

# FLAME HOTLINE

Facts & Logic About the Middle East

October 24, 2017

## Hamas and Fatah Try Reconciliation . . . Again. Why It's a Futile Dream

Dear Friend of FLAME:

Pity poor Mahmoud Abbas—skewered on the prongs of the Palestinian dilemma.

Since Abbas doesn't rule over 40% of the Palestinians—namely the 1.8 million people in Gaza who currently suffer under the terrorist dictatorship of Hamas—how can the Americans and Israelis regard him as a serious peace partner?

Yet if Abbas makes peace with Hamas—as he's been trying to do over the past month—he's saddled with a huge Islamist army he doesn't control, plus Hamas political militants who insist on destroying Israel. Both are obviously deal breakers for the Americans and Israelis.

But despite the efforts of Abbas' Fatah party and Hamas, as well as Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who hosted the reconciliation talks in Cairo, the chances of peace between the two factions are remote for numerous reasons. Indeed, since 2007, when Hamas seized Gaza and expelled Fatah, the two enemies have announced at least six unity agreements before this one, all of which failed.

No wonder. Leadership of the two factions hate each other almost as much as they hate Israel. Abbas recently cut off payments to Hamas for fuel and medical supplies, as well as salaries for Palestinian Authority (PA) employees in Gaza. Fuel shortages cut operations of Gaza's power plants, so residents had electricity only a few hours a day, and Gaza's offline sewage filtration plants had taken to dumping waste into the sea. Some medical patients died awaiting visas from the PA.

In the wake of this latest reconciliation effort—futile as it seems—Israel's security cabinet has made it abundantly clear that negotiations with the Palestinians will never proceed unless:

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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 Jews never build settlements in the West Bank. Other, much greater obstacles 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 rewarded with a murderous war by the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas. Two major misconceptions underlie criticism of Israeli settlements.

**Myth #1: Palestinians "own" these lands.** In fact, Jews are responsible for the migration of people of Palestine (including Israel, Judea and Samaria), who have lived in the region for centuries and until it is a state, including Arab settlement for 1,600 years. Palestinians have never had a state nor possessed public land in this region. Thus, the idea of "Palestinian land" is false. In fact, both people can be citizens of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). It is disputed 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 Arab rule, when Jews were expelled from the West Bank. Today, some two million Arabs live in full citizenship of Israel, and some 400,000 Jews live in Judea and Samaria. Yet Palestinians insist that no peace with Israel is possible as long as Jews live among them. In 2013, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas stated that "in the final settlement, we would not see the presence of a single Israeli—civilian or soldier—on our land." Why should Abbas, who accuses Israel of "apartheid," issue a tacit ban of Jews? Who should Arabs be welcome in Israeli territory 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 deputy national security adviser Ben Rhodes complained to PLO's Jady 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 more than 20 years. The number of settlements, plus illegal outposts, now totals just 224. While the number of settlers is rising as 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. Also, 7% of the population in the disputed territories. Today, Israeli conservatives 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 Israeli-occupied Cyprus, and China has settled Chinese into occupied Tibet. The World 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 any law—while allowing other nations to violate it blatantly?

**Myth #5: The Palestinians would make peace if settlement building stopped.** In 2005, Israel froze new settlement activity for 18 months to enable 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 2014, in which the Palestinians would have received more than 90 percent of the disputed territories upon land transfer—plus a capital in Jerusalem—but the Arabs turned them down. They refuse to accept land as a Jewish state and insist on "right" of the million descendants of Arab refugees from 1948 to "reside" in Israel, which would swamp Israel demographically.

Israel has a standing offer to resume negotiations with the Palestinians with no preconditions. In the draft offer, citing Israeli settlements as an obstacle. One thing is certain: Settlements were not the obstacle to peace in 1948, when Israel was born and there were none—and they're not the obstacle today.

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**FLAME**

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FLAME is the only organization

- Hamas recognizes Israel and desists from terrorism
- Hamas, which currently has 30,000 men under arms, must be disarmed
- The Palestinian Authority must assume full security control in Gaza
- The PA will continue to act against Hamas terror activities in Judea and Samaria
- Hamas will sever all ties with Iran
- Funds and humanitarian equipment will continue to flow into Gaza only through the PA
- Israeli fallen soldiers and civilians held by Hamas must be returned.

We should also point out that hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. aid would be automatically cut off in the event of a Palestinian unity government that included Hamas, a faction designated by the U.S. State Department as a terrorist organization.

Unsurprisingly, both Hamas and Fatah leaders issued statements last week assuring the world that neither group would ever recognize the Jewish state.

Unfortunately for these would-be "peacemakers," antipathy for Israel is one of only a few key issues the two groups agree on. This week's FLAME *Hotline* featured article (below) succinctly outlines some of the greatest political and cultural antagonisms that block reconciliation between the two warring factions.

The writer, Hillel Frisch, Senior Fellow at the Jerusalem Institute for Strategic Studies think tank, focuses on what is likely the most profound and persistent reason Hamas and Fatah will not unite—the Religious-Secular Divide. Frisch's explanation of the conflict between the "bearded ones" and the "clean-shaven" will help you understand why a Hamas-Fatah reconciliation is ultimately unthinkable.

Please review this insightful article, then please also take a quick minute also to review the P.S. below and click on the link to review FLAME's latest *hasbarah* effort, if you haven't done so yet. It discusses the most villainous of U.N. agencies, the UNHRC.

Best regards,

Jim Sinkinson

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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## 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.

