

Palestinian factions including Hamas agree to form future unity government

Diplomatic coup for China as Beijing declaration sets out deal to unite across territories and prepare for elections

Leaders from Hamas, Fatah and other Palestinian factions have agreed after three days of talks in Beijing to form a national unity government at an unspecified point in the future, in a move that has bolstered China's status as a global mediator, particularly in the Middle East.

The "Beijing declaration", signed by 14 Palestinian factions, also represents a significant step forward in negotiations between the groups, although it is light on detail about how to actually achieve Palestinian unification.

In a speech on Tuesday, China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, said the declaration represented an "important historical moment in the cause of Palestinian liberation".

Nicholas Lyall, a senior researcher at Trends, a research and advisory firm based in Abu Dhabi, said: "Today's agreement goes much further than any other past agreements between the parties since their 2007 conflict." He was referencing the fighting that led Hamas to oust Fatah from the Gaza Strip nearly 20 years ago.

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