



[What is Driving the Intra-Palestinian Reconciliation in Egypt?](#)

A meeting between Palestinian factions took place in Egypt this past weekend to discuss reconciliation efforts. The meeting comes at a time of unprecedented violence in the West Bank as Israel stages near-nightly raids. It was organized by the Egyptian government and headed by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. The meeting has been viewed by many observers as an effort to calm tensions as they in the West Bank. The United States and other Arab governments were involved behind the scenes, working with the Egyptian government in initiating this meeting. It is unlikely any decrease in tensions will result from negotiations, as the extremist far-right government continues to violently expand settlements. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) boycotted the meeting to protest the detention of its members by the Palestinian authority. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine also boycotted the talks. Their absence is notable and highlights the continued division among many Palestinian groups, not just Hamas and Fatah.

During the meeting, both sides agreed that reunification was essential for the Palestinian cause, but how that will happen is far from agreed upon. Past attempts have so far been futile, and there is little evidence to think this meeting will result in anything substantial. At the end of the meeting, it was agreed upon to form a committee on intra-Palestinian reconciliation, which at face value seems like progress. However, similar committees have been formed in the past and have achieved little. Palestinian observers remain pessimistic. Moukhaimer Abu Saada, a political scientist in Palestine, holds this sentiment. "The best way to kill something is to form a committee for it," he explains.

This was also a chance for Abbas to try and improve his popularity. He is currently very unpopular and widely seen as corrupt. The security coordination deals with Israel he agreed to are unpopular and Israel rarely keeps up their side of these deals. This combined with growing discontent over the conditions in the West Bank has made Abbas deeply unpopular. It is unlikely that one meeting will change any of this, especially a gathering that accomplished little.

The ideal path forward, and one that enjoys wide popularity, is to hold elections. The last legislative election was held in 2006. Hamas won this election. After Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007, Abbas dismissed the coalition and appointed Salam Fayyad to form a new government. Elections were planned to be held in 2021 but were postponed by Abbas, who cited Israeli obstruction. Though obstruction was present, it was also evident Abbas was postponing the election to keep himself in power. In a poll held in the same year as the last election, it was found that nearly 80% of Palestinians wanted him to resign from his position. If legitimate elections were held, it is almost certain Hamas would win. It is important to note, however, that a Hamas victory would mean a significant decline in funding and international recognition for the Palestinian cause. Hamas is considered a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union. This would limit diplomatic capabilities, though they have not been very effective in the past either.

With neither side willing to sacrifice their political gains, the chances of reconciliation are very slim. The common ground that is needed to form a unified strategy does not exist. The status quo will continue for the time being, despite neither Hamas nor Fatah being content with it. Conditions are worsening in both Gaza and the West Bank, and the division among Palestinian factions is exacerbating it. A united Palestine is essential moving forward, especially as the extremist Israeli government continues to escalate tensions in the West Bank.