

Inside the PA



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Editor's note:

Welcome to the thirteenth 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

"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

— Hamas legislator Hammad threatens Israel in wake of its capture of six Palestinian terrorists in Jericho.

This Week in the PA

- *In Ramallah, PA cancels 2 economic meetings*
- *In Nablus, PA police concludes course on family violence*
- *In Hebron, PA police hold counter-terrorism exercise*
- *In Gaza City, Palestinian gunners continue missile strikes on Israel*
- *In Gaza City, PA rejects Israeli offer to use Keren Shalom terminal*
- *In Gaza City, PFLP turns down offer to participate in Hamas govt.*

NEWS DIGEST

1. HANIYEH PRESIDES OVER HAMAS THREATS TO ISRAEL
2. FOREIGNERS FEAR VISITING PA
3. DESPITE POVERTY, PA DAILIES PACKED WITH ADS
4. THE UNCLEAR ROLE OF PA POLICE
5. PA POLICE REFUSE TO PROTECT HAMAS VIPs
6. PA MESSAGE: MOTHERS SEND YOUR CHILDREN TO DEATH

Haniyeh Presides Over Hamas Threats to Israel

For the first time, a Palestinian leader has directly presided over terrorist threats against Israel.

Hamas Prime Minister-designate Ismail Haniyeh attended a news conference on March 15 in Gaza City in which his parliamentary faction threatened Israel with terrorist attacks and abductions. Haniyeh stood by quietly as the threats were issued.

The news conference, reported by the Hamas newspaper Al Risala on March 16, was held in wake of Israel's raid of a PA prison in Jericho on March 14, in which six Palestinian terrorists were captured. Hamas had vowed to free the Palestinians, held in PA custody. Five were charged by Israel with assassinating the late Tourism Minister Rehavam Zeevi; one of the inmates was accused of shipping Iranian weapons to the Gaza Strip.



Al Hayat Al Jadida. March 15, 2006

Britain stabs the Palestinians with a Jewish knife.

"This crime will not pass without a reaction," Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri told the news conference. Hamas leaders vowed to launch a range of attacks against Israel, including the abduction of Israelis in an attempt to win the release of Palestinian prisoners.

"This is a heinous crime, and there is no doubt that the Israeli occupation government will pay for it, as we shall do all we can to ensure the release of all our Palestinian detainees from Israeli jails," said Fathi Hammad, a Hamas member elected to the Palestinian Legislative Council in January.

Addressing a massive rally in the Jabalya refugee camp on March 14, Hammad pledged that Hamas would protect the Palestinians. He said the new Hamas-led PA would retaliate against any Israeli strike.

"If the enemy opted for arrests, then we will choose the abduction of Israeli soldiers to save our prisoners," Hammad said. "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

Hamas has agreed with the PA accusation that Israel colluded with Britain and the United States in the military operation that captured the six Palestinian detainees. Twenty British and U.S. monitors had ensured that the detainees remain in Jericho prison, but left on March 14 amid fear for their safety.

"We are, at this point of time, questioning where are the U.S. and British assurances?" Hammad asked in remarks reported by the Palestinian media. "Why did the Anglo-American guards flee the place just minutes prior to the storming of the [Israeli] occupation forces."



Al Ayyam. March 15, 2006

Israel's Olmert stars in a British and American musical of the invasion of Jericho.

Hamas's military wing, Izzedin Kassam, agreed. The unit issued a statement that accused the United States of favoring Israel and warned that Washington could not be trusted.

"What had happened Tuesday is a clear American and British collusion with Israel against our people as the incident proved that those parties neither keep a pledge nor respect a deal," Izzedin Kassam said. "The oppressive West is clearly biased towards the Zionist regime as far as the Palestinian issue is concerned."

Foreigners Fear Visiting PA

The PA has acknowledged that foreigners are too frightened to respond to invitations to visit the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Foreigners have simply refused to risk the danger of abduction in wake of attacks on Westerners throughout the Palestinian territories.

On March 15, the official Palestinian news agency, Wafa, reported the cancellation of two major economic events. They were the Palestinian Economic Encounter, scheduled for

April 2006, and the Palestine Development and Investment Conference, scheduled for this

autumn.

The meetings were meant to mark efforts to attract international investors to the PA. They were to have included the cream of the Palestinian private sector, such as the Palestine Development and Investment Co., or PADICO, Consolidated Contractors International Co., the Arab Bank, the Palestine Investment Fund, the Arab Islamic Bank and Paltel.

Wafa said the Higher Coordinating Council for the Private Sector concluded that it had no choice but to cancel the Palestine Economic Encounter, scheduled for April 8-10. "We apologize to all interested parties for any inconvenience this may have caused," PA Economy Minister Mazen Sinokrot said. "And we will keep all our cherished participants, interested friends and partners updated of any conference news in accordance with political developments."

