

Activists, You Must Shame and Pressure the Palestinian Authority for Its Sins as Much as You Pressure Israel for Its Crimes

Criticizing the PA and holding it accountable is not anti-Palestinian; it is patriotic and as much a tenet of the resistance movement as criticizing apartheid Israel is.

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After decades of repression, the resistance movement today gives the Palestinian national struggle for liberation a new direction. But such resistance has never come from the Palestinian Authority (PA), whose reason for existing at all is to accommodate Israel's priorities of security and trade.

The "peace process" the PA managed to sell to the young generation of Palestinians in the West Bank has proven to be the mirage it's always been, a mirage that Yasser Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan were fully cognizant of. The latter, for example, is said to have mused at the signing of the Oslo agreement: "If Israel were serious about withdrawing from the West Bank, it would have returned it to me and not to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)."

In a 2017 piece in The Algemeiner titled "Israel Cannot Withdraw From the West Bank," Gershon Hachohen emphasized the writing on the wall—true even before Israel built the wall:

The greatest threat to Israel's existence is neither Shiite militias on the Golan border, nor the Iranian nuclear threat, which are both of physical and military nature.

Instead, it is the threat of a Palestinian state within the Clinton parameters—which

would entail dividing Jerusalem and withdrawing to the 1967 lines—that most endangers Israel.

As countless political analysts have pointed out repeatedly, the PA is a security treasure for Israel. As long as it exists, it carries all the cost of Israel's occupation. The PA's security configurations in relation with its national, regional, and international security partners have always been highly problematic. The neoliberal politics and aid from the US and the EU continue to entrench the illusory promise of self-determination.

Only resistance in all its forms is likely to lead Palestinians out of the political maze into which the PA has boxed them. Since they walked into that maze, many are still blind-folded, but many others, especially among the young, are clear eyed with no illusions any more of liberal state-building or economic development in the occupied West Bank.

The maze is still dark, dank and foul. Consider, for example, yesterday's [report](#) in Al Jazeera on "the financial crisis" in the occupied territories described as "the worst" since the PA's establishment in 1993. It's the same old story exacerbated by the pandemic and recent US politics: "Donor aid and Israel's withholding of vital tax funds are squeezing the PA's already decimated budget." One public employee is quoted as saying: "Until now, nobody knows whether we will get paid or not, or if we'll get our salaries in full or only 75 percent of it."

Headlines such as the above in Al Jazeera yesterday were recurrent when I was in the West Bank in 2006 after Hamas took power and formed a Palestinian unity government and the Bush Administration, along with its Quartet partners and Israel, cut off contact with and halted assistance to the PA.

I used to marvel how the thousands of families dependent on public money managed to cope. Someone explained to me that almost every such family had members working abroad who helped their relatives. Some employees moonlighted. Women sold their gold jewelry, the traditional dowry Palestinian brides get upon marriage. The school and health systems faltered but continued to function.

At the time, Congress passed P.L. 109-446, the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006, to tighten existing restrictions on aid to the Palestinians. In 2007, Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen introduced H.R. 1856, which further restricted contact with and assistance to the PA.

You may recall that the Biden administration at first accepted the PA's decision to hold elections in April, elections in which all Palestinian political parties were slated to take part. However, pressured by Israel, the Biden administration reversed its position and prevailed on Abbas to cancel the elections. The reason for the reversal on the part of the PA was economic: Hamas in a unitary Palestinian government would trigger US laws that would defund the Palestinian Authority.

Economist Anas Iqtait, in Chapter 11 of the recent book *Political Economy of Palestine*, makes [the case](#) that readily available funds, in the form of foreign aid and clearance revenue to the PA have "relieved it of constructing an authentic contract with its populace and widened the gap between its senior employees and rest of society."

In the light of the above economic morass, it's fair to wonder how the PA could possibly find the wherewithal to resist. The answer to this question necessitates a critical understanding

of the political economy that “turns on the colonial question” and on the reality of the existence of a single apartheid Israeli state in Palestine from the river to the sea.

Through such understanding and organizing, I believe it is possible to replace the PA with a political system that embraces solidarity with popular struggles in Palestine and transforms itself into a force for social, economic, and political change. I believe that the PA, as a compromised and corrupt agent for the current horrific status quo in Palestine, is a huge stumbling block for any political or material progress. It is the reason why mountains of evidence as well as thousands of Palestinian prisoners and martyrs who sacrificed their lives so that other Palestinians may live have failed fundamentally to improve conditions for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Palestinians have been collectively weakened by the complicity and cowardice of the PA and its reliance on the mediation of the US. The resistance movement has still not fully recovered. Only now are movements like [Masar Badil](#) beginning to organize how Palestinians could collectively resist Israel’s colonization and apartheid, mapping out an important corrective to the many defeatists who discuss Palestine today as though the existing status quo were the last word in the matter.

The need for a strong resistance movement that targets the PA and not just Israel is crucial for the liberation of Palestine. At the very least, activists must shame and pressure the PA for its sins as much or even more so than they are pressuring Israel for its crimes. Criticizing the PA and holding it accountable is not anti-Palestinian; it is patriotic and as much a tenet of the resistance movement as criticizing apartheid Israel is.

Palestinian resistance expresses itself in many forms, collective and individual. Although individual actions, such as the continuous and relentless exposure of Israel’s crimes on social media or the production of resistance art forms often goes unquantified, it is, nevertheless, very powerful and can be credited with debunking Israel’s “narrative.”

On Facebook, there exist no Groups or Pages I know of that are publicly critical of the PA or make popular demands of it. On the other hand, such Pages against Israel proliferate. That is why I have started a [Page](#) called “Sins of the Palestinian Authority” — not to equate the crimes of the PA with the [crimes](#) of the settler-colonial Jewish Zionist entity, but rather to highlight the problematic nature of a structure called “Authority” that uses whatever such authority it is permitted to have in order to impede liberation and worsen Israel’s ongoing dispossession of the Palestinian people. About the Page:

This Group is committed to solidarity with the Palestinian resistance and with the liberation of the land and people of Palestine, to achieve victory from the river to the sea.

The Palestinian Authority today has the largest per-capita police force in the world. And yet, it uses this force to safeguard Israel’s security instead of safeguarding the Palestinian resistance to Israel’s apartheid and occupation. This group is meant to expose the failings of the Palestinian system of governance, which is built on the defunct “peace process,” as well as the Palestinian elite and the powers, Arab and Western, who continue to preach and implement the “road map” of “normalizing” this defunct system.

Palestinian resistance points to a hopeful future, whereas the PA continues to be nothing but

bad news for Palestine's liberation struggle and national aspirations.

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Featured image: Only resistance in all its forms is likely to lead Palestinians out of the political maze into which the PA has boxed them. (Source: Rima Najjar)

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