

Arabs urge Israel to do more for Mideast peace

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Egypt's Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit

The foreign ministers of three Arab countries today accused Israel of failing to show the necessary political will to resolve its long-running conflict with the Palestinians and expressed frustration at the continued failure to reach a solution, according to un.org

Egypt's Ahmed Aboul Gheit said the events of the past year had confirmed suspicions that Israel was not genuinely determined to "achieve a just peace" with the Palestinians, despite numerous meetings, visits and contacts from the international community to broker a deal.

"Throughout this year, Israel has shown a lack of the necessary political will to engage in serious and credible negotiations that aim at reaching a final settlement to the conflict, a settlement which includes all its aspects, issues and tracks, and leads to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the entire Palestinian national land, occupied since 1967, and with East Beit-ul-Moqaddas as its capital," he said.

Aboul Gheit, who was speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), called for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians to resume as soon as possible, and urged the international community to put forward a formula for a final settlement.

He also stressed that Israel must completely freeze settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories, "not only because it is contrary to international law and should be halted, but also in order to build a climate of trust between the two parties, hence allowing negotiations on the final status to bear fruit."

Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates said the situation in the Middle East had deteriorated because of "the continued hostile attitude of the Israeli Government," expressed notably in "the suffocating blockade imposed on the Palestinian and Arab territories, particularly in Gaza."

The Foreign Minister said the Palestinian people will not enjoy independence, freedom and economic prosperity until "Israeli occupation is completely ended, the separation wall is dismantled, the settlements are removed from the occupied territories, the inalienable legitimate rights of the Palestinian people are restored and the Palestinian Authority is enabled to possess all the attributes and components of an independent State."

But he expressed support for the positions voiced by United States President Barack Obama during his speech to the General Assembly on Wednesday, saying it contained "solid foundations" for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Nasser Judeh of Jordan said that as far back as 2002, the Arab world had adopted a proposal — known as the Arab Peace Initiative — that called for a two-State solution to the Middle East conflict.

Yet Israel had not accepted this choice of a "just and comprehensive" solution, and a good-faith response from the Government was now necessary.

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