

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Negotiations Stalled

With increasing reports of breakdowns in Israeli-Palestinian **conflict negotiations** and attempts to jumpstart them by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, the parties involved in trying to create a framework for a negotiated peace deal are growing more distrustful of one another—and neither party particularly trusts the role of the U.S.

Kerry last week warned that should **peace** not advance between the parties, Israel could face growing isolation in the international community as well as violence.

“The alternative to getting back to the talks is the potential of chaos. I mean, does Israel want a third intifada?” Kerry said in an interview that was broadcast on both Israeli and Palestinian TV networks.

“If we do not find the way to find peace, there will be an increasing isolation of **Israel**. There will be an increasing campaign of delegitimization of Israel that has been taking place in an international basis,” he said.

Yet many Israeli citizens and leaders are choosing not to heed what they consider to be empty warnings from Kerry.

“It’s a funny argument [Kerry is] making. This administration simply doesn’t see reality,” professor Efraim Inbar, director of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies and professor of political studies at Bar-Ilan University, told .

According to Inbar, threatening Israel does not create the necessary conditions for peace. With America’s lack of success in bringing about peaceful resolutions and conditions in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Egypt, Israelis are as skeptical as ever that the U.S. can play a productive role in negotiating

peace in Israel. The latest monthly peace index poll from Tel Aviv University's Israel Democracy Institute showed that 73 percent of Israelis do not believe the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict negotiations will lead to **peace**.

"It's not just on this issue that the Americans display such naiveté, but it's across the board. It's Iran, it's their policies vis-à-vis Pakistan, Russia, it's everything," Inbar said.

Israel is not alone in its skepticism, Inbar explained. "We are not the only ones complaining about Obama's foreign policy. The Saudis are complaining, the Egyptians are complaining," he said.

Israeli leaders quickly downplayed Kerry's warnings. Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon said, "There is no need to fear threats of whether there will or won't be a third intifada."

According to Inbar, an **intifada** is not a likely outcome of failed negotiations, since the Palestinians are bent on proving that Israel is the primary obstacle to a peace deal. Furthermore, the Israel Defense Forces is well prepared to quickly handle any uptick in Palestinian violence, he said.

"I'm not really sure that an intifada will erupt, and if the Palestinians have a clear interest [in a violent uprising]," Inbar told . "We can beat them again. The Palestinians remember what happened the last time they started a cycle of violence at the beginning of this century."

A new Arab World for Research and Development (AWRAD) poll showed that while 60 percent of Palestinians believe there is a possibility of a third intifada erupting in the near future, only 31 percent say they would participate in it.

Palestinian leaders, meanwhile, are reportedly worried over the prospects of a peace agreement, which could cause their already fragile popularity among their constituents to

wane—the AWRAD poll said 40 percent of residents in both the West Bank and Gaza don't feel their leadership has given them sufficient information about the current negotiations. Palestinian negotiator Muhammad Shtayyeh hinted Monday that the Palestinian Authority might prefer forgoing a signed agreement if such an agreement would mean compromising on some of the Palestinian demands.

"In the absence of political will from the Israeli side to take the negotiations seriously, we believe that it is better not to reach a deal than to reach a bad deal," Shtayyeh said in a statement reported by the AFP news service.

Among the Palestinian public, the AWRAD poll revealed that only 34 percent are optimistic that the current negotiations will produce positive results, while 54 percent are not optimistic.

Kerry has been echoing the sentiments of U.S. President Barack Obama in suggesting that the current status quo in Israel is unsustainable, whereby Jewish communities governed by Israel are interspersed in the Palestinian Authority-controlled West Bank.

Responding to Israelis who state "We're not in a day-to-day conflict, we're doing pretty well economically," Kerry said, "Well, I've got news for you, today's status quo will not be tomorrow's or next year's. Because if we don't resolve this issue, the Arab world, the Palestinians, neighbors, others, are going to begin again to push in a different way."

On this latest trip, Kerry denied growing rumors that the U.S would propose its own solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should the two parties fail to deliver a negotiated agreement. At the same time, Kerry is warning the Jewish state of increasing international isolation if it fails to produce a peace deal. But Inbar told , "It's an empty threat. Israel is not isolated."

According to Inbar, Israel has improving relations with many countries around the world—including in Europe, as far east as China and even in the Middle East. The same cannot be said of the Palestinians, he said.

“Most countries simply don’t care about the Palestinian issue. How many protests did we see during the Arab Spring about the Palestinian issue?” Inbar said.

Yet honoring America’s push for a **negotiated settlement**, even in the unlikely scenario of a peace deal, is a responsibility that Israel must bear, Inbar believes.

“After all, America is our greatest ally. We are deferential to the Americans. It is very difficult for us to tell them to stay home,” he said.

Recent reports stated that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could agree to a peace framework in which signing a deal would bring about the permanent end to all hostilities, and that Israel would be recognized officially by Arab nations as a Jewish state.

Netanyahu is “simply trying to buy time, to minimize the damage to Israel, to convince the international community that Iran is taking the Americans for a ride,” Inbar said.

“This will not be the first round of negotiation that failed and nothing happened,” he said.