UN Chief to Visit Israel, PA, Gaza to Push Peace Efforts

June 21, 2016

The Times of Israel

http://www.timesofisrael.com/un-chief-to-visit-israel-pa-gaza-to-push-peace-efforts/

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is reportedly slated to visit Israel and the Palestinian Authority next week for a two-day round of meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

The visit, scheduled for Monday and Tuesday next week, will take him to Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ramallah and the Gaza Strip, the Walla news site reported Tuesday.

The visit comes amid renewed international diplomatic efforts to restart Israeli-Palestinian peace talks stalled since 2014.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is also slated to meet US Secretary of State John Kerry next week in Europe to discuss, among other issues, the recent French initiative to jumpstart talks.

Channel 2 reported Sunday that Netanyahu plans to tell Kerry he backs potential Egyptian-led efforts to revive negotiations, rather than the international approach being pushed by France.

Netanyahu has recently given mixed signals on the Saudi-drafted Arab Peace Initiative as a means to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, suggesting partial support for it but also calling for it to be amended.

His Foreign Ministry director-general, Dore Gold, told The Times of Israel three weeks ago that Israel believes improved ties with certain Arab states could enable subsequent progress with the Palestinians.

“The conventional wisdom for the last few decades has been that a solution to the Palestinian issues will result in improved ties between Israel and the Arab world,” Gold said. “But there is a serious basis for thinking that, actually, the sequence is exactly the opposite — that by improving ties with the Arab states, we set the stage for a future breakthrough with the Palestinians.”

Ban is slated to pay a special visit to the Gaza Strip during his visit in order to inspect from up close UN agencies’ aid work in the coastal territory.