

Chutzpah: Palestinians Prepare List of Demands For Biden Administration

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The Palestinian Arabs sense an opening for them in Biden's Washington, where they rightly assume they will be personae gratae again. They have already been preparing their laundry list of demands for the Biden Administration, which is discussed here: "PA wants Biden to reverse 'anti-Palestinian' decisions," by Khaled Abu Toameh, [Jerusalem Post](#), November 22, 2020:

The Palestinians will demand that the new administration under US President-elect Joe Biden cancel "anti-Palestinian" decisions taken by the administration of President Donald Trump, Palestinian officials said on Sunday.

The officials told The Jerusalem Post that the Palestinian Authority has prepared a list of demands that will be presented to Biden after he is sworn in on January 20.

The list includes a request to reopen the PLO diplomatic mission in Washington, rescinding Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, resuming financial aid to the PA and the UN Relief and Work Agency and reopening the US consulate in east Jerusalem.

In addition, the officials said, the Palestinians will also demand the Biden administration cancel the recent decision that allows US citizens born in Jerusalem to list Israel as their place of birth, as well as US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's announcement allowing for settlement products to be labeled as "Made in Israel."

"We have already contacted Biden's people to inform them of our demands," a Palestinian official told the Post. "We had a positive dialogue with senior officials who are close to Biden."

Since that contact between the Palestinians with Biden's staff, the two most pro-Israel of Biden's advisers, Tony Blinken and Jake Sullivan, have been appointed to be, respectively, Secretary of State and National Security Adviser. It may not be quite as smooth sailing for the PA as it thought just a few days ago.

Last week, PA Foreign Minister Riad Malki said the Palestinians want to conduct dialogue with the new US administration in order to cancel decisions taken by the Trump administration.

Malki said the Palestinians have suffered tremendously as a result of Trump's decisions directed against them, including the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the transfer of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the closure of the PLO mission in the US and the suspension of US financial aid to the Palestinians.

Malki and other Palestinian officials said they also expected the Biden administration to distance itself from Trump's plan for Middle East peace, also known as the "Deal of the Century." The Palestinian leadership has strongly condemned the plan, unveiled in January 2020, as a "conspiracy aiming to liquidate the Palestinian issue and national rights."

Another Palestinian official told the Post that while he was optimistic the Biden administration would cancel some of the decisions taken by the Trump administration, the Palestinians do not believe it would be easy to return the US Embassy to Tel Aviv.

No, it won't be easy to move the Embassy back to Tel Aviv. It will be impossible. There is not a chance in hell that the American Embassy will be moved out of Jerusalem. Biden has already declared that he would not do it, though he also added that he "would not have made the move himself," a curious remark given that he was one of the most enthusiastic backers of the 1995 Jerusalem Embassy Act, which passed in the Senate by 93 to 5.

"We know that the Biden administration would not be able to accept all our demands, such as the removal of the embassy from Jerusalem, but we are very optimistic regarding the other demands," the official explained. "If [Biden] renounces the 'Deal of the Century' and resumes financial aid to the Palestinians, this will be a good step in the right direction. It will be a big victory for the Palestinian people."

The suspension of financial aid to the Palestinians was partly in response to the PA's refusal to end its Pay-For-Slay program, which incentivizes terrorism by providing generous monthly stipends to imprisoned terrorists, and to the families of terrorists who had been killed. The PA has been recently been making noises about modifying the plan, by providing stipends based not, as now, on the length of a sentence, which provide more money the longer the sentence (so those who commit the worst attacks get more money), but instead on the "financial need" of a terrorist's family. Qadri Abu Bakr, the PLO's Director for Commission of Prisoners' Affairs, in English told the New York Times that the Palestinian Authority's (PA) policy on terrorists' families' salaries will change. But in the Arabic version of those remarks, Qadri Abu Bakr said the exact opposite, assuring his listeners that the calculation of stipends to terrorists and their families would not change in any way. Two versions, directly contradicting each other. Why not? Qadri Abu Bakr knows: "War is deceit," said Muhammad.

It is thus doubtful that the PA could bring itself to change its Pay-For-Slay policy, which reflects the Palestinians' visceral support for terrorism. But even if the PA did change the criteria according to which the stipends are calculated, this would still leave in place a program that subsidizes, and therefore incentivizes, terrorism. This will make it very difficult for the Americans to turn on the faucet of aid again.

The PA's complacent assumption that the Americans will renew financial aid to the Palestinians needs to be challenged and undermined. Even without the Pay-For-Slay program, why should the Americans turn on that tap for the PA, rather than have the PA go hat in hand to their fellow Arabs in the oil states, or Iran, or Turkey, and ask them for aid? Who decided that the United States owes the Palestinians a permanent living? And why should American taxpayers be shelling out billions, over

the years, to UNRWA, which includes on its ever-expanding rolls of those who receive its largesse not just the real Palestinian refugees, those who left in 1947-1949, of whom there may now be 30,000 still alive – but also all of their descendants, now amounting to more than five million people? Who decided that among the many tens of millions of refugees who have been created by conflicts – wars, civil wars, persecutions – all over the world since the late 1940s, only one group, the Palestinians, should be allowed to pass on the refugee status to their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and so on, world without end?

This ever-lengthening list of “Palestinian refugees” has been on the international – almost entirely Western – dole for decades. Don’t we need to ask a few questions at this point? For example, why are we Americans expected to give hundreds of millions of dollars a year to the Palestinians instead of, say, to the inoffensive and much poorer people in Bolivia or the Congo or Nepal? What exactly have the Palestinians done for us? Haven’t they used terror as a weapon for a half-century? Didn’t we see the Palestinians hand out candies and celebrate when they heard the glad news on 9/11/2001? Haven’t Palestinian terrorists killed American citizens? Isn’t Hamas a local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, that seeks a worldwide caliphate? And what about the links between the Palestinians and our mortal enemy, Iran?

According to the official, the Palestinians are also expecting the Biden administration to return to the long-standing US policy toward settlements and adhere to UN resolutions on this issue.

In November 2019, Pompeo announced that the US no longer views settlements as “inconsistent with international law,” a move that drew strong condemnation from the Palestinian leadership.

Secretary Pompeo had quite properly declared as a break with previous policy what ought to have been American policy all along. The Israeli settlements in the West Bank do not violate, and are not “inconsistent with” international law. Their legality stems from the Mandate for Palestine, that included the entire West Bank in the territories assigned to the future Jewish National Home. Previous administrations had relied on the “Hansell Memorandum” of 1978, which took the position that the settlements were “illegal,” but Hansell himself never mentions the Palestine Mandate. In his memorandum, as if it were of little moment, when it is, in fact, the essential document for understanding Israel’s claim to the West Bank, and hence, the basis of Israel’s right to build settlements in that territory.

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