The PA also decided to cancel the autumn economic conference. Again, the PA concluded that the "entrance and safety of all participants from the Palestinian diaspora and neighboring Arab countries could not be guaranteed," Wafa reported.



Al Ayyam. March 18, 2006

**PA Prime Minister-designate Haniyeh drowns
in rejections to join his government.**

Organizers said the Palestine Development and Investment Conference sought to improve long term development of the Palestinian economy. They envisioned Arab and Western companies establishing subsidiaries in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"The decision was a set back for all of us, " Palestine Development and Investment Conference chief executive officer Kamel Husseini said. "But we live in an unpredictable situation and we have to adapt our strategies always. However, the fact that 150 Palestinian diaspora and Arab investors were keen to join us in April is a message of solace and support. The work on reactivating the conference in autumn 2006 will not stop."

Despite Poverty, PA Dailies Packed with Ads

The Palestinian Authority is crying poverty. But the Palestinian Authority-controlled press shows little sign of economic difficulty.

PA newspapers are packed with ads, many of them for luxury products. Full page ads are published nearly daily for luxury clothes, cars, restaurants and other products. Others are for professional services, including graphics and "super ADSL."

Many of the models in these ads are young and chic Western-style women, a far cry from the promised austerity of a Hamas-dominated society. Some of these women appear to have been taken from Western ads themselves.

The ads have been accompanied by a new and expanded style and an economic section; the news in the economic section reflects a good deal of Palestinian activity. There is, for example, the Palestinian Stock Exchange, located in the West Bank city of Nablus. On March 13, Palestinian newspaper reported an amazing increase of 5.4 percent in stock prices, with shares in 18 out of 22 companies on the rise. Two days later, the stock exchange fell just as fast.

The want ads of the newspapers also reflect continued foreign investment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The ads seek university graduates and professionals both for foreign and local employers.

This is a far cry from the dire warnings by the PA and its supporters of an imminent

economic collapse. On March 16, the World Bank issued a report that warned of an economic crisis in the PA. The report warned that an aid cutoff would double Palestinian unemployment to 47 percent and slash personal income by 30 percent in 2006.



Al Quds. March 18, 2006

**International law is swept in the dust bin
when it comes to Palestine or Iraq.**

The PA-owned Al Ayyam daily, long heavily subsidized by the Fatah-led government, has been packed with ads that announce projects and jobs by the United Nations, U.S. AID, International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations. Stories in the local section report nearly daily on Western-financed seminars on women in Palestinian society. One ad by Amideast proclaims "English is coming to Nablus!!!!"

The coverage tells of a PA that is managing despite the threats of a cutoff in Western aid. On March 13, the front pages of daily newspapers reported that the PA planned to pay February salaries of the 145,000 civil service employees. Other reports told of a resolution

in strikes by taxi drivers and university staffers. The drivers returned to work after the PA agreed to their demands for a lowering of the price of gasoline – from 3.85 shekels to 3.75 shekels per liter.

Other ads suggest a powerful Palestinian monied class. One ad in Al Ayyam is direct: "Is there a police file on you? Is there an intelligence agency file on you? Have you been stopped from traveling abroad? Have you received bounced checks?" The ad promoted an

unidentified agency in the West Bank that claims connections with PA police and intelligence agencies.

The Unclear Role of PA Police

What does a PA security force dominated by Fatah do when its bosses become Hamas? So far, the answer has been not much.

The PA media reflect police and security forces that seek to justify the huge increase in personnel over the last year, financed by Western donors. Nearly every PA-owned or -controlled newspaper features news and photographs of the security forces in action. They are either reports of a successful PA capture of thieves or drug caches in the West Bank, or that of an exercise, where masked security forces – guns pointing in every which direction – capture a mock suspect.

The flurry of stories is not coincidental. The PA has been under heavy pressure by Western donors to significantly reduce its police and security forces, reported at about 60,000.

On March 15, Quartet representative James Wolfensohn testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the PA hired thousands of additional security personnel in 2005 for Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. The United States has been the largest provider in the more than \$1 billion in annual foreign aid to the Palestinians. About \$350 million a year has gone directly to the PA.

"The size of the [PA] wage bill has ballooned over the last eight months, largely due to substantial wage increases granted to both civilian and security personnel mid-year, and more recently due to significant increases in the number of PA security services personnel," Wolfensohn said. "To return to a path of fiscal sustainability, the PA must shed at least 30,000 security sector employees."



Al Quds. March 19, 2006

**The election choices for the Israeli electorate:
Transfer of Palestinians is the answer.**

That means that the four-member Quartet – comprised of the United States, European Union, United Nations and Russia – wants the PA to cut at least half of its current security force. During the Senate hearing, U.S. security coordinator Gen. Keith Dayton said PA security forces failed to fulfill their mandate to collect weapons, dismantle insurgency groups and conduct reform and restructuring. He said the failure was linked to infighting within the PA.

