

EU sees renewed hope for peace in Middle East

Written by Chris Perver
Friday, 13 April 2007 17:00

Link from my friend Jim...

EU Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner has stated that the European Union sees a [renewed momentum](#) for peace in the Middle East, following recent developments in the region. The announcement came as the EU Commissioner met with ["moderates"](#) in the Palestinian Authority during the week, namely the Finance Minister Salam Fayyad.

Ferrero-Waldner said the Arab Initiative - recently renewed in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the fortnightly meetings between Olmert and Abbas, and the formation of a Palestinian unity government were signs that progress is being made. Javier Solana, the High Representative for the EU Common, Foreign and Security Policy, has stated he hoped the Quartet (EU, US, UN, Russia) could meet with Israel and moderate Arab nations before the summer. Israeli Prime Minister Olmert's Office also believes that final status issues could be on the table by this

[summer](#)

Quote: *"Olmert's office on Friday said said such 'final status' issues would not be on the agenda on Sunday. 'We are not there yet. It could be possible to get to that point within the next few months, by summer,' a senior State Department official told Reuters. 'I think it has to be an effort by Israelis and Palestinians but also by Arabs too.'*

Israeli officials have also announced that Prime Minister Olmert is considering forming a [working group](#) with members of the Arab League. The group would discuss the implementation of the Arab Initiative, which offers Israel normalized relations with moderate Arab states, in return for a full withdrawal to the 1967 armistice lines and the ["right of return"](#) for thousands of Palestinians and their families to Israel proper. Olmert recently objected to letting even

[one](#)

Palestinian refugee return to Israel, but stated a future Palestinian state should deal with that issue.

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Quote: *"A senior Israeli official close to the deliberations said the proposed working group talks were "an option" under active consideration and that "initial contacts" have been made to follow up on the Riyadh summit. Another senior Israeli official said support was growing within the Israeli government to agree to the working group talks, and Olmert planned to make a final decision before a committee of Arab League members meet on Wednesday at the ministerial level in Cairo. The Israeli officials spoke on condition of anonymity because a final decision has yet to be made. Olmert's office declined to comment.*

Source [Jerusalem Post](#) , [YNet News](#) , [Alert Net](#)