

# U.S. - led World Community Fails, Palestinians on Brink of Explosion

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In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

“In the absence of all hope, we cry out our cry of hope,” Palestinian Christian leaders, representing churches and church-related organizations, meeting in Bethlehem on December 11, concluded in their 13-page document titled “Kairos Palestine – 2009: A Moment of Truth,” enlisting Christians worldwide in proactive efforts to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. Their “cry” symbolizes the popular mood of their people as well as the political status quo.

On both sides of the inter-Palestinian divide between the U.S. - backed presidency and the Israeli - hunted legislative, the Fatah - led West Bank (where the leadership of the Palestine Liberation organization (PLO) is committed to peace, direct negotiations and security coordination with the Israeli occupying power, but the 16 -year old “peace process’ has reached an impasse and the negotiations are deadlocked in a one -year old stalemate over the cancer - like expanding Jewish colonial settlements) and the Hamas - led Gaza Strip (where the Islamic resistance Movement (Hamas) is strictly committed to ceasefire save in self - defense while conducting indirect negotiations mediated by Egypt and Germany over an exchange of POWs), both political and military solutions for the century - old Arab - Israeli conflict have failed and aborted all prospects of peace, which have proved an elusive mirage, a stark failure of the U.S. led world community. An imminent explosion seems the only breakthrough ahead.

“There is no bilateral solution. The fastest road to the next round of violence is through another failed negotiation process ... and it has zero chance. Next year ... could be ripe for an explosion,” Gershon Baskin of the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information told a Russian-sponsored debate on the Jordanian side of the Dead Sea last week. The “dangerous standstill” needs a “rescue mission,” the speakers said, according to Reuters. Former Russian Prime Minister Evgeny Primakov warned that a “real crisis” could develop if the international community did not intervene, adding that the role of the so-called Middle East Quartet (the United States, United Nations, Russia and the European Union) was in default. On December 15, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas told the PLO Central Council in Ramallah: “Now the ball is in the international community’s court and in America’s court.”

But Abbas seems to knock at the wrong door. Barak Obama will go down in history as the first U.S. president who pushed a life - long Palestinian ally like Abbas to publicly pronounce the first ever pronounced Palestinian “disappointment” with the United States and its role as the mediator in the conflict, despite the Palestinian euphoria Obama invoked when he chose Abbas as the first foreign leader to give a phone call as soon as he set foot in the White House. The Obama Administration “made zero progress. Not only, of course, has it failed

even to get negotiations going ... but there isn't the slightest shred of evidence to believe that anything is going to change in the rest of its term," director of the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center, Interdisciplinary university, Barry Rubin wrote in Global Politician on December 19.

Obama shot down the mission of his presidential envoy to the Middle East, George Mitchell, when he sent Secretary of State Hillary Clinton early in March ostensibly on a mission to bring together Palestinian and Israeli leaders to resume their negotiations, but her mission was a resounding failure because she did exactly the opposite, which made her visit the milestone of her administration's shift from what was believed by the Palestinians as an honest broker to a mediator who aborted his mediation by completely adopting the views of the Israelis.

The following U.S. - Israeli deal to kill the Goldstone report in the bud — allegedly because it created a "fairly substantial gap" between the two sides (Assistant U.S. Secretary of State P.J. Crowley on December 10) — indicated that Clinton's failure was not a personal one but an official policy that should have been expected after Obama failed to back up his earlier demand for a "freeze" of Israeli colonial settlement as a pre-condition for the resumption of Palestinian - Israeli talks, a demand that misled Abbas to demand no less, and to become the hostage of an un-honored U.S. promise and of his own decision to put all his eggs in the American basket.

Obama and his administration show no regrets, but are following in the footsteps of the traditional U.S. - Israeli strategic alliance, dispelling whatever remains of Obama's promises of "change" to his voters. Last week Obama signed the foreign aid budget law for 2010, raising security aid to Israel by US\$225 million the next year to US\$2.775 billion, an aid which under a MoU is to rise from \$2.55 billion in 2009 to \$3.1 billion in 2013. Arabs, including Palestinians, view this aid as fueling the Israeli intransigence in the peace process. The \$500 million allocated to the Palestinian Authority (PA), including \$100 million to be used by US General Keith Dayton, practically boils down to a contribution to keep the PA floating as a collateral for Israel's security.

Even in the best of times, long before the inter-Palestinian division, the 2002 military reoccupation of the PA territory in the West Bank and the current tight siege imposed on Gaza, the PA has become dependent on donors since the PLO-Israeli "Declaration of Principles" (DoP) was signed in Washington DC in 1993, relieving the Israeli occupying power of its obligations under international law.

Grudgingly but gratefully the PLO accepted the donors money as a temporary arrangement, pending the end of the interim period in final status negotiations that were supposed to conclude by the creation of an independent Palestinian state living in peace and security side by side with Israel as promised by the U.S. - led international community first in 1999, then in 2005, again in 2008, and now within two years according to Obama administration.

