

Col. (res.) Dr. Eran Lerman Joins the BESA Center



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Dr. Lerman:

False Palestinian narratives of victimhood and blatant lie-telling reveal just how far the Palestinian leadership is from accepting the premises necessary for true peace with Israel.

Col. (res.) Dr. Eran Lerman has joined the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies as a senior research associate. He has served for the past six years as deputy for foreign policy and international affairs at the National Security Council in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office. For 20 years prior to that, he held senior posts in IDF Military Intelligence, and also was Israel director of the American Jewish Committee. His Ph.D. is from the London School of Economics, under the guidance of Prof. Elie Kedourie.

In a series of hard-hitting articles penned for the BESA Center this fall, Dr. Lerman has focused on Palestinian rejectionism and extremism. He demonstrates that Palestinian wallowing in self-pity and rituals of bashing Israel, along with blatant lie-telling, make peace a distant reality.

"My purpose is not to demonize the Palestinians, but to treat them, for a change, as adults capable of coping with a culture of responsibility," Lerman says.

Lerman deconstructs the speech delivered by Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas at the UN General Assembly in October, and a "media guidance" document issued by top PLO negotiator Saeb Erekat in November.

Both documents purvey a false Palestinian narrative of victimhood, contain utter lies about Israel, and reject any compromise on key matters in dispute.

In the Abbas and Erekat telling of history, Palestinians deserve to be backed by coercive global intervention to impose on Israel "solutions that will implement Palestinian rights." There is no room in these narratives for the long litany of Palestinian past mistakes, misjudgments, and missed opportunities, nor for negotiation with Israel.

What needs to be done, say Lerman, particularly in disputation or in dialogue with those who are sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, is to make the point that endorsement of the false Palestinian narrative harms the Palestinians' own future.

"By tagging the Zionist project as 'colonialist' in nature (i.e., transient and perishable), those who do so help consign the Palestinian people, whom they purport to help, to an ideological, political and diplomatic cul-de-sac."

"Saeb Erekat's record of lies and dissimulations is legion, and he seems to be getting worse as he ages," adds Lerman. "He has been a central factor in the Palestinian Authority's abandonment of peace talks with Israel and its move to confrontation with Israel in international forums. His propaganda warps the truth and undermines peace efforts. History will yet record his abysmal diplomatic role in the many mistakes of the Palestinian national movement."

In advance of the fateful and fruitless meeting in the White House between

Mahmoud Abbas and President Obama in March 2014, Erekat authored a critical document, entitled "Study Number 15," which set the stage for the failure of the meeting in Washington.

Rejecting the "Kerry Framework" and any prospect of compromise with Israel's minimal expectations on security and mutual recognition, Erekat's document advocated the hostile course of action ultimately chosen by Abbas: A spate of unilateral accessions to international organizations and a bid for reconciliation with Hamas. "The results of those dreadful choices are in, and they did not serve the Palestinian people well," Lerman writes.

Erekat's "Key Points to Remember when Reporting on Occupied Palestine" (a document distributed in November to foreign media based in Israel) is filled with bravado, distortion and mendacities. The document rants about "Israel's occupation, colonization, Apartheid and culture of impunity," while making wholly untrue statements about history, about international law, and about Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.

Dr. Lerman also has written recently also on Russian ambitions, and Israeli opportunities, in the partition of Syria. He is now working on a project at the BESA Center studying strategic trends in the Mediterranean. He is also teaching at Shalem College.