

# *Inside the PA*



March 15, 2006  
Research

Produced by the Center for Near East Policy

**Editor's note:**

**Welcome to the twelfth edition of "Inside the PA," a weekly on-line publication designed to provide an open-source and yet valuable insight into the workings of the Palestinian Authority. We will review important statements by senior PA officials and developments within Palestinian society as taken from the Palestinian and Arab media.**

**QUOTABLE**

**" I say that it should end, and forever, the political arrests, and stop surrendering to Israeli and American demands on the Palestinian Authority."**

—PFLP leader Saadat expressing the hope that the new Hamas-led PA will free him and his colleagues from detention in Jericho.

**This Week in the PA**

- *In Riyadh, Hamas delegation meets Saudi leaders*
- *In Ramallah, Hamas seeks to form government*
- *In Ramallah, Fatah youth movement holds conference*

**NEWS DIGEST**

1. GAZANS DON'T FEAR ISRAELI ATTACKS
2. THE AGE OF DENIAL
3. PA MEDIA CONSIDER ISRAELI ELECTIONS
4. WAITING FOR HAMAS
5. LOOKING FOR RACISM IN THE WEST

### **Gazans Don't Fear Israeli Attacks**

Fahmi Abu Salah lives in Gaza about one kilometer from border with Israel. But he has no fear of the nightly Israeli artillery barrages meant to deter Palestinian missile strikes on the Jewish state.

Abu Salah and his family of twelve live next to his farm in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. As he put it in an interview to the PA-owned daily Al Ayyam on February 28, the Israeli shells can be useful around the house. Featured with the interview is a photograph of his living room, which shows several artillery shells used as vases for roses.



**Al Ayyam. March 11, 2006  
 Hamas's Haniyeh presents his government.**

The published interview is one of several indications that Israeli artillery strikes have no effect in deterring Palestinian missile strikes against the Jewish state.

Abu Salah reports that he sees Israeli battle tanks enter the border area almost daily, and is aware of the operations of Israeli special forces. Actually, he doesn't understand why Israel shells his farm and the surrounding area in Beit Hanoun. He says Palestinian gunners don't use his area for missile launches against "Israeli settlements."

However, all in all, he says, he's not worried. "We put our hands in Allah," he declares.

The confidence expressed by people such as Abu Salah is one side of the coin; the other is the plethora of publicized threats being made by Palestinian terrorist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. On March 8, a statement by Jihad's military wing, Al Quds Brigade, was entitled "The Zionist enemy must leave or die or be destroyed."

"Palestinian blood is very precious and dear, and the criminal Zionist enemy will pay for its crimes, actions which have not succeeded against our beloved West Bank and steadfast Gaza," ran the statement that appeared in the PA media and originated on Jihad's website. "Blood is for blood, and blood is the law of the current phase. There will be no talk of a truce; on the contrary, the factions must escalate and continue this holy battle."



**Al Ayyam. March 10, 2006  
Hamas and Fatah play tennis  
with a microphone in a game entitled 'Dialogue.'**

The statement said Jihad, which has borne the brunt of Israeli air strikes, has mobilized its forces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for an "immediate and earth-shattering response against the heart of this entity, in retaliation for its crimes and in continuation of our jihad."

"We urge the Muslim nation to support this blessed movement with all means, and to pray for its steadfastness in this struggle, because today it leads the Islamic Jihad project in Palestine," the statement said.

Jihad's belligerence has been matched by the insistence by Hamas that it will keep its weapons in the war against Israel. On March 7, Hamas's Izzedin Kassam Brigades released a statement that despite its takeover of the PA, the movement would not disarm.

Izzedin Kassam spokesman Abu Obeida said in a statement published on the Hamas website that the dismantling of the military wing was not a viable option. He said the Hamas victory in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections would strengthen the war against Israel and that the military wing would "seek all means of acquiring power and strengthening the resistance in order to act at the appropriate time and place."

### ***The Age of Denial***

Not long ago, the Fatah movement led by Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas issued all the threats against its opponents. Today, Fatah is seeking to avoid threats and particularly a confrontation with Hamas.

In the midst of reports that Abbas's movement has sought to strike Hamas and kill its leaders, Fatah leaders are going out of their way to adopt Hamas positions, including non-recognition of Israel.

Fatah strenuously denied claims in Al Quds on February 26 regarding an assassination plot against Hamas leader Khaled Masha'al. The Palestinian daily, basing its article on an Egyptian magazine report published the previous day, said Mohammed Dahlan and Tawfiq Tirawi had plotted with Israel and the United States to kill Masha'al.

On February 28, Al Ayyam published a front page article that cited denials by Dahlan and Tirawi of any involvement in the alleged plot. Dahlan, while issuing a denial, said the report was actually not worth denying. Tirawi rejected any PA involvement in an Israeli plot against Hamas.

