



– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

Palestinian President states conditions for peace talks with Israel

Montreal, July 23, 2010 – Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, has announced his conditions for resumption of direct peace talks with Israel. He has stated that Israel must accept the 1967 frontiers, with minor adjustments, as the basis for the borders of a future Palestinian state, and allow the deployment of an international force on those borders. As well, in return for being allowed to annex certain Jewish settlements within the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Israel must compensate the Palestinians with Israeli lands equivalent in quality and size. These proposals pick up where negotiations with former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert left off in December 2008. Unless progress on these points is made in the indirect US-mediated talks, Abbas says direct peace talks with Israel cannot be undertaken.

Abbas notably did not reiterate a long-standing demand for a comprehensive freeze on Israeli colonies (settlements) on Palestinian land, which he had earlier indicated was a precondition for direct talks. Nevertheless, he stopped short of agreeing to resume direct peace negotiations with Israel. Palestinians are skeptical about negotiating with current Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, who has backtracked on various commitments made by his predecessors. Other stumbling blocks are Netanyahu's refusal to agree to a basic framework for negotiations, Israel's resumption of illegal house demolitions in East Jerusalem, and Obama's lack of assurances about the size of a future Palestinian state. Abbas commented that clauses in a message from Obama last week were "unclear, especially those which define the borders of the occupied territories."

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) agrees with Abbas's firmness on the need for clarity from the US and Israel about the framework for peace talks. "The basic framework for negotiations should respect international law, and previous agreements. Abbas cannot be expected to endlessly renegotiate points already negotiated and settled with Netanyahu's predecessors," states CJPME President Thomas Woodley. Repeated UN resolutions passed by the vast majority of nations, including Canada, have condemned Israel's military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

Abbas's hesitations are shared by the Arab League. On Monday the League's General Secretary Amr Mussa backed Abbas, saying that the Palestinians should not engage in direct peace talks with Israel in the absence of "written guarantees" from the US. According to Palestinian peace negotiator Saeb Erekat, Arab League foreign ministers will discuss the matter July 29, prior to a meeting of the PLO's top decision-making body.

About CJPME – *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) is a non-profit and secular organization bringing together men and women of all backgrounds who labour to see justice and peace take root again in the Middle East. Its mission is to empower decision-makers to view all sides with fairness and to promote the equitable and sustainable development of the region.*

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