



Written by on August 20, 2010

## Israeli and Palestinian Leaders to be Invited to U.S. for Peace Talks

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced on August 20 that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas have been invited to Washington on September 2 to start talks related to the Middle East peace process. Clinton said this will be the first time in 20 months that Israel and the Palestinians have agreed to resume direct negotiations.



Speaking at a special press briefing at the State Department and joined by Special Envoy for Middle East Peace Talks, former Senator George Mitchell, Clinton said she had invited Netanyahu and Abbas to Washington to "relaunch direct negotiations to resolve all final status issues, which we believe can be completed within one year."

"These negotiations should take place without preconditions and be characterized by good faith and a commitment to their success, which will bring a better future to all of the people of the region," Clinton was quoted by BBC News.

The leaders of Egypt and Jordan also have been invited to attend the initial session of the talks.

A *USA Today* report cited the Secretary of State's statement that President Obama had sent a formal invitation to the summit to both Netanyahu and Abbas. Clinton further stated: "The president and I are encouraged by the leadership of Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas and fully share their commitment to the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security."

*USA Today* also quoted Israeli and Palestinian officials who said they expected to see the statement and U.S. invitation by the end of the day. "We are waiting to see the formulation of the American invitation draft. Our position remains that we don't want preconditions," an Israeli official who remained anonymous said.

A Palestinian official, also speaking on condition of anonymity, said: "If the statement meets what we are calling for, we will say yes of course."

According to a Reuters news report datelined from the United Nations, a simultaneous statement was issued on behalf of what is termed "the Quartet of Middle East peace mediators," which includes the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations. The report quoted from a joint statement issued in the name of "the Quartet," which read: "The Quartet expresses its determination to support the parties throughout the negotiations, which can be completed within one year, and the implementation of an agreement." The statement continued: "The Quartet again calls on both sides to observe calm and restraint, and to refrain from provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric."



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AP reported that the Palestinians had been resistant to engaging in direct talks with Israel because they want any talks to be based on a March statement issued by the Quartet calling for a peace agreement based on borders in place before the 1967 Mideast war — conditions that Israel found unacceptable. The Palestinians also want Israel to stop the construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem areas.

A temporary freeze on Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank is to expire on September 26.

Under a compromise agreement, the Quartet called for talks that "lead to a settlement, negotiated between the parties, that ends the occupation which began in 1967 and results in the emergence of an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbors."

A copy of the statement obtained by The Associated Press said that the Quartet believes the talks "can be completed within one year."

While the resumption of talks between Israel and the Palestinians appears promising, some of the impediments to permanent peace between the two rivals in the Palestine region have long proven to be unsurmountable.

An article in the *Washington Post* on March 19 addressed part of the dilemma:

Officials said that Clinton and President Obama, who jointly wrote the points for her call last Friday [March 12], were furious that Israel announced that 1,600 housing units were being planned in East Jerusalem as Vice President Biden was on a goodwill trip to Israel. Netanyahu agreed that the timing of the announcement was poor, but he has publicly maintained that Israel has a right to build in parts of Jerusalem that it annexed after the 1967 war, a move not recognized by other nations. Palestinians want to claim East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state in any peace deal.

Aside from border disputes between the two factions, the peace process in Palestine is hampered by the fact that Mahmoud Abbas is not a credible leader to represent the legitimate concerns of the Palestinian people. It was former PLO head Yasser Arafat who appointed Abbas as Prime Minister of the PA on March 19, 2003. Abbas became the chairman of the PLO on November 11, 2004 upon the death of Arafat and became President of the PA on January 15, 2005. When Arafat was elected as President of the PA in a landslide victory in 1996, both Israel and the United States had such a dim view of him because of his past terrorist connections that they refused to negotiate with him.

While it is true that many Palestinian people were displaced from their homelands following the creation of Israel in 1948 and have suffered much economic hardship, before successful negotiations to establish a homeland for these unfortunate people can be established, Palestinians must be governed by moderate individuals who can coexist alongside Israel as a peaceful and prosperous neighbor.

Mahmoud Abbas, because of his past PLO association with the radical Yasser Arafat, does not possess the degree of statesmanship to fulfill that role.

The efforts of the Quartet of Four are also compromised by the presence of Russia (which has a history of supporting the most radical elements in the Middle East) and the United Nations, which — despite its oft-touted description as an organization committed to peace — has a history of supporting the wrong side in many international disputes, thereby inflaming the conflict instead of solving it. (The most notorious example of this occurred during the civil war in the Congo in the 1960s, when UN-backed



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troops took the side of the oppressive central Congolese government in a bloody suppression of the freedom-loving people of the breakaway province of Katanga. For a thorough report, read: "[UN-Backed Troops Wreak Havoc in Africa.](#)")

*Photo: Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, right, accompanied by special Mideast peace envoy George Mitchell, talks with the media about Mideast peace talks, Aug. 20, 2010, at the State Department in Washington: AP Images*



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