On March 2, Hamas speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Abdul Aziz Dweik

claimed that Fatah gunmen tried to target him and PLC employees during a violent demonstration.

Three days later, Fatah's Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade issued a denial of any involvement in such an attack against Hamas or Dweik, which ran in the PA-owned Al Hayat Al Jadida. Al Aqsa said the allegations by Hamas were false and inciteful:

"The brigades consider Dweik's statements to be incitement. They are accusations that constituted slander and defamation, and are part of the PLC Speaker's campaign against Fatah and the brigades.



**Al Quds. March 11, 2006**

**Hamas's Haniyeh tries to write his government's new program.**

What happened on March 2, according to the newspaper report, was that Al Aqsa gunmen demonstrated at the PLC in Ramallah. They shot in the air in protest of what they termed unlawful measures taken by Dweik in his dealings with Fatah employees.

Fatah was particularly upset over Hamas's decision to block or reverse legislation taken during the last days of the previous PLC. Fatah has been concerned that its members would be fired from the PLC and other PA institutions.

"The repercussions of this decision are still taking place and causing concern and considerable fear," the report said.

The Al Aqsa statement said Dweik has been intimidating Fatah employees "with his approach to management and method of talking to them." The statement said Fatah's protest was at a distance of 10 meters from the building and gunmen did not shoot.

Fatah said it would closely monitor the PA in wake of the Hamas victory. The statement said Al Aqsa would encourage democracy and "not allow terror, violence and chaos to prevail."

Fatah members comprise the clear majority of the 135,000 employees of the PA. Al Aqsa gunmen have been taking over PA buildings and other facilities, but in many cases left before and when security forces arrived.

In its statement, Al Aqsa said it carried the burden of carrying out the war against Israel. Fatah vowed to protect the state and rights of citizens rather accede to Al Dweik's personal rules.

At the end of the statement, Al Aqsa called on Hamas's military wing to prevent internal conflict. Indeed, Dahlan supported Hamas positions at a news conference in the Gaza Strip on February 28. Dahlan, who won a seat in the PLC, said he would not negotiate with Israel nor would he press Hamas to do so. He said Fatah has no interest in Hamas revising its position and recognizing Israel.

For his part, Masha'al and his aides have dismissed the reports and grandly announced that neither Fatah nor the PA had anything to do with the assassination plot. Instead, Masha'al has been busy consolidating his power from Damascus headquarters.

In an interview with the Arab satellite channels A-Jazeera and Al Arabiya on March 6, Masha'al made it clear that Israel was his target. He said the Palestinians are ready for an "all-out war" with Israel.

"In the past, Hamas fought Israel with its military wing," Masha'al told A-Jazeera. "Now, if Hamas faces this option, it will fight Israel with the entire Palestinian people. This is our choice."

At the same time, Hamas leaders in the Gaza Strip have sought to assuage Fatah. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh gave an interview to Al Ayyam on March 12 that offered Fatah a place in the government and regulations to standardize the security forces.

Haniyeh said under his tutelage, the PA would outlaw the carrying of arms by militias in public places and pursue kidnappers. He said he would negotiate with the armed groups to prevent attacks on foreigners.

### ***PA Media Consider Israeli Elections***

The Palestinian Authority has been closely following Israel's election campaign. While PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas has expressed support for the ruling Kadima Party, the Palestinian media have been wary of endorsing any Zionist position.

A column by Mahmoud Al Hibash in Al Hayat Al Jadida represented the PA attitude. Al Hibash wrote on February 28 that there was no real choice for Palestinians regarding whom to support in Israeli elections on March 28. The column cited a statement by Kadima leader Avi Dichter as warning that Israel would bomb the Gaza Strip into "hell" should Palestinian gunners continue their missile strikes on the Jewish state.

Indeed, Al Hibash could not find anything positive regarding Israeli elections. He said they merely intensify Israeli hostility and racism. As he put it, all the parties are essentially the same to the Palestinians.

Al Hibash did avoid mention in his column of any Israeli platform, including the plan by acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmer to dismantle Jewish communities in the West Bank.

The PA media more generally have highlighted these plans, however, and reported them prominently.

The PA has been uncomfortable with Olmert's plan. On March 6, chief PA negotiator Saeb Erekat told PA radio that the Israeli plan sought to exploit the PA in the aftermath of the Hamas victory in Palestinian Legislative Council elections.

"Israel is using this change to impose facts on the ground with unilateral actions, such as annexing Jerusalem, making the separation fence along the borders and ignoring Palestinian refugees' rights," Erekat claimed.



**Al Quds. March 10, 2006  
Amid Israeli closure of cargo terminal,  
Palestinian bakes the last sack of flour in Gaza.**

Erekat said the PA contacted members of the Quartet – composed of the United States, Russia, United Nations and European Union – to protest Olmert's plan, which represents Israeli unilateral measures.

"We are not going to stop our contacts and efforts to exert pressure on Israel to stop carrying out unilateral actions and get back as immediate as possible for a permanent peaceful settlement," Erekat said.

