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## December 16, 2010

### Middle East News: World Press Roundup

The PA cracks down on extremist preachers. The Arab League says new negotiations should be based on a 'serious offer' on borders. Israel approves 24 new settlement housing units in occupied East Jerusalem. Norway upgrades the diplomatic status of the Palestinian mission. Palestinians seek diplomatic recognition in Europe. Bethlehem is preparing for a prosperous Christmas but its mayor complains about ongoing occupation. The PLO condemns a House resolution threatening a cutoff of aid if Palestinian statehood is unilaterally declared. Israeli towns continue efforts to keep Arabs out. Carlo Strenger says Palestinians should not repeat the mistake of 1947. Elie Podeh says Israel never wanted peace. Rachel Shabi critiques Israel's claims about Jews from Arab states. The IRS denies it is targeting pro-Israel groups. A fired AIPAC staffer says the group was aware of his activities. Martin van Creveld says the occupied territories are not crucial for Israel's security. Daniel Levy says it's time for a more detailed American peace plan. US may seek a framework agreement. More moderate voices in Hamas seem to be sidelined.

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### Palestinian Authority cracks down on mosques to promote moderate Islam

**Article Author(s):** Janine Zacharia  
**Media Outlet:** The Washington Post

**Date:** December 15, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/15/AR2010121506440....> [6]

EL BIREH, WEST BANK - Each week, Mahmoud Habbash, the Palestinian Authority's minister of religious affairs, sends an e-mail to mosques across the West Bank. It contains what amounts to a script for the Friday sermon that every imam is required to deliver.

The practice, part of a broader crackdown on Muslim preachers considered too radical, shows the extreme steps the Palestinian Authority is taking to weaken Hamas, its Islamist rival, as it seeks to cement power and meet Israel's preconditions for peace talks.

## **Arab FMs want 'serious offer' on Israel peace**

**Media Outlet:** Ma'an News Agency

**Date:** December 16, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=342504> [7]

CAIRO (AFP) - Arab foreign ministers on Wednesday rejected more Palestinian-Israeli peace talks without a "serious offer" and said they will seek a UN Security Council resolution against Israeli settlement building.

They announced their decision after meeting Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas in Cairo and US Middle East envoy George Mitchell vowing "substantive" talks with Israel and the Palestinians to rescue the battered peace process.

## **Israel approves construction for Jerusalem yeshiva**

**Media Outlet:** Ma'an News Agency

**Date:** December 16, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=342500> [8]

JERUSALEM (Ma'an) -- Israel's Jerusalem Municipality approved for construction an additional 24 housing units near the ultra-Orthodox center Beit Orot in occupied East Jerusalem, Israel Radio reported Thursday.

The organization's website confirmed the report, but said there were only 18 units under construction, all designed as "housing for married students and to enhance the development of the educational complex."

## **Norway upgrades PLO mission, supports statehood**

**Media Outlet:** Ma'an News Agency

**Date:** December 16, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=342571> [9]

OSLO, Norway (Ma'an) -- Norway's foreign ministry announced Wednesday that the status of the Palestinian representative's office in Oslo would be upgraded to a diplomatic mission as part of an effort of the Scandinavian nation to support Palestinian efforts toward building a state.

The announcement came while Prime Minister Salam Fayyad was in Oslo, where officials announced the coming international donors conference to take place in the city in April 2011. During the announcement the official said he hoped a Palestinian state could be established within the year.

## Q&A-After Mitchell trip, what next for peace process?

**Article Author(s):** Tom Perry

**Media Outlet:** Alertnet

**Date:** December 16, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/qa-after-mitchell-trip-what-next-for-peace-pr...> [10]

The U.S. Middle East envoy held separate talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders this week during his first trip to the region since the United States called off efforts to revive direct negotiations.

What happened to those negotiations, what has U.S. envoy George Mitchell said and done this week and what are the prospects of success for another round of indirect talks Washington now says it will pursue?

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE NEGOTIATIONS?

## Palestinians ask Europe to recognize a state

**Article Author(s):** Ben Hubbard

**Media Outlet:** The Statesman

**Date:** December 16, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.statesman.com/news/nation/palestinians-ask-europe-to-recognize-a-stat...> [11]

The Palestinians have asked European countries to recognize an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip ? a new step in the campaign to pursue statehood outside the framework of a peace deal with Israel.

