

Peace talks showing signs of discord

by UPI

JERUSALEM - Israeli and Palestinian leaders met in Jerusalem despite apparent discord over the content of their talks and what they are trying to achieve. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas met Tuesday at Olmert's residence, first with their negotiating teams then alone, The New York Times reported Wednesday. While negotiating teams have met frequently in recent days, members are honoring an agreement of not disclosing talk details. However, signs of friction have been observed, the Times said. Trying to counter pressure from the Israeli public and a religious party in his coalition, Olmert said he and Abbas agreed to delay talks on the future status of Jerusalem, a contentious issue for both sides. Israel annexed the eastern part of Jerusalem after the 1967 war; the Palestinians want it as the capital of a future independent state. Palestinian officials, however, denied any agreement regarding Jerusalem discussions is in place. "That is not the case," Saeb Erekat, a senior Palestinian negotiator, told the Times. He said issues of Jerusalem, borders and settlements couldn't be separated. "We have a principle that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. It's a package," Erekat said.

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