

Subject: Information regarding kidnapped Israeli boys and continuing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations

### **1. Information on the victims and the incident.**

On June 12<sup>th</sup> 3 boys, two aged 16 and one aged 19, were kidnapped in the Israeli controlled region of Hebron in the West Bank. The boys' names are Eyal Yifrach, Gil-ad Sha'er and Naftali Frankel. Naftali Frankel holds U.S. citizenship.

The Prime Minister of Israel, Netanyahu, has asserted that a rogue cell of Hamas members committed the kidnapping. John Kerry has backed this allegation saying that "many implications point to Hamas", while Hamas has vehemently denied the accuracy of the allegations.

President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, did not implicate Hamas but has vowed to help catch the kidnappers asserting, "it is in our interest that there is security coordination between us and Israel in order to protect ourselves, protect our people." Abbas also has released a statement accusing Israel of using the teenagers' disappearance as "a pretext to impose tough punishment against our people and besiege them" in violation of international humanitarian law, requiring "condemnation by the whole world."

Operation My Brother's Keeper has mobilized Israeli Special Forces in addition to 10 divisions of the IDF to conduct sweeping searches of 1,000 locations in the West Bank. Since the Israeli military operation began on June 20, more than 300 Palestinians have been arrested, most of them members of Hamas' political arm and its various charities and civilian organizations. More than 50 prisoners who had been released as part of the deal under which Hamas freed captive Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, in 2011 were rearrested. 4 Palestinians have been killed in the operation.

### **2. Update on the negotiations and statements from varying interests**

The kidnapping and subsequent reactions from both sides have further soured relations between The Palestinian Authority and Israeli Government. On June 2<sup>nd</sup> the Palestinian government swore in a unity government that consists of a coalition of Fatah and Hamas. Israel has condemned this coalition, asserting that Hamas is a violent terrorist organization. Now the unity government is quickly losing legitimacy due to Israel's military operations targeting Hamas members and Hamas affiliated politicians.

The kidnapping has also caused a rift within the Palestinian government. Israeli operations are affecting Abbas' legitimacy. Hamas and other high-level Palestinian politicians have criticized President Abbas' support for security coordination with Israel claiming that it is unjustified and negatively affects the mindset of the Palestinian people who "are under occupation [and asked] to provide protection to their occupiers and to illegal settlers while they are unable to protect themselves from the attacks of these occupiers". Abbas is concerned that the deal with Hamas will negatively affect the reputation of the Palestinian Authority within the international community.

**AIPAC** has stated that this abduction highlights the constant terrorist threat against the Jewish State. They call for Abbas to separate himself from the terrorist Hamas group and return to peace talks with Israel. They also state that the US should continue to stand with Israel and its right to protect itself.

**JStreet** has also condemned the kidnappings but have not directly blamed Hamas. They have also announced that they are pleased Abbas' statement condemning the kidnappings and encourage the ongoing cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli security officials to facilitate the safe return of the three boys.

