

**Canadian Friends of Peace Now
Shalom Achshav Peace Foundation**

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NEWS

PEACE NOW WELCOMES RENEWAL OF DIRECT ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN TALKS

TORONTO, ON—[August 23, 2010]

Canadian Friends of Peace Now (CFPN) today welcomed the announcement that Israel and the Palestinians have agreed to resume direct peace negotiations in Washington, D.C. on September 2nd, but warned that serious compromises will be needed by both sides if the optimistic predictions of a deal within 12 months are to be fulfilled.

The Obama administration deserves credit for arranging a renewal of the face-to-face negotiations that collapsed in December 2008 when Israel launched its offensive in Gaza. The proximity talks that have been taking place via U.S. envoy George Mitchell were clearly insufficient.

However, said Sheldon Gordon, President of CFPN Toronto, "it was understandable that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas was wary of entering open-ended talks with Israel. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, while giving lip service to the idea of a demilitarized Palestinian state, appears unready for the kind of concessions offered by his predecessor, Ehud Olmert."

"The first test of Mr. Netanyahu's commitment to serious negotiations will be his willingness to extend Israel's 10-month settlement freeze in the occupied territory," said Dr. Stephen Scheinberg, President of CFPN Montreal. "This freeze, though publicly limited to the West Bank, has apparently been maintained in East Jerusalem as well. It will be a reckless blow to the peace talks if the Israeli cabinet approves renewed construction activity barely days after the talks get underway."

The forces arrayed against a successful outcome are daunting. If Mr. Netanyahu unexpectedly makes a far-reaching offer to the Palestinians, Israel's right-wing coalition government is sure to collapse, forcing him to bring Kadima MKs into his Cabinet or to call new elections.

Mr. Abbas, for his part, remains locked in confrontation with the Hamas movement controlling the Gaza Strip, and cannot claim to speak for all Palestinians. While he and P.M. Salam Fayyad have done much to bring economic progress and security to the West Bank, they have done nothing to prepare their people for a modification of the Palestinian "right of return." The heavy lifting still lies ahead for negotiators on both sides.