

President Trump: Palestinians Must Renounce Radical Islamic Terrorism

Ahead of his meeting later this month with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Donald Trump hosted Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas at the White House on Wednesday as part of his effort to restart peace negotiations.

They held a joint press conference in the Roosevelt Room before beginning their discussions. The president was courteous, and even offered a little bit of praise, but was also pointed in his expectations of the Palestinians.

"I'm committed to working with Israel and the Palestinians to reach an agreement," he said. "But any agreement cannot be imposed by the United States, or by any other nation. The Palestinians and Israelis must work together to reach an agreement that allows both peoples to live, worship, and thrive and prosper in peace.

"I will do whatever is necessary to facilitate the agreement—to mediate, to arbitrate anything they'd like to do. But I would love to be a mediator or an arbitrator or a facilitator. And we will get this done."

Noting that Abbas has been an outspoken opponent of ISIS, the president also noted that the destruction of the terrorist organization is a component of the peace process. Palestinian security forces have a role to play in that effort, he said, but the Palestinian leadership also needs to step up.

"[T]here cannot be lasting peace unless the Palestinian leaders speak in a unified voice against incitement [of] violence and hate," he said. "There's such hatred. But

hopefully there won't be such hatred for very long. All children of God must be taught to value and respect human life, and condemn all of those who target the innocent."

The president also stated that as part of his administration's effort to advance the peace negotiations, he would be discussing with Abbas ways in which the U.S. can assist the Palestinians "unlock the potential" of their people through new economic opportunities. The Palestinian president said he looked forward to the day he could sign the final peace agreement between his people and Israel.

But, as has been a problem in the past, it came with conditions.

"Mr. President, our strategic option, our strategic choice is to bring about peace based on the vision of the two-state—a Palestinian state with its capital of East Jerusalem that lives in peace and stability with the state of Israel based on the borders of 1967," he said. "Mr. President, for us to bring about a comprehensive and just peace based on the two-state solution, such matter would give a great impetus to the Arab peace initiative and the other initiatives, international initiatives—as well as it enables to fight and deter terrorism, and fight the criminal ISIS group, ISIS—that is totally innocent and has nothing to do with our noble religion. And that also, if we create peace that is just and comprehensive, that will also lead the Arab and the Islamic countries to have normal relations with Israel based, as stipulated in the previous Arab summits, the latest of which was the Arab summit in Jordan."

Referring to "the Israeli occupation," Abbas made it clear—while sounding conciliatory—that he was going to stick to his position. And although he spoke of Jews, Christians and Muslims one day "living in harmony" in the Holy Land, Rep. Doug Collins, R-Ga., has sounded the alarm about "retaliation" against Palestinians who dared to celebrate with their Israeli

neighbors in the West Bank region.

“I believe it is critical that courageous Palestinians who develop relations with their Israeli neighbors feel secure to do so without fear of retaliation,” he wrote in a letter to the president. “The United States can help promote the cause of peace by encouraging Israelis and Palestinians to engage in dialogue—especially those who live in the disputed territories.” {eoa}