

Barak to Abbas: Zero Israeli tolerance for Palestinian Sept. 20 outbreaks

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Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak in sharp warning to Palestinians

Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas surprised a group of Israeli intellectuals whom he received in Ramallah Monday, Sept. 5, by informing them that he had met Israel's Defense Minister Ehud Barak in Amman last week on Aug. 24.

He declined to answer questions about the topics of their conversation, but implied there would be more meetings and their purpose would be to try and restart the long-stalled Israel-Palestinian talks, rejected by the Palestinian leader in favor of his unilateral application for UN recognition of a Palestinian state.

debkafile's military and intelligence sources disclose that the Barak-Abbas conversation in Jordan was more businesslike than diplomatic. It revolved around the Palestinian UN application to be submitted on Sep. 20 and its impact on security. Barak laid down clear limits for the Palestinian popular response to this event.

It was Abdullah King of Jordan who persuaded Abbas to sit down and talk to the Israeli defense minister. Concerned that outbreaks of Palestinian unrest on the West Bank might spill over into the Hashemite Kingdom, he demanded that the Palestinian leader coordinate security with the Israeli defense minister.

The third party attending the meeting was Gen. Muhammad Rakad, Jordan's General Intelligence Director.

From mid-September, Jordanian forces will be on high preparedness for Palestinian unrest in the same way as the IDF's West Bank Division and the Israeli police.

Barak warned Abbas that any Palestinian attempts to cross the border into Israel, invade settlements or carry out acts of terror would meet with a rapid and firm Israeli response calibrated according to the level of Palestinian disorderliness - from moderate all the way in extreme cases to military or economic punishment severe enough to topple the Palestinian Authority.

On no account, would Israel put up with crowds of West Bank Palestinians mobbing IDF checkpoints around Jerusalem or demonstrations in the areas surrounding the city, Barak said. In general, rallies must be confined to Palestinian cities and remain outside a preset radius around the Israeli settlements and towns of Judea and Samaria. Any demonstrations crossing these lines would be forcibly dispersed.

In answer to these warnings, the PA chairman explained that his administration was planning nothing more for September 20 than demonstrations to celebrate his application to the United Nations – no violence and certainly no terrorism.

This reassurance is of limited value. Barak and Gen. Radak both know that the control Abbas and his Fatah party actually exert over the Palestinian street is very limited. They are in no position to guarantee that extremist elements won't take over and generate unpredictable consequences.

debkafile's military sources report that Israel's security and military chiefs are thinking of making an example of Palestinian agitators as a deterrent. The first in line is PLO leadership member Nabil Shaat, who is going around the West Bank making speeches urging the Palestinian masses to violently attack Israel targets.

If Israel withdraws his VIP status, his travels will be restricted, including trips to the Gaza Strip, by having to leave the West Bank through Jordan. There, the security authorities will vet him and keep him under their eye.