

Palestinian Prime Minister Says Conditions Not Ripe for Negotiations with Israel

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- Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said conditions are not ripe for a resumption of peace talks.
- Israeli President Shimon Peres called for immediate negotiations, and asserted that Iran is the main obstacle to peace.
- The theme of the 42nd World Economic Forum [Annual Meeting](#) is The Great Transformation: Shaping New Models. For more information, visit <http://wef.ch/Davos>

Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, 26 January 2012 – “ Conditions are not ripe or right ” for a meaningful resumption of direct negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority Salam Fayyad told World Economic Forum participants in a debate with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres today.

In a session that showed a gulf between Peres and Fayyad on the day that the deadline for progress in Israeli-Palestinian talks expired, they were asked whether hope for peace between the two sides is still possible. “ Right now, one would have to work really hard to be hopeful, ” said Fayyad, adding that the peace process has “ never been so lacking in focus ” since its launch nearly two decades ago.

Peres, however, expressed hope that progress could be achieved soon and called for direct negotiations to begin at once. “ We need a bouquet of agreements, which won ’ t cover all the issues, to enable the Palestinians and Israel to keep open the negotiations, ” he said. “ I believe if we negotiate, peace will come maybe sooner than we think. ”

Peres criticized as “ arbitrary ” the deadline imposed by the Quartet of Middle East mediators – the United States, the United Nations, Russia and the European Union – which expired today with no progress achieved in the talks that aimed at reviving negotiations. “ Under tension and pressure, we will make mistakes, ” he said.

Iran poses the greatest threat to Middle East peace, Peres asserted. “ They want to be the hegemon and they don ’ t want peace, ” he added, citing as evidence Tehran ’ s support of two armed groups that are sworn foes of Israel: the Palestinian group Hamas and Lebanon ’ s Hezbollah.

Praising European measures to pressure Iran over its nuclear programme, Peres said the international community must pressure the Islamic state on its human rights record and give Iranians hope that they can oust their government.

Fayyad pointed out that 18 years after the Oslo peace process was launched, it is unclear what President Peres means by his support for a two-state solution. “ What kind of state does he have in mind when he says ‘ Palestinian State ’ ? ” he asked.

“ To be clear about what we mean by that: we are looking for an independent, viable state of Palestine on the territories occupied in 1967, ” added Fayyad.

Both agreed on the need for two courses of action: peace negotiations and Palestinian state building. But Fayyad said more international attention needs to be focused on the Authority ’ s lack of resources. That, he said, is due to a lack of financial assistance and the need for Palestinians to acquire Israeli permits to move or operate in 60% of the West Bank.

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