

## Palestinians Disqualify U.S. as Peace Broker

By [Nicola Nasser](#)

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The “unbreakable alliance,” which will be confirmed by the upcoming visit of President Barak Obama to Israel , will disqualify the United States as an honest broker of peace in the Arab – Israeli conflict in Palestine , a Palestinian veteran peace negotiator says.

This “unbreakable alliance” will doom whatever hopes remain during Obama’s visit for the revival of the U.S. – sponsored deadlocked “peace process,” on the resumption of which depends the very survival of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas’ leadership, and explains as well the Palestinian frustration, low expectations, unenthusiastic welcome and the absence of celebrations for their most cherished among world celebrities, in a stark contrast to the euphoria that is sweeping Israel in waiting for what the U.S. and Israeli officials are describing as an “historic” visit.

On February 19, the Israeli Prime Minister’s Office released the official [blue, red and white logo](#) that will be on all documents and signs during Obama’s visit late in March. The logo shows the words “Unbreakable Alliance” written in English and Hebrew under a combined Israeli and U.S. flags.

During his visit, Obama will become the first ever serving U.S. president to receive Israel’s presidential medal to honor the fact that he has “established the closest working military and intelligence relationship with Israel in the country’s history: joint exercises and training, increased security assistance every year, unprecedented advanced technology transfers, doubling of funding for Israel’s missile defense system, and assistance in funding for the Iron Dome system,” according to Steven L. Spiegel in *Huffington Post* late last year.

Speaking exclusively to *RFI* Hanan Ashrawi, the Palestinian veteran peace negotiator and member of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Israel’s partner in signing the defunct Oslo peace accords, said the first – term Obama administration “have just managed to buy more time for Israel” to “create facts on the (Israeli – occupied Palestinian) ground.”

“Our experience has been really tragic with this American administration,” which “started with such high hopes and tremendous promises,” but “they backed down so quickly it was incredible,” she added, to conclude: “The U.S. has disqualified itself as a peace broker.”

Therefore, “there are no plans to celebrate” Obama’s visit to Ramallah, because “they haven’t forgotten the part he played” in aborting the PLO’s efforts in 2011 to win the United Nations’ recognition of Palestine statehood as a full member and in opposing its UN recognition as a non – member observer state the next year, according to Shlomi Eldar in *Al-Monitor* on February 14. Still, to make a bad situation worse, Obama will convey the same message to Abbas during his upcoming visit, because “our position has not changed” neither to Palestinian statehood nor to Palestinian national reconciliation according to U.S.

State Department spokeswoman Olivia Nuland on February 19.

Obama will visit on the backdrop of a two -year old simmering Palestinian - U.S. political crisis, which potentially could explode in the aftermath of his visit.

The U.S. subscription to the UN recognition of Palestinian statehood would establish irrevocably the prerequisite to make or break the only viable "two - state solution" for the almost century - old conflict, because it would confirm the 1967 borders as the basis for such a solution and, consequently, will for sure defuse the time bomb of the Israeli illegal settlement enterprise in the Palestinian occupied territories and pave the way for the resumption of negotiations. However neither Obama nor the U.S. is forthcoming and they continue to "manage" the conflict instead of seriously seeking to solve it.

Earlier this month, Israel in an unprecedented move boycotted the UN Human Rights Council because a year - long investigation by the council produced a report urging that "Israel must, in compliance with article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, cease all settlement activities without preconditions. It must immediately initiate a process of withdrawal of all settlers from the OPT (occupied Palestinian territories)." The report stated that about 250 settlements were established in the Israeli -occupied Palestinian West Bank where 520,000 settlers live now, which the report said could be subject to prosecution as possible war crimes.

*Recently, Yacov Ben Efrat, the General Secretary of the Israeli DAAM Party, wrote in Challenge Magazine that when Obama arrives in the Israel - occupied Palestinian territories "he will see that his policy of appeasing the Israeli right has nearly killed the Palestinian (self- ruled) Authority" economically as well as politically, to conclude: "Having already experienced the Oslo accords, the Palestinians have already seen how the temporary becomes permanent, and there is no way they will accept this."*

"It's plain and simple: Either the settlements or peace ... even Obama won't get us abandon this principle," PLO chief negotiator Saeb Erekat was quoted as saying on February 14.

Should Obama decide to act accordingly, he may reinforce the "unbreakable alliance" with Israel to his convenience, from a Palestinian perspective. Otherwise, any initiative by Obama to resume the Palestinian - Israeli peace talks during his upcoming visit to the region will be doomed as a non - starter.

On this February 19, author Marvin Kalb wrote (<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs>): "Instead of opening his Mid-East diplomacy with a cutting critique of Israel's cantankerous settlements policy, often considered the third rail of Israeli politics, ... instead of allowing, even encouraging, a discomfiting coolness in Israeli-American relations, ... the Israelis and the Palestinians might be engaging in serious, face-to-face negotiations on a peace treaty by this time."

Releasing a \$ 700 million of U.S. blocked Palestinian aid, using U.S. good offices to make Arab donors honor their pledges to them or convincing Israel to release the tax and customs revenue it collects on their behalf are not the kind of U.S. "carrots" that would open a breakthrough.

\* Nicola Nasser is a veteran Arab journalist based in Bir Zeit, West Bank of the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories.\* [nassernicola@gmail.com](mailto:nassernicola@gmail.com)

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