

Palestinian Prime Minister Calls for 'Reconsidering' Palestinian Authority's Ties to the Arab League

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The Palestinians continue to display an unreal sense of their own importance. Now they have taken on the Arab League and “threaten” – as if anyone would much care – to sever their own ties to the League. That story is [here](#).

The Palestinian Authority on Monday called on its leader, Mahmoud Abbas, to “reconsider” Ramallah’s ties with Arab League in the wake of what it called the pan-Arab forum’s “impotence” vis-à-vis the growing momentum for regional peace independent of the Palestinian cause.

The Palestinian factions have criticized the Persian Gulf states of Bahrain and United Arab Emirates for seeking

rapprochement with Israel before the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is resolved, decrying the two nations' recognition of Israel as a "stab in the back."

The Arab League has remained mum over the peace deals, sparking both fury and concern among the Palestinian leadership, which fears the winds of change blowing through the region will marginalize the Palestinian issue.

The Palestinian issue has long been "marginalized." Confronted with three civil wars, in Yemen, Libya, and Syria, with the continuing aggression of Iran which seeks to create a "Shi'a crescent from the Gulf to the Mediterranean," with Muslim Brotherhood challenges to Egypt and the Gulf monarchies, with forces of Al-Qaeda and Islamic State having regrouped, with the steep decline in oil demand and oil prices, with the coronavirus pandemic, the Arabs have never had so much to deal with, and of course they have put the "Palestinian issue" far down their list of concerns.

"The Arab League has become a symbol of Arab weakness," PA Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh stated on Monday.

Ramallah has already recalled its envoys in Abu Dhabi and Manama in protest over the peace deals with the Jewish state.

Yes, that's showing them. But will the UAE and Bahrain really suffer from no longer having Palestinian envoys whining, and demanding financial aid and diplomatic support, and throwing tantrums, in the spirit of the PA leader Mahmoud Abbas, when that aid and that support are not forthcoming? Or will the UAE and Bahrain, as is more likely, breathe a sigh of relief, and think to themselves "good riddance" as they show those envoys the door?

A potential exit from the Arab League could undermine the Palestinian Authority in more ways than one. It will further

distance them from the 20 nations comprising the powerful forum, and may also backfire—driving more Arab states to normalize relations with Israel.

That is absolutely correct. The Palestinians are becoming ever more irrelevant. They have made mistake after mistake. They support the Muslim Brotherhood – Hamas is the local MB branch in Gaza – which is a threat to both Egypt and the Gulf monarchies. Even more intolerable for the other Arabs is that the Palestinians have grown close to, and accepted military aid from, the mortal enemy of the Gulf Sunnis – Iran.

Now the Palestinians threaten to quit the Arab League. What Arab states would give a damn? It's no skin off their teeth. Go ahead, Mahmoud Abbas, and don't forget to close the door behind you. Take your spittle-flecked fury and your tantrums off to your only remaining friends in the region, Iran and Turkey. Perhaps they can console you. We in the Arab League have had quite enough of your ingratitude and your endless demands that we Arabs ignore our own national interests and do as you demand. See what Ankara, see what Tehran, both in the midst of economic free falls, can do for you instead.

“These peace deals will kill the Arab peace initiative,” Shtayyeh said, referring to the 2002 Saudi outline for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“The signing of these agreements is a dark day in the history of the Arab nations and it is a defeat for the Arab League.”

Shtayyeh has it partly right. These “peace deals” – “normalization” deals – will confirm the death of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, but that Initiative, that required Israel to withdraw behind the 1949 armistice lines, which Abba Eban rightly described as “the lines of Auschwitz,” was already dead on arrival. There was never a chance in hell that Israel would agree to its maximalist conditions, leaving

Israel with a nine-mile-wide waist from Qalqilya to the sea.

Shtayyeh is wrong, however, in describing the signing as a “dark day” in the “history of the Arab nations.” It was rather, a bright sign that some Arab states had come to their senses, and from now on will make their policies on the basis of their perceived national interests. And when those national interests in security and economic matters are promoted by “normalization ” of relations with Israel, they will refuse to be held back by curses and threats from the Palestinians.

Is the signing of these agreements between Israel and the UAE, Israel and Bahrain, a defeat for the “Arab League”? Why? How has the Arab League suffered? The League has simply refused to follow the demand of the Palestinians to consign the UAE, at its latest meeting, to the outer darkness. The Palestinians, having lost control of the League proceedings, and in a rage, want us to believe it was not they, but the Arab League, that has been deeply discredited. No one else seems to agree.

According to the Palestinian prime minister, “We have managed to foil much of [US President Donald Trump’s] ‘deal of the century’ only to find ourselves struggling with the UAE and Bahrain.”

How did the Palestinian Arabs foil “much of the ‘deal of the century’”? They refused to attend the meeting in Manama to discuss the \$50 billion aid package – the largest such package for a single state in history – that the Palestinians would receive as part of the Deal of the Century. They refused to consider a deal that would for the first time give them an independent state, with 70% of Judea and Samaria, all of Gaza, and two large enclaves in Israel’s Negev to compensate for the 30% of Judea and Samaria that Israel would retain, and in addition provide them with that colossal sum of \$50 billion, as a victory. They long ago lost all moral sense. Now they have lost all common sense. And contrary to their claim that

they have “foiled” much of the deal of the century, that deal’s offer is still intact and on the table. Mahmoud Abbas, who is 85, may be replaced by someone more pragmatic and realistic, such as Mohammad Dahlan (who has the backing of the UAE), willing to negotiate on the basis of the “Deal of the Century.” There are fifty billion reasons for the impoverished Palestinians to want him to do so.

First published in