

**State of Palestine**

**Palestine Liberation Organization**

**Negotiations Affairs Department**

**April 2, 2014**

**Q&A: Palestine's Accession to International Treaties**

On Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April, following a unanimous decision by the Palestinian leadership, including the PLO Executive Committee, President Mahmoud Abbas signed letters of accession to 15 multilateral treaties and conventions, a right which Palestine gained following its upgrade to Observer State status by the UN General Assembly in November 2012.

**How are these letters of accession linked to the negotiations process?**

In July 2013, the PLO took the difficult decision to postpone accession to multilateral treaties and conventions in exchange for the release of 104 pre-Oslo prisoners in four stages. In fact, the release of pre-Oslo prisoners is a commitment Israel had already made 20 years ago as part of the Palestinian Israeli interim accords ('Oslo Accords'), again in 1999 through the Sharm Al-Sheikh Agreement and a third time at the beginning of this negotiations process.

The release of prisoners was not formally linked to the negotiations process.

The fourth and final release of 30 prisoners was set to take place on March 29<sup>th</sup> 2014. As Israeli officials indicated that Israel would not go through with the release, the PLO requested that the US administration ensure that Israel fulfil its commitment. Since Israel failed to release the last group of prisoners, the State of Palestine is no longer obliged to postpone its rights to accede to multilateral treaties and conventions.

**The 9 months is not over yet. Doesn't this mean the Palestinians are breaking their commitment?**

No, this does not mean that the negotiations process is over. President Abbas made this point clear during his announcement on Tuesday April 1st. Indeed, the PLO remains committed to this 9-month process, which ends on April 29. Despite the escalation of oppressive Israeli policies, such as the killing of Palestinian civilians, settlement construction, raids on vulnerable communities, arbitrary arrests and detentions, home demolitions and the removal of residency rights, the PLO remains committed to the negotiations process and supports US efforts.

## **Which treaties and conventions did President Abbas sign?**

President Abbas signed letters of accession to the following 15 multilateral treaties and conventions. These treaties and conventions will help to protect and promote basic rights of the Palestinian people and will enable the State of Palestine to be a responsible actor on the international stage:

1. The Four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and the First Additional Protocol
2. The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations
3. The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations
4. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in armed conflict
5. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
6. The Hague Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations Concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land
7. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
8. The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties
9. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
10. The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
11. The United Nations Convention against Corruption
12. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
13. The International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid
14. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
15. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

### **What happens now?**

The letters of accession have been handed over to the relevant parties.

There are a total of 63 treaties, conventions and agencies that the State of Palestine has the ability to join and will do so in the best interests of its people, as and when it sees fit. This is a right that all UN member and Observer states have.

### **Isn't this just a unilateral step so the Palestinians can reject an agreement?**

No. This is the fulfilment of Palestine's right and has nothing to do with negotiations or the reaching of an agreement. As President Abbas expressed during the announcement, the Palestinian position remains unchanged. The PLO seeks to achieve an independent and sovereign Palestinian state on the 1967 border with East Jerusalem as its capital with a just solution to the refugee issue based on UN General Assembly resolution 194. It will use all legal means to achieve this, including negotiations and peaceful popular resistance.

### **Doesn't this undermine US and international efforts?**

No. Palestine is not seeking to clash with anyone. The tools it uses are legitimate and non-violent. The PLO bases its action on international law and the fulfilment of the long overdue and inalienable rights of its people.

These treaties are vital to continued Palestinian institutional building, good governance and the upholding of human rights, all of which form the basis for an independent and sovereign State of Palestine. Palestine will pursue this non-violent track, including all possible diplomatic venues, in a way that serves the best interests of its people and the cause of a just peace.

On the other hand, Israeli actions, including unrelenting settlement construction during this entire process, have undermined US and international efforts.

### **What does this mean for the peace process? Are the negotiations over?**

No. The PLO is committed to negotiations until the 29<sup>th</sup> April, as agreed.

The Israeli government needs understand that negotiations are a non-violent tool to achieve peace rather than a smoke screen behind which it can continue its violations of human rights, further its settlement enterprise, and make the two-state solution increasingly impossible.