

Israel slams Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for anti-Trump speech

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Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, center, speaks during a meeting with the Palestinian Central Council, a top decision-making body, at his headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah, Sunday

Jerusalem: Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said on Monday that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had "lost his senses" following his fiery speech against President Donald Trump.

Lieberman told Israel's Army Radio that Abbas' address symbolized his giving up on the prospect of peace negotiations and opting instead for a confrontation with both Israel and the United States.

Abbas sharply escalated his rhetoric in a speech on Sunday, lashing out at Trump over recent policy moves, such as recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Abbas also slammed Trump's recent Twitter comment threatening to cut American aid and alleging the Palestinians are no longer willing to negotiate a peace deal with Israel.

"Since when did we reject negotiations?" Abbas told members of the Palestinian Central Council, a key decision-making body. "Shame," Abbas said, addressing Trump.

To laughter from the crowd, Abbas then added the phrase "Yehreb Beitak," literally translated as "may your house be demolished."

In colloquial Palestinian Arabic, the phrase can have different connotations, from a harsh to a casual insult, but its use in a widely watched speech seemed jarring.

Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett, head of the pro-settler Jewish Home Party, said the content and style of the speech represented Abbas' swan song.

"Abu Mazen is at the end of his road, toward the end of his rule and the end of his life," he told Army Radio, referring to Abbas by his nickname. "There appears to be no Palestinian partner and it is unlikely there will be."

Trump infuriated Palestinians and Muslims around the world when he announced late last year that the U.S. would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move its embassy there, upending decades of U.S. policy and countering an international consensus that the fate of Jerusalem should be decided in negotiations between the sides.

Abbas has said that by siding with the Israelis on a sensitive issue, the announcement had destroyed Trump's credibility as a Mideast peace broker.

- AP