

# *Israel Halts Talks with Palestinians Over Unity Deal*

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Tel Aviv, April 25 (RHC)-- Israel has halted the so-called peace talks with the Palestinian Authority following a unity deal between the Palestinian leadership and the resistance movement Hamas.

The office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement on Thursday after an emergency cabinet meeting that Tel Aviv decided to stop further negotiations with Palestinians. The statement added: "In addition, Israel will take a number of measures in response to the Palestinian moves."

The decision came after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which includes acting PA chief Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah Party, pledged to form a joint government on Wednesday.

Earlier on Thursday, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman expressed Tel Aviv's anger over the recent unity agreement, saying that it made a peace deal with Palestinians impossible. Meanwhile, senior Palestinian official Saeb Erakat said the Palestinian "leadership will look into all options" to respond to Israel's "decisions against the Palestinian Authority."

The talks between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli regime reached a new deadlock when Tel Aviv refused to free the last group of 104 Palestinian prisoners in late March as part of a deal for the resumption of the U.S.-sponsored negotiations.

Since the resumption of the direct talks in July 2013, Palestinians have objected to a number of issues, including the Israeli regime's illegal settlement expansion in the occupied Palestinian territories.

According to the Palestinian sources, the issue of the settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories remains as the main obstacle to the peace in the region.

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