

PA Prime Minister Shtayyeh Defends 'Pay-For-Slay' Policy

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Mohammad Shtayyeh offers a collection of lies – “war is deceit,” after all – about the PA’s Pay-For-Slay policy, that Maurice Hirsch refutes here: “Damn Lies and the Palestinian Authority’s ‘Pay-for-Slay’ Policy,” [JNS](#), November 20, 2020:

Richard Engel of the Council on Foreign Relations, a prestigious and influential think tank, held an exclusive webinar on November 17 hosting Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh.

While anyone still believing in the value of truth would have had a field day with the entire presentation, the six minutes of the presentation in which Shtayyeh tried to explain and justify the PA’s “pay-for-slay” policy were, by far, the most offensive.

Every year, the PA spends hundreds of millions of dollars on salaries for imprisoned terrorists and released terrorists, and allowances to wounded terrorists and the families of dead terrorists. The PA pays these terrorists because, as Deputy PA Prime Minister Nabil Abu Rudeina recently said, "It is impossible to send a soldier to war and then not take care of his family. We are talking about someone who acts on our behalf and receives orders from us."...

These are not "soldiers sent to war." They are not sent to a battlefield where they engage with enemy soldiers. They are terrorists whose entire reason for being is to kill men, women, and children, innocent civilians who are engaged in ordinary tasks: feeding their children at a pizza parlor (Sbarro Pizzeria), taking buses (on the Coastal Road, on Jaffa Road, on Dizengoff Street, and on dozens of other bus routes), photographing wildlife (Gail Rubin on the beach), studying in a classroom (Ma'alot), eating at a university canteen (the Hebrew University bombing), waiting at bus stations (Tzifrin, Beersheva), shopping at a market (Mahane Yehuda). There is a moral distinction that the PA's Nabil Abu Rudeina is incapable of making. But let's note that he is claiming that **these people, whom we know to be terrorists, "act on our behalf and receive orders from us."** So much for all those claims by the PA that it has nothing to do with terrorism.

There are so many thousands more of these attacks by terrorists, the people whom the PA's Deputy Prime Minister describes as "soldiers." Here's the brave act by one of them – Samir Kuntar. Kuntar and his team broke into an apartment building and kidnapped a father, 31-year-old Danny Haran, and his 4-year-old daughter, Einat, taking them to a nearby beach. According to eyewitnesses and forensic reports, Kuntar shot Danny to death at close range, and then killed the four-year-old girl, Einat, by smashing her skull against the rocks with the butt of his rifle. During the attack, the wife, Smadar Haran, accidentally suffocated her two-year-old daughter Yael

to death while attempting to quiet her whimpering, which would have revealed their hiding place. That's the man the PA's Deputy Prime Minister Nabil Abu Rudeina wants you to think of as a "soldier" who deserves to be paid for the rest of his life by the PA.

The beneficiaries of the [Pay-For-Slay] payments include terrorists from all the Palestinian terror groups, including Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – all internationally designated terror organizations – as well as members of Fatah. Many of the terrorists are responsible not only for the murder of Israelis – Jews and Arabs alike – but also for the murder of foreigners, including, but not limited to, US, UK, French, Dutch, Australian, and Russian citizens.

When it comes to "pay for slay," the only requirement to receive payment is that you were engaged in terrorism against Israel. When it comes to rewarding terror, the PA is truly an equal opportunity employer.

What made Shtayyeh's presentation so offensive was his resort to outright lies.

Shtayyeh opened his defense of the PA's squandering of billions of dollars of US and international aid by claiming that Yigal Amir, who assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on November 4, 1995, "is getting a social pension from the State of Israel."

No, Amir was and is not getting a pension from the Israeli government. Israeli law denies state benefits of any kind to any person being held in prison.

Shtayyeh went on to explain that the PA policy does not incentivize terror but rather compensates for the "collective punishment" he claimed Israel imposes on the terrorists and their families. According to Shtayyeh, Israel destroys the

house of every terrorist arrested.

Another lie: Israel doesn't demolish the homes of all terrorists. It uses home demolitions only in the cases of murder. Many thousands of terrorists are arrested every year but only a handful of them – those who manage to murder someone – have their homes demolished as a way to discourage terrorism.

Doubling down, Shtayyeh tried to explain that the PA policy is – pass the tissues – focused on the terrorists' "orphans" and "kids."

What Shtayyeh failed to mention is that according to Palestinian Media Watch (PMW) reports, later confirmed by the Israeli Prison Service, 70 percent of the imprisoned terrorists are single. Many of them are minors, such as Morad Adais, the 16-year-old murderer of nurse Dafna Meir; Khalil Jabarin, also 16, who murdered Ari Fuld; or Iham Tzabach, who at the tender age of 14 convinced three of his friends to participate in the terror attack that led to the murder of Tuvia Yanai Weissman. If "pay for slay" is all about the "orphans," why are single terrorists receiving a payment?

Shtayyeh argued that the payments were actually in Israel's security interests, claiming the IDF Military Governorate had called him to ensure the PA renewed the canteen payments to the imprisoned terrorists. Shtayyeh obviously "forgot" that it was actually Israel, following a PMW report, that stopped the canteen payments, and that only after the terrorists threatened a hunger strike did the Israeli government temporarily capitulate.