On March 11, the Al Quds daily published an editorial entitled "There is no Israeli Peace Partner." The editorial asserted that Olmert plans to annex Jewish settlement blocs in the West Bank, and impose Israeli sovereignty over eastern Jerusalem.

Al Quds said Israel offers the Palestinians two choices. One is to accept a settlement that includes Israeli annexation of vast areas of the West Bank, seizing Jerusalem, and controlling the borders and water of the entire Palestinian entity. The second choice is an Israeli "apartheid wall" that would set the new border.

"But Israel is in fact ignores two points, Al Quds said. "The first is the international legitimacy and support required for a just solution of the Palestinian issue. The second is that the Palestinian people and leadership together with Islamic and national factions would not accept either of the two Israeli choices."

Hamas leaders agree. Khaled Masha'al said in an interview from Damascus, published in Al Hayat Al Jadida on March 12, that the Olmert plan was "a declaration of war against our people. It is clear that Ehud Olmert is repeating the mistake of Ariel Sharon," a reference to the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005.

### ***Waiting for Hamas***

Ahmad Saadat waited in his Jericho detention center for a Hamas release. Saadat has been in a PA prison, under the supervision of British and American guards, since Israel accused him of helping engineer the assassination of Tourism Minister Rehavam Zeevi in 2001.

Saadat, secretary-general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, has spent the last three years in a type of benign detention. He telephoned at will, received visitors and even television news crews.

Hamas and the PA both pledged to release Saadat, a move that was opposed by Israel. Still, Saadat was hopeful and in a March 5 interview with A-Jazeera, he took questions from the audience via e-mail and fax.

Saadat declared that he might run a secular movement, but like Fatah leaders he has no problem with the Hamas agenda. The key, he said, was Hamas's vision regarding the "struggle with the occupation," the codeword for the war against Israel.



**Al Quds. March 10, 2006**

**Right: The old rich and poor.**

**Left: The rich and poor today.**

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh promised to release Saadat with the formation of a new PA government. Saadat hoped that all of his colleagues are also released from detention.

"Currently, there are many political prisoners in Palestinian prisons as you know," Saadat said. "In the prison that is currently under British-American supervision, there are six prisoners; myself, my four comrades [regarding the assassination] and the brother Fuad Al Shobaki. There also other prisoners in the district prison in Jericho."

Al Shobaki was accused of arranging for the delivery of a ship full of missiles, rockets and explosives from Iran to the Gaza Strip in 2002. Israel consented to having the six detained in Jericho under international supervision rather than force the PA to surrender the suspects.

In 2003, Saadat thought he would be released when the Palestinian Supreme Court ordered his release. But the PA never implemented the ruling.

Saadat acknowledged that the Hamas victory harmed the Palestinian left. But he said the decline of the Palestinian left-wing was part of the decline of the left internationally. He

said Palestinians decided to choose Hamas and its campaign of reform rather than the left.

"Maybe the Palestinian public, which called for a change, did not see a strong alternative in the left-wing to accomplish reforms," Saadat said. "I think that we should review our organizational situation, our organization's structure and our relationship with the Palestinian public."



**Al Hayat Al Jadida. March 11, 2006**

**The rejection of DP World is based on "security fears;"  
the real reason is racism.**

***Looking for Racism in the West***

The PA-owned Al Hayat Al Jadida occasionally launches crusades. Its latest crusade is against Western racism.

Al Hayat Al Jadida editor Hafez Barghouti has run a series of columns and cartoons that compare the West to Nazis and other racists. The newspaper has capitalized on the controversy in Congress over U.S. plans to allow a United Arab Emirates company, DP World, to run six major American ports.

Barghouti speaks of a new Nazism in the West from which Jews believe they are immune. The language of his articles are harsh and reflect a Palestinian hate of Western democracy. The new Nazism, Barghouti writes, stems from neo-conservatism, which he terms a supremacy doctrine. The Palestinian editor says he sees this ideology in numerous officials.

"There is a new ideological Nazism, which has started to dominate the West," Barghouti wrote on March 4. "It doesn't speak openly about totalitarian Nazism, but implements this in practice. I see in many minor and senior Western officials, copies of Hitler. Many of the western institutions are as if they are managed by the Gestapo and the SS."

This Western Nazism, Barghouti writes, has resulted in Arab extremism. As he sees it, the West preaches democracy but acts in a fascist manner.

Naturally, the leading proponent of this ideology is the United States. Washington has sought to use democracy to dominate and control the Arab world.

"Washington has its own agenda and distinct domineering and imperialistic aspirations," Barghouti writes on March 8. "Serving democracy is not one of them. Instead, it is the service of monopolistic companies and allied totalitarian regimes."



**Al Hayat Al Jadida. March 10, 2006**

**The U.S. reads its human rights report on Syria and Iran while holding Arabs in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo.**