


## Meretz presents four-year path to peace based on Arab League initiative

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The leftist Meretz party on Tuesday unveiled its diplomatic platform - a four-year path to peace based on the Arab League initiative.

The platform calls for immediate recognition of a Palestinian state followed by negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, a freeze on settlement construction, release of Palestinian prisoners and removal of West Bank roadblocks, Meretz chairwoman Zahava Gal-On said on Tuesday at a Tel Aviv news conference.

The plan would also cancel the Oslo Accords in agreement with the Palestinians, and replace them with a new interim pact. Gal-On said she would be meeting with PA President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah to discuss the plan on Wednesday.

"We stand here today on the eve of elections as the last anchor of the peace camp," she said. The party chairwoman added that when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "said no to a Palestinian state in the United Nations, he got a resounding slap from the world, and those who did not want a Palestinian state by agreement will get it without an agreement."

She went on to say that the "[Moshe] Feiglins, the Yariv Levins and the Danny Danons on the Likud roster" will not allow Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to come to a peace agreement, referring to the candidates on Likud's right flank. Gal-On said the window of opportunity for peace, "which is a strategic interest of Israel, is rapidly closing."

Meretz's diplomatic platform was formulated by Ilan Baruch, formerly Israel's ambassador to South Africa. When Baruch retired two years ago from the foreign service, he harshly criticized Netanyahu and then-Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman.

"I have not come to talk politics, I have come to talk policy," Baruch said on Tuesday. "Between Hamas and Fatah, the decision on what happens with us depends on the Israeli leadership. Unfortunately the Israeli leadership today, as well as those who would like to be part of the next government, very much strengthen the Palestinian voice that says the entire country is Palestine and there is no room for Israel." Baruch said Tuesday's presentation was not meant to be a comprehensive peace plan and was not based on empty slogans. "It is a plan intended to jump-start the process that has gone into deep freeze, [which is] completely the responsibility of the outgoing government and apparently the incoming one. Any plan that pretends to reinvent the peace process is not serious. Our plan is based on existing materials. The first and supreme test is the applicability of such a plan."