

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Sunday, February 12, 2012 4:05 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Abbas speech in Cairo

RELEASE IN PART
1.4(B),B1,1.4(D),B6

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Fyi

----- Original Message -----

From: Hale, David M
Sent: Sunday, February 12, 2012 03:46 PM
To: Rubinstein, Daniel H; Feltman, Jeffrey D; Sullivan, Jacob J; Walles, Jacob; Wells, Alice G; Sawyer, Julie L; Patterson, Anne W; Shapiro, Daniel B (Tel Aviv); Jones, Stuart (Amman); 'Steven_N_Simon' [redacted]
[redacted] Schwartz, Jonathan B
Cc: Rangaswamy, Roopa; 'Robert_P_Waller' [redacted] Lempert, Yael; Wate [redacted]
John R; S_SpecialAssistants; Ryu, Rexon Y
Subject: Re: Abbas speech in Cairo

B6

B1
1.4(B)
1.4(D)

----- Original Message -----

From: Rubinstein, Daniel H
Sent: Sunday, February 12, 2012 01:55 PM
To: Feltman, Jeffrey D; Hale, David M; Sullivan, Jacob J; Walles, Jacob; Wells, Alice G; Sawyer, Julie L; Patterson, Anne W; Shapiro, Daniel B (Tel Aviv); Jones, Stuart (Amman); 'Steven_N_Simon' [redacted]
Schwartz, Jonathan B
Cc: Rangaswamy, Roopa; 'Robert_P_Waller' [redacted] Lempert, Yael; Waters, John R; S_SpecialAssistants; Ryu, Rexon Y
Subject: Abbas speech in Cairo

B6

I spoke to Erekat briefly after the AL meeting in Cairo ended to discuss President Abbas's speech, which was delivered on live television earlier this evening.

As you can see in the informal draft gist/transcript pasted below, Abbas left the door open to negotiations, but he did so in the context of an affirmation that doing so would require settlement cessation (he explicitly references the problems of private tenders and East Jerusalem), acceptance of the 1967 lines, and a release of pre-Oslo prisoners. At the end of the speech, he mentions the fact that he will send a letter to PM Netanyahu, and then goes on to say the Palestinians will move on to the UNSC, UNGA, and to seek to apply the Geneva Conventions (in the occupied territories). At the end, he says we will do this "within days," but it wasn't clear what the "this" refers to. Erekat didn't seem 100% certain, but thought it was a reference to sending the letter. Consistent with what he said earlier, he noted that the measures themselves would play out in weeks assuming a satisfactory (in the Palestinian view) response wasn't received from the GOI, at one point noting the desire/intent to wait until the end of March to see what could emerge in terms of Israel's reaction.

The call was cut short as he was boarding a plane in Cairo, but Erekat confirmed a meeting for David and me in Amman with Abbas tomorrow where we will try to gain additional clarity on the way ahead.

After thanking the Arab League for dedicating time to the Palestinian cause in today's meeting, Abbas said there were two key issues he intended to address: reconciliation, and the peace process.

On reconciliation, he noted that current efforts had been undertaken to address the Hamas coup in the Gaza Strip five years ago, and thanked Egypt for removing obstacles in the process, noting that the factions agreed to the GOE-drafted reconciliation agreement (albeit after some time) and subsequently reached an agreement on the formation of an interim PA cabinet under the auspices of Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa al-Thani of Qatar (the "Doha Declaration").

Abbas said that under the terms of that agreement, he will head the interim PA cabinet until elections are held. That cabinet, he said, has two primary tasks: holding elections (for both the PA and the PLO/PNC), and implementing reconstruction projects in Gaza. On the latter point he noted that "donors pledged millions but nothing has happened" since the conclusion of Operation Cast Lead, and said he plans to call for a donor conference after the new, interim PA cabinet forms.

Abbas said that it won't be possible to hold elections before the Palestinian Central Elections Commission (CEC) is permitted by the de facto Hamas authorities in Gaza to update the Gaza voter registry (which has not been updated, according to Abbas, for five years), estimating that 250,000 - 300,000 Gaza voters need to be registered.

