

Saudi king assures Obama of commitment to two-state Mideast solution

King Abdullah hosts Obama to discuss 'importance' of Palestinian state beside strong Israel; meeting also focused on Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

By Natasha Mozgovaya and Reuters

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U.S. President Barack Obama and Saudi King Abdullah met Tuesday to discuss the Middle East peace process and the importance of securing a Palestinian homeland alongside a strong Israeli state, Obama said on Tuesday.

"They expressed their hope that proximity talks between Israelis and Palestinians will lead to the resumption of direct talks with the aim of two states living side-by-side in peace and security," the White House said in a statement.

"The President and King Abdullah also discussed the importance of resuming the Israeli-Syrian and the Israeli-Lebanese tracks in order to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The President welcomed the King's continued leadership in support of the Arab Peace Initiative."

Obama said their meeting ranged over a number of strategic issues, including Iran's nuclear program, Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well as "the importance of moving forward in a swift and bold way in securing a Palestinian homeland that can live side by side with a secure and prosperous Israeli state."

King Abdullah only spoke briefly after their meeting, thanking Obama for his hospitality and praising the friendship between their two countries.

Analysts say the Saudis want Obama to take a stronger stance with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over stalled peace talks with the Palestinians and on freezing settlements. Netanyahu meets Obama on July 6.

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