

directly to the Palestinian Authority and another \$95 million that is funneled through U.N. agencies—that's about \$450 million a year.

In August, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved—by a vote of 17-4—the Taylor Force Act, which would cut U.S. aid to the Palestinians in the amount the P.A. pays out in terrorist salaries. Most importantly, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and President Trump support the act.

Now it's time for us to reach out to our U.S. Senators and strongly urge them to vote for the Taylor Force. We don't want the final vote to be a squeaker—it must have strong support from both parties. I'll make it easy for you to help ensure that in a moment.

In the meantime, let me direct you to two resources in this FLAME *Hotline*. First, please review this week's *Hotline* featured article, below, by Elliott Abrams, Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. This transcript of Abram's testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in July gives you great background on why this legislation must be passed.

Second, I hope you'll also quickly review the P.S. immediately below, which describes FLAME's long-running *hasbarah* campaign to stop the U.S. Congress from funding Palestinian terrorism. (We've been on this issue for more than six months.)

Third, please email and call your U.S. Senator immediately—do it right now, if possible—to encourage their vote for the Taylor Force Act when it comes up for a vote. Go right now to the [U.S. Senate directory](#) and choose your state: Your Senators, as well as their email address and phone numbers will appear. Please use both—it's one thing you can do to support Israel now.

Best regards,

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

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.

[DONATE NOW >>](#)



[SUBSCRIBE FREE](#)

FLAME'S WEEKLY HOTLINE E- NEWSLETTER



FLAME's Hotline e-newsletter keeps you up to date on the most important pro-Israel advocacy issues and features our choice of the week's most informative and thought-provoking article on Israel and the Middle East. If you only subscribe to one pro-Israel news service, make it the FLAME Hotline.

[SUBSCRIBE NOW >>](#)

P.S. Did you know: By subsidizing the corrupt Palestinian Authority (P.A.) with aid of some \$450 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](#)

Consideration of the Taylor Force Act

By Elliott Abrams, Before the Committee on Foreign Relations,
United States Senate

1st Session, 115th Congress, July 12, 2017

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the honor of appearing before you today to discuss the Taylor Force Act.

Since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the

1990s, U.S. assistance has totaled more than \$5 billion. In recent years, aid from the Economic Support Fund (ESF) has amounted to over \$300 million per year. Those figures do not count assistance we give through the United Nations agency UNRWA, which is now approaching \$6 billion since that organization's founding. The United States is the largest donor to Palestinians, year after year.¹

What's the problem that led to introduction of the Act, and leads to this hearing? It is the Palestinian practice of making payments to individuals convicted of acts of terror, and their families or survivors, in accordance with the severity of their acts and the length of their sentences. The predictable effect of this practice is to reward and incentivize acts of terror.

The length of sentences of course reflects the gravity of the crimes that have been committed. Accordingly, the more harm you do, the more money you and your family get. There are cases of unemployed and desperate men who commit acts of terror in order to get these payments—which can amount to a permanent government salary. Inevitably, the Palestinian government and society are by this scheme glorifying and honoring acts of violence, no matter how depraved. They are rewarding terror. There's no way around that conclusion. And it does not really matter whether the payments are formally made by the Palestinian Authority or the PLO.

Nor, I would add, does it matter what the original intention of these practices was. I have heard it argued that the original goal was just to assist prisoners while in prison and take care of their dependents, and to assist them in readjusting and reintegrating after serving their sentences. But when you give assistance in accordance with the severity of the crime committed, the effect is unavoidable: to incentivize and reward acts of terror.

These are not welfare payments. I had hoped that, in the face of this controversy and the prospect of a reduction in American assistance, the Palestinian leadership under President Abbas would adopt a system of welfare payments. That is, payments to prisoners, families, and survivors would be based on the number of dependents—the number of individuals being helped. Such a system would be acceptable to us, I think, and here in the United States we understand that the families of prisoners in our correctional institutions must be eligible for general assistance—welfare, Medicaid, food stamps, and so on. But the Palestinian leadership appears to have rejected that approach. And according to the most recent poll I have seen, so do the

Palestinian people (although of course the exact question asked may have affected the outcome).²

So that escape route from our problem is not open. Another proposed escape route is to cut all funds but allow a national security waiver.³ I oppose that suggestion, because it achieves almost nothing. Congress would be handing the problem to the administration without actually having any impact on the Palestinian practice of paying terrorists for their acts.

There are other suggestions. Some argue that we should simply look the other way and allow this to continue because many Palestinians would suffer from cuts in U.S. assistance. In Israel, there has long been a concern that cuts in aid to the Palestinians would lead to disorder in the West Bank or even the collapse of the Palestinian Authority.

These are all reasonable concerns, but in my view they do not outweigh the logic behind the Taylor Force Act: as long as the Palestinian government is in effect rewarding terror, we need to be sure we make our objections—our condemnation—known, and that cannot be merely in words. Our assistance program must reflect our feeling of repugnance.

