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Facts & Logic About the Middle East

May 2, 2017

Mahmoud Abbas Visits Washington: What's He Looking for and What Kind of a Deal Will Mr. Trump Make?

Dear Friend of FLAME:

Mahmoud Abbas will be visiting the White House this week. The big questions are, what will he be trying to accomplish . . . and more importantly, what can President Trump hope to achieve?

As Mr. Trump has already observed with his thwarted healthcare deal and his prospects for a deal with China over North Korea, engineering a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians will likely be a lot more complicated than he ever imagined.

As you know, we at FLAME and most of our supporters tend to take a hard line on the Palestinians. No wonder: Their every action for the last 70 years indicates they aren't yet sufficiently motivated to make peace with Israel. Based on the curriculum they teach their schoolchildren, they have not given up their dream of driving the Jews from greater Palestine and establishing an Arab state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

But they should know, just as we teach our children, choices have consequences.

Therefore, the logic goes, let the Palestinians swing in the breeze:

- Cut funding from the U.N. until the Palestinians root out the terrorist, anti-Semitic curriculum in U.N.-sponsored schools.
- Cut U.S. financial aid until the Palestinians stop glorifying terrorists who murder Israelis and other Western nationals.
- Move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem immediately.

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YOU DESERVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH...
Israel's Settlements: Obstacle to Peace?
 Arabs opposed the State of Israel before there were settlements—and they oppose it still today. It's time to clear up 5 false myths about settlements.

The U.N., as well as some American media and politicians, claim Israel doesn't want peace, since Jews build houses in disputed territories of Judea and Samaria (i.e. the West Bank). But the facts reveal settlements to be a misconception. What's much greater than is are preventing peace.

What are the facts?
 Palestinian Arabs have violently fought Israel's existence since the Jewish state's founding and only much later cited Israel's settlements as an obstacle to peace. When Israel relinquished its settlements in Gaza in 2005, it was regarded with a mixture of awe by the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas. Five major misconceptions underlie criticism of Israeli settlements.

Myth #1: Palestinians "own" these lands. In fact, Jews are indisputably the indigenous people of Palestine (including Israel, Judea and Samaria), who have lived in the region for millennia and ruled it as a state, including Arab rule from 638 to 1948. Palestinians have never had a state nor possessed public land in the region. Thus, the idea of "Palestinian lands" is false. In fact, both people can live claim in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) if it is aligned territory.

Myth #2: Jews have no right to live in the disputed territories. Jews and Arabs have lived together for hundreds of years in Palestine. The only exception is during 19 years of Turkish rule, when Jews were expelled from the West Bank. Today, some two million Arabs live on full citizens of Israel, and some 400,000 Jews live in Judea and Samaria. Yet Palestinians insist that no peace with Israel is possible so long as Jews live among them. In 2013, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas stated that "in the final resolution, we would not see the presence of a single Israeli—civilian or soldier—on our lands." Why should Abbas, who accuses Israel of "apartheid," issue a racist ban on Jews? Why should Arabs be welcome in Israel society—as they are—when Jews would be forbidden from living with Palestinians in the West Bank?

Myth #3: Israel is increasing new settlements in Judea and Samaria. In December 2014, President Obama's dignitary national security adviser Ben Rhodes complained to PLO's holy Woodhead of "tens of thousands of settlements being constructed" by Israel. In fact no new settlements are under construction in Israel, and Israel has created no new settlements in some 29 years. The number of settlements, plus illegal outposts, now totals just 220. While the number of settlers in living in established settlements has increased by 355,000 since 2013, the number of settlers living out of Israel's anti-terrorist separation barrier has since 2009 increased by only 20,000. Less than 1% of the population in the disputed territories, Judea, Israeli communities take up only 2% of the land of the West Bank. Almost all the settlements are located on land not previously occupied, used or privately owned by individual Palestinians.

Myth #4: Israel's settlements are illegal under international law. Most who assert Israeli settlements are illegal cite the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." However, Russia has settled its people into the Baltic region, Turkey has settled Turks into Turkish-occupied Cyprus, and China has settled Chinese into occupied Tibet. The Israel has never transferred any of its people into the West Bank. All settlements in Judea and Samaria have been voluntary, undertaken by private land owners. Why does the world focus on Israel—which has not broken this law—while allowing other nations to violate it liberally?

Myth #5: The Palestinians would make peace if settlement building stopped. In 2009, Israel froze new settlement activity for 10 months to entice the Palestinians to negotiations sponsored by the U.N. The Palestinians refused. Indeed, Israel has made numerous land-for-peace offers to the Palestinians, most recently in 2009 and in 2016, in which the Palestinians would have received more than 90 percent of the disputed territories, plus land swaps—plus a capital for Jerusalem. But the Arabs turned these down. They refuse to accept Israel as a Jewish state and insist on "right" of the 5 million descendants of Arab refugees from 1948 to "resettle" in Israel, which would swamp Israel demographically.