Peace talks with Israel have been deadlocked since September, leaving Palestinians to start exploring alternative ways forward. The campaign by President Mahmoud Abbas and his West Bank government aims to pressure Israel, though it will likely change nothing on the ground as long as Israel remains opposed.

## **Arabs against peace talks without clear borders**

**Article Author(s):** Sarah El Deeb

**Media Outlet:** The Statesman

**Date:** December 15, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.statesman.com/news/nation/arabs-against-peace-talks-without-clear-bor...> [12]

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## **Bethlehem mayor complains about Israeli limits**

**Media Outlet:** The Statesman

**Date:** December 15, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.statesman.com/news/nation/bethlehem-mayor-complains-about-israeli-lim...> [13]

Bethlehem's mayor has lit up his town's main Christmas tree while complaining that Israel's limitations on access to his West Bank town are weighing heavily on holiday cheer.

Mayor Victor Batarseh and a Palestinian official threw a switch to light white bulbs strung around a tall, star-topped fir tree in front of the Church of the Nativity, marking the traditional birthplace of Jesus.

Part of Israel's West Bank separation barrier cuts through southern Bethlehem, blocking the road to Jerusalem, 3 miles (5 kilometers) away.

## **PLO condemns U.S. congress resolution against**

## Palestinian state recognition

**Media Outlet:** Xinhua

**Date:** December 16, 2010

**Source Link(s):** [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-12/16/c\\_13652121.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-12/16/c_13652121.htm)  
[14]

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Thursday condemned a United States congress resolution opposing the Palestinian quest to gain international recognition of their future state.

The resolution of the U.S. house of representatives "is unjustified and doesn't help the U.S. administration's role as a sponsor of the peace process in the Middle East," said Ahmed Majdalani, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee.

## Israeli towns continue to rewrite bylaws to keep Arabs out

**Article Author(s):** Jack Khoury  
Jonathan Lis

**Media Outlet:** Haaretz

**Date:** December 16, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israeli-towns-continue-to-rewrite-by-la...> [15]

While the Knesset may not be in a rush to pass a bill on the powers of cooperative communities' admission committees, fearing criticism and a battle in the High Court of Justice, some of these communities are still rewriting admission regulations in order to "preserve their Jewish and Zionist character."

Community members who oppose such changes to the regulations say they are designed to keep Arabs from joining.

## The Palestinians must not repeat their mistake of 1947

**Article Author(s):** Carlo Strenger

**Media Outlet:** Haaretz

**Article Type:** Opinion

**Date:** December 15, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.haaretz.com/blogs/strenger-than-fiction/the-palestinians-must-not-rep...> [16]

For the time being, the United States has mercifully stopped the embarrassing haggling about the settlement freeze. While Obama's administration officially says that it will continue to look for ways of reviving the peace process, it is probably realizing what has been fairly clear since Benjamin Netanyahu chose to form a coalition with his "natural" partners, Avigdor Lieberman

and Shas: this government is unable and unwilling to deliver an agreement with the Palestinians.

## Israel never really wanted peace

**Article Author(s):** Elie Podeh

**Media Outlet:** Haaretz

**Article Type:** Opinion

**Date:** December 16, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/israel-never-really-wanted-peace-1....> [17]

Peace may be a dream - but it is not our dream. The time has come to recognize the fact that Israel uses the rhetoric of peace, but does very little on the practical level toward achieving it. Anyone still clinging to the axiom that "we'll leave no stone unturned" needs to take a good look in the mirror. Is Israel truly laboring with determination and persistence to reach peace?

## Bethlehem Is Booked for Christmas

**Article Author(s):** Arie O'Sullivan

**Media Outlet:** The Media Line

**Date:** December 16, 2010

**Source Link(s):** [http://www.themedialine.org/news/news\\_detail.asp?NewsID=30823](http://www.themedialine.org/news/news_detail.asp?NewsID=30823) [18]

Amid unseasonably sunny December days in Bethlehem, it appears history is about to repeat itself. During the week of Christmas all the city's hotels are fully booked for the first time in decades, which will leave some of the estimated 90,000 expected visitors without any room at the inn.