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P.S. The U.N. Human Rights Council—already one of the most despicable anti-Semitic U.N. agencies—recently nominated 16 new members, including seven that U.N. Human Rights Watch deems unqualified for their poor human rights records: Afghanistan, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Qatar. The UNHRC has long been a forum for oppressive regimes to pass judgments on Israel, and this new crop of members is certain to continue that practice. The Middle East's only democracy and truly a light unto nations in so many ways, Israel suffers more condemnations by the UNHRC than all other nations together. In just the last year, the UNHRC passed twice as many resolutions against Israel as against North Korea and Syria combined. In order to make Americans—especially college and university students—aware of this injustice, FLAME has just produced and will soon publish a new position paper: "Exit the U.N. Human Rights Council." This paid editorial will appear 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.

**Hamas security has beards, Fatah doesn't:  
Why real PA unity won't happen.**

**Some things cannot be compromised on.**

By Hillel Frisch, *Jerusalem Post*, October 17, 2017

**The conflict between Fatah and Hamas boils down to beards;** to theocratic and nationalist ideals. Only a showdown can decide between Hamas and Fatah rule, with one side totally victorious and the other totally defeated, and it is doubtful that Fatah can muster the strength to make a bid for true power in Gaza.

Politics takes many forms. Often, it is exceedingly complex and unpredictable no matter how small the political issue at hand.

Sometimes, the political situation, as large as it may be, is extraordinarily simple. Whereas resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian problem is characterized by complexity, the dynamics of internal partition and disunity between the PA and Hamas in Gaza is characterized by simplicity.

The conflict between the PA and Hamas boils down to beards. Hamas security personnel—both its "army" and personnel in the various security agencies controlled by its Interior Ministry, including the blue-force police—are almost always bearded. One can safely assume that the few personnel who aren't bearded shave for health reasons.

**On the other hand, the PA's security personnel**—which Hamas often deprecates as the "Dayton" forces, so named after the first US general to train them—sport no beards.

"Dayton" is used as a term of deprecation, because it suggests that these forces serve the interests of the US and of course Israel, "America's proxy."

As most indigenous Middle Easterners know, being bearded as a member of a security force is hardly a question of fashion but rather reflects the most burning issue in Middle East politics. A bearded security officer means that the political entity he serves is or aspires to be a theocratic state. A non-bearded member of an official security force means that the state he serves is "nationalist" or secular and most certainly anti-theocratic.

The distinction is (pardon the pun) razor sharp and of long pedigree. The leader who most contributed to this law of politics in the Middle East is arguably the greatest leader in the modern Middle East—Mustafa Kemal, or Kemal Ataturk. He was also the most secular.

**To the horror of the contemporary Muslim world at the time,** he abolished the caliphate almost a century ago and adopted a French-inspired constitution that separated strictly between mosque and state (The Ottoman Sultanate he abolished strictly combined the two). Needless to say, no leader in the Middle East has dared to do the same.

What all the non-theocratic regimes adopted with a vengeance from

Kemal's Turkish Republic was the rule that no man in a security-related uniform could ever wear a beard. In Egypt, the military personnel have no beards.

In Syria, Algeria and Tunisia it is the same. It is hardly surprising that the PA, the aspiring Palestinian "nationalist" state, has strictly enforced this rule.

Just as in the "nationalist" states security personnel never wear beards, in Middle East theocracies they always wear beards.

**Just Google "photos of security forces in the Islamic Republic of Iran"** and then search the same for security forces during the reign of the shah to see the results. The Hamas government, an aspiring theocracy (at least until many of its tunnels were destroyed by Egypt and Israel and its monies dried up), follows the Iranian example.

This is not to say, of course, that the security forces of Egypt or the PA are anti-religious.

Nothing could be further from the truth. One of the most important perks for senior officers in the Egyptian army is a subsidized pilgrimage to Mecca. The PA security organizations also have their chaplains and mosques, and participation in religious rites is common.

But there is a big difference. The beards in Hamas are indoctrinated by Hamas preachers who essentially control the "Directorate of Political Moral Guidance," the indoctrination arm of the Interior Ministry and security forces. The equivalent institution within the PA's security complex is controlled by Fatah nationalists. The former teach the virtues of Sharia law and of serving Islam. The latter teach the virtues of serving the state, its leader and the citizenry.

**Even absenting the crucial religious element, the PA/Fatah-Hamas standoff** is a bitter zero-sum game. In yielding to the PA under Egyptian pressure to allow Rami Hamdallah's Fatah-dominated government to operate and its security forces to take over the "international" crossings into Egypt and Israel, Hamas is at risk. What Hamas did to the PA security forces in 2007 (such as throwing them off rooftops), could yet be visited upon Hamas at some time in the future.

Add to this the searing tensions between those bent on theocracy and those who will have no part of it, and the prospects of true Hamas-Fatah unity are negligible, bordering on non-existent.

A recent example of the failure of cohabitation of the two strands of thought and conviction may be found in Egypt during the "Arab

Spring." It was clear from the beginning to the Egyptian army and other segments of the "deep state" that the Muslim Brotherhood must be confronted at all costs. It was president Mohammed Morsi who wavered.

The choice was stark and the episode ended in zero-sum fashion with President Abdel Fattah Sisi emerging all-powerful, and Morsi locked in jail.

**In revolutionary Iran, the cards were stacked the other way** and the outcome was far bloodier. The losers were executed, not jailed.

The common denominator in these two conflicts is that one side was totally victorious and the other totally defeated.

Only a similar showdown in Gaza can decide between PA and Hamas rule. But it is doubtful whether the Fatah-led PA can muster the strength to make a true bid for absolute power, and even more unlikely that it will win a shootout.

The logo for FLAME, featuring the word "FLAME" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letter "A" is stylized with a flame icon integrated into its top curve.

Facts and Logic

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