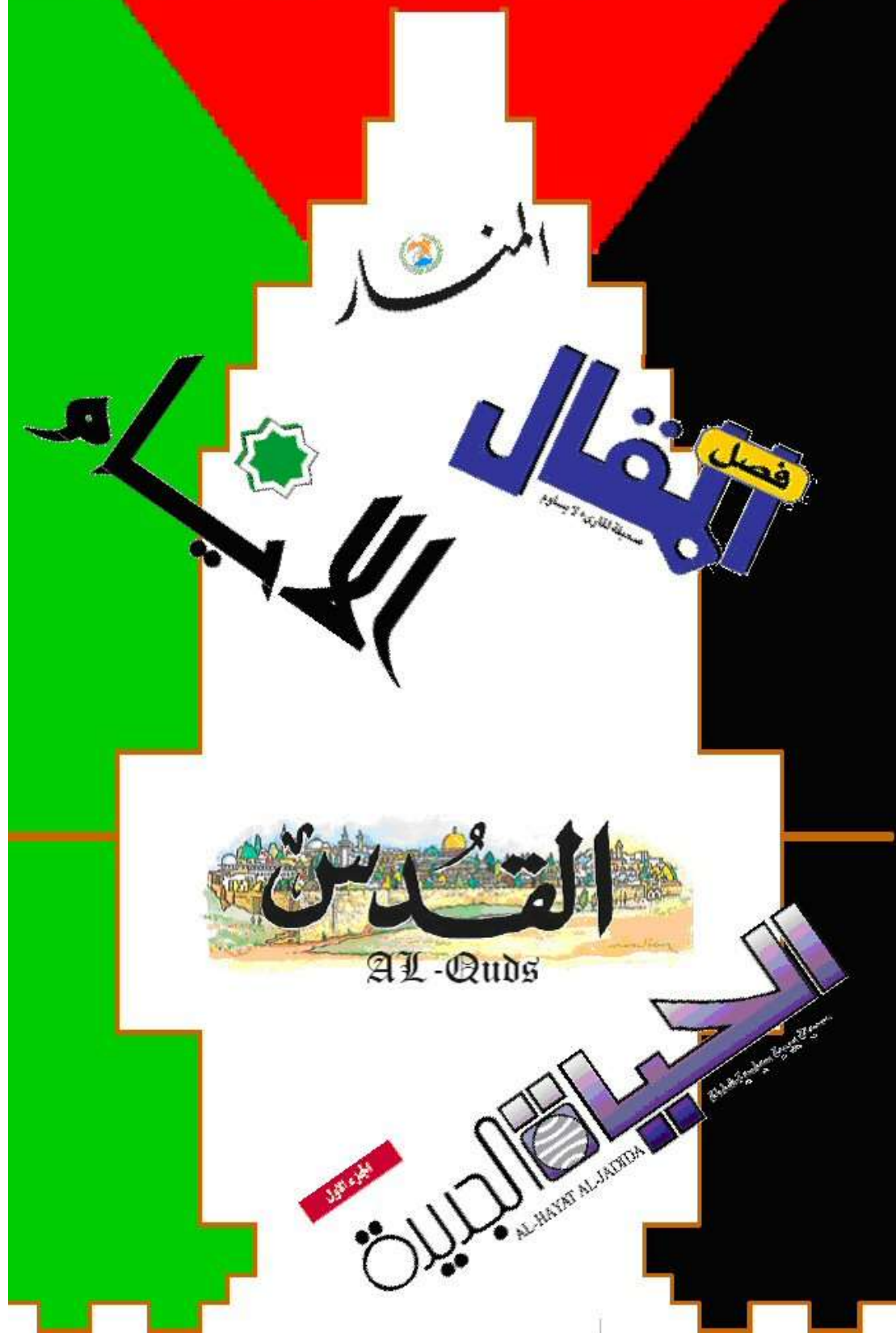


Inside the PA



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Produced by the Center for Near East Policy Research

Editor's note:

Welcome to the fifth 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

" There are many questions we cannot answer at this stage."

--PA negotiator Erekat worries over Israel without Ariel Sharon.

