

Abbas Agrees to Suspend ICC Action Against Israel

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Palestinian Authority (PA) Chairman Mahmoud Abbas will temporarily refrain from unilateral action against Israel to give U.S.-brokered peace talks a chance to resume, a PA official told AFP on Thursday.

"Abbas and the Palestinian leadership have decided to give a sufficient chance for (U.S. Secretary of State John) Kerry's efforts to succeed," the official said on condition of anonymity.

For around two months, Abbas and the Palestinian Authority would suspend all unilateral measures through United Nations agencies and would refrain from taking a case against Israel to the International Criminal Court, he said.

During the two months, "the Palestinian leadership will not make new demands to UN agencies," the official told AFP, adding that this would give Kerry enough time to set up a framework in which peace negotiations might take place.

The remarks came just days ahead of a visit by Kerry, who will hold fortnightly meetings with Israeli and PA leaders as he tries to revive the stalled peace process.

The official warned, however, that if Israel failed to halt construction in Judea, Samaria and eastern Jerusalem -- a longtime PA precondition for any talks to take place -- the entity would immediately begin working through the international bodies again.

"Settlement building in E1 is a red line and erecting so much as one stone in the area... would destroy the (possibility of a) two-state solution," he said.

Last week it was reported that Abbas plans an appeal to the International Criminal Court at The Hague if other measures to stop new Israeli construction in Judea, Samaria and eastern Jerusalem fail.

Last month, Issa Karaka, the Palestinian Authority's Minister for Prisoner Affairs, urged Abbas to enroll the PA in as many international organizations as possible as quickly as is feasible, in order to capitalize on the recognition the PA received at the United Nations last year and use its standing in the international community to sue and prosecute Israel.

Karaka said that the PA should join the Geneva Convention, and once admitted, use the Convention's provisions to prosecute Israel in the International Criminal Court for “crimes against the Palestinian nation,” he said.

Kerry is planning to pressure Israel and the PA to resume the negotiations, which have been stalled for nearly three years, and reportedly plans to offer the sides an outline which would see Israel releasing terrorists from its prisons and transferring areas from Area B, which is under joint PA-Israeli control under the Oslo Accords, to Area A which is under full PA control.

Kerry's outline would have the PA undertaking a return to the negotiating table and promising not to file lawsuits against Israel with the International Criminal Court.

Abbas has continuously imposed preconditions on peace talks and has demanded that Israel freeze Jewish construction in Judea, Samaria, and eastern Jerusalem. When Israel froze construction for a ten-month period in 2010, however, he refused to come to the table.