

Museum of the Palestinian People Fundraiser

by Hugh Fitzgerald



[The report](#) about the **Palestinian Authority** spending its international aid money on jihad terror groups recalls an email that a friend of mine received awhile ago, and that he thought I might enjoy. I did. Here it is:

We have great news! The Museum of the Palestinian People will be hosting its inaugural fundraising dinner on Monday, September 24th [2018] at the historic Tabard Inn in Washington, D.C, and you're invited! We hope you will be able to join us to support the opening of the Museum of the Palestinian People, the first and only museum in the nation's capital that will be dedicated to celebrating Palestinian culture, history and resilience.

*At this dinner we will celebrate the beauty of Palestinian culture with a menu featuring **Palestinian cuisine crafted by renowned Palestinian Chef Joud Achkar**, the Executive Chef at*

Tabard Inn. The evening will also feature a silent auction with items from Palestine, some of which is [sic] rare and discontinued items from Jerusalem. There will also be art donated by local D.C. artists and much more!"

What might those "rare and discontinued items from Jerusalem" have been? Can we guess?

Tableware and dishes made of olive wood? Tiny models of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher or the Church of the Nativity? Little jars of olive oil or honey or spices from the Holy Land? A model of the Temple Mount, showing the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque? A handwoven hijab?

There is nothing surprising here. As we all know, the invention, and then the elaboration, of a distinct "Palestinian" identity began after the Six-Day War, with a little help from the KGB, when it became clear that the military option would have to be put on hold. Instead, a long propaganda assault on Israel would be necessary, to first push the Jewish state back into something like its pre-1967 (that is, behind the 1949 Armistice Lines) borders. Only later, once Israel had been reduced in size, would the Muslim Arabs try again to go in for the kill through military means.

For decades, the Arabs had not hidden their intentions to destroy the Jews. Just before the 1948 war, Abdul Rahman Azzam, Secretary-General of the Arab League, predicted that if there was a war, then **"it will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Tartar massacre or the Crusader wars."** Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, and the leader of the Arabs of Palestine, had been on friendly terms with Hitler (he urged Hitler not to allow Jews to escape to Palestine, but to keep, and kill, them, in Europe). He who had helped raise an SS Battalion consisting of Bosnian Muslims, who had befriended Eichmann and claimed to have visited Auschwitz, was happy to declare a

jihad, telling his fellow Arabs “I declare a holy war, my Muslim brothers! Murder the Jews! Murder them all!”

It is fascinating to consider that until the fall of 1967, in all of the threats and warnings given by Arab leaders, in all of the statements made by Arab diplomats, such as the loquacious Jamal Baroody, the ambassador from Saudi Arabia at the U.N., not a single Arab leader or diplomat ever mentioned “the Palestinian people.” Nor, in all the records of the U.N. discussions about Israel and Palestine, until several months after the Six-Day War, was there any mention by anyone, Arab or not, of the “Palestinian people.”

The ever-helpful KGB came up with the idea of creating, out of “Arab refugees,” a “Palestinian people.” The word “Palestinian” was promoted from geographic adjective – as in “Palestinian” Arabs – to ethnic noun, as in “Palestinians.” Yassir Arafat, who was born in Egypt, was now transformed by the KGB into a “Palestinian.” The KGB simply destroyed the official birth records of Arafat in Cairo, and replaced them with fictitious documents that showed he had been born in Jerusalem. Thus he became a “Palestinian.”

It took a while, after the Six-Day War, for the phrase “Palestinian people” to be sufficiently repeated so that it might take on a life of its own. But after a few years, and by dint of constant repetition, the name stuck. No one bothered to ask what features – religion, language, cuisine, folksongs, dances – distinguished the “Palestinian people” from other Sunni Arabs in the neighborhood, but had they done so, they would have discovered there were no such distinctive features.

