

**Jerusalem and Ramallah. July 8th, 2007.**

The vice chairman of the SPD caucus, Walter Kolbow, visited the Palestinian Territories on July 7th and 8th as part of his visit to the Middle East. The former State Secretary for Defense surveyed the situation in the hops of finding ways of achieving improved security for people in the region and determining an appropriate contribution for Germany. With this in mind Kolbow visited German soldiers stationed in Lebanon as part of the UNIFIL mission aimed at stabilizing that



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country. The focus of the conversations organized by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in East-Jerusalem with its political interlocutors was the question of political renewal in the Palestinian Territories. Kolbow had the opportunity to meet with leading members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and Fatah movement among others. Each indicated that elections present a possible way out of the intra-Palestinian crisis. Before preparations for the next round can get underway in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, however, there must be unity among political actors and potential spoilers, including extremists, must be isolated. The goal of Kolbow's visit in Ramallah was to bolster the new Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad, in his difficult task. In a comprehensive discussion between with the Caucus Vice Chairman Dr. Fayyad underscored the necessity for political rejuvenation among Palestinian political movements and for the Palestinian Authority itself. Earnest measures must be taken. The problems begin and end with the question of security, yet the crippling of the economy must also be rectified. Restoring the monopoly on violence and reigning in the militias is the primary goal of the PA. It became clear that the Prime Minister has not only positioned himself among the competition before the electorate, but intends to win its support. Democracy must deliver- especially a solid government that acts. Setbacks should not obstruct the process. Therefore, the PA requires political and financial support from the international community. In one conversation with the Fatah General Delegate for International Relations, Abdallah Frangi, Kolbow made a plea for a rejuvenation of the party platform and a generational handover within the Fatah movement. The German Social Democrat encouraged Fatah leadership to develop a platform that moves away from revolutionary slogans and clearly positions itself as a political party ready to establish a moderate Palestinian state and contribute to peace in the Middle East. In this endeavor Fatah requires clear visions for the future of a viable state. A party platform could pave the way, according to Kolbow. The 6th General Congress would furthermore strengthen democracy within the party by electing new political minds with an eye on the future. In no uncertain terms: Kolbow plead the case for renewal.