

MP Rolf Mützenich Visits Jerusalem and the West Bank



Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and MP Dr. Rolf Mützenich

Jerusalem and Ramallah. June 25th, 2007. Dr. Rolf Mützenich, Member of the German Parliament, visited high ranking Palestinian decision makers including Prime Minister Salam Fayyad to help inform the Social Democratic foreign policy toward the region at this critical time for Palestinians.

During his visit to the region MP Mützenich consulted members of the Fatah movement, Palestinian National Initiative (Al-Mubadara) and independents. In his meeting with PM Fayyad and other political leaders Mützenich made clear that Germany has a stake in stabilization in the Middle East. As the first Social Democrat from Germany to meet with PM Fayyad, Mützenich underscored his party's commitment to constructive multilateral dialogue.

President Mahmoud Abbas' decision to dissolve the national unity government and form an emergency government is the latest development in a protracted crisis with international dimensions that requires multilateral engagement. This is a priority for the German SPD and Mützenich who is a senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Talks with high-ranking Palestinian politicians and intellectual leaders placed the crisis in context and demonstrated the powerful effects, both positive and negative, that decisions in the international community can have in the region.

Withdraw of international support following the Hamas victory in Palestinian Legislative Council elections in 2006 gave rise to international isolation and hindered both political and economic progress. Internal divisions among Palestinian leadership as well contributed to the political situation characterized by partisan violence in Gaza and the dramatic change in government. At this juncture, Mützenich made clear the international community must re-engage to avoid a more grave deterioration of the situation.

Fatah representatives and independents alike warned Mützenich of the dangers of a permanent division of the West Bank and Gaza. Whereas Fatah members conveyed their demand that Hamas relinquish its hold on Gaza others made clear that internal decision making alone is not enough to return to the peace process. Future progress in the West Bank and Gaza are dependent on Israel, neighboring Middle Eastern countries as well as the US and Europe.

In recognition of the importance of international policy, Mützenich asked all of his interlocutors what they expected from the international community and Germany in particular. Palestinian National Initiative leader Mustafa Barghouthi questioned the value of international military intervention in Gaza and outlined the importance of sound political solutions. Fatah leaders offered that the international community should support the decisions of President Abbas and keep focused pressure on Israel to allow Palestinians greater mobility and withdraw Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.