
Hamas to respond to Egypt proposal next week

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Egypt intelligence chief Omar Suleiman

A Hamas official reported Wednesday that Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas, will respond to Egypt's latest proposal for restoring internal Palestinian unity next week

Salah al-Bardaweel, a senior Hamas lawmaker, said a delegation from his movement will visit Cairo on Sunday and will meet Egypt's intelligence chief Omar Suleiman a day later to hand out Hamas' responses to the Egyptian initiative.

The proposal calls for holding Palestinian general elections by the middle of 2010 in a bid to give Hamas and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah movement more time to bridge gaps between them.

The elections are meant to overcome the consequences of Hamas' 2007 violent takeover of the Gaza Strip and ensure political split with the West Bank, ruled by the Fatah-dominated Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Al-Bardaweel said that Hamas' reply to the Egyptian offer "will reflect positive reactions on some points and will present notes on others, but it won't be 100 percent positive."

Hamas has earlier stated that it has reservations on rebuilding the security services in Gaza and the West Bank and reforming the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), two of the issues that are still outstanding in the Egyptian-sponsored Palestinian national dialogue.

According to al-Bardaweel, Damascus-based Hamas politburo chief Khaled Mashaal will head the delegation which also comprises leaders from the Gaza Strip.

After Egypt receives Hamas' response, it will invite the Palestinian factions for a broad meeting in Cairo to continue the dialogue, Fawzi Barhoum, a Hamas spokesman, told reporters in Gaza Wednesday.

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