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From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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From: Withers, Anne M
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Subject: (AP) Arab League backs Palestinians on restarting talks

CAIRO (AP) - Qatar's prime minister says the Arab nations have endorsed direct Palestinian talks with the Israelis but left the timing to the Palestinians themselves. Sheik Hamad bin Jassem Al Thani, who chaired the meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo said July 29 the timing of the direct talks "is a matter for the Palestinian side to decide." The U.S. and the Europeans have been pushing Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to restart the direct talks, which broke off in 2008, immediately. Abbas, however, has said he would only restart talks if Israel agrees to a halt in settlement construction and accepts a Palestinian state in territories seized in the 1967 Middle East war, the West Bank, Gaza, and east Jerusalem. He first wants progress in the current U.S. mediated indirect talks.