



Published on *The American Task Force on Palestine* (<http://www.americantaskforce.org>)

[Home](#) > [Printer-friendly PDF](#) > [Printer-friendly PDF](#)

---

## U.S. Struggles to Restore Middle East Talks

Mark Landler

The New York Times

November 10, 2010 - 12:00am

[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/11/world/middleeast/11diplo.html?\\_r=1&ref=middlee...](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/11/world/middleeast/11diplo.html?_r=1&ref=middlee...) [1]

November 11, 2010

**Article Author(s):** Mark Landler

**Media Outlet:** The New York Times

**Date:** November 10, 2010

**Source Link(s):**

[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/11/world/middleeast/11diplo.html?\\_r=1&ref=middlee...](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/11/world/middleeast/11diplo.html?_r=1&ref=middlee...) [2]

With tensions between the United States and Israel flaring again over Jewish settlements, the Obama administration and its allies worked feverishly on multiple fronts Wednesday to put Middle East peace talks back on track.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton reiterated President Obama's criticism of Israel's new housing plans in East Jerusalem, calling them "counterproductive" to the peace process. But she discouraged the Palestinian Authority from unilaterally declaring an independent state, an action that Palestinian officials have threatened to take in recent weeks as the talks have remained paralyzed.

"We do not support unilateral steps by either party that could prejudice the outcome of such negotiations," Mrs. Clinton said to reporters after meeting Egypt's foreign minister, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, and its intelligence chief, Omar Suleiman. They discussed ideas for getting the Israelis and Palestinians back to the table.

"Each party has a very strong set of opinions about the way forward," she said. "There can be no progress until they actually come together and explore where areas of agreement are and how to narrow areas of disagreement."

Mr. Aboul Gheit also criticized Israel as not doing enough to keep the process alive. He said Egypt, which has been in talks with both sides, was concerned by the deepening impasse and was focused on renewing the talks and keeping them going.

Though he did not disclose Egypt's proposals, American and Israeli officials said they focused on gestures Israel could make toward the Palestinians, like pulling security forces out of parts of the West Bank or guaranteeing no Israeli incursions in areas where the Palestinians already provide security.

On Thursday, Mrs. Clinton is to meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in New York. Israeli and American officials played down hopes for the session, which may end up being yet another attempt to clear the air after the announcement of 1,000 new Jewish housing units for a contested part of East Jerusalem.

While some administration officials seemed eager to tamp down the clash, Mrs. Clinton pointedly raised it just before announcing an additional \$150 million in American financial aid for the Palestinian Authority.

"This announcement was counterproductive to our efforts to resume negotiations between the parties," she said. "We have long urged both parties to avoid actions which could undermine trust, including in Jerusalem."

Mr. Netanyahu, who was meeting businesspeople in New York, said Tuesday that the dispute was "overblown." His argument was echoed by at least one senior American official: Senator John Kerry, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who had his own meetings on Wednesday with Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

Speaking from Tel Aviv, Senator Kerry said that, based on his discussions, he believed the United States could devise a formula that would persuade the Palestinians to return to negotiations even without an extension of the freeze on settlement construction, which the Palestinians have demanded.

At the same time, he said he did not rule out the possibility that Mr. Netanyahu would extend the freeze for a brief period, despite being constrained by a right-wing coalition that opposes any further halts to building.

"Is it difficult? Yeah," Senator Kerry said in a telephone interview. "Is it a moment of disagreement? Yes. But it doesn't have to be a showstopper by any means."

He added, "There is a way to clarify the road forward, and to meet the needs of both parties," though he declined to offer details. He made the comments after meeting with the president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, and Israel's president, Shimon Peres.

The administration had asked Mr. Kerry to go to the Middle East, amid growing signs of instability in Lebanon as well as the deadlock in the peace talks. He said he told Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, that the United States would watch closely for evidence that Syria was trying to discredit an international tribunal investigating the 2005 assassination of a former Lebanese prime minister, Rafik Hariri.

Reports of Syria's efforts to undermine the tribunal have led lawmakers and even some administration officials to question the wisdom of American efforts to engage Damascus. But Senator Kerry said, "I remain absolutely convinced there is an opportunity to have a different relationship with Syria."

---

TAGS: [Peace Based on Two States](#) <sup>[3]</sup>[Peace Negotiations](#) <sup>[4]</sup>[U.S.-Arab Relations](#) <sup>[5]</sup>[U.S.-Israel Relations](#) <sup>[6]</sup>

[Events](#) | [Daily News](#) | [About Us](#) | [Resources](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Donate](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

 [Front Page Features](#)  [World Press Roundup](#)  [ATFP in the News](#)  [Policy and Analysis](#)  
 [Briefing Summaries](#)

---

**Source URL (retrieved on Dec 9 2019 - 3:07am):**

[http://www.american taskforce.org/daily\\_news\\_article/2010/11/10/1289365200\\_14](http://www.american taskforce.org/daily_news_article/2010/11/10/1289365200_14)

**Links:**

- [1] [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/11/world/middleeast/11diplo.html?\\_r=1&ref=middleea](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/11/world/middleeast/11diplo.html?_r=1&ref=middleea)
- [2] [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/11/world/middleeast/11diplo.html?\\_r=1&ref=middleea](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/11/world/middleeast/11diplo.html?_r=1&ref=middleea)
- [3] [http://www.american taskforce.org/palestinian\\_statehood/two\\_state\\_solution](http://www.american taskforce.org/palestinian_statehood/two_state_solution)
- [4] [http://www.american taskforce.org/peace\\_negotiations](http://www.american taskforce.org/peace_negotiations)
- [5] [http://www.american taskforce.org/us\\_arab\\_relations](http://www.american taskforce.org/us_arab_relations)
- [6] [http://www.american taskforce.org/usisrael\\_relations](http://www.american taskforce.org/usisrael_relations)