

**Middle Eastern politics & society**

## China says rival Palestinian factions express 'political will' to reconcile

Hamas and Fatah meet in Beijing to try to work out differences as international pressure grows for end to war in Gaza



Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said discussions between the two rival groups had 'made positive progress' © Johannes Neudecker/picture-alliance/dpa/AP

## Edward White in Shanghai YESTERDAY

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The two largest Palestinian factions, Hamas and Fatah, have expressed “political will” to achieve reconciliation through dialogue during a round of talks in Beijing, according to the Chinese foreign ministry.

Lin Jian, a foreign ministry spokesperson, said on Tuesday the discussions between the rival groups covered “many specific issues and made positive progress”, but did not provide further details.

The latest attempt to reconcile the factions comes as international pressure mounts on both Hamas and Israel to end the six-month [war](#) triggered by the Islamist militant group’s October 7 attack.

Mediators trying to broker a deal to secure the release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza and an initial six-week pause in the fighting are cautiously optimistic after Israel appeared to [soften its stance](#) at the negotiations. Hamas is still studying the latest proposal and has yet to formally respond.

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Arab states believe reconciling the rival Palestinian factions will be important for any postwar plan for Gaza. Hamas has controlled the strip since 2007 when it ousted Fatah after an internal battle that followed the Islamist militant group's victory in Palestinian elections the previous year.

In February, the weak Fatah-led government of the Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank [resigned following pressure](#) from Arab and western states to reform the PA and establish a technocratic government that might have greater credibility among Palestinians.

Arab and Palestinian officials believe the PA, which administers limited parts of the West Bank, will have to play a role in governing Gaza once the war ends. But until Hamas and Fatah work out their long-running differences, it is unclear how the relatively secular PA could operate in territory it has lost — both electorally, and in terms of control on the ground — to the Islamist militant group.

Although Hamas has been severely depleted militarily by Israel's offensive in the devastated strip, it is considered part of the Palestinian social fabric and has a political wing.

Hamas and Fatah previously [held reconciliation talks](#) in Moscow in February.

Lin, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, said the factions "agreed to continue the course of talks to achieve the realisation of Palestinian solidarity and unity at an early date".

Beijing has in recent years sought to expand its political and economic influence in the Middle East — a region it depends on for its energy imports — as part of President Xi Jinping's vision for Chinese leadership of the "Global South" of emerging and non-aligned countries.

Last March it brokered a deal that led to Saudi Arabia and Iran [restoring diplomatic ties](#).

But since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war, Beijing has not played a central role in regional diplomacy, while the US — the dominant foreign power in the Middle East — has been centre stage.

[China](#) has been a supporter of the Palestinian cause since the era of Mao Zedong but since the 1980s has also developed friendly economic ties with Israel.

Wang Yi, China's top diplomat, said last week that the country would "actively promote peace and stability in the Middle East and help ease the tension".

"The only way to break the vicious cycle of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict . . . is to truly restore justice to the Palestinians, effectively enforce the two-state solution and bring about political settlement to the legitimate security concerns of all related parties," Wang told Al Jazeera.

*Additional reporting by Ding Wenjie in Beijing*

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