

Israel Palestine Peace Talks: No Help from Washington. The only Option left to the Palestinians is Resistance

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Global Research, July 19, 2010
19 July 2010

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)
In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials in the government of Mohamed Abbas often complain they spend more time negotiating with American rather than Israeli governments. This has been particularly true of late. Since Israel's all-out assault on Gaza nearly a year and half ago, Palestinian officials have discontinued all direct talks with the Israelis and have been talking to the Americans. US presidential envoy George Mitchell has been closely engaged in the region since May 2010, but his efforts have not proved fruitful.

The Palestinians have had no more luck with the Americans than with the Israelis. They have been consistently asked to accept US-Israeli peace terms that spell disaster and capitulation. Apart from exhausting the Palestinians, and making them edge closer to further concessions, nothing of substance has emerged from talks with either the Americans or the Israelis.

The Americans have sold the Palestinians false hopes, giving Israel the time it needed to grab land and change the demographics of their state-to-be. Now, even the fig leaf of good intentions has fallen.

In a meeting between US President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu last Tuesday, the mercy bullet was finally fired, dealing a deadly blow to fantasies of American help.

Palestinian negotiators keep telling us that they have no other option but to negotiate with the Americans. This is not true. The Palestinian people don't want them to do so, and their fighting spirit is alive and well. When all other options run out, the people will come up with options of their own. It is what people living under foreign occupation have always done, and the Palestinians are no exception.

President Abbas used to tell us that the ball is in Israel's court. Now Obama has kicked it back into the Palestinian court. Once again, the White House has made it clear that the ball, the court, the referee, and the players should all perform according to American dictates.

The peace process has been at best a US- Israeli PR exercise, at worst a political ruse designed to help the Zionists and undermine the Arabs. The whole aim of the peace process has been to create a fifth column in our midst. At heart, the peace process had no bearing on peace. Fairness was never part of the equation.

It is time the Arabs, especially Palestinian Arabs, called it a day. It is time the admission was made that the peace process has done nothing at all for the peace, security, and development of this region.

Obama was pleased to see Netanyahu, just as George Bush was once thrilled to confer with Ariel Sharon. The words the two presidents used in describing the Israeli dignitaries were almost identical. Sharon was called a “man of peace”. Now Netanyahu seems to be inheriting the title, no matter that a few days earlier he ordered the massacre of peace activists on the Gaza-bound flotilla, no matter that on the same day Obama welcomed him, the Israeli group B’Tselem issued a damning report on the expansion of settlements in the West Bank.

Obama had nothing but praise for the Israeli prime minister. There are no differences between Israel and the US, Obama declared, describing his talks with Netanyahu as “excellent” and his country’s ties with Israel as “extraordinary”. Washington is as committed to Israel’s security as it always was, and the “special ties” as binding as ever, he told US reporters.

For his part, Netanyahu said reports about a schism in US-Israeli relations were just rumours.

To reward Netanyahu for what he described as “progress” toward peace, Obama accepted an invitation to visit Israel.

Does any of this surprise President Mahmoud Abbas?

The only harsh words the American president used were in reference to the Palestinians, whom he advised to stop provoking and embarrassing the Israelis. The Palestinians should stop thinking of “excuses” to tarry on peace and start talking to the Israelis. Any conditions Obama once made on direct talks seem to have been forgotten. The current US position is that the Palestinians should start talks without preconditions.

This is not what President Abbas was hoping to hear. Instead of encouragement, the Palestinians have been admonished and told to behave.

A close associate of President Abbas told Al-Quds Al-Arabi that “all signs suggest that the US administration would press the Palestinian Authority to hold direct talks” without guarantees or preconditions. This is basically what Mitchell has been trying to do throughout his earlier visits to the region.

Now Abbas has to choose. Either he gives way to the Americans, which is what he’s done since Annapolis in 2007, or he gives up on the Americans. In the first case, he would lose any remaining credibility. In the second, he will have to step down. He has gambled everything on negotiations, and now any hope of fruitful talks has evaporated.

The only option left to the Palestinians is resistance and more resistance. It is a course that is not only long and hard, but calls for national unity. The PLO made it into government as a result of resistance and national unity. Now the lack of unity and resistance threaten to banish the PLO into the wilderness, or turn it into a lackey of the occupation authorities.

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occupied Palestinian territories. This article was translated from Arabic then published by Al-Ahram Weekly on July 15, 2010.

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