

Palestine's PLO Threatens to Cut Communications With United States



Ramallah, November 23 (RHC)-- Palestinian officials have threatened to cut off all communications with the United States if the government proceeds with plans to shut down its PLO diplomatic mission in Washington. Describing the threat to close the Palestine Liberation Organization mission as "very unfortunate and unacceptable," Saeb Erekat, a senior Palestinian negotiator, said the U.S. government's decision came "at a time when we are trying to cooperate to achieve the ultimate deal."

While the Donald Trump administration offered no response and Netanyahu's office issued a statement affirming that the possible closure was "a matter of U.S. law," Erekat went on to say that Palestine "will put on hold all our communications with this U.S. administration."

Prior to Erekat's issuing his statement on social media, U.S. officials claimed that threats to close the PLO mission stemmed from an unavoidable consequence of the country's law, not a strategic move to increase leverage over Palestinian negotiators during Middle East peace talks.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki was informed that legal teams working for the U.S. government and its State Department will meet to determine the function of the PLO mission.

U.S. law stipulates that Trump has 90 days to determine if the Palestinians are conducting "direct and meaningful negotiations with Israel." The mission will be allowed to reopen if such negotiations are demonstrated.

"Conditioning the renewal of the waiver on the Palestinians' sticking to 'direct and meaningful negotiations with Israel' is actually superfluous since negotiations are nonexistent, and the current U.S. administration has yet to present any kind of peace initiative," said PLO official Hanan Ashrawi. She added that the U.S. is "disqualifying itself as a peace broker in the region."

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