Zuheir Mohsen, a member of the PLO executive committee, gave an interview to the Dutch newspaper Trouw in 1977, ten years after the Six-Day War. His oft-quoted candor deserves to be re-quoted until it is etched in our collective memory:

The Palestinian people does not exist. The creation of a

Palestinian state is only a means for continuing our struggle against the state of Israel for our Arab unity. In reality today there is no difference between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese. Only for political and tactical reasons do we speak today about the existence of a Palestinian people, since Arab national interests demand that we posit the existence of a distinct "Palestinian people" to oppose Zionism. Yes, the existence of a separate Palestinian identity exists only for tactical reasons. Jordan, which is a sovereign state with defined borders, cannot raise claims to Haifa and Jaffa, while as a Palestinian, I can undoubtedly demand Haifa, Jaffa, Beer-Sheva and Jerusalem. However, the moment we reclaim our right to all of Palestine, we will not wait even a minute to unite Palestine and Jordan.

But let's get back to this celebration of "Palestinian" culture at the Tabard Inn in late September of last year.

What, one may ask, constitutes a distinctive "Palestinian" cuisine by a "Palestinian" chef? Here is all I could find online when I googled "Palestinian" cuisine:

Try these recipes from Palestine.

Shawarma. (Middle Eastern spiced meat sandwich)

Kefta. (Middle Eastern spiced meatballs)

Falafel. (Middle Eastern fried chickpea patties)

Tabouli. (Middle Eastern bulgur and parsley salad)

Pita. (Mediterranean pocket bread)

Maqluba. ...

Hummus bi Tahina. ...

Musakhan.

Anyone the least bit familiar with the Levant can see that these dishes are to be found all over the Middle East – in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and beyond. You will find all of these dishes in Middle Eastern – usually Lebanese – restaurants in the West. Some can be found not just in Arab, but in Turkish and Armenian restaurants as well. There is nothing distinctively “Palestinian” about any of this cuisine.

What about Palestinian folksongs and dances? Again, online searches make clear that there is nothing “Palestinian” about any of the dances presented as being from Palestine. For example, the “dabke” presented [here](#), combining circle and line dancing, may be billed as “Palestinian,” but is danced all over the Levant, in Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, and even among some Bedouin. A more impressive version of the same dance, billed as “Lebanese,” can be seen [here](#).

Is there a distinctive “Palestinian” dress? Nothing I’ve been able to come up with in online searching. If there is no distinctively “Palestinian” religion, language, cuisine, folk dances, folk tales, or dress to be found online, are we not entitled to be skeptical at the very idea of a “Palestinian people” who only started to be mentioned, for the reasons Zuheir Mohsin mentioned in his interview in Trouw, after the Six-Day War?

In 1957, the Adviser on Refugees for the World Council of Churches, Elfan Rees, described the Arab refugee problem as in fact the easiest of all post-war refugee problems to solve:

I hold the view that, political issues aside, the Arab refugee problem is by far the easiest post-war refugee problem to solve by integration. By faith, language, race and by social organisation they are indistinguishable from their fellows of their host countries. There is room for them in Syria and Iraq [and even more room, and need, now, in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf oil states]. There is a developing

demand for the kind of manpower they represent. More unusually still, there is the money to make this integration possible. The United Nations General Assembly, five years ago, donated a sum of \$200,000,000 to provide, and here I quote the phrase "homes and jobs" for the Arab refugees. That money remains unspent, not because these tragic people are strangers in a strange land – because they are not, not because there is no room for them to be established – because there is, but simply for political reasons.

This "Museum of the Palestinian People" in Washington, D.C. is one more aspect of the relentless propaganda effort to make us all believe that there is a "Palestinian people." So keep asking, on every possible occasion: what exactly are the features that distinguish the "Palestinian" people from all others? We have seen that it can't be a matter of language, religion, ethnicity, cuisine, dances, folk culture. The answer is that there are no such distinctive features. The "Palestinian people" were created and subsist "simply for political reasons." See, above, yet again, the comments of Zuheir Mohsen and Elfan Rees.

And the Museum of the Palestinian People in Washington also makes a political statement in the capital of our politics. The museum's reason for being is to further convince us – by sleight of word, by sleight of exhibit – that the "Palestinian people" exist, have existed for many centuries, and are not to be denied their very own state. This charade has real consequences. Don't take part.

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