How do we do that? Since the Hamas victory in legislative elections in 2006, USAID has distinguished between assistance to the Palestinian Authority and aid to other recipients, such as NGOs and municipalities. In my view, all the payments that give assistance to or directly benefit the P.A. itself should be stopped. Some of those payments no doubt support good programs and worthwhile goals, but money is fungible. So the payments must stop. I believe this would cut our assistance roughly in half, but there is a context here. Considering the very great pressure on the foreign assistance budget right now, how could we justify continuing all these programs and payments to the Palestinians, while they continue to use money to reward terror? Surely the money can be better spent elsewhere. Moreover, these huge expenses on prisoners who have committed acts of terror are not the only example of P.A. financial mismanagement. A poll taken last year found that 95.5% of Palestinians think the P.A. is corrupt, and that was the highest rate ever.⁴ Given the amounts of U.S. assistance, the whole issue of P.A. financial management and mismanagement should get a good deal more attention.

Why not cut every cent right now? That step would have a greater impact, to be sure, but might directly affect people or

programs unrelated to the Palestinian Authority and its payments for terrorism. The Taylor Force Act would, in any event, require a determination that the P.A. is taking credible steps to end acts of violence by individuals under its jurisdictional control. I don't see how that certification could be made if the P.A. continues to pay for terror. Moreover, cutting payments in half, or thereabouts, would show the Palestinian leadership that Congress is serious about ending aid unless this intolerable situation is changed. That would make it more likely that the issue might be addressed. If it is not, you can come back in three or six or nine months and cut some more, or cut everything. Ideally, during such a period there could be discussions between the P.A., Israel, and American officials, and the scaled payments that reward greater acts of violence and terror could be eliminated. If not, the Palestinians will in any event have been warned what is coming.

I want to deal with one other issue, which is that about \$75 million in aid is paid to cover debts owed directly to suppliers of power (which is most of the \$75 million) and to hospitals, reducing amounts owed to them by the Palestinian Authority. Cut those payments, it is said, and you just hurt the suppliers of power and of medical care. I would make an exception for those hospitals, which account for perhaps a fourth of the \$75 million in debt reduction payments. In fact, by far the largest part of the medical payment is to Augusta Victoria Hospital in Jerusalem, and I would not wish to see it cut off.

Power is different. There our money does not support a renowned and venerable institution like Augusta Victoria. In fact, for obvious reasons it encourages a kind of corruption. There are cases where commercial users of power in the West Bank simply don't pay their power bills, because everyone knows the Americans will cover the bills from our aid budget and send checks to the Israeli companies. The current system really encourages irresponsible behavior. We all watch our power consumption in our homes and businesses because we pay the bills. But we now underwrite a system for the West Bank where the United States pays the bills, not the users, and that's not smart—and not worth continuing in the context of the Taylor Force Act, the need to confront Palestinian rewards for acts of terror, and the competition for scarce U.S. assistance dollars.

Mr. Chairman, we should not be under the illusion that passage of this legislation and a large cut in aid to the Palestinians will immediately solve this problem. We should not expect that the Palestinian leadership will quickly react by ending their rewards for terrorism. We can hope that they will address

this issue, and in negotiations with Israel and the United States come to an agreement—but that may very well not happen. I think you should pass this legislation nonetheless. We need to send a clear message to the Palestinian people and leadership that we find the current system unacceptable and in fact repugnant. We need to be sure that our aid money does not even indirectly sustain that system. We should do this as a matter of principle—frankly, whether the Palestinians like it or not, and whether the Israelis like it or not.

I wish we had done it years ago, including the time I served in government. We all may have had the excuse then that we weren't exactly clear about the facts, and indeed the facts and implications and reverberations are complex. But the moral point is crystal clear, and now is the time to act.

Thank you for permitting me to testify today.

1 U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, U.S. Foreign Aid to the Palestinians, by Jim Zanotti, RS22967 (2016), 2, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22967.pdf>.

2 "Public Opinion Poll No. 64," Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, July 5, 2017, <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/692>.

3 Daniel Shapiro and Ilan Goldenberg, "For U.S. Aid to the Palestinians, Don't Use a Sledgehammer When a Scalpel Would Do," Foreign Policy, June 29, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/29/for-u-s-aid-to-the-Palestinians-dont-use-a-sledgehammer-when-a-scalpel-would-do/>.

4 Karin Laub and Mohammed Daraghmeh, "In Tough Times, Most Palestinians View Government as Corrupt," Associated Press, May 24, 2016, <https://apnews.com/3aab1f5db4e4623a74c00fcd71589f3/tough-times-most-Palestinians-view-government-corrupt>.

The Council on Foreign Relations takes no institutional positions on policy issues and has no affiliation with the U.S. government. All statements of fact and expressions of opinion contained herein are the sole responsibility of the author.

FLAME

Facts and Logic

About the Middle East

PO Box 3460

Berkeley, CA 94703

Copyright 2017 FLAME. All rights reserved.