

Barack Obama urges Israelis, Palestinians to 'tamp down' rhetoric

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Washington: US President Barack Obama urged Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas to "tamp down" the kind of rhetoric that is arousing anger and tensions in the region, and condemned the violence "against innocent people" that has left more than 30 people dead over the past few weeks.

"It's important for both (Israeli) Prime Minister Netanyahu and Israeli elected officials and (Palestinian) President Abbas and other people in positions of power to try to tamp down rhetoric that may feed violence or anger or misunderstanding," Obama told the joint press conference he gave together with visiting South Korean President Park Geun-hye on Friday.

Those leaders have to make their people understand that "this kind of random violence isn't going to result in anything other than more hardship and more insecurity," the president said.

"I don't think we can wait for all the issues that exist between Israel and Palestine to be settled for us to try to tamp down violence right now," he said.

Obama said he was "very concerned about the outbreak of violence" in Jerusalem and on the West Bank, and condemned "in the strongest possible terms violence directed against innocent people".

He added that "Israel has a right to maintain basic law and order and protect its citizens from knife attacks and violence on the streets".

Nonetheless, he said that "over time, the only way that Israel is going to be truly secure, and the only way the Palestinians will be able to meet the aspirations of their people, is if they are two states living side by side in peace and security".

He said those talks have foundered, and "I think it's going to be up to the parties... to see if they can restart a more constructive relationship," the president said.

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