

The Washington Post

Advertisement
Advertisement

Findomestic
GRUPPO BNP PARIBAS

Più responsabili, insieme

**TROVA
QUI LA RATA
ADATTA
A TE**

messaggio pubblicitario

“Reality is, we're a small bank with large bank capabilities. We're a local bank in over 100 countries that we serve.”

Yousef Omar, Manager, Commercial Bank, North Texas, Citi

[Watch Now](#)

citi

Obama urges Middle East leaders to make peace

By Scott Wilson
Washington Post Staff Writer
Wednesday, September 1, 2010; 10:02 PM

On the eve of the first direct Middle East peace negotiations since he took office, President Obama urged Israeli and Palestinian leaders Wednesday to seize "this moment of opportunity" and to end their decades-long conflict, pledging to throw his administration's "full weight" behind their effort to do so.

Speaking in the Rose Garden after a day of preparatory meetings, Obama sternly addressed both parties and the region's Arab leaders, whom he scolded for endorsing the creation of a Palestinian state in principle while often doing little to help bring one about.

But he said that, ultimately, only Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas could make the compromises necessary to secure peace between their peoples.

"The hard work is only beginning," Obama said after meeting. "Neither success nor failure is inevitable. But this much we know: If we do not make the attempt, then failure is guaranteed."

Obama's inauguration of direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations comes after more than a year of diplomacy to bring the two sides together. The last direct talks broke off in December 2008 amid an

intensive Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip to stop Palestinian rocket fire into southern Israeli towns.

The events Wednesday, which culminated in a White House dinner for Netanyahu, Abbas, King Abdullah II of Jordan and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, marked at least a temporary success for the Obama administration, which has at times appeared confused over how to further peace-making in the region.

The president's Rose Garden remarks followed meetings with the four leaders who will be involved, either directly or as mediators, in negotiations that are scheduled to begin Thursday and that are supposed to conclude in a year with the conflict's most difficult issues resolved.

Those issues include the status of Jerusalem, which both Israelis and Palestinians claim as their capital; the right of Palestinian refugees to return to homes inside what is now [Israel](#); and the final borders of a Palestinian state.

But a deeply divided Palestinian national movement, a right-leaning Israeli public, and the energetic extremes on both sides who oppose compromise of any kind are already complicating efforts to forge an agreement that has eluded Israelis, Palestinians and their U.S. mediators for years.

Perhaps the most immediate threat to the negotiations is the impending expiration of Israel's 10-month moratorium on West Bank settlement construction.

The building freeze, opposed by Netanyahu's hawkish coalition partners, is set to expire Sept. 26. Abbas has warned that he might walk away from the talks if Netanyahu does not extend the moratorium, which U.S. officials also want to see remain in place.

"The central piece of worry focused on the moratorium," Soliman Awaad, [Egypt's](#) ambassador to Washington, told reporters after Mubarak's meeting with Obama.

Awaad said Mubarak also told Obama that "it is not enough to offer dinner, to give some speeches," warning that the United States must remain involved after the official start of direct talks.

Obama struck a note of hope in his remarks in the Rose Garden and, later, in the East Room, at one point saying that "despite what the cynics say, history teaches us that there is a different path."

But he tempered his optimism with a realistic assessment of the challenges ahead.

"We are under no illusions," Obama said. "Passions run deep. Each side has legitimate and enduring interests. Years of mistrust will not disappear overnight."

Obama met with each Middle East leader in a one-on-one session in the Oval Office. The dinner he later hosted on their behalf was attended also by representatives of the Quartet of Middle East peace interlocutors: the United States, the European Union, [Russia](#) and the United Nations.

Each leader delivered brief remarks during the East Room reception, setting an urgent tone for the negotiations to come. Netanyahu addressed Abbas as "my partner in peace."

"The Jewish people are not strangers in our ancestral homeland, the land of our forefathers," Netanyahu said. "But we recognize that another people share this land with us. And I came here today to find an historic compromise that will enable both peoples to live in peace and security and dignity."

Following the Israeli prime minister, Abbas said he would "spare no effort and we will work diligently" to achieve a peace agreement that would meet Palestinian interests and address Israeli security concerns.

"It is time to put an end to the struggle in the Middle East," said Abbas, who referred to Palestinians as "victims" in the long conflict. "Let us sign a final agreement for peace."

But Abbas, Netanyahu, and Obama all agreed that the nascent process is already threatened by groups that will seek to upend it in the months ahead.

Earlier in the day, Obama condemned the fatal shooting Tuesday of four Israeli settlers in the West Bank. The armed wing of the Islamist group Hamas claimed responsibility for the killing, which Obama called "senseless slaughter" after his meeting with Netanyahu.

Hamas does not recognize Israel's right to exist, and has opposed the renewal of direct talks between Abbas and the Israeli government.

Abbas's secular Fatah movement was driven from Gaza by Hamas in 2007 during months of what amounted to a Palestinian civil war. Those divisions within the Palestinian national movement have yet to heal, likely hindering Abbas' ability to enforce any peace agreement that he might reach with Israel.

"The tragedy that we saw yesterday, where people were gunned down on the street by terrorists who are purposely trying to undermine these talks, is an example of what we're up against," Obama said.

Those threats persisted Wednesday when an Israeli couple was wounded in a shooting attack on their car in the West Bank.

King Abdullah II told the East Room audience: "Time is not on our side."

"If hopes are disappointed again, the price of failure will be too high for all," he said. "Our people expect us to rise to their high expectations."

Correspondent Janine Zacharia in Jerusalem and Mary Beth Sheridan in Washington contributed to this report.

Post a Comment

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)

Submit

Comments that include profanity or personal attacks or other inappropriate comments or material will be removed from the site. Additionally, entries that are unsigned or contain "signatures" by someone other than the actual author will be removed. Finally, we will take steps to block users who violate any of our posting standards, terms of use or privacy policies or any other policies governing this site. Please review the [full rules](#) governing commentaries and discussions. You are fully responsible for the content that you post.

Sponsored Links

Business On Main

Join The Community of Ideas, Tools, & Resources, Connected by Sprint!
www.BusinessOnMain.com

The Top 10 Golf Mistakes?

Play Best Golf of Your Life in Just 2 weeks - 10 Free Video Lessons
PeakPerformanceGolfSwing.com

Loan Modification Relief

Do You Qualify? Find Instantly. 9 Million Homeowners can benefit now.
Save-My-Home.org

[Buy a link here](#)

Sponsored Links

Business On Main

Join The Community of Ideas, Tools, & Resources, Connected by Sprint!
www.BusinessOnMain.com

Loan Modification Relief

Do You Qualify? Find Instantly. 9 Million Homeowners can benefit now.
Save-My-Home.org

The Top 10 Golf Mistakes?

Play Best Golf of Your Life in Just 2 weeks - 10 Free Video Lessons
PeakPerformanceGolfSwing.com

[Buy a link here](#)