

**ON THE EVE OF THE SUMMIT AND RAMADAN—
THE PALESTINIAN BROADCAST MEDIA:
A SURVEY REPORT**

October 2005

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General Summary

On the eve of PLO leader Mahmoud Abbas's planned visit to Washington, the broadcast media of the Palestinian Authority (PA) maintained a generally tough anti-Israeli and sometimes even anti-American posture, regarding talks with Israel and American actions in the Arab world.

For example the Fatah newspaper Al-Hayat al-Jadida published a cartoon on October 15 condemning America for actions in Iraq and Syria:



Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, Oct. 15, p 15, reprinting cartoon from Qatari newspaper Al-Watan, showing defiant Syrian flag being pulled down by balls and chains labeled “America” and “Iraq.”

Although many Arab newspapers reported that Dr. Abbas (also known as Abu Mazen) was set to meet Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in Washington, the official media reported (from late September) that such a summit was not a foregone conclusion, and that it depended on Israel meeting Palestinian demands.

Israel and Israeli officials were often mentioned in regular news reports in a derogatory manner, such as “the Tel Aviv Government” [the Israeli government], “the Tel Aviv prime minister” [PM Sharon], “Tel Aviv” [Israel], “the chief of the occupation army” [Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz].

There was frequent airing on Palestinian television of news reels and montage programs concerning the Sabra and Chatilla massacres in the

1982 Lebanon War, and the blame was laid squarely on Ariel Sharon for causing the murders of “3000 Palestinians.” There were continuous showings of montages of Israeli prison authorities torturing Palestinian prisoners.

There was also a rise in the number of contentions that Israel was deliberately trying to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque. This is a technique which has been used in the past to whip up Palestinian emotions and cause violence [e.g. Yasser Arafat in Sept. 1996 and 2000 and Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini in 1920, 1922, 1929], and it is a technique that is being used by Mahmoud Abbas and other PA officials today.

Sheikh Ismail Nawahda, Friday Sermon, Al Aqsa broadcast live on Voice Of Palestine Radio, Oct. 14:

“O ye Muslims wherever you are, what will you say on the day of judgment? Muslims are being slaughtered here and there by the hands of the enemies of Allah. And what will you say to your lord on the day of judgment and the Al-Aqsa Mosque is imprisoned.”

The official Voice of Palestine radio and Palestinian Broadcast Corporation (PBC) television also gave generally favorable treatment—sometimes heroic treatment—to armed Palestinians (with guns or knives) killed while trying to infiltrate into Israel or while attacking Israeli soldiers at roadblocks. Members of the Jihad, Hamas, Fatah and other armed militias who were killed during Israeli arrest operations were said to have been “assassinated.” They were also given heroic treatment for having fallen in the path of “*muqawwama*”—RESISTANCE.

Mosque speeches vetted by the Palestinian Authority continued to accuse Israel and the West of plotting against the Palestinians and other Muslims. The mosque speakers are not an independent voice, but are paid employees of the Palestinian Authority, and they often go out of their way to issue praises and prayers for Mahmoud Abbas and his colleagues.

In many of these speeches, the American presence in Iraq is constantly criticized as an attack on Arabs and Islam.

For example, a cartoon in the October 14 edition of Al-Quds (the tamest of the Palestinian newspapers vetted by the PA), the American-led drive for a new Iraqi constitution is seen as burying the “Arab-ness” or Arab nature (Arabic: *uruba*) of Iraq.

In the cartoon below, an Arab lies buried beneath a headstone “the Arab-ness of Iraq” atop the new American-bound Iraqi constitution.



On the home front, the PA media repeatedly mentioned that Hamas had been responsible for attacks on PA police and for causing the deaths of innocent civilians during incidents in Gaza, but the PA media generally refrained from criticizing Hamas directly. The PA media also generally denied reports in the Arab press that Hamas had abandoned positions in the overall Palestinian Steering Committee and in efforts to achieve a “national dialogue” [*hiwar watani*].

DAILY REPORTS

Oct. 11—“Israel is continuing operations underneath the Al-Aqsa Mosque.” [Second Item Headline-- PBC Television, 9PM

Oct. 10—Voice of Palestine (VOP) opened its broadcasts Monday morning with the news of the “heroic martyring” of “three teenagers” trying to cross into Israel.

“Three teenagers were heroically martyred by the bullets of the Israeli occupation forces near the border fence at Dir al-Balah.”

VOP said the Palestinian Authority (PA) was working to obtain the bodies of “the martyrs” from “the Israeli occupation.” The three were not identified but said to be between the ages of 15 and 18. At the end of the opening item, the broadcast mentioned that the Israeli authorities

said the “teenagers” were shot on the border fence trying to enter Israel. There was no mention of whether the three dead men were carrying weapons, and there was no PA condemnation of the event.

Abbas and his spokesman, Nabil Abu-Rdeina, said in a PBC broadcast (3PM) that the Palestinian-Israeli summit was being postponed until the end of the month. Abbas, who earlier had been firm in his demands, sounded more restrained when he said he was willing to meet Sharon at any time “as long as the talks are serious.”

Oct. 9—Official Palestinian television and VOP radio quoted Abbas at length and featured video and sound bites of him asserting that any summit with Israeli leaders was dependent on at least four conditions:

- return to the Sharm al-Sheikh agreement
- removal of Israeli forces from all Palestinian cities
- opening of Palestinian sea and airport facilities
- and release of all prisoners.

Abbas’s National Security Advisor, Gen. Jibril Rajoub said in a VOP interview that there was no truth that the PA was agreeing to an Israeli withdrawal from Jenin alone, but that they PA demanded Israeli withdrawal from all West Bank towns.

