

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**  
**Office of the Spokesman**

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**INTERVIEW**

**Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton**  
**With Michel Ghandour of Al Hurra Television**

**November 3, 2009**  
**Marakech, Morocco**

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, first, thank you for your time. You have met yesterday with Arab foreign ministers. Were you able to convince them to take some gestures toward Israel?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, we had a very constructive meeting yesterday. I have pledged to consult with my counterparts, and I try to keep them informed as to what we are doing. I think there was an opportunity at our meeting to explain better how we saw the current situation with respect to the resumption of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. I was able to clearly answer questions about what is the Israeli offer on no new settlement activity. And we talked about how important it was for President Abbas to continue his leadership and his commitment to the two-state solution – something that he had first stated back in 1972. So we had a very broad-ranging discussion.

But ultimately, I asked for their continuing support for the process, and I asked them to look for ways that they can demonstrate that support both to the Palestinians and to the Israelis.

**QUESTION:** In the Arab world, they are saying that the U.S. Administration started by criticizing Israel and asking it to – for a settlement freeze, and ended by praising Prime Minister Netanyahu after he denied the American calls. What can you answer?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, first of all, I think President Obama has demonstrated his commitment and sincerity in pursuing a comprehensive peace that includes a two-state solution.

Secondly, both I and Senator Mitchell, our special envoy, have worked constantly since President Obama became our president to reach out not only to the Israelis and the Palestinians, but to the larger region and the world, about everyone working toward this goal.

Thirdly, I believe it's important to recognize the positive steps that either side takes. That's why I have been very strongly in favor of what the Palestinians have done on security. And I have done that publicly and privately, not only with them, of course, but with the Israelis and the Arab nations. Because when people do things which advance the cause of a two-state solution, they should be recognized.

Now, when we called under President Obama's leadership for an end to settlement activity, it

was a restatement of American policy and a recommitment to the Obama Administration's very strong conviction that settlement activity is not legitimate. The President said that in New York.

What the Israeli Government has offered would end all settlement activity that would be going forward. It would end permits, it would end approvals, it would end expropriation of land. It is not at all everything we would want, but for that government to do anything is unprecedented.

So I think that the foreign ministers from Arab nations understood. I showed them how it would work. Now, it is not what anybody would want, but when you negotiate, very often you start off with the maximum position but you try to figure out where you can realistically end up.

What I want is a discussion between the parties on the final status issues – the '67 borders, the refugees, Jerusalem, everything that needs to be resolved. Anything which moves us toward the resumption of negotiations and closer to our goal of a two-state solution, I am going to say is a positive development.

**QUESTION:** Do you expect resuming negotiations in the near future?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, we are pushing very hard for such a resumption to occur. But as I have also said, I'm a very patient and persistent person. I know how difficult this is for everyone. And yet I believe it is so much in the interests of both the Palestinians and the Israelis that I am very hopeful we're going to see that resumption occur.

**QUESTION:** Last question on the peace process side. Saeb Erekat has said if America cannot get Israel to implement a settlement freeze, what chance do Palestinians have of reaching agreement with Israel on permanent status issues? Can you give the Palestinians and the Arab states guarantees regarding these issues?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** There have been numerous peace negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. I know very well what happened in the 1990s with my husband and Yasser Arafat, how close everyone got. And there was no demand or expectation that settlements would be dealt with before the entire negotiation. After my husband's administration, I know what Prime Minister Sharon and Prime Minister Olmert were talking about with President Abbas and his negotiating team, and there was no demand about settlements. Everyone believed that when the borders of a new state were set, the settlement issue would take care of itself.

So President Obama has gotten more before negotiations ever started out of Israel than anybody has ever gotten, more than was ever asked for before. So I think everyone should take a deep breath and say, look, what is our goal here? Is our goal to end a few hundred settlements or a few thousand more units? Or is our goal a Palestinian state? And I think if we keep that in mind, we've actually made some progress along that way, even though not everybody is satisfied with it. But nevertheless, do we want to say, oh, well, that's not good enough?

Michel, if there had been a final agreement at Camp David, there would have been no more settlements. The capital of a new state would have been in East Jerusalem. And we were so

close, but we didn't achieve it. So now we are here talking about what we talked about 10 years ago. I want to end the talk. I want to see Israel have the security it needs. I want to see the Palestinian people have the state they deserve.

**QUESTION:** On Iran, Iran has expressed its readiness for a third meeting with the P5+1 in Geneva to discuss how – or to buy uranium from the international community. Are you ready, first, to attend this meeting, the third meeting with Iran, and to sell Iran uranium?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, the P5+1, which are the group of nations negotiating with Iran, have said that they were willing for another meeting. I am sure that the United States will attend. We are waiting for an answer to the offer that was made by the United States and Russia and China and France and the United Kingdom and Germany and the European Union. We believe Iran should accept the offer that was made, and we are hoping that it does so.

**QUESTION:** On Lebanon, the Lebanese leaders have been trying to form a new government since six or seven months, and they failed. Some leaders are blaming Iran and Syria. How do you view the situation in Lebanon?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, the situation in Lebanon is distressing, and I think it's time for the people and leadership of Lebanon to stand up for Lebanon, not to stand up for any foreign influence or any other outside concern. And they should put personal interests or personal ambition behind the interests of the entire nation and form a government that represents the full diversity of Lebanon so that decisions can be made that will improve the future for Lebanon.

**QUESTION:** Last question, Madame Secretary, on Syria. After months of engagement with Syria, how do you assess the dialogue with Damascus? Are you planning to visit Syria in the near future?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** I have no plans to visit Syria in the near future, but I do want to see changes in Syrian behavior and actions. We have, as you know, engaged in diplomacy with Syria on a number of issues. But the jury is out as to how Syria intends to respond. We are hoping for a positive response, and we will continue to try to achieve that. But it can't be just talk. There has to be action as well.

**QUESTION:** Thank you, Madame Secretary.

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Thank you very much.

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