

# PROFESSIONAL PAGE

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The new American administration is loudly saying what the Arabs want to hear. The administration wants to change Israel's policy on building inside settlements and they seem determined to use political and economic pressure to achieve this.

Obama's intention to force Israel to stop ALL construction beyond the Green Line is seen as the "solution" that would bring about a Palestinian state, which his administration believes is the key to solving the problems in the Middle East. But leaning on Israel won't produce a Palestinian state for the simple reason that it's not in Israel's power to create such a state. True, it's easier to coerce Israeli politicians than Palestinian ones. That's because Israelis

are not doctrinaire, while Palestinians all speak with one voice: "It's the occupation (that prevents a Palestinian state)." Nevertheless, the Palestinians haven't developed the institutions necessary to run a state. More fundamentally, they haven't stopped hating Jews enough to start building a state.

The biggest obstacle of all to a Palestinian state today is the enmity between Hamas, which controls Gaza, and Fatah, which has a tenuous hold on the West Bank. This is closely followed by the simmering dispute between the younger generation of Fatah and the "old guard" Palestinian Authority leader, Mahmoud Abbas. If Prime Minister Netanyahu capitulated completely to President Obama's demands and said, "Let there be a Palestinian state," I wouldn't hold my breath waiting for "Palestine" to come into being. Clearly,

preventing Israelis beyond the Green Line from building inside existing communities isn't the "make or break" determinant for Palestinian statehood, despite the Obama administration's desire to quickly bring peace to the region.

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