

Olmert, Abbas to discuss settlements

by UPI

JERUSALEM -- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced plans to discuss settlement issues during a Thursday meeting. The two leaders are expected to discuss issues settlement issues that have slowed the process of negotiations since the Annapolis, Md., summit in November, Haaretz reported Wednesday. Palestinian negotiators object to the Israeli Housing Ministry's plan to build 307 housing units in Jerusalem's Har Homa neighborhood, which falls on the Palestinian side of the Green Line. "We want to make 2009 a year of peace," top Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said Wednesday. "This kills the credibility of the peace process." Israeli officials said the Har Homa plan was put in motion by low-ranking government officials in the Housing Ministry and Olmert wasn't alerted to the decision before it was made. Israel considers Har Homa to be part of a unified Jerusalem but the Palestinians believe the area to be as much a part of their territories as the West Bank, and have similar feelings about Israeli construction in both areas, Haaretz said.

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