Israel has a standing offer to resume negotiations with the Palestinians with preconditions. In the Arabic region, citing Israeli settlements as an excuse. One thing is certain: Settlements were never made to peace in 1948—what Israel was aware and there were more—and they're not the obstacle today.

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IF YOU SUPPORT PUBLISHING FLAME'S BOLD PR MESSAGES,

- Continue to allow Israeli settlement construction until the Palestinians recognize the Jewish state, accede to Israel's security needs and agree to serious negotiations with no pre-conditions.

Any, or even all, of these measures may have the desired effect—drive the Palestinians to make peace—and we at FLAME have advocated, to one degree or another, for each of these measures.

But the fact is, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Palestinian economy are so weak that cutting their foreign aid drastically, for example, could throw West Bank Palestinian society and nearly two million people into utter chaos and a humanitarian crisis. This in turn could create the perfect storm for a takeover by hardcore jihadist forces—most likely Hamas, but even al Qaeda or ISIS. Who wants that? No one in Israel, that is certain. We, too, must bear in mind that choices have consequences.

This week's featured *FLAME Hotline* article, below, explains what President Trump can hope for from his visit by Mahmoud Abbas this week and elucidates many reasons his choices will be limited. However, as author and Middle East analyst Eran Lerman makes clear, the chances for moving a peace process forward—even a few inches—are better today than they were over the past eight years.

Donald Trump indeed has an opportunity, but he clearly will not tweet the Palestinians into submission. As Lerman makes clear, the President's meeting with Abbas will require a combination of trust-building and measures to apply serious pressure on a calcified Palestinian leadership—one that for decades has labored successfully to convince its people that they can still defeat the Jews.

I hope this short piece helps you articulate to friends, colleagues, and your representatives in Washington why President Trump needs to ratchet up the pressure on Abbas—to make clear that there will be no peace until he and his leadership are unequivocally committed to it.

No unilateral moves in the U.N. will give the Palestinians a peace . . . and a peace deal with Israel will never be better than it is today: Every day Abbas temporizes makes Israel stronger, the Palestinians weaker and the ultimate deal less advantageous to him.

Finally, I hope you'll also quickly review the P.S. immediately

PLEASE HELP US!!

FLAME is the only organization that defends Israel with paid editorial hasbarah messages placed in media nationwide every month: The dire threats from Iran, Hamas and Hizbollah, the injustice of BDS, Palestinian anti-Semitism and more. If you support a bold voice that tells the truth about Israel in American media, please donate now.

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below, which describes FLAME's recent *hasbarah* campaign to expose the Palestinians' funding of Islamic terrorists using U.S. taxpayer dollars.

Best regards,

Jim Sinkinson

President, Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. You've no doubt often read in the *N.Y. Times* and other mainstream media of "Israeli settlements on Palestinian land" or "settlements regarded as illegal by the international community." Yet these objective-sounding phrases represent malicious propaganda—disguised lies told so often that millions of Americans believe them. In order to make Americans—especially college and university students—aware of this media treachery, FLAME has just begun publishing a new position paper: "Israeli Settlements: Obstacle to Peace?" This paid editorial, exposing the five greatest myths about the settlements, is appearing in magazines and newspapers, including college newspapers, with a combined readership of some 10 million people. In addition, it is being sent to every member of the U.S. Congress and President Trump. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion—and U.S. support of Israel—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider giving a donation now, as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation to FLAME is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to donate now. Now more than ever we need your support to ensure that the American people and the U.S. Congress end our support of blatantly anti-Semitic, global jihadist organizations.

As of today, more than 15,000 Israel supporters receive the FLAME Hotline at no charge every week. If you're not yet a subscriber, won't you join us in receiving these timely updates, so you can more effectively tell the truth about Israel? Just go to free subscription.

Mahmoud Abbas goes to Washington: What is at stake?

By Eran Lerman, BESA Center *Perspectives*, April 27, 2017

The preparatory visit to Washington now underway by a Palestinian delegation, headed by Saeb Erekat, underscores the importance attached to the forthcoming visit [this] month by Mahmoud Abbas. The indications that Abbas is now willing to contemplate a meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu under Trump's auspices may seem surprising, given the latter's firm stand on issues important to Israel. But it should be considered in the context of the broader consolidation of the pro-western forces in the region, which felt on unstable ground during the Obama years.

An opportunity is now arising to forge a more realistic framework for negotiations than the one former Secretary of State John Kerry tried, and failed, to get the Palestinians to agree to in 2014 (and which they had no reason to accept, knowing full well that the Obama administration would put the blame on Israel). Straightforward messages would be of great help in setting the stage for purposeful talks. Those messages should address the need for long-term security measures; for mutual recognition (i.e., of Israel as the embodiment of the right of the Jewish people to self-determination, and vice versa); and for a territorial compromise reflecting realities on the ground. It would also be helpful for President Trump to send a message on the need to "park" the Jerusalem issue, which cannot be resolved at this time.

