

Donald Trump Pessimistic on Israeli-Palestinian Peace Deal

Donald Trump, who has argued his experience negotiating tough real estate deals makes him best qualified to be U.S. president, said on Wednesday it might be impossible to forge a lasting peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

During a televised town hall session hosted by MSNBC in South Carolina, Trump, the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination, said he believed getting a deal done would be "very, very tough."

The remarks were notable not only because Trump rarely discusses Israel or the Mideast peace process on the campaign trail, but also because they seemed to show a shift in Trump's views on the feasibility of a deal.

Trump said in December he would start working on a deal between the two sides within the first six months of taking office if elected. In those earlier comments, he also said he thought a deal would be hard to make, but added he thought it depended whether the Israelis really wanted to make one.

In his comments on Wednesday, Trump said he'd heard from an Israeli that "the other side has been trained from the time they're children to hate Jewish people," and that was why a deal might not work. "You have one side in particular growing up and learning that these are the worst people," he said.

"I would say if you can do that deal you can do any deal," he added. "That's probably the toughest deal in the world right now to make and it's possible it's not makeable."

The town hall was part of Trump's final push to translate his substantial lead in the South Carolina polls to a victory in the state's Republican primary election, which takes place on Saturday. He also appeared before South Carolina audiences on Wednesday in the towns of Bluffton, Walterboro and Sumter.

Trump said he'd still try to get a peace deal done, even if the odds for success were slim: "I'm going to give it a shot."

(Editing by Michael Perry)

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