
President Abbas announces inter-dialogue to unify Palestinians

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During the World Economic Forum on the Middle East meeting being held currently in Sharm El Sheikh, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas announced an internal dialogue aimed at unifying the Palestinian political landscape in light of increasing friction and violence between rival parties. The inter-dialogue is scheduled for 25 May 2006.

"The dialogue is about unifying political positions," President Abbas said at the World Economic Forum where more than 1,200 business, government and civil society leaders from 50 countries are attending the three-day meeting, which is focusing on the theme of "the promise of a new generation". While announcing the dialogue, Abbas reiterated his position that seeks a two-state solution, the rejection of violence and a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a peace process, particularly the implementation of the UN-supported roadmap.

"We have no way before us but to continue the peace process," Abbas said. "Israel should accept our call to return to the negotiating table."

A meeting between Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Tzipi Livni and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas took place earlier in the day, the first high-level meeting between the two sides in eleven months.

"The meeting was very important," Livni said. "A meeting between Israel's Prime Minister and Abbas will be the next step."

FULL TEXT OF PRESIDENT ABBAS' SPEECH:

H.E. President Hosni Mubarak

Mr. President:

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen distinguish guests:

Thank you for your kind invitation, and I am honoured to speak to you today at this highly respected forum which became a gathering for international Leaders searching for development, progress and cooperation in all economic fields leading to a positive impact on security, peace and stability in the region and the world at large.

Ladies & Gentlemen:

I realise what goes in your minds about the Palestinian situation, and I address you once again, with hope that paralysis and melancholy will not prevail, and you will not follow a policy of the possible instead of the needed. It is you who found solutions to the most difficult international and economic crises when you knew what is needed to resolve these crises and confronted challenges with prudence and sharpness until the needed has been accomplished although it might have appeared impossible for many.

Despite all the political changes and financial crises, there is one constant and that is that the Palestinian people simply seek freedom - real liberation - on 22% of what remained of our land. A compelling majority of Palestinians accepts Israel's right to exist on the remaining 78%.

What is necessary is to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian land, and hence I introduced my political platform that was the basis of my Presidential election campaign. This program included recognition of the State of Israel, recognition of the principle of two states and the establishment of Palestine and Israel on the borders of 4 June 1967, it also included rejection of violence and the pursuit of resolving the conflict with Israel through peaceful means and through the peace process that leads to implementing the Road Map as a whole in order to end the Israeli occupation which began in 1967.

This political platform came as a continuation of the historical decision of our people in 1988 when the Palestine National Council adopted the Palestinian peace initiative and adopted Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and presented an opportunity to accomplish a historical reconciliation.

These principles did not change even following the most sever blows to the peace process, primarily settlement construction, Wall construction and land confiscation to create facts on the ground that prejudice the results of negotiations. This platform did not change because it is the historical choice of the Palestinian people at home and in exile. I re-affirmed it in the assignment letter to the Prime Minister from the Hamas party.

I stressed before him that the government's political guidelines are the principle of two states, acceptance of the Road Map, rejection of violence and participation in the peace process. But moving from opposition to authority requires big changes that take some time. Today, the government is only seven weeks old, and it is my view that it should be given a chance to adopt the historical choice of the Palestinian people. I will continue to exert every effort with the government in order for it to accept the platform that was the basis of its assignment.

For this reason, I will lead the Palestinian National Dialogue with the government participation due on the 25th of this month, with the objective of unifying our goal that aims to achieve the two states solution and our people legitimate rights through peaceful negotiations.

At the same time, I consider that cutting aid and collective punishments will not contribute to the democratic process of the internal Palestinian dialogue,

and will not create the appropriate atmosphere that allows the new government to adopt the platform according to the letter of assignment, and will definitely lead to a humanitarian catastrophe that will affect all sections of the Palestinian people.

The balance here lies in the continuation of international aid to our people, and at the same time continuation of every possible effort towards the government to accept the platform in the assignment letter which is based on international and Arab legitimacy and Palestinian Authority previous commitments. In addition, Israel's seizure of the Palestinian clearance revenue collected in Israeli ports and withholding it from the Palestinian Treasury, will not contribute to political solutions.

