Written by Chris Perver
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German media outlet Der Spiegel has revealed that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert have agreed to let the European Union monitor their fortnightly talks on moving the peace process forward. Der Spiegel said that Olmert had agreed to this after German Chancellor and EU President Angela Merkel stated regular meetings with no progress could be counter-productive, and that the EU may be able to mediate between the two leaders.

Quote: *"Berlin - The European Union is to monitor talks between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, in a concession wrung from Olmert by German Chancellor Angela Merkel during her recent visit, according to a news report. The German news magazine Der Spiegel reported Friday that Olmert had agreed in confidential talks with Merkel to make concessions to the Palestinian side. According to the unsourced report, Merkel had warned Olmert and Abbas that repeated meetings without progress would be counterproductive.*

Progress is also apparently being made on the release of Corporal Gilad Shalit. Hamas has revealed it has handed Olmert a list of Palestinian prisoners which it demands should be released in return for the Israeli hostage. The list is rumoured to contain around 1300 names, including many terrorists directly responsible for the murder of Israeli civilians. Israel has not yet agreed to the list, but Hamas leaders state that if Israel accepts it, a deal could be done within a week. Israel has stated that serious negotiations on the creation of a Palestinian state cannot begin until the hostage crisis is ended.

Quote: *"The sources said the prisoner swap deal will include children and women and leaders from different Palestinian factions including Marwan Barghouti of Fatah, Ahmed Saadat, secretary-general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and Hamas deputies and ministers who were detained after the capture of Shalit. The sources said the list includes names of 1,300 prisoners. The release of Gilad Shalit is a precondition for any possible progress in Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. A swap could also help the new Palestinian*

unity government, a coalition of Hamas and the Fatah movement, in its quest for international acceptance.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has also signalled during the weekend, that he wants rocket attacks against Israel to come to an end. Palestinian terrorists have launched over 200 Kassam rockets against Israel since last November. Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal told Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Ivanov earlier in the year, that his organization would end rocket attacks against Israel if the international boycott against Hamas could be lifted.

Quote: *"At a graduation ceremony for his presidential guard, Abbas was quoted by the official WAFA news agency as saying it was necessary that "all parties work with maximum effort, especially the presidential guard and national security forces, to spread security and safety in the homeland, end security anarchy and stop useless rockets."*

Source EarthTimes , KazInform , YNet News