

Abbas says he would resume peace talks

by UPI

RAMALLAH, West Bank -- Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said Wednesday he would resume peace talks with Israel only after a cease-fire in Gaza is reached. "The negotiations must be started, but after the truce," Abbas said in Ramallah on the West bank. "Once the truce is achieved, the road will be open for negotiations." In Jerusalem, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas "is not a condition" for resumption of peace talks, CNN reported. Rice is conducting a Middle East visit ahead of a NATO meeting. Abbas' government suspended negotiations in light of the fighting between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza. He called on Israel to end its aggression "so the necessary environment can be created to make negotiations succeed," CNN said. He said Rice will send an envoy to Cairo to discuss mediation efforts with Egyptian leaders. "There are real efforts being exerted by Egypt for the truce," Abbas said. Rice said both parties have told her they've contacted each other and plan to resume talks. Peace negotiations must be resumed "as soon as possible," Rice said, adding all parties need to "focus on the process of bringing peace."

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