

Trump Envoy Meets With Israeli and Palestinian Leaders

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with President Donald Trump's special representative for international negotiations, Jason Greenblatt, for more than five hours in Jerusalem Monday night amid the Trump administration's efforts to jump-start Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, which have been frozen since 2014.

One of the first signs of the Trump administration's interest in pursuing a new peace initiative occurred last week, when the U.S. president held his first phone conversation with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. During the conversation, Trump invited the Palestinian leader to visit the White House and, according to a statement released by the White House, "emphasized his personal belief that peace is possible and that the time has come to make a deal."

Monday's meeting between Greenblatt and Netanyahu covered a broad range of issues, from settlement construction to bolstering the Palestinian economy.

According to an official statement from the Israeli prime minister's office, Netanyahu and Greenblatt reiterated their nations' mutual desire to develop a comprehensive framework for an enduring Israeli-Palestinian peace "that strengthens the security of Israel and enhances stability in the region."

Netanyahu, the meeting readout said, told Greenblatt that he looks forward to working with the new U.S. administration and that he believes achieving peace between the Jewish state and its regional neighbors, including the Palestinians, is possible "under President Trump's leadership." Greenblatt reaffirmed the Trump administration's commitment to

safeguarding the Jewish state's security and to achieving lasting peace between the Palestinians and Israel "through direct negotiations."

Greenblatt and Netanyahu discussed Israeli settlement construction and how to approach that issue from a vantage point that is "consistent" with the goal of advancing security and peace. In early February, responding to Israel's announcements of intentions to build nearly 6,000 new settlement units, the White House had said, "While we don't believe the existence of settlements is an impediment to peace, the construction of new settlements or the expansion of existing settlements beyond their current borders may not be helpful in achieving that goal."

Moreover, Greenblatt underscored "how important enabling the growth of the Palestinian economy and improving the quality of life for Palestinians are to President Trump." Netanyahu assured Greenblatt of his commitment to increasing Palestinian prosperity "as a means of bolstering the prospects for peace," the Israeli leader's office stated.

Following his meeting with Netanyahu, Greenblatt was scheduled to meet Tuesday with PA leader Abbas in Ramallah. According to Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki, the meeting between Greenblatt and Abbas would primarily focus on the Palestinian leader's upcoming trip to Washington, D.C.

Greenblatt, an Orthodox Jew from Teaneck, N.J., worked as a real estate lawyer with Trump over the course of the past two decades and also advised Trump on Israel during last year's election campaign.

Lending insight into his approach toward negotiations, Greenblatt had said in a June 2016 interview, jointly published by The Jewish Link of New Jersey and , that "you need to listen to the other side, you have to try to piece together everything to try to address as many issues as you

can, with both sides satisfied that a fair and appropriate deal has been struck. Not everyone is happy all the time.”

“I am not diminishing the concept of a peace deal or a relationship; they are complicated and there are lots of layers,” he said, “but people like Donald [Trump], who are skilled negotiators, and people on his team who have worked on transactions large and small over the course of their careers, are well-suited to these things.” {eoa}

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