

Palestinian negotiators: Washington killing peace process

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Palestinian negotiators rejected recent statements by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in which she said that the continued construction of Israeli settlements on occupied Arab territory should not stand in the way of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks

Clinton also said that any restriction on settlement building would represent an "unprecedented concession" by Israel.

"There won't be a Palestinian state to negotiate for if settlements aren't dismantled," chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Ereikat told CNN, accusing Clinton of effectively "killing" the peace process. "There can't be a two-state solution as such."

Palestinian representative to the Arab League (AL) Barakat al-Farra said he planned to call for a meeting of the AL General Assembly in order to discuss the current deadlock in the peace process.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu declared that new settlement construction would be "restricted" to 3000 housing units in the West Bank.

He added that building in East Jerusalem should not be considered settlement construction per se, but rather the "natural result" of population growth.

Youssef Salama, a preacher at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque, warned that Israel would soon make a bid to demolish the Islamic shrine. "Jerusalem will always remain an Arab-Islamic city," he said, calling on all Arab and Muslim countries to combat the ongoing "Judaization" of the city.

In a related development, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul-Gheit announced that a meeting of the Union for the Mediterranean, originally slated for 23 November, had been postponed.

The move comes within the context of unanimous Arab refusal to meet with Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman in light of his extremist positions, which contradict the union's stated aims.

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