

Mahmoud Abbas Threatens – Ruat Caelum! – to Let the P.A. Collapse

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Here is the story from [Israel Hayom](#):

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas plans to run his administration to the ground to prevent Israeli from pursuing its plan to apply sovereignty to large parts of Judea and Samaria and the Jordan Valley, a senior Palestinian official told The New York Times on Monday.

According to the report, Abbas plans to slash the wages of tens of thousands of functionaries and police officers, as well as the \$105 million in monthly aid it sends to the Gaza Strip.

And why must Abbas “slash the wages” of tens of thousands of

people working for the P.A., and end the \$105 million monthly aid it sends to the Gaza Strip? Because Abbas himself has brought the P.A. to financial ruin. It is he who has mismanaged the economy. It is he and his corrupt cronies who have been helping themselves to vast sums from the aid sent to help the Palestinian Arabs. And it is Abbas who now refuses to accept any of the \$190 million a month that Israel collects in taxes for the P.A. and tries – after deducting for the amount he pays terrorists and their families in his Pay-For-Slay program – to transfer the rest to the P.A. Abbas is outraged by that Israeli policy, believing the terrorist murderers to be splendid fellows, “martyrs” if they die, with streets and squares named after them. They need to be amply provided for, if alive and imprisoned, and if dead, their families receive the sums they would have received. And that’s why Israel deducted those Pay-for-Slay amounts but was prepared to transfer the rest of the tax money to the P.A. Now it seems that in order to express his displeasure over the planned extension of Israeli sovereignty to the Jordan Valley and to the Israeli “settlements” (really, cities and towns) in Judea and Samaria (a/k/a “the West Bank”), Abbas is now refusing to take any of that tax money. That’ll show Israel.

Of course, Mahmoud Abbas himself needn’t worry. He and his two grasping sons Tarek and Nasser have amassed a fortune of more than \$400 million. His cronies – Hanan Ashrawi, Saeb Erekat, and others – have also managed to become multi-millionaires, despite their modest salaries. They all live in villas in the “Diplomatic Compound” in Ramallah, well-shielded from prying eyes of ordinary folk; Abbas lives in a \$13 million presidential palace, and has a \$50 million private plane to fly him hither and yon. Of course he feels bad about all those West Bank Arabs whose salaries are now being cut, or who will now lose their jobs in the financial ruin his mismanagement and corruption have brought about. And it’s too bad – he feels their pain! – that the Gazan Arabs will now be out more than \$1.26 billion a year. But that’s not Mahmoud Abbas’s concern.

He's got bigger things to think about. He's threatening to bring the whole Palestinian Authority house crashing down so that, he thinks, Israel will have to step in and assume the responsibilities of rule for the West Bank. But Israel likely has other ideas.

In addition, any Israeli citizens or Arab residents of Jerusalem arrested in the West Bank will be tried in Palestinian courts instead of being handed over to the Israel Police, the report noted.

He is threatening all cooperation with Israel, which includes handing over to Israel those Palestinians wanted for crimes by the Israeli police. From now on, he appears to be saying, anyone arrested in the West Bank by the P.A. will be tried in Palestinian courts. What kind of justice will be done, what kind of punishments for terror attacks on Israelis, do you think those Palestinian courts will hand out?

These provocative steps seek to prevent Israel from pushing ahead with the controversial annexation move. The sovereignty move has been endorsed by the Trump administration as part of its "deal of the century" but has met fierce objection from the Palestinians.

These steps will not prevent Israel from going ahead with extending its sovereignty (which we are wrong to call "annexation") to territories that were always meant, according to the Mandate for Palestine, to be included in the Jewish National Home which would eventually become the Jewish State. The Jordan Valley is indispensable for Israel's security. It is not only Israel's military, but members of the American military, too, who have concluded this. In 1967, a delegation was sent by the Joint Chiefs to Israel at President Johnson's direction, to study which territories won in the Six-Day War Israel would need to hold onto for defensive reasons. They reported that Israel would have to retain – at the top of the

list – the Jordan Valley and the Golan Heights.