This Week in the PA

- *In Ramallah, Hamas and Fatah discuss PLC election delay*
- *In Gaza City, PA police search for Fatah abductors*
- *In Gaza City, Hamas TV begins broadcasts*
- *In Khan Yunis, PA seeks to mediate between battling clans*
- *In Rafah, PA reconstructs border wall with Egypt*
- *In Jerusalem, Fatah candidates plan major rallies in Israel's capital*

NEWS DIGEST

1. PA FEARS FOREIGN TAKEOVER
2. PA CONCERNED OVER POST-SHARON ERA
3. PA PREPARES TO TORPEDO PLC ELECTIONS
4. PA DAILIES PROMOTE JIHAD MISSILE STRIKES
5. PA ENABLES HAMAS TO EXPAND MEDIA

PA Fears Foreign Takeover

The Palestinian Authority appears concerned that its failure to impose order could lead to a foreign takeover of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. At least one PA-owned newspaper has reported on discussions and plans for Jordan and Egypt to send thousands of troops to the West Bank and Gaza Strip to fight Palestinian terrorist groups.

"Is there a strategy to reject the idea of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea?" Al Hayat Al Jadeeda columnist Hilmi Al Foul asked on Dec. 26. "Does the deployment of Egyptian and Jordanian forces mark a return to previous dreams?"



Al Quds. Jan. 6, 2006

**Palestinian woman cries over Egyptian flag
in wake of Fatah killing of two soldiers: 'Egypt, You're Right.'**

The reference was to the Egyptian and Jordanian occupation of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, respectively from 1949 to 1967. Under Yasser Arafat, the PA rejected any direct Egyptian or Jordanian military intervention

Last week, however, the PA came under sharp Egyptian criticism for allowing Fatah gunmen, including PA officers, to breach the Gaza-Sinai border and attack Egyptian security forces. Two Egyptian soldiers were killed, which led to a "deep apology" by PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and cartoons and columns in PA-owned dailies that appealed for Egyptian forgiveness

Al Foul analyzed a report by the Israel-Palestinian Committee for Research and Information that called on Egypt and Jordan for security help. Authored by Palestinian analyst Khaled Duzdar and former Israeli security official Yossi Ben Ari, the report said the Egyptian and Jordanian deployment should last three years and aim to "overcome internal chaos and enforce law and order."

"Despite heavy pressures from the international community and from Israel, the PA leadership has not taken substantial steps to disarm any of the armed groups, nor succeeded to gain control and enforce law and order over the Palestinian population," the report said. "It seems there is a little chance that such steps will be taken before the general parliamentary elections at the end of January 2006."

IPCRI, founded in 1988 by an Israeli and Palestinian, has hosted numerous seminars on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The group has received funding from the European Union and United States and submitted reports to both Israel and the PA

The latest report said the PA has failed to fulfill most of its obligations to achieve security. The authors cited a corrupt government, chaos within PA security forces, lack of planning and shortage of foreign financing.

"The preferred option is the use an Egyptian force in Gaza and Jordanian force in the West Bank," the report said. "This seems the right match, as this will probably be the preferred Palestinian choice."



Al Quds. Jan. 7, 2005

Bulldozer entitled 'chaos' rams into Palestinian fortress.

Egypt and Jordan have already been the most active contributors to the international effort to train and mentor PA security forces. Egypt was said to have deployed 300 trainers, including 10 brigadier generals and colonels, in the Gaza Strip. Jordan was said to have a much smaller presence in the Gaza Strip.

In 2005, Israel rejected a Jordanian request to send the Badr Brigade of the Palestinian Liberation Organization to patrol the West Bank. Israel cited concerns that the brigade would end up abandoning its mission and join the power struggle in the PA.

But the report said Israel might not object to the deployment of Egyptian and Jordanian security forces under the direct control of Cairo and Amman. Ben Ari and Duzdar, citing the collapse of the Oslo peace process, expected the foreign forces to spark PA efforts to enforce discipline and restore order.

At the same time, the authors said any foreign force must come under the command of Abbas. The report attributed the failure of PA security forces in part to Abbas's refusal to confront Palestinian insurgency groups.

The report recommended that Egypt deploy a brigade, or about 2,500 soldiers, in the Gaza Strip. Jordan should deploy a division, or 10,000 soldiers in the West Bank. The foreign forces should include military and police units equipped with light weapons.

"Those forces will operate separately from the Palestinian security forces, both functionally -- they will not be subordinate to Palestinian field units and commanders -- and geographically," the report said. "They will have separate districts of responsibility, where they act independently, with no Palestinian interference at the field level. They will deploy in separate camps, organized for them in advance by the Palestinian authorities, and assisted by other foreign parties."

