

Olmert: Abbas a partner, but a weak one

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has become a partner in peace negotiations, but is weak. In an interview in Washington with the Israeli Haaretz newspaper as the U.S. summit wound down, Olmert said it was incumbent on him to help shore Abbas up. "He is a weak partner, who is not capable, and as (special Middle East envoy) Tony Blair says, has yet to formulate the tools and may not manage to do so," Olmert said of Abbas. "But it is my job to do everything so that he receives the tools, and to reach an understanding on the guidelines for an agreement." Olmert also repeated his 4-year-old stance that Israel must eventually withdraw from occupied territories or otherwise "face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights" for both sides. He said in that situation, "the Jewish organizations, which were our power base in America, will be the first to come out against us, because they will say they cannot support a state that does not support democracy and equal voting rights for all its residents."

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