If, in return, the Palestinians garner a delay in the transfer of the US Embassy to Jerusalem and an understanding on restrictions (not a freeze) of construction, limiting it to existing settlements, this would be a reasonable price to pay in order to break the dangerous lock of unrealistic terms of reference that Obama (and Condoleezza Rice) led the Palestinians to expect. Given regional and global dynamics, this is not quite as impossible as it may sound.

What is likely to be on the table between the Palestinians and the Trump administration in the preparatory talks and the summit meeting? The most important aspect may, in fact, remain unspoken. It can be defined as "strategic reassurance": the realization that after years of uncertainty under Obama, the American administration - for all its obvious faults - is once again committed without reservation to its friends in the region, the so-called "camp of stability".

Obama's abandonment of Mubarak, regardless of the merits of the case, was catastrophic in terms of the loss of any residual political courage on Abbas's part. Obama was sympathetic to the

Palestinians' cause, but his policies generated an acute level of uncertainty for the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah, laced with what seemed like a measure of support on Obama's part for the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and elsewhere. This was not an environment in which to take fateful decisions.

The Trump team seems to be working to restore confidence and reconstruct what was referred to during the Reagan years as the "Strategic Consensus", which includes both Israel and the pro-Western Arab states. In this new environment, it could be safer for Abbas to take measured risks and enter into an open-ended negotiation with Netanyahu. The effort may still fall apart, if only because the Palestinians have fallen into the habit of posing preconditions. But there seems to be a better chance of drawing them in when they feel that their traditional patrons in the Arab world, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, are once again basking in the sunshine of American strategic support.

The familiar Palestinian need to latch onto preordained terms of reference, a "closed-end" process, is to some extent a direct function of their sense of weakness and uncertainty (as well as a way to avoid the painful decisions that a real peace with Israel must entail). At least in theory, it should therefore be easier now for Jason Greenblatt and the White House to persuade Abbas to accept a point of entry into negotiations that stays within the two-state paradigm but is no longer predicated on strict adherence to the 4 June 1967 lines (with minimal 1:1 swaps). These parameters could be more in line with what Israel can accept and implement. Clarity on the US agreement with Israel with regard to limited settlement construction—not a "freeze", which brought both sides nothing but grief when it was tried in 2009-10—can further set the stage for realism on the broader question of territorial compromise.

As to security, there needs to be a greater recognition of the dangers that flow from the rise in regional tensions; the ambitions of Iran and the virulence of IS; the wars in Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Iraq; and the real possibility of a bid for power by Hamas in the areas now under Ramallah's control. All this requires arrangements for a long-term Israeli military presence in areas vital not only to the defense of Israel and her citizens but also to the stability and survival of the Palestinian government, as well as the security of Jordan. The level of openness on the Palestinian side on these issues will be highly indicative of the seriousness of their intentions.

In the debates of recent years, recognition has often come across as the most difficult problem to solve. The Palestinians'

almost instinctive reactions—"Call yourselves whatever you wish", "We do not want to turn this into a religious conflict"—sound plausible at first, but they reflect a profound misreading of the very nature of the Zionist project as a national movement. While this is not a precondition and will ultimately be settled at the table, it would be useful for the Trump team to explore whether the Palestinians can live with more elaborate language than a "Jewish State"—for example, a text asserting that Israel is the embodiment of the right of the Jewish people to self-determination, while the future Palestinian state would be the embodiment of theirs.

Ultimately, it may be wise for the Trump administration to leave the question of Jerusalem on the back burner at this stage. There is no middle ground to be found there, and it would be better to "park" it for the time being. By using the embassy issue as a lure, it should be possible to persuade the Palestinian side that their interests will not be served by forcing the Jerusalem issue now.

As to the sensitive question of PA subsidies to terrorists and their families, which has recently come into focus (thanks in part to the message of Israeli organizations and think tanks), there needs to be a realization on both sides that this is unlikely to be resolved overnight. The conceptual and moral chasm is too wide. Key people in the US administration have already expressed forthright opinions, during their previous service in the House or Senate, about this practice, and have supported legislation aimed at putting an end to it. At the same time, amidst the turmoil caused by the prisoners' hunger strike (apparently organized by Bargouthi for his own political purposes), it will be impossible for Abbas to simply turn his back on a key aspect of PA policy. The best way to handle this would probably be to increase the pressure, use the issue to legitimize Israel's security concerns, and then leverage it in order to secure a more practical Palestinian position on the terms of reference—one which will open the door to effective and implementable solutions, not close them in advance.

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