As for the “settlements” in the “West Bank,” the 500,000 Israeli Jews who now live in these cities and towns are there by right and not, as so many believe, as beneficiaries of a “military occupation.” To understand this one must read, and thoroughly understand, the Balfour Declaration, the Treaty of San Remo and – above all – the Mandate for Palestine, especially the Preamble and Articles 4 and 6. The Mandate for Palestine was created in order to facilitate Jewish immigration into the Mandate’s territory and to “encourage close settlement by Jews on the land.” Which land? The land as shown on the Mandate maps, where the Jewish state was meant to extend from Mt. Hermon in the north to the Red Sea in the south, and from the Jordan River in the east, to the Mediterranean in the west. In fact, the territory to the east of the Jordan River “out to the desert” was also supposed to have been included in the Mandate’s intended territory, but it was removed from the Mandate lands, in order that the British might present it as a consolation prize to the Hashemite Emir Abdullah (whose brother Feisal had been made King of Iraq) as the Emirate of Transjordan.

The Six-Day War did not create Israel’s legal claim to the “West Bank,” but made it possible for Israel to enforce its preexisting claim. Jews settled on land to which they knew they had a legal, historic, and moral claim, and now had a possibility of enforcing that claim. They won the West Bank in a war of self-defense. Now that the Jewish population of the area has reached a half-million, the current government is ready to extend its full sovereignty to those settlements and also to the Jordan Valley that controls the invasion route from the east. Israel has an independent claim, in addition to that based on the Palestine Mandate, to much of the West Bank. This is U.N. Resolution 242, which allows Israel to retain territory won in the Six-Day War that it requires if it is to have, in the exact words of the resolution, “secure [i.e.

defensible] and recognized boundaries.”

The European Union and United Nations have warned Israel against making any unilateral moves, saying annexation would doom the already moribund Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Ever since Israel's independence was proclaimed on May 14, 1948, the Israelis have been trying to make peace with their Arab neighbors. They offered to make the 1949 armistice lines, bad as they were, into permanent borders, but the Arabs turned them down. They have had to fight three major wars of survival (1948-1949, 1967, 1973) against Arab states, and several smaller wars against three terror groups, the PLO, Hamas, and Hezbollah. If the “peace process” is “moribund,” that is entirely the fault of the Palestinians, who have refused to negotiate ever since 2008, when Ehud Olmert offered practically the entire West Bank, as well as shared control of Jerusalem's Old City, to Mahmoud Abbas. Abbas rejected the offer and walked out. The so-called “peace process” is “moribund” because the Palestinians have steadfastly refused to negotiate ever since. In any case, the only sure way for Israel to survive is not to put its trust in any peace treaty with the Palestinians. but rather, in the power of deterrence. Why can't Israel put its faith in treaties? Here's why. In 628 A.D., Muhammad made an agreement with the Meccans that was to have lasted for ten years After 18 months, Muhammad, feeling that his forces were now strong enough to defeat the enemy, broke the treaty and attacked the Meccans. That has been the model of Muslim treaty-making with non-Muslims ever since.

Those who now prate about how the extension of Israel's sovereignty to parts of the West Bank will damage the “peace process” fail to realize that there is no “peace process,” but if there were, it would not lead to a real peace that can be kept. What will keep the peace between Arabs and Israelis is Israel's military strength; it must be sufficient to deter all would-be aggressors. That is a matter not only of weaponry,

and of the training and elan of IDF soldiers, but also of control of territory. If Israel were to lose control of the Jordan Valley, for example, it would be wide open to an invasion force from the East. If the Jewish state were squeezed back into the pre-1967 lines, that is the 1949 armistice lines, Israel would be nine miles wide at its narrowest; an invader could slice the country in two within hours. Israel needs both a minimum of strategic depth, and control of the Judean heights.

