



NEWS

CFPN CALLS FOR MEANINGFUL DIRECT TALKS ON PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD

TORONTO - [September 19, 2011] - Only direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians can resolve their intractable conflict, but the Palestinian Authority's statehood initiative at the UN this week is understandable in light of the current stalemate, Canadian Friends of Peace Now said today.

A UN resolution that recognizes Palestinian sovereignty would, by itself, do nothing to change facts on the ground. It would not prompt the departure of one Israeli soldier or the dismantling of a single settlement in the occupied territory. In that sense, UN recognition would be a hollow gesture that serves only to deepen Israel's isolation.

A UN resolution for statehood would be surrealistic, too, in that Gaza, a major part of the proposed state, is governed by the militant Hamas, which, for its own tactical reasons, is just as opposed as Israel and the U.S. to the statehood initiative.

Nevertheless, CFPN understands President Abbas's desire to seek UN recognition of Palestinian sovereignty. We believe his initiative reflects not a rejection of negotiations in principle, but a lack of faith in Israeli sincerity, along with concern that unbridled settlement building in the occupied territory could foreclose a two-state solution.

At best, the statehood bid could be used to restart and reinvigorate the long-stalled negotiations. However, the danger is that, absent a diplomatic compromise, a U.S. veto in the Security Council would trigger violent protests by West Bank Palestinians. The danger, too, is that a Palestinian victory in the General Assembly would trigger retaliatory acts by Israel, such as withholding Palestinian tax revenues and accelerating settlement building. Both scenarios must be avoided.

Whatever the fate of the resolution presented to either the Security Council or the General Assembly this week, the pressing need is for a resumption of the peace process under creative U.S. leadership in conjunction with a renewed settlement freeze by Israel.