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From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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Subject: Norway backs Palestinian path to U.N. vote (Reuters)

OSLO (Reuters) - Norway said on Monday it was "perfectly legitimate" for Palestinians to take their case for statehood to the United Nations for voting in September.

"We will consider very carefully the proposed text that's to be put forward by the Palestinians in the coming weeks," said Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere, with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas beside him at a press conference.

"Norway believes it is perfectly legitimate for the Palestinian president to turn to the United Nations with such proposals," Stoere said, adding that continued negotiations with Israel will be required in any case.

The United States and Israel have opposed Abbas's plan, backed by the Arab League, to bring the Palestinians' long quest for statehood to a vote in New York.

Abbas said on Monday the plan was still on.

"We will seek to go to the U.N. next September in order to obtain membership for the state of Palestine," he said.

He added: "Our way is to go to the Security Council. If we fail we will go to the General Assembly."

Norwegian diplomats said U.N. membership would require approval by the Security Council, where the United States holds veto power, but that a resolution on statehood could go straight to the U.N. General Assembly.

Stoere said Norway would decide how to vote after reading the exact proposal but left little doubt about his inclination.

"I don't think that any Palestinians or anybody around the world are in doubt that Norway supports Palestinians' right to statehood," he said. "That has to be accompanied by a process of negotiation, which at the moment is stalling."

He and Abbas signed a document upgrading the Palestinian Authority's representative in Norway to ambassadorial rank, as several other European nations have done.

Norway chairs a group of Palestinian donor nations, some of which have contributed to a funding crisis for Abbas by not fulfilling funding pledges. Stoere implored them to pay up.

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