

At the invitation of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Hubertus Heil, the SPD Secretary-General, visited the Palestinian Territories at the end of April in order to discuss the role of political parties as trailblazers for democracy and peace in the Middle East. Heil met with numerous high-ranking representatives of Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA). He held talks with Dr. Salam Fayyad, the prime minister of the PA, Ahmad Qureia, head of the department for Mobilisation and Organisation Fatah and former prime minister of the PA, Dr. (h.c.) Abdallah Frangi, Fatah's special foreign policy representative, and Rafiq Husseini, chief of staff to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.



*Tony Blair, Ahmad Qureia and Hubertus Heil during a discussion about the Fatah party convention.*

During his talks, the secretary-general came out clearly in favor of a two-state solution. "There must be tangible results to the negotiations launched in Annapolis," stressed Heil. A non-binding statement of principles was not a viable option, he said. Instead, there must be a peace treaty which would enable the founding of a Palestinian state to take place.

The talks revolved round cooperation between the SPD and Fatah. In particular, discussions were held about possible ways for the SPD to support its Palestinian fellow party with preparing the upcoming Sixth General Congress and the internal democratization of the movement. This was also discussed in talks with Ahmad Qureia, who heads the Palestinian negotiations, in the presence of Tony Blair, the Middle East Quartet's special envoy. Other issues discussed included the internal Fatah debate about its program, and SPD support for the Fatah program committee.

In this context, Hubertus Heil suggested that the SPD could provide professional support for the Congress in terms of organizational preparation and its media coverage. He said that the SPD had a very positive attitude to Fatah's decision to convene new elections to the party committees, despite what was currently an extremely difficult situation for it, on

both the foreign and the domestic political levels. This internal democratization would give Fatah new legitimacy on a domestic level, and strengthen it in the eyes of international players.

Hubertus Heil also had a meeting with the Secretary-General of the progressive secular party, Al-Mubadara, Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, in order to discuss possible closer ties between the SPD and Al-Mubadara. In conclusion, he visited Hebron and gained an impression of the city, where violent confrontations between Jewish settlers and Palestinians are commonplace.



*Hubertus Heil in dialogue with members of Fatah.*