Merchants in shops along its fabled cobblestone streets leading to Manger Square were busy preparing souvenirs for the flood of pilgrims converging on this West Bank town over the next month as Catholics, Greek Orthodox and Armenians celebrate the birth of their savior Jesus Christ.

## The problem with Israel's Jewish 'refugee' initiative

**Article Author(s):** Rachel Shabi

**Media Outlet:** The Guardian

**Article Type:** Opinion

**Date:** December 16, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/dec/16/israel-palestinian-refugee?C...> [19]

While the US has given up pressing for a freeze on illegal settlement building, one Israeli minister has been cranking up the volume on an issue he apparently considers more pressing. The deputy foreign minister, Danny Ayalon, recently launched a new initiative to demand that Palestinians "recognise Jews who exiled from Arab lands as refugees".

Ayalon's initiative is in alliance with Justice for Jews from Arab Countries (JJAC), whose mission is to put this issue on the international agenda.

## **IRS: No ?special? policy for pro-Israel groups**

**Media Outlet:** Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA)

**Date:** December 15, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.jta.org/news/article/2010/12/15/2742185/irs-no-special-policy-for-pro...> [20]

In affidavits, Internal Revenue Service officials denied telling a pro-Israel group that they checked whether such groups applying for tax-exempt status oppose the administration.

?Z Street's application was not referred to the TAG group because of an ?Israel Special Policy? as alleged in Z Street's complaint, ? Jon Waddell, the manager of the Exempt Organizations Determinations Group, said. TAG is an acronym for Touch and Go, the informal name for the Exempt Organizations Determinations Group, according to a report Tuesday by Politico.

## **Rosen Fires Back in His Law Suit Against AIPAC**

**Article Author(s):** Nathan Guttman

**Media Outlet:** The Jewish Daily Forward

**Date:** December 15, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.forward.com/articles/133980/> [21]

The American Public Affairs Committee has frequently condoned its employees' receipt of classified information, according to documents filed in federal court by lawyers for Steve Rosen, a former senior official of the pro-Israel lobby.

The new court filing, submitted December 15, offers Rosen's response to claims by AIPAC that he acted improperly by obtaining classified information without the lobby's knowledge while working on its behalf.

## Israel Doesn't Need the West Bank To Be Secure

**Article Author(s):** Martin van Creveld

**Media Outlet:** The Jewish Daily Forward

**Article Type:** Opinion

**Date:** December 15, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://forward.com/articles/133961/> [22]

When everything is said and done, how important is the West Bank to Israel's defense?

## Obstructing a Middle East Rescue Effort

**Article Author(s):** Daniel Levy

**Media Outlet:** The Jewish Daily Forward

**Date:** December 15, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.forward.com/articles/133960/> [23]

Special Middle East envoy George Mitchell is back in the region conducting his shuttle diplomacy, settlement construction continues apace and the much-anticipated speech of Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton managed to avoid hard choices. It's business as usual, so presumably we can all relax ? Israel has dodged another peace bullet. No so fast. I would suggest that recent events should have sent the gevalt-o-meter into the red zone for anyone concerned about Israel's future or shared American-Israeli interests.

## US focus on framework agreement in peace talks

**Article Author(s):** Vita Bekker

**Media Outlet:** The National

**Date:** December 16, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/middle-east/us-focus-on-framework-agree...> [24]

George Mitchell, the US Middle East envoy, said yesterday that he hoped to make "real progress" in peace talks, even as media reports suggested that the Palestinians may be disappointed with Washington's efforts so far.

Mr Mitchell met in Cairo with Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian president, on the third day of his visit to the region.

"In the days ahead our discussions with both sides will be substantive, two-way conversations with an eye towards making real progress in the next few months on the key questions of an eventual framework agreement," he said.

# Hamas turns away from its face of moderation

**Article Author(s):** Hugh Naylor

**Media Outlet:** The National

**Article Type:** Analysis

**Date:** December 16, 2010

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.thenational.ae/news/worldwide/hamas-turns-away-from-its-face-of-moder...> [25]

Ahmed Yousef, Palestinian intellectual, diplomat, and self-described public-relations extraordinaire, champions many causes.

Bridging the chasm that divides Iran's Shiite theocracy from the Muslim world's majority Sunnis is one. Reconciling Islamist governance with democracy and human rights is another.

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