Politically however the donors money have become a temporary permanent arrangement, relieving the budget of the occupying power of burdens it must be held responsible for, financing the unending military occupation, defusing the economic incentive for revolt against the occupation, and holding the PA and the PLO hostages to the political conditions attached to donors' contributions.

Disillusionment with the role the donors' money is playing is growing alongside the Palestinian disillusionment with the 'peace process.' The Palestinians, who contributed substantially to regional state building and who still contribute to many regional economies are a resourceful and indignant people who have the capital, the expertise and skillful labor, the scientific and intellectual manpower, and the intelligence and the political will to build their own society once they are empowered with self - determination to gain liberty, freedom and independence. With the growing disillusionment, the donors political role is increasingly becoming suspicious, creating a sense of humiliation, exacerbating the national frustration, and could not any longer keep the lid tightly on the boiling refusal of the interim - turned - permanent status quo.

Palestinian sense of betrayal by the international community is as old as the United Nations General Assembly's 1947 resolution No. 181 for the partition of their homeland into two states and its resolution No. 194 of 1948 for their return to their homeland. This same sense of betrayal has a strong vocal voice in the West Bank recently in the "disappointment" that Abbas, the signatory to (DoP), made clear by declaring his irrevocable decision not to run anew for presidency: "I found all ways blocked, then I decided not to rerun for another term. I am not optimistic and I do not want to have illusions." he had told the London - based Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat. In the Gaza Strip, the latest chapter of the betrayal of the world community was voiced in Paris on December 22 by sixteen rights groups, including Amnesty International, Oxfam, and Christian Aid: "The international community has betrayed the people of Gaza by failing to back their words with effective action to secure the ending of the Israeli blockade ... World powers have also failed and even betrayed Gaza's ordinary citizens. They have wrung hands and issued statements, but have taken little meaningful action," they said in a report.

This sense of betrayal is explosive given the political siege imposed under the direct Israeli military occupation on the PLO and PA in the West Bank and the Israeli military siege imposed tightly on the Gaza Strip. Conditions are ripe for a third Palestinian "Intifada" (uprising) in the West Bank and all indications refer to a renewal of Israeli military invasion of Gaza.

Abbas, in an interview with The Wall Street Journal on December 22 warned of an imminent 'Intifada.' True he pledged that, "As long as I'm in office, I will not allow anybody to start a new intifada. Never. Never. But if I leave, it's no longer my responsibility and I can't make any guarantees," he said.

Meanwhile in the Gaza Strip, Hamas, on the eve of the first anniversary of the December 27 Israeli three -week invasion, is warning against an imminent Israeli new invasion. Their strongest indicator is a steel wall the U.S. Engineering Corps are building underground to block an estimated 1,500 tunnels that span the 14-kilometer Sinai-Gaza border. In January 2008 thousands of Arab Palestinians from Gaza swarmed the Egyptian - Gazan borders as an outlet into a compatriot Arab government who nonetheless proved no more compassionate to their plight under siege than the Israelis when they immediately after the episode closed their border crossings. The tunnels were the Palestinian alternative.

Now the U.S. - made 18 - meter steel slabs, which were tested in U.S. laboratories to resist bombs, melting or cutting and meant to reach 30 meters underground, threaten — in addition to disrupting and contaminating the underground water flow — when the project is completed, reportedly in eighteen months, to deprive them of sixty percent of their basic needs, according to the UNRWA American Commissioner - General, Karen Koning AbuZayd,

who told a forum organized by the American University in Cairo that the steel wall is more secure than the Bar Lev Line, built by Israeli military along the eastern coast of the Suez Canal after it occupied the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt in 1967.

No people or country in the world would tolerate such a “defensive” wall on their borders, a first worldwide, or view it as not an act of war. The steel wall serves only Israeli political and military goals, notwithstanding the fact it is “U.S. - made” — according to AbuZayd — and the labor as well as the guarding soldiers are Egyptians. As such the wall is viewed as part of the Israeli occupation and as an integral part of the Israeli siege mechanisms, and accordingly, from a Palestinian point of view, its targeting is legitimate. However, Palestinians, at least in Gaza strip, are in a state of war with Israel, but not with Egypt. Consequently, any expected violent flare up which the wall could ignite would be Palestinian - Israeli hostilities. Hamas argues that Egypt cannot risk the expected angry Palestinian, Arab, Muslim and international outcry against the collective punishment of one and a half million Palestinians in Gaza unless Cairo is expecting an Israeli invasion that would make such an outcry short-lived.

Israel is diverting attention away from the Palestinian imminent explosion and away from both its political siege of the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and its military siege of the rival Palestinian leadership in Gaza by highlighting as a priority an Iranian nuclear threat, which has yet to be vindicated. All indications are that the Obama administration has subscribed to the Israeli agenda, dragging with it its European satellites. All other Middle East regional conflicts could wait, it seems, even the explosive Arab and Palestinian - Israeli conflict.

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