Written by Chris Perver
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Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, has told WorldNetDaily that he believes the summit between President Abbas, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert, could lead to the creation of a Palestinian state . Saeb Erekat stated that they have realized the only way to create peace in the region is through the establishment of such a state. The three parties are due to meet in Jerusalem on February the 19th.

Quote: *"Israeli and Palestinian diplomatic sources told WND Olmert is expected to use the summit to offer Abbas far-reaching concessions. Asked if he expects the summit to pave the way toward an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, Erekat replied, "I don't want to create any expectations, but I will say I believe the summit will bring about bold and strategic initiatives in the direction of a Palestinian state."*

Israel Prime Minister Olmert previously stated that President Abbas would be " surprised " with what Israel had to offer the Palestinians. It was also revealed by former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres that the Israeli government is still working on the ill-fated disengage ment plan for Judea and Samaria, despite claims by the Olmert government that the plan was now unworkable. The European Union is also preparing for a major change in the political landscape of the region. Meanwhile, talks on a Palestinian unity government are also making progress. Both Palestinian leaders, President Abbas, and Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal, have stated they will not leave Mecca until an agreement is signed. Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit said a unity government was essential, if the talks between the US and Israel were to succeed...

Quote: *""The idea is not just to stop the fighting," Gheit said. The Palestinians need to have a unified delegation when Rice holds scheduled talks in Jerusalem Feb. 19 with Palestinian and Israeli leaders, the foreign minister said.*

Hamas sources also believe a deal on the formation of a unity government could be on the table within three days. It was reported earlier in the week that a deal between Hamas and Fatah may result in Prime Minister Ismael Haniyeh keeping his job, and the watering down of the Quartet's demands that Hamas recognize past Palestinian Authority agreements made with Israel under former Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Quote: *"Hamas politburo member Mohammed Nazzal told AFP that he expected an agreement "within three days at the latest". "I am optimistic about that," he said. Abbas adviser Nabil Amr gave an even tighter timeline, telling AFP he was "highly optimistic" that a deal would be reached "within 48 hours."*

Source WorldNetDaily, Jerusalem Post, YNet News