Sufiyan Abu-Zaideh, the PA Prisoner Affairs Minister told VOP that the PA was insisting on release of all prisoners.

VOP’s radio announcer referred to a Palestinian killed in Nablus the day earlier as some one who “was heroically martyred while moving forward in resistance.”

Abbas announced that talks on establishing a new PA cabinet would begin in two days.

Oct. 7—VOP (8am) reports Abbas Meets with James Wolfenson, representing the Quartet, regarding the peace process. Israel only allows men above 45 years old to pray in Al-Aqsa on first Friday of Ramadan. Saeb Ariqat meets Dov Weisglas, Sharon advisor, to set up meeting between President Mahmoud Abbas and Sharon.

“Mufti Sheikh Ikrema Sabry warned of continuing Israeli attacks on the holy Jerusalem Shrine during his Friday mosque speech.” [top item VOP Friday 2PM]

Sheikh Sabry warned of dire consequences if Israeli MK Uzi Landau tried to visit mosque sites as planned. 100,000 participated in mosque

prayers in Al-Aqsa. Continued protests in Bil'in "against racist Israeli separation wall."

Abbas meets David Welch, US emissary, to prepare Abbas-Sharon meeting and visit of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice after Holiday of Feast ('Id al-Fitr, ending Ramadan in month's time).

Oct 6—"PLO supports any effort made by Jordan to help bring about meeting between President Mahmoud Abbas and Sharon" (lead item, VOP 7AM).

"Cabinet Secretary Samir Khleili denies reports that Prime Minister Ahmad Qreia suffered heart attack...and said that Prime Minister Qreia would return to Ramallah today"

"Joint Higher National-Islamic Forces Committee blames Hamas for responsibility for recent events in Gaza." (refers directly to killing of three PA policemen as well as indirectly referring to explosions in which almost 20 people were killed).

Israel destroys trees and takes over 100 dunams in Tsurif village near Bethlehem.

Mosque Speeches

The Friday mosque speeches given by Palestinian Authority officials—some cabinet ministers in the government of Mahmoud Abbas—continue to include incitement against Israel (including positive references to shooting Qassam missiles at Israel), Britain and the United States. This is true even when the speeches are given in the presence of Abbas himself.

For example, a speech on Sept 16 by PA Endowments Minister Sheikh Youssef Jumma Salama included themes of Israel's desire to conquer the entire Middle East. The speech was given at the Main Mosque in Gaza and broadcast on PA television.

"O Ye Believers, the Palestinian people is rejoicing in the removal of the Occupation. We have gloried in the freeing of some of our land: Jenin of the Qassam and the northern part of the (West Bank) and the Gaza Strip.

"The important thing is that the leadership of the Palestinian people, and at the head of them the brother president [camera flows in on the head of Mahmoud Abbas] has held firm to its principles, and one of these is patience. When the Rafah junction was re-opened, the brother president visited the transfer point and declared there will not be even a single Israeli soldier here at the transit point. And the transfer point will

be under Egyptian-Palestinian supervision. And we will not allow Gaza to be a big prison.The Palestinian people is clinging to the right of return of the refugees and the end of the settlements....

“The return of the Palestinians to their land in the year 94 (1994-the year of Arafat’s return with 100,000 people) was an awesome development in the political map of the middle east. The occupation will end. And one day the Palestinians will return during the extinguishing of the occupation or as the Israelis call it –Greater Israel—stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates.....

“And in closing, I urge you O Believers to unite in one voice behind our governing leadership which is capable of administering our affairs.”

Raising the Spectre of Israeli terrorism and Invasion of Al-Aqsa

Sheikh Ikrema Sabri, Jerusalem Mufti, speaking on VOP radio at Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem—**Oct. 7, 2005**

— “O ye Believers, O ye servants of Allah wherever you may be, Uzi Landau of the Israeli rightwing party Likud is planning to invade the blessed Al-Aqsa mosque craving that it be [Judaized/returned?] fettered, mastered, and disgraced, [he being]ignorant of the deep meaning of Al-Aqsa to Muslims forever. And we say to this cursed messenger (i.e. Landau) learn the lesson of what happened to your colleague Sharon. [This is a reference to the riots and war that began in September 2000.]

“Al-Aqsa is for Muslims alone and we do not recognize any other law therein.” [Note: Al-Sabry and other Muslim clerics use the term “Al-Aqsa” to describe the entire Temple Mount or Haram al-Sharif area, including the Western Wall.]

Combining Ramadan With Continuing Palestinian ‘Struggle’

The term “struggle” –*nidaal* in Arabic—and “struggler” –*munaadil*—are usually terms used to signify someone who fights or who has fought Israel.

Oct. 3, 2005 Sheikh Ikrema Sabry announcing Ramadan on Voice of Palestine Radio

“From the blessed mosque of Al Aqsa, the first direction of prayer, the second of the two mosques, and the third of the holy places, we greet Muslims on the occasion of the month of Ramadan....we greet ou Palestinian people who are struggling inside (in Gaza, West bank and Israel) and in the areas of their presence in this munificent

month, and as we greet the Palestinian Authority and at its head the Brother, President Mahmoud Abbas –Abu Mazen—God give him strength.

Some additional material from cartoons in the last Week



Al-Quds October 9, 2005—Palestinian paper vetted by Palestinian Authority

This cartoon in Al-Quds is a criticism of Arabs who help the West or the UN in disarming Arab regimes of WMD. It shows Al-Bardei getting Nobel Peace Prize while holding gun (an apparent reference to war in Iraq looking for weapons of destruction)



Al_Hayat Al-Jadida, newspaper run by Fatah organization of Mahmoud Abbas, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority



Al-Hayat Al-Jadida Oct 13-2005