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Facts & Logic About the Middle East

July 5, 2017

President Trump's Administration Seems to Have Abandoned the Term "Palestinian State"—What Does It Mean?

Dear Friend of FLAME:

One of FLAME's supporters last week wrote to us that, "It's obvious you despise Trump." Nothing could be further from the truth.

Unfortunately, some partisans believe that any criticism of "their guy (or gal)" is tantamount to treason. We wrote back to our supporter, clarifying that FLAME's policy is to criticize acts of any elected official—regardless of party—that weaken the U.S.-Israel relationship or threaten the state of Israel itself.

That FLAME policy held for Presidents Reagan, Clinton, Bush I & II, and Obama, and it goes for President Trump.

By the same logic, when elected officials of any party support Israel, we endeavor equally quickly to praise.

This week's *FLAME Hotline* featured article [below] highlights an apparent White House Middle East strategy that, assuming it's intended, deserves recognition and tribute.

Article author Yoni Ben Menachem observes that the Trump envoys to the Holy Land—Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt and Mr. Trump himself—so far have never mentioned the concept of a "Palestinian state" in their recent fact-finding meetings with the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. (Neither have they yet articulated any official position—pro or con—on the question of a Palestinian state.)

This is huge, since the President seems to be setting aside the traditional maximalist strategy of negotiating a final peace

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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.S., 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 much greater obstacle is 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 rewarded with a mushroom war by the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas. Five major misconceptions underlie criticism of Israeli settlements.

Myth #1: Palestinians "own" these lands. In fact, Jews are indigenous to the indigenous people of Palestine (including Israel, Judea and Samaria), who have lived in the region for millennia and ruled it as a state, providing Arab settlement by 1,000 years. Palestinians have never had a state nor possessed public land in this 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 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 British rule, when Jews were evicted 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 of Jews? Why should Arabs, who welcome an Israeli society—as they see—where 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 alleged national security adviser Ben Rhodes complained to FOX's *Sally 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 stands just 220. While the number of settlers on living in established settlements has increased by 355,000 since 1993, the number of settlers living east of Israel's anti-terrorism separation barrier has since 2009 increased by only 20,000. Less than 1% of the population in the disputed territories, in fact, 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, Britain has settled its people into the Middle East, 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 Israeli citizens. 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. "Israel has created no new settlements in some 20 years." In 2009, Israel's new settlement activity for 10 months to entice the Palestinians to negotiations sponsored by the U.S. The Palestinians refused. Indeed, Israel has made numerous land-for-peace offers to the Palestinians, most recently in 2009 and in 2010, in which the Palestinians would have received more than 90 percent of the disputed territories, plus land swaps—plus a capital in Jerusalem—but the Arabs turned them down. They refuse to accept Israel as a Jewish state and insist on "right" of five 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 no preconditions. Yet the Arabs reject, citing Israeli settlements as an obstacle. One thing is certain: Settlements are not the obstacle to peace in 2017—what Israel was before and never was—and they're not the obstacle today.

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agreement between Israel and the Palestinians—and hence a Palestinian state—and substituting instead a more minimalist strategy of “what’s desirable and possible.”

For reasons we’ve been outlining in these *FLAME Hotline* issues over the past several months, the aggressive pursuit of a final-status peace agreement between a justifiably security-obsessed Israel and a Palestinian leadership and people obsessed with extinguishing the Jewish state . . . is abject folly.

Given the continued opposition to a Jewish state by both Abbas’s West Bank Fatah party and the even more murderous Gaza terror group Hamas, the idea of Israel depending on and trusting the Palestinians to keep Israel safe is unthinkable.

Likewise, given the rejection by most Palestinians of a Jewish Israel, it would be “suicide by assassination” were Mr. Abbas to negotiate an end to hostilities with Israel.

As Menachem points out, the Palestinians will cooperate with Team Trump only for a short time without U.S. guarantees of a cessation of Israeli settlement building and the promise of a “State of Palestine” endpoint. But the U.S. forcing Palestinian leadership to deal with today’s new negotiating realities will also force them to realize that their fantastical demands of the last 50 years no longer gain traction.

While the Netanyahu government is no doubt girding itself for what the White House might in turn demand of Israel, so far it’s the Palestinians who are most nervous.

In short, this week’s *Hotline* helps you understand what may signal a sea change in U.S. diplomacy toward Israel and the Palestinians—one reflecting a refreshing new realism that finally puts some of the burden for peace on the Arabs, which should make pro-Israel advocates breathe just a bit easier.

We can only hope President Trump’s ultimate Israel-Palestinian peace proposal—expected in the next few months—continues to reflect this same sense of what’s possible, in contrast to the full Palestinian state many people fantasize about . . . but many wiser people fear.

For this reason, I hope you’ll also quickly review the P.S. immediately below, which describes FLAME’s recent *hasbarah* campaign to expose the Palestinians’ funding of Islamic terrorists using U.S. taxpayer dollars.

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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Best regards,

Jim Sinkinson

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

P.S. Did you know: By subsidizing the corrupt Palestinian Authority (P.A.) with aid of some \$400 million taxpayer dollars a year, the U.S. is also funding the P.A.'s program of paying salaries to Palestinian terrorists who have killed innocent Americans and Israelis? In order to make Americans—especially college and university students—aware of this Palestinian practice of rewarding jihadi assailants and murderers with U.S. funds, FLAME has recently been publishing a new position paper: "[U.S. Funds Palestinian Terrorism](#)" This paid editorial has appeared 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](#).

What Ever Happened to the Term "Palestinian State"?

