

Report: Abbas agrees to Israeli control over Jewish holy sites in Jerusalem

PA president hands U.S. special envoy Mitchell a list of written proposals for a peace deal with Israel, including suggestions on borders and Jerusalem, Al-Hayat reports.

By Jack Khoury and Haaretz Service

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Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has given U.S. special envoy George Mitchell a list of written proposals for reaching a peace agreement with Israel, which includes leaving the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem and Western Wall under Israeli control, Arabic-language daily Al-Hayat reported on Saturday.

According to the report, Abbas offered Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a set of concrete proposals for a peace deal, including proposals on borders and security arrangements.

Abbas is said to have proposed the creation of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, but with a land swap encompassing 2.3 percent, which would leave larger settlement blocs such as Gush Etzion, Pisgat Ze'ev and Modi'in Ilit in Israel's hands, along with a swathe of land overlooking Ben-Gurion International Airport.

In return, the Palestinians would get land bordering the southern West Bank in addition to land for a passageway between the West Bank and Gaza.

The report also said Abbas presented a softened stance on East Jerusalem, which would become the future capital of the Palestinian state. Abbas reportedly proposed that Israel would retain control over the Old City's Jewish Quarter and Western Wall, while the rest of East Jerusalem would be open to worshippers of all religions.

Palestinian sources told Al-Hayat that Netanyahu has only responded to Mitchell by saying that he wants face-to-face talks with Abbas. The Palestinians have been wary of direct negotiations, fearing that Netanyahu wants to bring them to the table in order to decrease international pressure on Israel with no intention of signing a deal.

The report also quoted Palestinian sources close to Abbas, who say the Palestinian leader expects more effective U.S. participation in peace talks, with some saying Abbas wants the Obama administration to impose a settlement if negotiations fail.

Netanyahu this week called on Abbas to enter direct negotiations.

"I'm ready anytime," Netanyahu said. "Let's not waste another 15 months before we sit down together."

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