Israelis now understand, as they did not previously, that they are facing a classic Jihad. Waging violent Jihad is part of Islam; it will never disappear. We have been using the wrong lexicon when we constantly refer to a “solution” – one-state or two-state – to this Arab war on Israel. The Jihad is not a “problem susceptible of a “solution.” The Muslim Arab war on Israel is, rather, a “situation” to be permanently managed. And the way to “manage” it is through deterrence, meaning that Israel must remain militarily more powerful than its possible enemies, and overwhelmingly, obviously so. In order for deterrence to work, Israel must retain control of some of the West Bank – to all of which it has a legal right, but to only 30% of which it intends to exercise that right, by extending its sovereignty, as set out in the carefully-crafted Deal of the Century.

According to Hussein al-Sheikh, the Palestinian official in charge of relations with Israel and one of Abbas' closest advisers, the Palestinian leader wants to effectively force Israel to shoulder full responsibility, “as a military occupier,” for the two million Palestinians living in the West Bank.

That's what Abbas may think will happen. But the Israelis – who would not be “military occupiers” of land to which they have legal title according to the Mandate – have no desire to fall into that trap. If Abbas lets go of the whole

administrative edifice in the West Bank, the Israelis will look with equanimity on others coming forward to rule in his stead. He and his regime are wildly unpopular. In an opinion poll taken last year by the Palestinian corruption monitor Aman Coalition, 91% of Palestinians said they did not trust the Palestinian Authority. Some Palestinians have this June said they would welcome to be included in any "annexation" by the Jewish state; they would much prefer being ruled by good-government Israel than by the corrupt P.A.

Hamas may step forward to fill the vacuum if Mahmoud Abbas declares the P.A. rule over. In a series of polls taken in the last five years, pitting Ismail Haniyeh, the head of Hamas, against Mahmoud Abbas, Haniyeh has won by large margins every time. Does Mahmoud Abbas want a Hamas takeover of the P.A.'s territories in the West Bank? He well remembers what happened to his fellow Fatah members in Gaza when Hamas took over. Dozens of them were murdered. And Abbas and his sons have important business interests in the West Bank which they would hate to lose. They could find themselves hounded out of the West Bank by popular protest, or even put on trial for corruption.

Hamas is not the only worry for Abbas. Mohammad Dahlan is his rival and sworn enemy, and much more popular with the Palestinian masses. Dahlan has supporters all over the West Bank. He has powerful friends, too, abroad, including the ruler of Abu Dhabi and the President of Egypt. Were Abbas to carry out his threat to let the P.A. government collapse, Dahlan might return from his base in Abu Dhabi to assume power over the former P.A.-run parts of the West Bank. The UAE would likely fund his campaign, and possibly even supply military support. And if it is not Hamas, nor Dahlan, who would take over, there are still others, waiting in the wings for the misrule of Mahmoud Abbas to end in the West Bank, and eager to present themselves as successors. Israeli leaders are no doubt considering all these scenarios, while Abbas can only think of

one – a takeover by Israel. The Israelis are not about to be inveigled into that.

“We are not nihilists, or fools, and we don’t want chaos,” Sheikh told NYT. “We are pragmatic,” he added. “We don’t want things to reach a point of no return. Annexation means no return in the relationship with Israel.”

“We are not fools”? Isn’t the refusal, time after time, to accept what Israel offered, an example of such foolishness? Now that the Palestinians have worn out their welcome in the Arab states, and are no longer the cynosure of all Arab eyes, they should follow the Saudi Crown Prince’s advice and “take whatever deal they are offered.” And the Deal of the Century is actually quite a deal for them. The Palestinian Arabs would be allowed to keep for their state fully 70% of the West Bank, all of Gaza, and two large swathes of territory taken from Israel’s Negev to be part of their state. 97% of the Palestinian Arabs would not have to move. And on top of that, they would be getting an aid package of \$50 billion. Just for themselves in “Palestine.” By comparison, the only aid package of similar gigantic size was the Marshall Plan, that provided \$60 billion (in 2020 dollars), but that was divided among sixteen countries.

Abbas has already suspended security cooperation with Israel, a strategy that Sheikh said “aims to remind the Israelis of the burdens they would assume if the Palestinian Authority disbanded, and to demonstrate that they are willing to let the authority collapse if annexation comes to pass.”