He insisted that it is imperative that the GOI permit national elections to be held in East Jerusalem as they were in 1996, 2005, and 2006, saying he will reach out to "friends" in Israel on this topic. Unless voting can take place in Jerusalem, Abbas said, "we cannot hold elections ... because it means we would undermine the status of Jerusalem."

Abbas said that should all necessary prerequisites be fulfilled, it will take the CEC three months to prepare for national elections, which he said he hoped can take place in June or July of this year, while adding "I don't know when exactly." (Note: Other observers say that technical requirements put the earliest possible date for elections later in the summer at this point, perhaps in the late August/early September timeframe.)

On the subject of negotiations, Abbas reviewed the Palestinian version of the recent history of the Quartet's efforts, asserting that in September 2011, the Quartet issued a statement saying that the parties "need to agree on borders and security in three months," after which, on October 26, 2011, the Quartet said that "within two months," the parties would "finalize everything." Abbas claimed that after this failed to materialize, the Palestinians turned to the "gracious initiative of King Abdallah."

Abbas said the Palestinians provided their positions on borders and security in the context of the GOI-sponsored talks, agreeing that a borders agreement will be based on the 1967 lines with limited swaps, and that a third party presence (non-Israeli) would be acceptable on security. However, Abbas claimed, "the Israelis did not however respond with anything reliable, serious or anything that can be build on. This is where things stand."

Abbas noted that "In a few weeks, we will mark ten years for launching the Arab League Peace Initiative plan," adding, "We tell the Israelis on every occasion that this is a golden (precious) opportunity for peace. The Israelis, however, did not even consider this initiative."

He said that the USG had sought to present a package of CBMs to include prisoner releases and the transfer of West Bank territory from Area C to Area B and A regimes. Abbas said the Palestinians had accepted these proposals after being assured that they would not become a subject of negotiations, but that Abbas asserted the Israelis did not respond.

Abbas dismissed what he characterized as recent Israeli offers to release "some" prisoners and stop issuing public (vice private) tenders for new settlement construction in the West Bank, saying that the GOI had previously agreed to release all approximately 130 of the remaining "pre-Oslo" Palestinian prisoners it holds and subsequently failed to follow through, and that (according to Abbas) the fact that 90% of new settlement tenders are private meant that even if the

GOI upheld that pledge, "Israel would not stop settlement activity." He said, "Settlement activity is everywhere. We may wake up one day to find they are building a settlement in the Muqata'a," adding that "East Jerusalem does not exist anymore."

Abbas charged that the Israelis "fail to recognize 1967 lines," adding that in the recent Israeli-Palestinian talks in Amman, "they failed to provide their positions and did not present maps. They want us to accept Israel as a Jewish state. We cannot do so because we know what the consequences are. We recognized Israel as a state during the Arafat and Rabin era. Even President Truman did not recognize Israel as a Jewish state."

Abbas said that "in light of all of this," the Palestinians intend to send a "lengthy" letter to PM Netanyahu affirming the Palestinian position that the resumption of negotiations requires a settlement halt, Israeli acceptance of the 1967 lines as terms of reference for negotiations, and the release of Palestinian prisoners, including those held since before Oslo-era agreements. He noted that the letter will include a review of the Palestinian view on Israeli violations of previous agreements.

Abbas said the letter will also state that the Palestinians "cannot accept the status quo" and that in the view of the Palestinian leadership, the "PA is no longer in existence" and that the Israeli Ministry of Defense's Civil Administration governance responsibilities in the West Bank have been reinstated.

Abbas said that similar letters of notification will be sent to other countries, who will be given a chance to respond (of unspecified duration) before the Palestinians take steps in other international fora, such as approaching the UNSC and UNGA, as well as seeking application of the Geneva Conventions in the Palestinian Territories. Abbas concluded, "maybe the international organizations can do us 'good' where the Quartet was unable to do so," adding that "We know that we went to UNESCO [for membership] we were punished twice by the U.S. Congress ... we anticipated obstacles."

On the time-frame for next steps by the Palestinian side, Abbas said, "we will do this within days."