This action is against all international agreements and international law and takes away from the teacher, the doctor and the policeman their livelihood and the food of their children.

Ladies and gentlemen:

I called upon the new Israeli government to avoid the path of unilateral actions, construction of walls and settlements, incursions, assassinations, arrests, siege, closure and the imposition of facts on the ground, especially regarding the city of Jerusalem. These policies and practices led during the past decades to expanding the cycle of violence, to chaos, extremism and bloodshed.

Few days ago, I called the Israeli Prime Minister Mr. Ehud Olmert and congratulated him on successfully forming his new coalition government. I also congratulate Mrs. Tzipi Livni on gaining confidence as a deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign affairs. I expressed to Mr. Olmert my desire to resume partnership with him for the sake of peace. We have no choice but to resume a meaningful peace process that leads to the implementation of the Road Map. The only way we have is a real peace process that leads to ending the occupation and ending conflict on the basis of implementation of the relevant resolutions of international legality addressing to all the issues reserved for permanent status negotiations as stipulated in Oslo Accords (Jerusalem, settlements, borders, refugees and water) and many other issues of common interest.

Some may say how can you resume negotiations with the existence of a Palestinian government that does not recognise Israel? I say that I will continue to exert every possible effort to obtain the agreement of the Palestinian government to my political platform, especially regarding the political solution to the conflict and negotiations to establish two states.

On the other hand, the political negotiations with the Israeli government are the historical choice of the Palestinian people and are the responsibility and the jurisdiction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation which executive committee I head. Negotiations will take place through the Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO. The Palestinian government will not object to this and will not create obstacles before these talks.

On my part, I committed to put the results we reach in negotiations to a general referendum. Peace is not merely the signature of leaders, it will need the approval of the people, and hence came the idea of a general referendum.

Ladies and gentlemen:

I hope that the new Israeli government will abandon the slogan of "no partner", and accept our invitation to return to the negotiating table. The drawing of the final borders cannot happen through dictations, but rather in the negotiations. Providing security, peace and fulfilling commitments will not be achieved by walls and military solutions. It can only be achieved through a comprehensive and a just political solution, and through the implementation of the Road Map according to an agreed timetable.

This requires creative economic solution, provide real freedom for trade, investment, free passage and genuine economic that can take us toward the future.

Unilateralism is a tempting mirage that tempts the exhausted and bitter with such illusions that seem like solutions because they are the easy and the possible thing to happen, and not what is needed to solve the conflict and involves effort. Unilateralism tempts with the false claim of more security for the two people at a time when our basic human rights are violated and when it puts us in a suffocating misery and prisons that become increasingly smaller. Unilateralism falsely promises us "permanent" arrangements impossible without resolving any of the main issues of conflict: security, borders, Jerusalem and refugees. Unilateralism cannot put an end to occupation, end to the conflict and end to claims. On the contrary unilateralism will quickly put an end to the two-state solution and will increase violence.

Therefore, this is the choice that we face today. Are we, Palestinians, Israelis and international community, ruling out the possibility of peace for the future generations in the Middle East by accepting what is not sustainable? Or will we make and choose an opportunity for real peace in the region. Will we succumb to a vicious paralysis or choose to rise above the shackles of ideology or our own shortsightedness and do what we all know is needed and necessary to be done? If we now allow the two-state solution to die, we will be limiting and destroying the dreams of our grandchildren for tomorrow.

It is time to end occupation and conflict in the holy land. I know that this is the aim and objective of the vast majority of the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples and all peoples in the area and worldwide, in order to live in peace, stability and prosperity for all.

Once again, I thank you for this invitation. I believe that I spoke to friends and partners who share with us the values of freedom, democracy, peace, stability and dialogue. I trust that we will continue to work together to achieve a historical peace treaty between the Palestinian and Israeli sides.

At the end I hope successful results for this forum, and I would to express my deepest gratitude to Egypt and for my brother President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak for his unwavering commitment to achieve a historic, lasting, comprehensive and just solution that will guarantee the establishment of a Palestinian state next to the state of Israel. I also express my thanks and appreciations to Professor Claus Schwab President of World Economic Forum for this opportunity

Thank you.