He warned that if the Palestinian would be left unable to pursue statehood, “The Palestinian Authority would be reduced to performing civil functions, making it effectively an agent of the Israeli occupation. I will not accept that my role is a service provider. I’m not a municipality or a charity.”

But why would the Palestinians be “left unable to pursue statehood”? The Deal of the Century was in large part about creating, for the first time, a Palestinian state. The Palestinian Authority would not “be reduced to performing civil functions” in that state. It would have all the authority needed by any government running an independent state. Only one thing would be different: the state of Palestine would be demilitarized. It would not have an army with which to attack Israel. But that’s it. And not having an army hardly constitutes a unique burden. According to the CIA Factbook, there are 31 countries without an active military force. They include, among others, Costa Rica, Iceland, Panama, Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and the Vatican. They seem to be doing all right. The government of Palestine would not be an “an agent of the Israeli occupation.” Israel would have no right to dictate its internal workings, but would intervene only if the obligation to remain demilitarized was ignored.

As part of the steps already taken, the Palestinian Authority has refused to accept the monthly tax funds Israel collects on its behalf.

Yes, that’s certainly showing the world. Abbas is a genius in reverse when it comes to cut-off-your-nose-to-spite-your-face politics. We’ll show Israel. We won’t accept \$190 million a month, or roughly \$161 million a month (if the Pay-For-Slay sum are deducted) that the Israelis collect for us in tax revenues. And don’t try to make us.

Sheikh, however, admitted that rejecting the funds would send the already cash-strapped PA to the brink of economic collapse.

But who cares, when it can somehow be blamed on Israel, which forced us to refuse to take the money it keeps trying to give us? Who cares, when Abbas, Erekat, Ashrawi, and another

hundred top officials are already well-provided for, and won't be living paycheck to shriveling paycheck like all those people they claim to care about?

He also confirmed that Ramallah plans to suspend its aid to the Gaza Strip, which mostly covers the salaries of Hamas government officials.

Hamas, designated as a terrorist organization by Israel, the United States, Canada, the European Union, and Egypt, ousted Abbas' Fatah from Gaza in a military coup in 2007, but the PA still supports the rival faction's clerks.

The move is likely to further destabilize the volatile coastal enclave.

Abbas has been looking for an excuse to cut off payments to his hated rival Hamas. Now he has it. To wit: "It's all Israel's fault. If it hadn't forced us to turn down the tax money, we would have had enough to allow the Gazans to have some. But now we don't, so they won't. Blame Israel."

Still, Sheikh said that despite cutting security ties with Israel, the PA's 30,000-strong police and intelligence officers would continue to maintain law and order and fight terrorism.

"We will prevent violence and chaos," he said. "We will not allow bloodshed. That is a strategic decision."

The decision to "prevent violence and chaos" means we will fight all those who don't like the P.A. and its leaders. And we will "fight terrorism" because Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, threaten the political and even physical survival of Mahmoud Abbas and his P.A. partners in crime. The P.A. police welcome intelligence-sharing by the Israelis, who have their own sources of informants in the West Bank. But "fighting terrorism" that is directed at the P.A. is not the same thing

as “fighting terrorism” that is aimed only at Israel. That’s a different thing. That’s not terrorism – it’s brave acts of derring-do by our “martyrs” against the Zionist colonial-settler state.

But security coordination with Israel was a means to a political end, Sheikh noted, saying, “I want peace and two states. But I’m not a collaborator with Israel.”

Sheikh wants “peace and two states”? But that is exactly what the Deal of the Century provides. Peace – and two states. What he means sub rosa is this: “I want two states, one of them a Jewish state squeezed back within the indefensible 1949 armistice lines, and the other an Arab Palestine, emptied of its Jews, that will hold us, temporarily, until such time as we Muslim Arabs, increasing our military strength, can again go in for the kill.”

And that Palestinian, Arab, Muslim plan is exactly why Israel needs to extend its sovereignty to the Jordan Valley and the settlements, beginning with the three largest ones – Maale Adumim, Ariel, and Gush Etzion.

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