But the PA has informally rejected this solution, saying this would serve Israeli interests. Indeed, Al Foul raised the prospect of a Palestinian insurgency against Egyptian and Jordanian troops.

"The deployment of any Arab or foreign troops under any banner would not be understood by Palestinian citizens in a positive manner," Al Foul wrote.

PA Concerned Over Post-Sharon Era

The Palestinian Authority has never had a kind word for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. But when he collapsed on January 4 from a massive stroke, the PA expressed grave concern.

PA-owned newspapers quoted officials, legislators and analysts that forecast regional instability in wake of Sharon's demise. The Palestinians said Sharon represented stability and his passing could lead to a right-wing government that might invade the Gaza Strip to stop Palestinian missile strikes.

"Who will fill the vacuum left by Sharon," Al Quds worried in a headline on January 7.



Al Hayat Al Jadeeda. Jan. 6, 2006

Sharon kills the bird of peace and strikes himself as well.

PA media coverage of Sharon's fight for his life has been intense. The stories have led most of the three major dailies since

"Sharon's passing will change Israel and the Middle East," columnist Bassam Abu Samiya wrote in Al Hayat Al Jadeeda on January 6.

Analysts have expressed skepticism about Sharon's successor, Vice Premier Ehud Olmert. Several columnists viewed Olmert as a passing figure who would have little authority over the military, which has sought to retaliate for Palestinian missile strikes on Israel.

The PA has sought to exploit the incapacitation of Sharon as a reason to suspend the Palestinian Legislative Elections. On January 6, Al Ayyam published an article headline, "Sharon's absence has already delayed Palestinian elections."

"Will Sharon's health be used to hinder the polls?" senior PA negotiator Saeb Erekat asked on Jan. 25. "There are many questions we cannot answer at this stage."



Al Quds. Jan. 6, 2006

Ehud Olmert sits in the huge chair of the dying Prime Minister Sharon.

PA Prepares to Torpedo PLC Elections

The Palestinian Authority has been preparing its constituents for the prospect that Palestinian Legislative Council elections would be torpedoed at the last minute by a confrontation with Israel.

PA media have reported on purported Israeli plans to destroy Jerusalem's Temple Mount. Programs, articles and cartoons have reiterated the theme that Jerusalem was in danger from Israel.

On January 4, PA dailies and websites ran a series of articles that told of Israeli construction of a synagogue under the Temple Mount. The coverage focused on a news conference by prominent Muslim clerics in Israel and the PA who said the purported synagogue "threatened to spark a third anti-Israeli occupation uprising."

Ra'id Salah, head of Israel's Islamic movement and jailed for maintaining contacts with Hamas terrorists in Jordan, said the synagogue contained a model of the Jewish temple. Salah warned of a massive and violent Palestinian backlash. Israel has denied that it was building any synagogue.

"The synagogue has been built right beneath Al Aqsa Mosque, some 90 meters from the Dome of the Rock," Salah said. "You [Israelis] are inviting an uprising against you."

Salah said Israel planned to build another synagogue under the Temple Mount. He said that in October 2005 Israel held a ceremony that included California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger for the construction of a museum under the site. Salah called on Muslims to ban movies that feature Schwarzenegger, a longtime Hollywood actor.



Al Quds. Jan. 5, 2006

**Dead Palestinian on a stretcher drops his sign:
'Jerusalem in danger.'**

The PA-appointed Jerusalem mufti of Jerusalem, Sheik Ikram Sabri, said the entire area of the Temple Mount is Muslim. Sabri accused Israel of turning mosques into bars and warned of Muslim retaliation throughout the Middle East.

"These violations and aggression lead to tension in the region," Sabri said.

The PA reports recounted the 1996 PA offensive against Israel in wake of an Israeli decision to open an archaeological tunnel near the Temple Mount. Nearly 100 Israelis and Palestinians were killed in two weeks of clashes. The media also referred to Ariel Sharon's tour of the Temple Mount in 2000, which led to major clashes in Jerusalem and a new PA-directed uprising.

The PA has also raised the prospect of yet another clash with Israel in Jerusalem. PA newspapers have provided lead coverage to Palestinian election rallies in Jerusalem as well as warnings by officials that PLC elections could be canceled.

