

## PLO Makes Peace Bid To Israel

Palestine Liberation Organization leaders, including PLO chairman Yasser Arafat, have initiated a series of delicate peace overtures to Israel to facilitate a just resolution to the West Bank Palestinian issue, the main stumbling block to an Arab-Israeli peace settlement.

According to columnist Eric Rouleau of the French daily *Le Monde*, moderate PLO leaders from Fatah, the core faction controlled by Arafat and backed by Saudi Arabia, are quietly circulating a document calling for the immediate integration of the PLO into the ongoing peace process, and mooted the possibility of releasing it publicly. The document, quoted in Rouleau's Dec. 20 article, states: "The PLO is committed to working in favor of a peaceful settlement on the basis of the U.S.-Soviet joint statement of Oct. 1977, which provides for the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to establish a state alongside Israel. The two main states would be committed to live together in peace."

Earlier this month, the PLO's Beirut spokesman Mahmoud Labadi stressed that the PLO is willing to compromise with Israel on the West Bank issue, and is ready to go to Geneva to work out a solution.

Although the PLO has publicly condemned Egypt's overtures to Israel, Arafat "would accept a *fait accompli* such as a West Bank Palestinian state linked to Jordan," according to a former State Department official. Since Sadat's trip to Jerusalem in November, Arafat has avoided attacking the Egyptian President personally, and has instead directed several PLO representatives abroad to support Sadat. Arafat himself is in almost daily touch with Sadat. "Arafat will not burn his bridges to Sadat, just in case Egypt does get a settlement," commented another State Department spokesman.

Arafat is engaged in an intense power struggle with the extremist wings of the PLO, which absolutely reject the notion of a negotiated settlement with Israel. The most vocal of the hardliners is Zuhair Mohsin, the agent-leader of the Syrian intelligence-linked As-Saiqa faction of the PLO, which is demanding the assassination of Sadat and the destruction of Arab oil fields to protest the Sadat-Begin diplomacy. Also exerting pressure on Arafat is George Habbash, the deluded leader of the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which is threatening terrorist action against Israel.

According to the London *Financial Times*, Egypt is working on a strategy to split Fatah off from the rest of the PLO by exacerbating the Fatah-Saiqa rift. "If more than half of Fatah accepts ... the peace talks," said one Egyptian source, "then Egypt will give Arafat its full backing."

### *PLO Delegation Seeks Invitation to Washington*

Arafat has personally instructed Said Kemal, the head of the PLO office in Egypt, and deputy head of the PLO Political Department, to coordinate policy with the Egyptian government. On orders from Arafat, Kemal

has requested Egypt to persuade the U.S. to invite a delegation of moderate PLO leaders, including PLO Foreign Minister Farouk Kaddoumi, to Washington, to open a dialogue on the basis of the joint U.S.-Soviet communiqué. Such a dialogue is backed by factions linked to Republican leader John Connally in the U.S. who favor direct PLO involvement in the peace process as the only realistic way to secure a durable Mideast settlement.

It is widely acknowledged that the U.S. and Israel must now reciprocate and make a move to accommodate the PLO. Europe is rapidly moving to clear the way. Last week, as a result of the mediation of moderate PLO representative to Brussels, Dajani, Luxembourg — which is emerging as the likely core of a new monetary system — has recognized the PLO, lending legitimacy to the PLO as a valid negotiating partner for peace.

### *PLO Leader:*

#### *"PLO Not Against Sadat Initiative"*

*This is excerpted from an interview with Said Kemal, the deputy head of the PLO's Political Department, that was printed in the Dec. 7 issue of the Turkish daily Milliyet.*

The PLO is not against President Sadat's initiative, but we have not reached a final decision either. This is why we decided to freeze our relations with Egypt instead of breaking with them and to leave the doors between us open.

The real ally and supporter of the PLO are the people of Egypt. Egypt is the primary ally of the Palestinian cause and people. Bearing this fact in mind, our leader, Arafat, has said that his stance is not directed against the basic aim of the peace initiative taken by Sadat, but rather at the tactics and the method used.

We have certain reservations about President Sadat's initiative, which he undertook without consulting anyone... Any decision should have been at least discussed with the PLO.

Now we will await the results of this visit. We must follow, study, and evaluate the initiatives taken by the United States and the Soviet Union. We have already announced our total acceptance of the Soviet-American joint declaration on reconvening the Geneva conference, and of the fact that this declaration could form a basis for the conference.

If President Sadat reaches agreement with Israel on all problems at the Cairo meeting and in other initiatives, the Geneva conference will be reduced to nothing more than a signing ceremony. If the United States and Israel really want peace and justice to come to the Middle East, the least they can do is to determine the principles that will form a basis for a final settlement. When this is done, the details may be debated later at the Geneva meetings. In fact, this is the procedure President Sadat has in mind.

## PLO Delegation Seeks Invitation to Washington

*The following is taken from the Dec. 20 Financial Times of London.*

Egypt today postponed the visit by a delegation of Arabs from the West Bank, whose mission was to express support for President Sadat's peace initiative.

This may well reflect Egypt's realization that Palestinian delegations from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank do not satisfactorily represent the Palestinians in peace negotiations with Israel.

Instead, it is working on a strategy to split the Fatah, the largest guerrilla group, away from the PLO.

Egypt intends to deal with PLO hostility by playing on the mistrust between Mr. Arafat's Fatah group and the Syrians who only last year were in open combat with each other in the Lebanese civil war.

Egyptian intentions can be observed in the results of recent contacts with the PLO. Mr. Sadat has sent three written messages to Mr. Arafat since his return from Israel, according to well informed Palestinian sources.

Mr. Arafat twice replied with verbal messages and personally instructed Mr. Said Kemal, acting head of the PLO in Egypt, to open talks with the Egyptians.

Mr. Kemal has held a series of meetings with Mr. Sayed Marei, speaker of Egypt's Parliament and the President's closest confidant.

Mr. Kemal has been asking Egypt to persuade the U.S. to invite a delegation of moderate PLO leaders which might include Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, Basl Aql, Shafiq el Hout, Yasiq Abdu Rabbuh, and himself.

Undeterred by the cold American response, a delegation of this sort would be willing to open a dialogue with Washington on the basis of the October U.S.-Soviet declaration on the Middle East which included U.S. acknowledgment of Palestinian rights and Soviet acceptance of normal relations between Israel and its neighbors without reference to the PLO.

It has also been noted in Cairo that despite a series of predictable PLO statements attacking Egypt, neither Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, the PLO's Foreign Minister, nor Mr. Arafat, has made any personal statement against Mr. Sadat since his visit to Israel. The latter left it to hardline Abu Iyad to sign the anti-Sadat declaration in Libya this month.