

"The changes in the Arab region and the political upheaval contributed to reducing the pressure on the Palestinian factions, and by pressure I mean the negative kind of pressure." Mousa Abu Marzouq, a representative of Hamas who negotiated the deal, said at the news conference. "We have ended a painful period in the history of the Palestinian people where Palestinian division had prevailed. Today we turn this page and open a new page."

The Fatah-led Palestinian Authority has negotiated for a two-state solution with Israel whereas Hamas says Israel has no right to exist and continues to fire rockets at Israeli towns.

The negotiators offered few details of the proposed transitional unity government. Mahmoud al-Zahar, a Hamas leader, told Al-Jazeera television that the sides had agreed to changes in the interim leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, a tribunal for elections and a date for the elections. Hamas and Fatah will nominate members of the technocratic government and a 12-judge election tribunal. He also said an agreement was reached to set up an oversight committee to regulate security.

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Palestinians wave flags and chant slogans Wednesday in support of a reconciliation between the rival Fatah and Hamas movements in Gaza City.

Hamas, Fatah resolve split, reach unity deal

BY ETHAN BRONNER AND ISABEL KERSHNER
The New York Times

JERUSALEM — The two main Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, said Wednesday that they were

putting aside years of bitter rivalry to create an interim unity government and hold elections within a year, a surprise that promised to reshape the diplomatic landscape of the Middle East.

The deal, brokered in secret talks by the caretaker Egyptian government, was announced at a news conference in Cairo, where two negotiators referred to each side as brothers and declared a new chapter in the Palestinian struggle for independence, hobbled in recent years by the split between the Fatah-run West Bank and Hamas-run Gaza.

It was the first tangible sign that the upheaval across the region, especially in Gaza, was not merely a risk of alienating the West-ern support the Palestinian Authority has enjoyed.

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Chief Fatah negotiator Azzam al-Ahmed



Hamas negotiator Mousa Abu Marzouq

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