On January 3, PA Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei warned that the PLC elections would be postponed unless Israel allowed Palestinians to vote in Jerusalem. He cited confrontations between Israeli police and PLC candidates.

"We insist that elections be held on time," Qurei said. "[But] there will be no elections without Jerusalem."



Al Ayyam. Jan. 4, 2006

Election of candidates in Jerusalem.

PA newspapers provided front-page coverage of scuffles as PLC candidates Hanan Ashrawi and Mustafa Barghouti sought to hold rallies in the Damascus Gate, about 500 meters from the Jerusalem municipality. Israeli police detained eight Fatah candidates.

The ruling Fatah movement, said to be endangered by a Hamas victory, has taken out huge election ads in PA newspapers to fan the Jerusalem issue. One Fatah ad, published in Al Quds on January 4, showed the Al Aqsa mosque on the Temple Mount and the slogan "Jerusalem is in our hearts."

But Fatah and PA officials have been angered by the refusal of Hamas to participate in the campaign. Hamas has sought to hold PLC elections regardless of Israeli restrictions on Jerusalem.

On January 4, former PA Civil Affairs Minister Mohammed Dahlan severely criticized Hamas for accepting the idea of PLC elections without Jerusalem. Dahlan and other PA officials have sought to reach agreement with Hamas to postpone PLC elections.

Deputy Prime Minister Nabil Shaath said a Palestinian consensus would also lead to the cancellation of PLC elections. He denied, however, that he signed a petition by Fatah leaders to Abbas for the suspension of the PLC elections.

"Either a national consensus on postponement or an outright announcement by the Israeli government barring the vote in Jerusalem," Shaath told Al Ayyam on January 2. "We will not accept any precedent to get lost Jerusalem."

So far, PLC campaigning has been marred by rising election violence. Fatah and Hamas forces have clashed in several areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with casualties.

The campaign has also sparked clan battles. In Khan Yunis, one family involved in the election campaign opened fire on a rival clan.



Al Quds. Jan. 4, 2006

Weapons chaos in PLC elections.

PA Dailies Promote Jihad Missile Strikes

In what appears to mark a new policy, Palestinian Authority-owned newspapers have decided to promote missile strikes by the Islamic Jihad.

The PA-owned Al Ayyam daily has consistently credited Jihad with missile strikes against Israel. Until now, PA dailies reported Palestinian missile strikes, without crediting any Palestinian group.

Al Ayyam revised the approach over the last week. The newspaper has been highlighting Jihad's claim of responsibility for missile strikes from the Gaza Strip on Ashkelon and other Israeli cities and towns.

A typical dispatch was on January 4. In a front page report, Al Ayyam said Palestinian gunners fired 19 rockets toward Sderot. The article said Jihad claimed responsibility for firing 14 of these rockets. The rockets were identified as the Jihad-origin Quds-2 and Quds-3 rockets, variants of Hamas's Kassam-class short-range missile.

The PA-owned Al Hayat Al Jadeeda has also begun reporting Jihad claims of missile strikes against Israel. The latest report that quoted Jihad's military wing was on January 8. Both Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadeeda are controlled by the ruling Fatah movement, which has increased military cooperation with Jihad.

In contrast, Al Quds has played down credit for Palestinian missile strikes. On January 4, Al Quds carried a front page report that told of anonymous Palestinian gunners who fired missiles toward Israel. Some of the missiles landed in a fuel station in Gaza City, which sparked complaints by the station owner.

PA Enables Hamas to Expand Media

The Palestinian Authority has allowed Hamas to expand its media in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

On January 8, Hamas launched its new television station in the Gaza Strip. The television station is called Al Aqsa and began broadcast from Gaza City.

For about a year, PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas has allowed Hamas to operate a radio station, also termed Al Aqsa. The new Hamas TV station broadcasts news, commentary and religious programming.

Hamas has also expanded its print media. The movement's weekly Al Risala announced that it would begin publishing twice a week. Al Risala has been regarded as the leading opposition publication in the PA territories and over the last few weeks has been used to promote Hamas candidates for Palestinian Legislative Elections, scheduled on January 25.

"We are running for the Legislative Council to put an end to the vestiges of Oslo," Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar said, referring to the Oslo peace accords between Israel and the Palestinians in 1993. "President Abbas will lose his credibility if he postpones the elections. Anyone who blocks the elections will lose. The elections will take place."