

MEMMO

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Abbas Refuses to Negotiate; Undermines Peace Process

Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas continues to reject efforts to restart direct negotiations with Israel and now seeks to bypass talks and impose a solution through international bodies. In contrast, Israel remains committed to a two-state solution – a Jewish state of Israel living in peace and security with a demilitarized Palestinian state – as the clear path to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United States should continue to support Israel as it pursues peace and reject Palestinian efforts to bypass direct bilateral negotiations.

President Abbas has repeatedly undermined peace efforts.

- Unfortunately, every time there have been serious negotiations and a very generous Israeli offer for peace, the Palestinian leadership has refused to conclude an agreement. During the latest round of talks in the spring of 2014, Abbas refused to respond to a proposed framework for an agreement offered by President Obama.
- After nine months of negotiations, Abbas walked away from the talks with Israel and chose to form a unity government with the terrorist group Hamas.
- Two months later, Hamas, Abbas' partner in the unity government, coordinated the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens, and instigated a violent conflict with Israel. Hamas violated or rejected at least ten cease-fires during Operation Protective Edge, leading to an extended conflict and additional loss of life.
- In his address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2014, President Abbas perpetrated the vicious lie that Israel committed genocide against the Palestinian people.
- On Dec. 31, 2014, the Palestinians initiated steps to pursue war crimes charges against Israelis. Abbas signed 20 international treaties and conventions, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- The Palestinians then submitted a declaration to the ICC accepting its jurisdiction starting on June 13, 2014. This date was specifically chosen so that the Court could not prosecute the Palestinian terrorists who, the day before, had kidnapped and murdered three Israeli youths. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has indicated the PA will join the ICC on April 1, 2015.
- President Abbas and other Palestinian leaders continue to use vitriolic language that inflames tensions and breeds an atmosphere of distrust. In March 2015, the PA held a ceremony to honor Dalal Mughrabi, a terrorist who murdered 37 innocent Israelis in the 1978 Coastal Road massacre.

In contrast, Israel remains committed to a two-state solution.

- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently reaffirmed his support for a two-state solution. "I don't want a one-state solution, I want a sustainable peaceful two-state solution," the Prime Minister said on March 19 in interviews with American media.
- The Prime Minister also made clear that the current security reality – including the Palestinian Authority's support for Hamas, Abbas' attempts to internationalize the conflict, and the rise of Islamic groups like ISIS and al-Nusra on Israel's borders – creates a difficult environment in which

to reach a two-state solution in the short term.

Israel has taken significant steps to create an atmosphere for peace.

- Israel has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to take difficult steps to achieve peace. In 2008, after a year of peace talks, Israel again offered to withdraw from almost all of the West Bank, swap land from inside Israel for the small amount of land it would keep in the West Bank, recognize an independent Palestinian state with the Arab part of Jerusalem as its capital, and accept the unlimited right of Palestinian refugees and their descendants to return to an independent Palestinian state. President Abbas never responded to the offer.
- In 2009, Prime Minister Netanyahu formally adopted a policy of support for a two-state solution during an address at Bar Ilan University. Thereafter, he agreed to halt new settlement construction in the West Bank for ten months to persuade President Abbas to enter talks. After refusing for the first nine months to enter negotiations, the Palestinians entered talks only to leave a month later.
- In 2013, as part of an effort to persuade President Abbas to return to peace talks, Israel released 78 Palestinian terrorists. Many of these individuals were convicted of killing innocent Israelis.
- During the 2013 talks, Israel reportedly made serious and far-reaching concessions to the Palestinians. Earlier this month, the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* reported that the government led by Prime Minister Netanyahu took an extraordinarily forward-leaning posture toward the Palestinians on the issues of land swaps, Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees.
- Beyond the talks, Israel has taken many steps to facilitate economic opportunities for Palestinians. These efforts include increased work permits to enter Israel, transfer of building materials to Gaza, new water projects, and a vast reduction in restrictions to Palestinian movement in the West Bank.

The United States should continue to support Israel as it pursues peace.

- The United States should re-emphasize that the U.S.-Israel relationship rests on shared values and interests that transcend the shifting status of the peace process.
- The United States should remain committed to direct bilateral negotiations as the only viable path for achieving an enduring solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and press the Palestinians to return to the table.
- The United States should continue to support Israel's need to have secure, recognized, and defensible borders with the understanding that the Jewish state must determine its own security requirements, especially given the regional instability.
- The United States should continue to oppose harmful Palestinian unilateral moves at the United Nations and other international bodies, and be prepared to veto resolutions brought before the United Nations Security Council that unfairly single out Israel.