

ARAB

**B. PALESTINIAN PRES. MAHMUD ABBAS,
LETTER TO ISRAELI PM BENJAMIN
NETANYAHU, RAMALLAH, 14 APRIL 2012.**

Reports that Palestinian Authority Pres. Mahmud Abbas was drafting a letter to Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu with the aim of breaking the diplomatic stalemate began circulating in mid-March 2012. Delayed by assorted diplomatic and other considerations (see Quarterly Update in this issue for details), the letter was finally delivered to Netanyahu by Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erakat on 17 April. The letter was not released, but a draft, reproduced below, was leaked to the press and published in The Times of Israel

on 15 April. Netanyahu sent a written response to Abbas on 12 May, which reportedly reiterated the call for an immediate resumption of talks, without preconditions. The Abbas letter was taken from the Times of Israel website at www.timesofisrael.com.

Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu
State of Israel
H.E. Prime Minister Netanyahu:

In 1993, the Palestine Liberation Organization signed the Declaration of Principles (The Oslo Accords) and exchanged letters of mutual recognition with the Government of Israel.

The Declaration of Principles defined its aim as the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, which would begin with a transitional period, and culminate with negotiations on the all final status issues including Jerusalem, borders, settlements, refugees, water, security, relations with neighboring countries, and other matters of mutual interest. Over the years, we included end of the conflict and claims, and the release of prisoners and detainees to these final status issues. May 1999 was set as the date by which negotiations on all final status issues would be completed and a comprehensive peace agreement between the two sides would be reached.

The PLO and the State of Israel subsequently signed additional agreements including the Interim Agreement in 1995, the Wye River Agreement in 1998, the Hebron Protocol of 1998, and the Sharm Sheikh Agreement in 1999. We also engaged in negotiations on final status issues during the Camp David talks in 2000, the Annapolis talks between 2007 and 2008, and talks conducted in Washington, D.C., Sharm Sheikh, and West-Jerusalem in September 2010. Most recently, in January 2012, I dispatched a delegation to Amman, Jordan for exploratory talks in furtherance of the Quartet Statement of 23 September 2011.

In the midst of these agreements and bilateral talks, the Arab states presented the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, and the Quartet for Middle East Peace presented its road map plan of 2003.

Signed agreements, international law, and UN resolutions, all recognize that peace will only be realized upon the end of Israel's occupation of Palestinian land that began in 1967. Until such time, Article 7 of the Interim Agreement stipulated that both parties, Israel and the PLO, shall not take any steps that would prejudice final status negotiations.

A fundamental obligation placed on Israel under international law and the quartet's road map was that it freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth. In a letter sent by former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres to Norwegian Foreign Minister Holst in 1993, Israel also committed itself to maintain the educational, economic, social, and cultural institutions in East Jerusalem, conserve the Christian and Muslim holy places, preserve Palestinian interests in East Jerusalem, and not to hinder their development.

Mr. Prime Minister,

As a leader, both of us have to face skepticism and opposition. In the quest of peace we have to help each other. We know that violence and terror whether committed by Palestinians or Israelis is not the way. I know that it erodes both of our public's trust in peace. Therefore, I reiterate our full commitment to a policy of zero tolerance against violence. At the same token, I expect your understanding that settlement building is eroding the Palestinian trust in your commitment to reconciliation and the idea of the two-state solution. The logic is simple: If you support the establishment of a Palestinian state, why do you build on its territory?

Mr. Prime Minister,

Among the most critical components of the signed agreements between the PLO and Israel is the recognition that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip constitute a single territorial unit, the integrity of which must be preserved until a final status agreement is reached. As such, it is subject to one law and one authority. In recognition of this, I have been determined to end the division of my people through national reconciliation, in accordance with my political program which respects signed agreements, recognizes the State of Israel,

and renounces violence. With regret, the Government of Israel has chosen to take a position diametrically opposed to Palestinian national reconciliation.

Aside from this, we continue to honor all our obligations, including the reactivation of the trilateral anti-incitement committee.

Mr. Prime Minister,

We have responded in good faith to the efforts exerted by President Obama and the Quartet in furtherance of peace, and we have welcomed the courageous Jordanian initiative aimed at putting the peace process on the right track, including through the submission of comprehensive positions on territory and security by the parties.

The Palestinian delegation submitted our proposals on these two final status issues and we reiterated our commitments and obligations. We asked your government to also submit comprehensive proposals on territory, security, and to commit to a settlement freeze, and release prisoners. These were not preconditions but Israeli obligations. To our deep regret, none of these commitments were honored.

Mr. Prime Minister,

Our historic Peace Proposal is still waiting for an answer from Israel.

- We agreed to establish the State of Palestine on only 22% of the territory of historical Palestine—on all the Palestinian Territory occupied by Israel in 1967.
- The establishment of an independent Palestinian State that can live side-by-side with the State of Israel in peace and security on the borders of 1967 with mutually agreed swaps equal in size and value.
- Security will be guaranteed by a third party accepted by both, to be deployed on the Palestinian side.
- A just and agreed resolution for the refugees' problem as specified in the Arab Peace Initiative.
- Jerusalem will serve as a capital of two states. East Jerusalem capital of Palestine. West Jerusalem capital of Israel. Jerusalem as an open city can be the symbol of peace.

Mr. Prime Minister,

Twenty years ago, we concluded with Israel an agreement under international

auspices which was intended to take the Palestinian people from occupation to independence. Now, as a result of actions taken by successive Israeli governments, the Palestinian National Authority no longer has any authority, and no meaningful jurisdiction in the political, economic, social, territorial, and security spheres. In other words, the PA lost its reason d'être.

In recognition of the above and in furtherance of the peace process and the agreements we signed with Israel, which were premised on international legitimacy, international law, and internationally recognized terms of reference, we call on the Government of Israel to do the following:

1. Accept the two-state solution on the 1967 borders with possible minor and mutually agreed upon land swaps of equal size and value;
2. Stop all settlement activities, including in East Jerusalem;
3. Release all prisoners, in particular those imprisoned prior to the end of 1994; and
4. Revoke all decisions taken since 2000 which undermine agreements signed between Israel and the PLO.

Should the Government of Israel refuse to honor these above-referenced obligations, we will seek the full and complete implementation of international law as it pertains to the powers and responsibilities of Israel as occupying power in all of the occupied Palestinian territory.

For the Palestinian Authority—now stripped of all meaningful authority—cannot continue to honor agreements while Israel refuses to even acknowledge its commitments. The PA is no longer as was agreed and this situation cannot continue.

Mr. Prime Minister,

I strongly believe that both our peoples yearn for peace. As leaders, it's our historic task to make it happen. Let's not fail our peoples.

Sincerely Yours,

Mahmoud Abbas

Chairman of the PLO Executive
Committee

President of the Palestinian National
Authority