over six million Jews, 70% of whom were born in Israel. I think anti-Zionism today is an interesting intellectual and academic and historical argument, but I don’t think it’s particularly relevant to current reality.”

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Black worries that the window of opportunity for the Two State Solution may be closing, in part because of a loss of international interest. “For the last seven years, attention in the Middle East has focused much more on the upheavals of what we used to call the ‘Arab Spring’, on the unprecedented series of upheavals across the Arab world from Libya to Bahrain in the Gulf,” he said.

“The Palestinian cause, which has always been a subject of intense interest and a lot of sympathy and solidarity, especially in the Arab and Muslim world, has been very much relegated, at least at the level of Governments. In fact, there is a convincing argument that the ‘window of opportunity’ has shut; it’s almost stopping because people have given up on it. I don’t myself think it’s quite over yet, because I don’t think there is a viable alternative.”

An additional factor is that many in Israel genuinely believe that the ongoing conflict is “manageable”.

“Can it be managed? Up to a point, but when something terrible happens, the world suddenly pays attention,” Black pointed out. “It’s not manageable for a society - which considers itself to be advanced, democratic and respecting human rights - to have another people living alongside it, who don’t enjoy the same rights. So it isn’t really manageable, although a lot of people have the illusion it is.”

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