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Clinton warns against unilateral steps in Middle East peace process

Xinhua

November 11, 2010 - 12:00am

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-11/11/c_13601285.htm [1]

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Media Outlet: Xinhua

Date: November 11, 2010

Source Link(s): http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-11/11/c_13601285.htm [1]

U.S. State Secretary Hillary Clinton on Wednesday warned against unilateral steps by Israel or the Palestinians as the direct peace talks between the two sides have been stuck in a limbo.

"Negotiations between the parties is the only means by which all of the outstanding claims arising out of the conflict can be resolved," Clinton told reporters at a joint press conference with visiting Egyptian Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit.

"So we do not support unilateral steps by either party that could prejudice the outcome of such negotiations," Clinton said.

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

Clinton still believed that both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas want to see a peace deal to be reached.

Under U.S. brokering, the direct peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians started on Sept. 2 in Washington. However, the talks have been suspended after only two rounds of meetings, as Israel has failed to extend its moratorium on West Bank settlement activities at the end of September.

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