

# Netanyahu renews support for two-state solution with Palestinians



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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu holds a meeting of his new cabinet, in honor of Jerusalem day, ...

JERUSALEM (Reuters) - **Israeli Prime Minister** Benjamin Netanyahu renewed his commitment on Wednesday to a two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, after backtracking on that pledge during a heated campaign for a March election.

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Speaking as he met with **European Union** foreign policy chief **Federica Mogherini** on her first visit to the region, and a week after his new government took office, Netanyahu said:

"We want a peace that would end the conflict once and for all ... I don't support a one-state solution, I don't believe that's a solution at all, I support the vision of two states for two peoples."

He reiterated Israel's longstanding demand that any **Palestinian state** established in land Israel captured in a 1967 war should be demilitarized, and said he hoped to discuss with Mogherini "how we can advance that vision forward".

One the eve of the March 17 election, with polls putting him behind centre-left rivals, Netanyahu went back on a 2009 pledge to back a Western goal of achieving a two-state solution with the Palestinians, saying he would not permit a Palestinian state to be established under his watch.

Although Netanyahu subsequently argued that he had not been opposing Palestinian state in principle, U.S. President Barack

Obama said the comments had made it "hard to find a path" back to serious peace negotiations, and told Netanyahu Washington would have to reassess its policies in the Middle East.

Peace negotiations brokered by Washington last broke off in April 2014 in a dispute over Jewish settlement building in occupied land and Palestinian accusations that Israel had not fulfilled all the terms of a promised prisoner release.

Mogherini told Palestinian leaders at a meeting in the West Bank city of Ramallah that Europe was committed to getting talks restarted, and similarly told Netanyahu she wanted to discuss "opportunities to relaunch the peace process" with him.

Some EU diplomats believe Mogherini sees a chance for European diplomacy in the Middle East in the absence of a major new push from Washington as President Barack Obama approaches his final 18 months in office.

(Writing by Allyn Fisher-Ilan; Editing by Kevin Liffey)