Israel Slams Quartet Report: Settlement Construction Isn't Akin to Terrorism

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Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority expressed disappointment on Friday with the Mideast Quartet report on the impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The report released on Friday afternoon calls on the Palestinian Authority to stop incitement, step up efforts to end terrorism and condemn attacks against Israelis. It calls on Israel to end settlement construction and put a stop to the gradual takeover of Area C in the West Bank.

Israel said it rejects the parallels the report had drawn between settlement construction and terrorism. The PA said that the report doesn't meet the Palestinians' expectations "as a nation living under a foreign colonial military occupation."

In a statement, the Israeli Prime Minister's Office accused the Palestinian Authority of referring to the assailant who murdered a 13-year-old Israeli girl in her sleep on Thursday as a "martyr." This response, the statement said, makes the Quartet's acknowledgment of Palestinian incitement relevant.

However, the PMO said that the report failed to address the "real core" of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which it defined as the "persistent Palestinian refusal to recognize Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people in any boundaries."

The PMO also accused the Quartet of "perpetuating the myth" that Israeli settlement construction is an obstacle to peace and rejected what it described as an attempt "to draw moral equivalence between construction and terrorism."

"It is troubling that the Quartet appears to have adopted the position that the presence of Jews living in the West Bank somehow prevents reaching a two-state solution," the statement said. "The presence of nearly 1.8 million Arabs in Israel isn’t a barrier to peace; it is a testament to our pluralism and commitment to equality. Israel rejects any attempt to draw moral equivalence between construction and terrorism."

The PMO further said it rejects the parallels the Quartet had drawn between Palestinian and Israeli terrorism. "The former is lauded by the Palestinian leadership," the statement said. "The latter is utterly condemned and rejected by Israelis across the board."

Finally, the PMO said Israel will continue to strive for peace based "on Prime Minister Netanyahu’s vision of two states for two peoples."

In his own response, secretary general of Palestine Liberation Organization, Saeb Erekat, said that report "attempts to equalize the responsibilities between a people under occupation and a foreign military occupier."

"Evidently, certain parties of the international community insist on trying to avoid their own legal and moral responsibilities to implement international law and conventions; to protect the Palestinian people and to ensure the fulfillment of our right to self-determination," he said.

Erekat said that the Fatah Central Committee and the PLO Executive Committee will convene in the next two days to discuss the report, and will release an official response on Sunday.