Javier Solana, the High Representative for the European Common, Foreign and Security Policy, has concluded the Madrid+15 talks, stating that the time for action in the Middle East has come. Now w here have we heard those words before? The three days of talks ended upbeat, with most parties genuinely seeking to resolve the issues in the region - that is, apart from the Syrian delegation, who attended the gathering to declare Damascus' position that Israel must return the Golan Heights full-stop. But there was a feeling that nothing had really changed in the Middle East in the past 15 years, and that unless something was done soon things could get worse. Solana stated the international community needed to focus on the Israeli-Palestinian issue...

Quote: *"EU Foreign Policy Chief Javier Solana, who attended only part of the conference, said that "the moment of action has come." "It is imperative to continue with a step-by-step approach. [UN Representative] Terje Roed-Larsen has said that the totality is 'too big,' so let us take the Israeli-Palestinian issue first," Solana continued. Outlining the formula for a successful peace process, Solana, who defined himself as "a friend of Israel and of the Palestinians," said that the process would need to be "comprehensive," and include "outside monitoring."*

Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Moratinos reiterated his idea of an international conference to look at the whole region, which the Declaration of Alicante calls for, with the opinion that things are so bad in Iran, Syria, etc. that these nations cannot possibly be held back by focusing solely on Israel and the Palestinians. He also made the bold suggestion that the Arab nations should be permitted to join the Quartet (EU, US, UN, Russia), to help formulate a plan. Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is preparing to visit the region. Last time she travelled to the Middle East, she was lambasted by the Arab press who depicted her giving birth to chimpanzee waving an Israeli flag - in reference to her statement last year that Israel's conflict with Lebanon was the " birth pangs " of the new Middle East. Still, Abbas is due to speak with Secretary Rice, who I am told is a born again Christian woman, and will present her with a plan for the creation of a temporary Palestinian state...

Quote: *"US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is set to propose "new ideas" to Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas during her trip to the region, according to a statement released by officials from the PA chairman's office on Friday. In addition, Abbas is due to suggest an alternate plan for the establishment of a Palestinian state, namely, a temporary state in accordance with the route of the security fence, the officials said.*

There have been reports last week that Hamas was prepared to accept an EU-brokered draft peace deal with Israel, one which possibly would have entailed the creation of a Palestinian state with temporary borders. But Abbas has seemingly rejected the idea.

Quote: *"Abbas reiterated that the Palestine Liberation Organization, which he heads, is responsible for negotiations with Israel. Outlining his positions in possible talks with Israel, he said he will not accept the formation of a Palestinian state in provisional borders, as Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni proposed last month in a private initiative. Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said yesterday the idea is a "non-starter."*

Question is, how is a temporary state who's border follows the peace wall any different from a state that has temporary borders? Perhaps Abbas was afraid that if Hamas made an agreement with the European Union, that would spell the end of Fatah.

Source Jerusalem Post , Jerusalem Post , Edmonton Sun