By Yoni Ben Menachem, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs,
June 28 2017

The Palestinian leadership is expressing growing concern over the possibility of renewing negotiations with Israel and "the deal" that President Trump is planning for both sides. Senior

Palestinian Authority officials confirm that since Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas' May 3, 2017, meeting at the White House with President Trump and until today, including the meeting between Abbas and the American president in Bethlehem on May 23, Abbas has not heard Trump utter the words "Palestinian state."

Nor were these words said by emissaries Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt, who met with Abbas at the Palestinian Authority headquarters in Ramallah on June 21, 2017. The message that Kushner brought to Abbas from Trump was that he is "committed to a serious peace deal." However, during all his conversations with Trump and his emissaries, Abbas emphasized that the only solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the establishment of a Palestinian state along the 1967 lines with east Jerusalem as its capital.

The Americans listened politely and did not respond.

A Tense and Angry Meeting, Say Arab Sources. According to a June 23, 2017, report in the newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat, the meeting between Mahmoud Abbas and emissaries Kushner and Greenblatt was "tense and angry." The pair did not raise final status issues at all and focused on the demand that the Palestinian Authority stop its incitement of the Palestinian people and payment of salaries to families of prisoners and "martyrs."

Abbas rejected the demand outright and agreed only to renew the activity of the American-Israeli-Palestinian tripartite committee to discuss the issue of incitement. According to the newspaper Al-Hayat on June 23, 2017, senior Palestinian officials said that Jared Kushner had hinted to Mahmoud Abbas that President Trump would decide whether he would continue his peace initiative only after receiving his report on the results of the contacts with the Palestinian Authority.

Kushner protested to Abbas that he had not condemned the murder of Israeli border policewoman Hadas Malka in the June 16, 2017, attack at the Damascus Gate, as well as his refusal to meet with David Friedman, the new American ambassador to Israel.

Abbas did not hide these details from the PLO or the Fatah Central Committee, and he understands well that he has a serious problem here. It is no coincidence that Trump and his emissaries have already studied the material and the history of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians from the Oslo Accords until today.

Abbas understands that he must prepare for the possibility of a confrontation with Trump as soon as both sides are presented with the outline of the “deal” he foresees as a solution to the conflict. If that “deal” does not include an independent Palestinian state along the 1967 lines with east Jerusalem as its capital, it will lead to the breaking off of contacts. From Abbas’ point of view, statehood and east Jerusalem are Palestinian “red lines” that he is unwilling and unable to surrender. He states these points to senior Fatah officials, and repeats them like a broken record to all senior American officials so they cannot come to him later, claiming that the comments were not made clearly.

Abbas has also not heard from President Trump or his envoys that Israel will freeze its settlement construction once negotiations are resumed. He agreed to give up all the preconditions he had demanded in the past during President Barack Obama’s days in order to resume negotiations. However, the Trump administration has not promised him in any way that Israel’s settlement activity in the West Bank and construction in east Jerusalem will cease altogether once negotiations are resumed. It appears that Trump understands that the right-wing government in Israel will collapse if presented with such a demand, and that will lead to elections. This option, therefore, does not currently exist on the agenda.

On the issue of “the Palestinian state,” Abbas fears that the “deal” that Trump speaks about is an expanded autonomy in the West Bank gift-wrapped with a presidential regime, government, parliament, embassies around the world, and the full status of a UN state. But in practice, the overall security responsibility in the West Bank will be in the hands of Israel, including controlling the border crossings and airspace.

Israel would continue to control security in east Jerusalem and the Temple Mount with special arrangements allowing the Palestinians to place symbols of sovereignty in the eastern part of the city. The Palestinian Authority believes that Trump will not mind if the Palestinians would call this autonomy “Palestine,” but the security arrangements of this plan will ensure that Israel will control the area in terms of security. The large settlement blocs will be brought under full Israeli sovereignty in a territory swap.

Abbas and senior Palestinian Authority officials also have not heard Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu say the words “Palestinian state.” On the contrary, Netanyahu made it clear that he is willing to give the Palestinians a “state minus” and made it

clear that that security control along the Jordan River will remain in the hands of Israel, as well as full Israeli sovereignty in east Jerusalem.

The political contacts made between the Trump administration and the Palestinian Authority and Israel are supposed to get new momentum after the Eid al-Fitr Muslim holiday. Senior teams with five people from each side are scheduled to go to Washington for separate discussions. The American administration is still formulating the “deal,” but there is no sign so far that the “deal” includes the establishment of an independent “Palestinian state” whose capital is east Jerusalem.

Senior officials in Fatah say in private conversations that Mahmoud Abbas may still regret that he rejected the deal proposed by former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in 2008, because it now seems that what President Trump is going to offer him is much less than what Olmert offered.

The pressure on the Palestinian Authority leadership is great. Abbas is afraid of betrayal by the “moderate” Arab states on the Palestinian issue. There are signs that they are ready to begin the normalization process with Israel before the Palestinian issue is solved, and after the Riyadh conference attended by President Trump on May 20, 2017, there is a feeling among the Palestinians that Trump can recruit the Arab countries for almost any mission.

There is no doubt that President Trump is trying to square the circle and find a creative solution that both sides will find difficult to reject. Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority still don't know what he is planning, but it appears the Palestinian side is much more worried than the Israeli side. It appears that the Palestinians who crave to hear the words “Palestinian state” will need to wait at least several more weeks in order to understand the essence of the “deal” formulated by President Trump. In the meantime, they are very worried and probably with good reason.

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Facts and Logic

About the Middle East

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