

From: Ziyad Clot
Sent: Thursday, September 04, 2008 2:16 AM
To: LPU; CD
Cc: Maen Areikat (Hotmail); Andrew Kuhn (Compuserve)
Subject: TR : Israelis, Palestinians Tackle Core Issues with American Help
Importance: High

See above. A very weird leak.

Not sure where it could come from. Some of the information reported in the article is accurate. But other approximations are harmful to our positions (the article refers to a mechanism for refugee compensation only, restitution is not mentioned as well as the return program etc.)

It confirms refugee's file view that it is extremely risky to discuss the mechanism -even confidentially with the US- as long as the right of return and the responsibility issue are not addressed.

At this point, there is a growing risk that the PLO will have to face harsh criticism from refugee communities, Palestinian civil society...: the article was on the Fofognet distribution list so it is very likely that some reactions will follow soon.

Z.

De: Ziyad Clot [REDACTED]
Date: jeu. 04/09/2008 11:31
A: Ziyad Clot
Objet : Israelis, Palestinians Tackle Core Issues with American Help

Date: Wed, 3 Sep 2008 08:09:25 -0400
From: PRRN Assistant [REDACTED]
Subject: [TML] Israelis, Palestinians Tackle Core Issues with American Help

Wed. September 3, 2008=09
The Media Line
http://www.themedialine.org/news/news_detail.asp?NewsID=3D22604

Israelis, Palestinians Tackle Core Issues with American Help
Written by 'Abd Al-Karim Shweiki and Michael Friedson
Published Tuesday, September 02, 2008

Condoleezza Rice hosts yet another meeting of the Palestinian and Israeli leaders. (Wafa)
[Ramallah, Jerusalem] Sources close to the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations have revealed to The Media Line that a United States State Department expert is in the region helping the two sides create a formula for compensating Palestinian refugees as part of a final settlement.

The Palestinian-declared "right of return," the status of Jerusalem and final borders are considered to be the most contentious issues holding up an agreement.

The sources, who asked not to be identified, said that Jonathan Schwartz, a U.S. Justice Department official, accompanied U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on her most recent visit to the region in the past week and participated in at least three meetings, including the trilateral session Rice presided over with the heads of the negotiating team, chief negotiator Ahmed Qurei' and Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

Schwartz also reportedly participated in Rice's meeting with Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud 'Abbas.

Rice informed the Palestinians and the Israelis that Schwartz would remain behind after she left in order to assist them in trying to put together a mechanism for compensating the Palestinian refugees as part of the final deal between the two sides.

Immediately after the meeting Schwartz met with Palestinian experts in the West Bank city of Ramallah, to discuss various models for compensation. The session lasted four hours.

Palestinian officials told The Media Line that they are insisting that the solution to the issue of refugees should have three components: That Israel recognize the principle of a "right of return" for Palestinian refugees with the caveat that this does not mean a return of all refugees

That Israel admit its responsibility both "politically and morally" for the suffering of the refugees

That Israel agrees to provide compensation to the refugees

According to the Palestinian officials, Livni has so far rejected the first two conditions, but has accepted the concept of compensation.

"What Livni says publicly about refusing [to allow] any refugee back to Israel are the same words that we hear from her behind closed doors," a Palestinian negotiator told The Media Line, insisting that, "This is not acceptable to us and no Palestinian leader will be ready to accept it because, simply, the Palestinian public will not buy it."

Palestinian officials say that although it is unimaginable that all of the 3.5 million refugees living in the Diaspora would be returned to Israel following the establishment of a Palestinian state, "It is also unimaginable to tell those people that the dream they have lived with for decades has vanished."

"For sure many of the refugees will decide to remain where they are and others will seek to move to Europe or the United States or Canada or Australia, and other countries; but in order to be able to market the agreement, Israel should accept the principle of return even if it is not implemented," a Palestinian official said.

The official also revealed that during the course of the talks Livni insisted that compensation be paid not only to Palestinian refugees but also to Jews who were forced to leave their homes in the Arab countries following the establishment of the state of Israel.

The Media Line was unable to obtain confirmation or denial from Livni,

whose position remains not to comment on negotiations.

'Abbas has reportedly asked Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to allow 100,000 refugees back into Israel over a period of 10 years in the framework of family reunification and humanitarian cases.

But negotiators say that such an offer has never been placed on the table by the Palestinian negotiating team, which has so far declined to speak about numbers, but insists on focusing on principles instead.

According to a source close to 'Abbas, he "wants the priority to be for refugees living in Lebanon because of the inhumane conditions they are living in compared to refugees living in other Arab and foreign countries."

Schwartz is not the only American official helping the sides create models for solving the core issues. U.S. Gen. James Jones is working with both sides to reach agreement regarding security arrangements for Israel and the new state of Palestine.

But according to the Palestinian officials, wide gaps remain between the two positions.

Upon hearing the positions stated in Jerusalem last Tuesday, the U.S. secretary of state decided that it was time for Jones to play a more active role in helping to reach an agreement.

A Palestinian official summarized the Israeli security position: "They want to control our airspace, to monitor the borders and man the crossing borders, and are insisting that the state should be demilitarized."

The official asked: "Have you ever heard of a demilitarized state? I have heard of a demilitarized zone but not a demilitarized state."

The official quoted Qurei' as saying, "We want a sovereign state, period. It's clear what this means and the Israelis should not interfere in every nail we bring in. And we are ready for international supervision of the borders =96 but not an Israeli one."

The official added that the Palestinians would go no further than allowing the placement of an early warning system in the Jordan Valley.

The lead negotiators working with Jones on the security track are Israeli Defense Ministry official Amos Gilad and Palestinian police chief Hazem Attalah.

Palestinian officials say that progress has been made on the issue of borders, but insist that it will be very difficult to reach an agreement without including the issue of Jerusalem. The Israelis insist that Jerusalem will remain the undivided capital of Israel, while the Palestinians insist it will be the capital of their state.

According to The Media Line's sources, Rice personally interfered for the first time during the talks over the defining of borders.

She was quoted as telling the Palestinians that, "What we are talking about are the 1967 lands, including the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, east Jerusalem, the Jordan valley and parts of the Dead Sea. But you must take into account facts created on the ground since 1967. This means that there should be agreed- upon modification of the borders in the form of a [land] swap."

Palestinian officials reportedly accepted Rice's clarification cautiously, but some called it meaningless unless the Americans pressured Israel to accept it in principle.

Among the objections to the proposed revisions to pre-1967 borders, is the Palestinians' insistence that the post-1967 city of Ariel should not be annexed to Israel because it penetrates deep into the West Bank, and that Ma'aleh Adumim should not be retained by Israel because it transects the West Bank, preventing territorial contiguity.

Copyright (c) 2008 The Media Line. All Rights Reserved.

The FOFOGNET and PALDEV email lists, and Palestinian Refugee ResearchNet (<http://www.prrn.org>), are projects of the Interuniversity Consortium for Arab and Middle East Studies (<http://www.mcgill.ca/icames>).

Copyright for all items posted to these lists remains with the original copyright holder.

List queries: Contact Rex Brynen at [REDACTED]

End of FOFOGNET Digest - 2 Sep 2008 to 3 Sep 2008 (#2008-213)

--

This message has been scanned for viruses and dangerous content by MailScanner, and is believed to be clean.