

Hamas, Fatah to sign peace pact Oct 25

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Mahmoud Abbas

Egypt has been mediating for over a year to heal the split between the Fatah group of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas since the Islamist movement took control of the Gaza Strip in a brief civil war.

The pact, if signed, could pave the way for presidential and parliamentary elections to be held next year.

Fatah administers the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Hamas rules Gaza -- the two territories where Palestinians want to establish their future state following a peace deal with Israel.

The pact calls for a joint committee of members from Hamas, Fatah and other political parties that would liaise between the internationally isolated Hamas government in Gaza and Abbas's Western-backed Palestinian Authority in Ramallah.

Hamas would also be able to supervise a joint police force in Gaza in the run-up to the June elections, something Fatah sees as cementing Hamas control there after what it calls the "coup" of June 2007. The pact is expected to end a dispute between the two rivals over hundreds of political detainees jailed in the two territories.

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