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From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, October 10, 2011 5:13 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Israel accepts EU invitation to meet Palestinians (Reuters)

From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Monday, October 10, 2011 05:09 PM
To: NEWS-NEA; NEWS-Mahogany
Cc: SES-O_Shift-III; SES-O_OS
Subject: Israel accepts EU invitation to meet Palestinians (Reuters)

JERUSALEM, Oct 10 (Reuters) - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday accepted a European Union invitation to meet Palestinian leaders in an effort to restart peace talks, his office said in a statement.

Netanyahu told EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton in a telephone conversation that he "is happy to meet (Palestinian President) Mahmoud Abbas at any time," said the statement.

The invitation, announced by Ashton on Sunday, has little chance of breaking a diplomatic impasse and restarting peace talks, which have been frozen for more than a year.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has demanded that Israel halt all settlement building in the occupied West Bank before Palestinians will restart talks. Israel has made clear it is not ready to do that.

Last month, Abbas formally asked the United Nations to recognise a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, territories Israel captured in a 1967 war.

Abbas's U.N. bid is strongly opposed by Israel and the United States who say only a negotiated peace deal can end the Middle East conflict and create a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

No further details on the invitation were given by the Prime Minister's office. Spokesmen for both Abbas and the Israeli government were not immediately available for comment.

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