

## Palestinian factions close to unity

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Hamas political leader Khaled Meshaal says a recent Egyptian-proposed initiative to heal rifts among Palestinian factions is a positive step toward reconciliation

Speaking to reporters after a meeting with head of Egyptian intelligence, Omar Suleiman, Meshaal said on Monday that the proposals pave the way for settling differences with the rival Fatah faction of Acting Palestinian Authority Chief ,Mahmoud Abbas.

"Our meeting was extremely positive. We tackled many issues pertaining to this proposal and we think this proposal is a good basis to achieve Palestinian reconciliation", Meshaal said.

He added, however, that his resistance movement has suggested a number of changes to the initiative before signing the final draft in October.

The Egyptian proposal, aimed at reaching a national unity agreement, calls for the formation of an advisory committee to oversee Gaza's security and the release of political prisoners.

The committee, which would be headed by Abbas, would supervise the deployment of nearly 3,000 PA security personnel in Gaza to operate jointly with Hamas in the region to oversee the release of detainees from both sides, Israeli daily Haaretz reported.

The initiative also calls for holding presidential and parliamentary elections in 2010. Hamas has repeatedly said that the vote must be held only after reconciliation is achieved.

Fatah, which rules the West Bank, and Hamas have been divided since 2007 when Hamas -- the democratically elected ruler of the Gaza Strip -- took control of the coastal territory.

Fatah has already agreed to the Egyptian proposal.

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