

MEMMO

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French Conference Hinders Prospects for Peace

Tomorrow, France will host a conference to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—without any Israelis or Palestinians. While all should welcome France’s desire to promote peace, the Paris conference together with Palestinian efforts at the United Nations, represent harmful distractions that diminish the chance to resume direct Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. Israel remains committed to achieving peace with the Palestinians through a two-state solution. The United States must use its presence in Paris to press the Palestinians to return to negotiations and to defend Israel against one-sided initiatives that are bound to arise.

The French peace conference could actually undermine prospects for peace.

- France has invited dozens of foreign ministers to an international conference to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but no representatives from the Israelis or Palestinians.
- Without Israeli or Palestinian participation, the conference will lack the legitimacy to facilitate meaningful solutions and elicit buy-in from the parties.
- The conference is also likely to spawn artificial deadlines and one-sided proposals—bolstering a Palestinian belief that others will impose Palestinian terms on Israel.
- In such an environment, the Palestinians are less likely than ever to resume direct talks with Israel.



Without Israeli or Palestinian participation, the upcoming Paris conference will lack the legitimacy to facilitate meaningful solutions and elicit buy-in from the parties.

Israel remains committed to achieving peace with the Palestinians and has opened the door to talks with the Arab world on the Arab Peace Initiative.

- In response to the conference, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated his desire to resume direct talks with the Palestinians. “The path to peace is via direct negotiations and without preconditions between the parties. That’s how it was in the past when we achieved peace with Egypt and also with Jordan and that’s how it needs to be with the Palestinians,” said Netanyahu on June 1.
- The prime minister also suggested engaging the Arab world on the basis of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. Netanyahu said the initiative “includes positive elements that can help revive constructive negotiations with the Palestinians.”
- On May 30, Israel’s newly installed defense minister, Avigdor Lieberman, reaffirmed his commitment to “two states for two peoples.” He also expressed interest in the efforts of the Egyptian

president to facilitate Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. “Egyptian President al-Sisi’s [May 17] speech was extremely important and he created a real opportunity. We have an obligation to try and rise to the challenge,” Lieberman said

- On May 17, President Sisi said Egypt was “prepared to exert all efforts that will contribute to finding a solution to this problem.”

Direct, bilateral talks represent the most viable path to an enduring solution.

- A deal can only work if both parties enter into it willingly, feel vested in it, and intend to implement the outcome. Without buy-in from the two parties and the publics they represent, no accord will be viable.
- Outside of a negotiated settlement, international recognition of Palestinian demands at Israel’s expense only encourages Palestinian obstinacy and refusal to return to the negotiating table. It does not hasten achieving real peace; it prolongs the conflict.
- As President Barack Obama said during his March 2013 trip to Israel, “There is no question that the only path to peace is through negotiations—which is why ... the United States will oppose unilateral efforts to bypass negotiations through the United Nations. It has to be done by the parties.”
- On Dec. 30, 2014, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Samantha Power reiterated this message in her explanation of the United States’ opposition to a one-sided, anti-Israel UNSC resolution. Power said, “Peace will come from hard choices and compromises that must be made at the negotiating table.”

The United States should press the Palestinians to return to direct, bilateral negotiations with Israel.

- The United States should press for the Palestinians to return to direct, bilateral negotiations with Israel, as this is the best path to ultimately achieving peace.
- The United States should reinforce long-standing American practice—as it did in 2011—to veto any Security Council resolution that seeks to bypass direct negotiations and impose a solution on the parties.
- The United States should remain committed to the principles that guided previous negotiations.
 - Talks must be direct and bilateral.
 - A solution cannot be imposed on the parties.
 - Both sides must be willing to make key compromises.
 - Disagreements should be resolved privately.
 - The United States must support and work closely with Israel.