Why would it be in Israel's security interests to ensure that the imprisoned terrorists have their prison canteen accounts paid for by the PA? The answer is: it wouldn't. That's why Israel stopped the canteen payments by the PA, and allowed

them to be renewed only in order to halt a hunger strike. But that was temporary; Israel has now reimposed that ban on canteen payments. When the IDF called Shtayyeh – that is, if we believe his story that they called him – it was only to remind him to pay the canteen bills that Palestinian prisoners had run up. That has nothing to do with the Pay-For-Slay payments, which Israel most definitely does not, *pace* Shtayyeh, regard as furthering its security interests.

Finally, Shtayyeh tried to justify “pay for slay” by asking about the recidivism rate of terrorists who had benefited from the payments....

We are expected to believe , according to Shtayyeh, that terrorists who receive benefits for being terrorists will come out of prison wishing to not be terrorists any more. This is illogical, for surely the receipt of such Pay-For-Slay payments to terrorists and their families incentivizes further terrorism. And in fact, that’s exactly what has happened. About 60 percent of the terrorists who are released from Israeli prisons return to terrorism; after all, whether they live or die, they or their families receive far more than any job open to ordinary Palestinians could provide. A 60% recidivism rate is very high, and one that Shtayyeh is careful not to mention.

Pay-For-Slay implicates the PA in the very terrorism it claims not to support. It incentivizes terror by ensuring that terrorists, or in case they die during their attack, their families, will receive generous lifetime support, higher than the wages earned by the average Palestinian in the West Bank or Gaza. Of course this policy incentivizes terrorism: not only does do those terrorists who die become “martyrs” who are memorialized by having squares and streets named after them, but they posthumously provide, by their murderous attacks, a steady source of income for their families. The sums involved are huge: Prime Minister Netanyahu in 2018 estimated that the

PA spends \$350 million each year on its Pay-For-Slay program.

For many months Mahmoud Abbas refused to accept the import tax payments that Israel collects on behalf of the PA, because Israel quite understandably wants to deduct from the amount it transfers the same sum that the PA spends on the Pay-For-Slay program. Until recently, Mahmoud Abbas, in one of his many cut-off-my-nose-to-spite-my-face moods, refused to accept *any* of the money Israel had collected on the PA's behalf. When the amount Israel was holding back amounted to \$890 million, and the Palestinians were becoming increasingly impoverished, Abbas finally relented, and now he has decided that yes, after all, he will now deign to receive the import-tax transfer from Israel, even after the Israelis deduct the amount distributed in the Pay-For-Slay program. At what point, one wonders, will Abbas, or his successors, for the sake of their own collapsing economy, stop the Pay-For-Slay program not on moral grounds – that would be expecting too much – but on economic ones? For there is not only the \$350 million a year that Israel withholds, but the Pay-For-Slay program was one of the main reasons why the Trump Administration ended all American aid to the PA, amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars annually. The PA thus is foregoing, with its insistence on continuing Pay-For-Slay, close to one billion dollars a year, at a time of great economic distress in its own PA-ruled territories and Gaza.

Now the PA has said it is willing to modify the terms of its Pay-For-Slay. No longer will the sums given to individuals be based on the length of their prison sentences (it has been, until now, based on the notion that the longer the sentence, the larger the subsidy, which means that the worst terrorists have been getting the most money). The proposal being hammered out in Ramallah now would give the families of Palestinian prisoners stipends based on their financial need instead of how long they are behind bars, says Qadri Abu Bakr, the chairman of the Palestinian Authority's Prisoners Affairs

Commission.

“Economic need must serve as the basis,” Mr. Abu Bakr said in a phone interview. “A single man should not be earning the same as someone with a family.”

But that change still leaves the Pay-For-Slay Program in place; *it merely changes how individual stipends are calculated*, no longer based on length of sentence but on financial need. Terrorists and their families will still be getting those stipends, however, even if the worst terrorists will no longer be guaranteed the highest payments.

Let us hope that the Biden Administration will not try to undo the Taylor Force Act, passed by Congress in order to stop American economic aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA) until the PA ceases paying stipends through the Palestinian Authority Martyr’s Fund to individuals who commit acts of terrorism and to the families of deceased terrorists.

The PA thinks it can somehow get around the Taylor Force Act by changing how it calculates the subsidies to imprisoned terrorists and to the families of dead families, basing their size only on financial need, not the length of a prisoner’s sentence. But such recalculations won’t exempt it. The law is clear: There must be no financial rewards for terrorists or their families before American aid can be renewed. It’s a principle easy to understand. Ask members of the American public what they would think if the families of the 19 9/11 hijackers were given lifetime financial awards by some Arab or Muslim state. We can imagine the universal rage directed at that state. Why should it be any less outrageous when the terrorists murder Israeli civilians, and then either the terrorists, or their families, receive lifetime support from the PA? And if the PA changes the calculation of the sums to be distributed, so they are based on need rather than length of sentence, that does not make the Pay-For-Slay program any

more acceptable. The point is this: no terrorists, and no families of terrorists, no matter what criteria are used to calculate the size of the stipend, should be rewarded for their terrorism with PA payments either to themselves or to their families.

Will the Biden Administration be snookered by the PA's announced change in how it will calculate Pay-For-Slay payments, failing to recognize that it keeps in place the reward system that incentivizes terrorism? Perhaps the new administration will come to its senses about this intolerable program, and demand that it be halted before any American aid is forthcoming to either the PA or, for that matter, to UNRWA. Surprise us, please, Mr. Biden, with a welcome display of common sense.

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