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Visit of President Mahmoud Abbas, February 2010

By

Sonia Roy

The two-day state visit of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in early February 2010 scarcely received attention of the mainstream Indian media. In an effort to shore up support, on 11 February President Abbas met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and exchanged views on the renewed efforts at initiating a peace process, especially the Russian proposal for a meeting of the 'Quartet'. The two sides exchanged notes on Abbas' meeting with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia late last year concerning the Middle East peace process, especially in the light of Dr. Singh's scheduled visit to Saudi Arabia in March.¹

The Indian Prime Minister announced a grant of ten million dollars as a budgetary support for the Palestinian National Authority. He also assured President Abbas of India's support to their efforts aimed at economic and social development.²

The visiting President met Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor who reaffirmed Dr. Singh's assurance and declared: "India has been a very strong supporter of two-state solution. We have been behind the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on Palestine. We would like to see Palestine and Israel living side by side behind

¹ Sandeep Dikshit, 'Manmohan, Abbas discuss fresh bids to open peace talks', *The Hindu*, 12 February 2010
<http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/thscrip/print.pl?file=2010021260781000.htm&date=2010/02/12/&prd=th&>

² 'PM meets Abbas, announces \$10 m as budget support', *Indian Express*, 12 February 2010,
<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/pm-meets-abbas-announces-10-m-as-budget-su/578861/>

secure borders in prosperity and peace. Where we can be helpful is certainly something we continue discussing with our friends.”³

This was the second visit to India by Abbas as President. On 19 May 2005 he had met Dr. Singh in New Delhi. That visit was a part of his Asian tour after Abbas succeeded the late Yasser Arafat as president of the Palestinian Authority in January that year. That visit had its particular significance due the gradual warming of friendship between India and Israel. Some saw Abbas’ visit would help restore a "balance" in India's ties with Israel and the Palestinians.⁴

In similar vein, the current visit promised to balance and strengthen the bilateral relations between India and the Palestinian National Authority.

Sonia Roy is a Graduate Student at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

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³ ‘India keen on restoration of peace between Israel and Palestine: Tharoor’, *AndraNews.net*, 12 February 2010, <http://www.andhranews.net/India/2010/February/12-India-keen-restoration.asp>

⁴ ‘Abbas visits Pakistan, India’, *Jordan Times*, 20 May 2005