



LOBBY FOR THE UNITED NATIONS 2007-08

Background information and suggested questions for MPs

THE UN'S ROLE IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE PROCESS

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What has happened in 2007?

- **8 February:** Following weeks of fighting in Gaza between Hamas and Fatah, an agreement for a Palestinian national unity government is brokered in Mecca by Saudi Arabia. Hamas and Fatah agree to form a government, with independents serving in key ministerial posts and Hamas Prime Minister Ismael Haniya retaining his position. Hamas does not reverse its policy of non-recognition of Israel; neither the US nor Israel formally acknowledges the national unity government.
- **28 March:** Meeting in Riyadh, the Arab League re-commits itself to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. This offers a full normalisation of relations with Israel and security guarantees from the Arab states in return for an Israeli withdrawal to its pre-1967 borders, the creation of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a 'just' solution to the Palestinian refugee problem.
- **14 June:** Following the relapse into fighting between Fatah and Hamas in Gaza during May, Hamas completes a takeover of Gaza. Fatah President Mahmoud Abbas dissolves the national unity government and appoints Salam Fayyad – an independent and a respected economist – prime minister of an emergency government. Ismael Haniya dismisses the emergency government as illegal. Israel and the US offer support to the new government and President Abbas.
- **27 June:** Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair is appointed the Quartet's Special Envoy, with a brief focusing on strengthening the Palestinian economy and improving Palestinian governance.
- **25 July:** The Egyptian and Jordanian foreign ministers visit Israel to discuss the Arab League's plan with Israeli leaders.
- **20 September:** In response to rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza, Israel declares Gaza to be "hostile territory", announcing curbs in electricity and cuts in fuel supplies to the level required to meet humanitarian needs. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urges Israel to reconsider this decision.

What is the UN's role?

- The UN is a member of the Quartet, which mediates the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The other members are the EU, the US and Russia. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon represents the UN in the Quartet.
- The UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) provides education, healthcare, social services and emergency aid to over 4.4 million Palestinian refugees. In 2006, the UK contribution to UNRWA was the fourth largest.
- The UN encourages peacemaking initiatives between the parties and provides a forum for non-governmental organisations to discuss their own peacemaking and humanitarian work.

What should the UK government do through the UN and the EU?

- The UK government should support the work of the UN and the EU – which are members of the Quartet – towards achieving a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East through negotiations involving all parties to the conflict.
- During negotiations, the Quartet should focus on the final status issues:
 - the territorial limits of the states of Israel and Palestine;
 - a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem; and
 - the status of Jerusalem.
- While focusing on the final status issues, the Quartet should also promote the fulfilment of the obligations contained in Phase I of the Road Map:
 - an unconditional cessation of violence and comprehensive political reform by the Palestinians; and
 - a freezing of settlement activity and a dismantling of settlement outposts by the Israelis.
- The Quartet should build upon the Arab Peace Initiative.
- The Quartet should encourage acceptance by all Palestinian factions of its three principles:
 - non-violence;
 - recognition of Israel; and
 - acceptance of existing Israeli-Palestinian agreements.
- The three principles should be applied more flexibly in future. While non-violence should be considered a precondition of final status negotiations, predicating talks on the formal recognition of the State of Israel conflates the outcome of final status negotiations with preliminaries to such negotiations.
- The UK government, working through the EU and Quartet Special Envoy Tony Blair, should seek to strengthen the Palestinian economy and develop an international reconstruction programme.
- In order to create conducive economic and political conditions for a durable peace in the Middle East, the EU should strengthen its relations with all parties to the conflict through the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Ask your MP

- What is the government doing to create the conditions necessary to achieve peace, stability and prosperity in the region?
- What action is the government taking to ensure that the EU is active in attempts to further the Israeli-Palestinian peace process?
- What steps is the government taking to strengthen the Palestinian economy, particularly in Gaza?
- Does the government agree that political and economic support should be provided to Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza?
- What steps is the government taking to reassure Israel that its security concerns, including the threat from terrorism, are being taken seriously by the international community?
- What steps is the government taking to strengthen the Palestinian security services in order to ensure peace and stability for both Palestinians and Israelis?
- Does the government agree that, while non-violence should be a precondition for final status negotiations, talks should not be made contingent on the formal recognition of Israel?
- What is the government doing to support the UN Secretary-General in his role as the representative of the UN in the Quartet?