

MEMMO

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Israel Taking Peace Steps Despite Ongoing Attacks

Despite relentless rocket attacks by Palestinian terrorists in violation of an Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire, Israel has taken a series of steps to help the Palestinian people and reaffirmed its commitment to two-state solution to the conflict. Israel also has exercised extraordinary restraint in limiting its response to these continuing attacks from Gaza against its citizens. The international community must continue to press the Hamas-controlled Palestinian Authority (PA) to implement the internationally accepted requirements to recognize the Jewish state, end its support for terrorism and accept previous agreements.

Palestinian terrorists continue to attack Israel despite the cease-fire.

- Palestinians have fired nearly 80 rockets into Israel since the cease-fire went into effect on Nov. 26, striking a strategic facility in Ashkelon and seriously wounding two Israeli teenagers in the city of Sderot.
- Palestinians fired mortars on Jan. 2 at the Karni crossing between Gaza and Israel, wounding an Israeli truck driver. Palestinian terrorists have regularly attacked Karni, the main crossing point through which humanitarian supplies enter Gaza.
- Terrorists continue to smuggle weapons into Gaza via tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border. Media reports indicate that the number of tunnels has more than doubled to nearly 250 since Israel fully withdrew from Gaza in the summer of 2005.
- Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Mahmoud Zahar said on Dec. 10, 2006, that a cease-fire was merely one of a number of tactical steps on the way to the “complete liberation” of Palestine. “We as Muslims are the owners of this land and we shall not give up a single handful of Palestinian soil,” Zahar said.
- Israel has indicated that it will take limited, targeted action only against terrorists actively firing rockets into Israel, exercising restraint against the broader terrorist network.

Israel is taking steps to assist the Palestinian people and reiterated its commitment to a two-state solution.

- Prime Minister Olmert met with PA President Mahmoud Abbas on Dec. 23 and offered several measures to ease conditions for the Palestinians, despite the continuing rocket attacks.
 - Israel has agreed to release \$100 million in frozen Palestinian tax revenue to Abbas to help finance the Palestinian health system.
 - Israel has eased restrictions at 16 West Bank checkpoints by reducing the number of security checks and announced plans to remove 27 roadblocks in a second phase.

- Olmert announced plans to build several bypass tunnels in the West Bank to make Palestinian movement easier and reduce friction between Palestinians and Israelis.
- Israel has accelerated the processing of goods at border crossings between Israel and Gaza, allowing for the quadrupling of Palestinian exports.
- In a major speech just weeks before his meeting with Abbas, Olmert also laid out a political vision for the Palestinian people, declaring that Israel is willing to offer the Palestinians an independent state with territorial contiguity in the West Bank if they recognize Israel and end terrorism.

The United States and the international community must continue to press Hamas to support peace with Israel.

- The international community must continue to press Hamas to meet the three conditions of the Quartet: recognize Israel's right to exist, renounce violence and accept previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements.
- Congress recently passed and the president signed into law the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act, which requires Hamas to meet these conditions before the United States can consider providing direct aid to and having contacts with the Hamas-controlled PA.
- While the United States continues to press Hamas, it is committed to helping the Palestinian people and to strengthening Abbas, contributing more than \$450 million this year to aid the Palestinian public.

Basic Facts Summary

- Palestinian terrorists continue to attack Israel despite the ceasefire.
- Despite the ongoing attacks, Israel is taking steps to assist the Palestinian people.
- The United States and the international community must continue to pressure Hamas to support peace with Israel.