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Mikhail Kamynin, the Spokesman of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Answers a Media Question Regarding Discussion in the Israeli Government of a Political Line Towards the Palestinian National Authority

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Question: According to media reports, the Israeli government has discussed what further line to take towards Hamas. To judge by the information in hand, Israel intends to toughen its policy towards the Palestinians even further. How could you comment on this information?

Answer: From all appearances, it is about the Israeli cabinet's discussion in a "narrow format" of the proposals from the defense minister for steps Israel should take following the formation by Hamas of the executive bodies in the PNA. As Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has said, these recommendations must soon be submitted for approval by the government of Israel.

The proposed measures actually envisage severing ties with the entire Palestinian Authority, which Israel now views as a hostile entity. There is only one exclusion made: for PNA Head Mahmoud Abbas. The recommendations suggest that foreign representatives contacting with Hamas officials should not be received at the official level in Israel.

As is known, Russia initiated contacts with Hamas after its victory in the parliamentary elections by striving to prevent a serious degradation of the situation in Palestinian-Israeli settlement and to preserve the prospect of advancing the peace process on the basis of the Roadmap. We acted and will continue to act within the framework of the Middle East Quartet's coordinated approaches, while treating with the utmost seriousness the security concerns of Israel.

One cannot but see that isolating the legitimate Palestinian authority and imposing a blockade against it will hit the Palestinian people in the first place, and aggravate even more the difficult humanitarian situation in the PNA territories. This may result in a paralysis of authority and chaos, and that can provoke a new outburst of uncontrolled violence and confrontation. We consider it the common task of the Quartet and the entire international community to prevent the development of events according to such a scenario.

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