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## EU sees possibility of more Syria partnership talks

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By Adam Entous

TEL AVIV, Israel, Sept 12 (Reuters) - The European Union is willing to renew talks for a partnership pact with Syria once Damascus takes more steps to meet Western demands, the EU's foreign policy chief said on Friday.

The signing of an already-drafted association accord has been stalled since the assassination three years ago of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri. Syria has denied assertions the attack was orchestrated from Damascus.

Javier Solana, the EU's foreign policy chief, told reporters in Tel Aviv: "The attitude of the EU is to continue with Syria the negotiations as soon as it decides it's clear enough that Syria has changed its position."

Solana did not spell out what the Western demands were, but the EU has expressed concern about preventing weapons smuggling across Syria's borders to the Lebanese guerrilla group Hezbollah, backed by Syria and Iran.

"There is no doubt that if Syria changes their position in the way we are talking about, and they have done some change in that direction, then we'll consider no doubt," resuming negotiations for the pact, Solana said.

At this point there had not been any decision taken by the EU to resume these talks with Syria, he added.

Solana praised recent indirect peace talks between Syria and Israel, under Turkish mediation, and said they ought to be resumed. Formal negotiations between Israel and Syria stalled in 2000.

"I think it's good. I think the contacts between Israel and Syria, through Turkey, should continue," he said.

Syria said last week it had postponed a further round of talks with Israel after the resignation of Israel's chief negotiator Yoram Turbowicz, who was stepping down as chief of staff for Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Olmert, embroiled in a corruption scandal, has pledged to resign himself once his Kadima party chooses a new leader in an election scheduled for next week.

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