

MEMMO

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Palestinians Must Choose: Violence or Negotiations

President Bush's Middle East speech represents an important opportunity for the Palestinians to achieve their own state living in peace and security alongside Israel. The Palestinians must decide if they want to pursue the path of terrorism or choose peaceful negotiations with the Jewish state. The new Palestinian government of President Mahmoud Abbas has taken important initial steps by rejecting violence, recognizing Israel and beginning the process of arresting terrorists. If followed with consistent action and supported by moderate Arab states, these steps can serve as the foundation for negotiations toward a two-state solution.

The Palestinians must decide if they will follow the path of terrorism and perpetual grievance or choose hope and peaceful negotiations with Israel.

- As President Bush said in his speech, the Palestinians have a clear choice to make: continue on the path of terrorism and violence or choose negotiations and progress toward peace with Israel.
- Terrorism will undermine efforts to achieve Palestinian statehood, the president said, reiterating his Rose Garden statement five years ago that a "Palestinian state will never be created by terror."
- In order to capitalize on the opportunity presented in the president's speech for the Palestinians to achieve their own state, they must seize this moment and undertake the necessary effort to fight terrorism and dismantle the terrorist infrastructure, reform their government and security forces and build a civil society willing to live in peace with Israel.
- In order to make progress toward peace, as the president emphasized, the Palestinians must fulfill their obligations to arrest terrorists, dismantle their infrastructure and stop attacks against Israelis as outlined by the sequenced approach of the internationally backed, performance-based Roadmap peace plan.



President Bush said the government of Mahmoud Abbas (left) and Salam Fayyad must fight terror as the key step toward talks on a Palestinian state.

The Arab states must reject the extremism of terrorist groups such as Hamas and support the new Palestinian government of Mahmoud Abbas.

- As the president made abundantly clear, the Arab states must take responsibility for supporting peace by rejecting the extremism of Hamas, ending anti-Israel incitement and showing strong support for Abbas' government.

- The president also said the Arab states must support the peace process by “ending the fiction that Israel does not exist ... and sending cabinet-level visitors to Israel.”
- The president called on the Arab states to fulfill their responsibility to use “their resources to provide much needed assistance to the Palestinian people” and to help improve the economy and humanitarian situation of the Palestinians.
- Bush also called on Egypt and Jordan to open their borders to facilitate increased Palestinian trade with the world and to help bolster the Palestinian economy.

Bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians are the only way to achieve a lasting solution to the conflict.

- The president reiterated longstanding and fundamental commitments of U.S. support for Israel’s security and existence as a Jewish state. Such strong U.S. support helps Israel take risks for peace.
- As the president said in his speech, Israel and the Palestinians must engage in direct, bilateral negotiations—a guiding U.S. principle of the peace process.
- While leadership by the United States and support from the international community and the Arab states are important for the peace process, imposed solutions by outside parties will not help in solving the conflict.

Basic Facts Summary

- The Palestinians must decide if they will follow the path of terrorism and violence or choose negotiations and progress toward peace with Israel.
- The Arab states must reject the extremism of terrorist groups such as Hamas and support the new Palestinian government of Mahmoud Abbas.
- Bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians are the best way to achieve a lasting solution to the conflict.