"There had been sporadic, localized, internal PA security cooperation," Dayton said. "However, such cooperation was not the norm and tended to evaporate quickly due to the PA's internal political crisis."

As a result, the PA has been reporting on new activities for its expanded police force. On March 15, Al Ayyam reported on the graduation of officers in Nablus in a course on how to deal with family violence, a persistent problem in Palestinian society.

However, the success of the PA police in maintaining order appears poorer than ever. PA police failed to stop attacks by Fatah and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

PA newspapers reported widely on Palestinian attacks on the British Council, British Consulate, European Union, the American International School and other Western facilities. There were photographs of Palestinians hurling rocks and firebombs against these facilities. There were no photographs of PA police preventing these attacks.



Al Quds. March 19, 2006

Trying to form a Palestinian national coalition.

PA Police Refuse to Protect Hamas VIPs

Kalkilya is one of many towns in the West Bank and Gaza Strip controlled by Hamas. Hamas has set the agenda of public life and has sought to ban music festivals, and regulate women's dress and education.

One area that has been beyond the reach of the Hamas municipalities has been the police. Controlled by Fatah, PA police have been unwilling to cooperate with Hamas mayors.

Kalkilya serves as an example. The police have demonstrated a refusal to follow directives of the Hamas municipality. Indeed, there is evidence that elements in the PA security forces have sought to intimidate the new Hamas leadership in the city.

The acting mayor of Kalkilya has charged police with failing to provide protection. The mayor said he was attacked as he left mosque on March 5. The attacker was believed to be a member of Force 17, the praetorian guard of the late PA Chairman Yasser Arafat, which

continues to be used by the current chairman, Mahmoud Abbas.

Hamas has charged that the police refused to provide required protection. The movement claims police also failed to arrest anybody in wake of the attack on the mayor. The charges have led to confrontations between the police and Hamas supporters in Kalkilya.

Police commanders in Kalkilya have responded, saying Hamas leaders would not be treated differently from any other Palestinian. The commanders said they were willing to follow up any leads in the attack on the mayor.



Al Hayat Al Jadida. March 19, 2006

**On right: Palestinian election propaganda.
On left: Israeli election propaganda.**

PA Message: Mothers, Send Your Children to Death

Hamas might not yet control the PA media. But its expected takeover of the Palestinian government appears to have ended any restrictions on the use of Palestinian radio and television in support of suicide strikes against Israel.

The messages until very recently were subtle and aimed toward both women and children. They often came in music clips, poetry readings or mosque sermons.

Sheik Yusef Jumaa Salameh had been cited as preaching this message over the last five years. Under U.S. pressure, Salameh lowered his profile after Mahmoud Abbas was elected

PA chairman in January 2005. But a year and a Hamas victory later, Salameh is back in action. His power is bolstered by the fact that he is also the religious affairs minister of the PA.



Al Quds. March 18, 2006

The Hamas government meets the Hamas legislature.

On March 10, PA television broadcast a sermon by Salameh aimed toward the mothers of suicide bombers. Salameh, regarded as one of the most popular preachers in the Gaza Strip, states what cannot be confused with anything other than the position of the Palestinian Authority.

In his sermon, Salameh told of the loss of husbands and sons in the war against Israel. He said the women who have sacrificed their children and husbands must not mourn them.

Instead, the role model of Palestinian women should be Al Khansaa, a female Arab poet who lived during the early era of Islam. Al Khansaa has been used as a model for Al Qaida to instruct women how they can contribute to jihad, or holy war. Indeed, Al Qaida named its first women's magazine after Al Khansaa, who was famous for her eulogies, particularly those written for her brother Sakhr, who died in a tribal feud. She later sent her four sons to fight jihad, all of whom were killed.

In his sermon, Salameh contrasted Al Khansaa's attitude toward the killing of her family before and after the advent of Islam. Before Islam, the PA minister said, Al Khansaa was devastated and recited poetry all day as a way to keep from killing herself.

After she became a Muslim, Salameh said, Al Khansaa was no longer sad. She sent her four sons to be killed in the battle of Al Qadissiya. "When the soldiers returned from battle in victory and told her that her four children had been martyred did she cry?" Salameh asked. "Did she recite poetry? Did she tear her clothes and expose her hair? No. She said: 'Praise God who honored me with their deaths. I pray to God for a reunion under his mercy.'"

This was not Salameh's first sermon regarding Al Khansaa. On March 11, 2005, the PA minister provided a similar sermon on the importance of the Islamic heroine. But in his latest sermon, Salameh added one important note, saying the victory of Islam would be in the next world, where the pleasures of virgins greet the martyrs in the war against Israel. "Brothers, victory lies there, not in this world," Salameh said.