

Talking Points:
June 26th, 2007

How can the PLO negotiate when it cannot control Gaza?

- Control over (or within) Gaza has no bearing on the PLO's authority to negotiate with Israel, which it has done consistently since 1991 without controlling any part of Palestinian territory (including Gaza).
- The PLO has the authority to negotiate because it is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and is universally recognized as such by the UN, the Arab League and the international community. The authority of the PLO to negotiate has also been accepted by all Palestinians, and endorsed by Hamas in the Mecca agreement.
- Regardless of the situation on the ground, Israel remains the occupying power exercising **effective control** over Gaza. To the extent that PA (and not the PLO) *administered* parts of the OPT until a final agreement could be reached, it did so with the approval of the PLO and by agreement between the PLO and Israel. It is not a government and Palestine is not yet a state.
- In the case of Gaza Strip, the PA is presently unable to administer the area directly, largely because it has not been given the tools needed to do so. It however continues to do all it can to provide essential services, supplies and other necessities for Palestinians in Gaza.
- Recent developments in Gaza are a direct result of:
 - The absence of political negotiations that would lead to an end to the occupation and the conflict;
 - Worsening economic and humanitarian conditions on the ground caused by Israel's refusal to meet its obligations under international law and the AMA; and
 - Prolonged international sanctions against a democratically elected government.
- The ability to maintain control and the occupation are inextricably linked. Movement towards a permanent status agreement strengthens the ability of the PA to govern. In other words, it is much easier to impose law and order if those imposing it feel that they are working towards a common and agreed goal.
- The events in Gaza demonstrate that if the needs of the Palestinian people are not being met and if continued promises of progress are not fulfilled, those who do not share our belief in peaceful negotiations will be able to successfully exploit the situation. The best way to regain control and support within the Gaza Strip is to fulfill these promises and needs.

- Negotiating a permanent status agreement is not contingent on the ability to exercise control over territory, though its implementation may be. The PLO can ensure Palestinian support for a negotiated agreement through a popular referendum, which President Abbas has said he would do. If the Palestinian people support the substance of an agreement, they will support all efforts by the PA to assert control and implement the agreement.