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# Netanyahu Calls for Peace Summit With Palestinian Leaders

By Robert Berger  
Jerusalem  
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Israel is calling for a resumption of stalled Middle East peace talks. But the Palestinians are skeptical.



Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu attends his weekly cabinet meeting in Be'er Sheva, Israel, 12 Jul 2009

Israel's hawkish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to meet with him for the first time.

Speaking at the weekly Cabinet meeting, Mr. Netanyahu urged the Palestinian Authority to cooperate with Israel on economic projects to promote the peace process.

He said many investors want to help boost the Palestinian economy and Israel is doing its part by easing travel and trade restrictions. He said there is no reason not to meet.

But the Palestinians have refused to resume peace talks since the right-wing Israeli government assumed power three months ago. Palestinian spokesman Yasser Abed Rabbo described Mr. Netanyahu's offer as a publicity stunt.

In remarks broadcast on Israel Radio, Abed Rabbo said the Israeli Prime Minister is not prepared to compromise on core issues, like the expansion of Jewish settlements and the creation of a Palestinian state.

Mr. Netanyahu's strategy is to begin with economic prosperity, something on which both sides can agree. He says that would create a positive atmosphere for tackling the tougher issues of the peace process. But the Palestinians say a full stomach is no replacement for freedom and independence.

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