



**THE BEGIN-SADAT CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**

# **The Myth of Palestinian Centrality**

Efraim Karsh



Mideast Security and Policy Studies No. 108

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**THE BEGIN-SADAT CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES  
BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY**

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<http://www.besacenter.org>  
ISSN 1565-9895  
July 2014

Cover picture: The State of Israel National Photo Collection/ Avi Ohayon

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This research was supported by the

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# The Myth of Palestinian Centrality

*Efraim Karsh*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The "Palestinian cause" has been at the forefront of discourse on the Middle East for nearly a century. It has long formed the primary common concern of pan-Arab solidarity and its most effective rallying cry, yet neither the Arab states nor Palestinian leaders have truly acted in the interest of the "liberation of Palestine."

While the "*Nakba*" may seemingly be of chief concern to the Arab states, Palestinian refugees have endured marginalization and abuse from their fellow Arab nations since 1948 in countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait. In the meantime, several opportunities to establish a Palestinian state and develop Palestinian civil society have been rejected by Palestinian leaders. Rather than seek to rectify the "Palestinian problem", their leaders have immersed their hapless constituents in disastrous and wholly unnecessary conflicts, while lining their pockets from the proceeds of this ongoing tragedy.

As such, any notion claiming a link between finding a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and attaining regional peace and stability is both false and misleading. The Palestinian leadership has continually shown no sign of actually wanting neither peace with Israel nor an independent state. Accepting reconciliation would transform the Palestinians in one fell swoop from the world's ultimate victim into an ordinary (and most likely failing) nation-state, thus terminating decades of unprecedented international indulgence. It would force Palestinian leaders into responsibility, accountability and the daunting task of state building. It is therefore of little surprise that whenever confronted with an international or Israeli offer of peace or statehood, Palestinian leaders will never approve.





# The Myth of Palestinian Centrality

*Efraim Karsh*

## INTRODUCTION

No cliché has dominated the discourse on Middle Eastern affairs more than the supposed "linkage" between the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the attainment of regional peace and stability.

According to this argument, since Arabs and Muslims are so passionate about Palestinian statehood, the Israeli-Palestinian stalemate feeds regional anger and despair, gives a larger rationale to terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and to the insurgency in Iraq, and obstructs the formation of a regional coalition that will help block Iran's quest for nuclear weapons. As President Obama asserted after his first meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu in May 2009: "[Making] peace with the Palestinians.... actually strengthens our hand in the international community in dealing with the potential Iranian threat."<sup>1</sup>

This study demonstrates that this argument is not only completely unfounded, but the inverse of the truth. For even though the "Palestine question" has long formed the main common denominator of pan-Arab solidarity and its most effective rallying cry, neither the Arab states nor Palestinian leaders have truly wanted the "liberation of Palestine."

The former have manipulated the "Palestine" cause to their own ends while blocking the Palestinians' road to statehood, perpetuating the refugee problem, and abusing their guest Palestinian populations. The latter have immersed their hapless constituents in disastrous and wholly unnecessary conflicts, while lining their pockets from the proceeds of this ongoing tragedy. As this study will show, for nearly a century Palestinian leaders have missed no opportunity to impede the development of Palestinian civil society and the attainment of Palestinian statehood.

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Nor have ordinary Arabs evinced any interest in the Palestinian cause. Quite the reverse in fact; from their arrival in the Arab states during the 1948 war the Palestinians were deeply resented and despised by the host societies and this sentiment has changed little over the years. Not once has the proverbial "Arab street" driven the Arab regimes to war with Israel; it was rather the Arab masses, indoctrinated for decades with vile anti-Jewish and anti-Israel hatred, who have been repeatedly goaded into violence by their unelected rulers so as to divert attention from their own marginalization and repression.

### **DENYING PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD: THE PAN-ARAB IDEAL**

It is the doctrine of pan-Arabism, postulating the existence of "a single nation bound by the common ties of language, religion and history... behind the facade of a multiplicity of sovereign states,"<sup>2</sup> that has transformed the "Palestine question" from a minor local dispute between Arabs and Jews into an international problem of the first order. This, however, has had nothing to do with the protection of Palestinian national rights for the simple reason that pan-Arabism does *not* consider the Palestinians a distinct people deserving statehood, but rather an integral part of a wider Arab framework stretching over substantial parts of the Middle East (e.g., "Greater Syria") or the entire region. In the words of the eminent Arab-American historian Philip Hitti:

*There is no such thing as Palestine in history, absolutely not.... [It is but] a very small tiny spot there on the southern part of the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, surrounded by a vast territory of Arab Muslim lands, beginning with Morocco, continuing through Tunis, Tripoli and Egypt, and going down to Arabia proper, then going up to Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq - one solid Arab-speaking bloc - 50,000,000 people.<sup>3</sup>*

It was indeed common knowledge at the time that the May 1948 pan-Arab invasion of the nascent state of Israel was more of a classic imperialist scramble for Palestinian territory, than a fight for Palestinian national rights. As the first secretary-general of the Arab League, Abdel Rahman

Azzam, admitted to a British reporter, Transjordan "was to swallow up the central hill regions of Palestine with access to the Mediterranean at Gaza. The Egyptians would get the Negev. [The] Galilee would go to Syria, except that the coastal part as far as Acre would be added to Lebanon."<sup>4</sup> Had Israel lost the war, its territory would have been divided among the invading Arab forces. The name Palestine would have vanished into the dustbin of history. By surviving the pan-Arab assault, Israel has paradoxically saved the Palestinian national movement from complete oblivion.

Ironically, this denial was shared by Palestinian Arab leaders during the British mandate era (1920-48) who, as products of the Ottoman imperial system where religion constituted the linchpin of the sociopolitical order of things, had no real grasp of the phenomenon of nationalism, hence had no interest in the evolution of a distinct Palestinian nation. Instead they subscribed to the pan-Arab dream of a unified "Arab nation" (of which "Palestine" was but a tiny fragment) or the associated ideology of Greater Syria (Suriya al-Kubra), stressing the territorial and historical indivisibility of most of the Fertile Crescent.

As early as October 1919, Musa Kazim Husseini, a former Ottoman official, elected Jerusalem mayor under the British, told a Zionist acquaintance that "we demand no separation from Syria."<sup>5</sup> Six months later, in April 1920, his peers instigated the first anti-Jewish pogrom in Jerusalem. This was not in the name of Palestine's independence, but under the demand for its incorporation into the (short-lived) Syrian kingdom, headed by Faisal ibn Hussein of Mecca, the celebrated hero of the "Great Arab Revolt" against the Ottoman Empire and the effective leader of the nascent pan-Arab movement. Four years later, in a special report to the League of Nations, the Arab Executive Committee (AEC), the umbrella organization of the Palestinian Arabs, still referred to Palestine as the unlawfully severed southern part of "the one country of Syria, with its one population of the same language, origin, customs, and religious beliefs, and its natural boundaries."<sup>6</sup> And in June 1926, the league's permanent mandates commission was informed of an Arab complaint that "it was not in conformity with Article 22 of the Mandate to print the initials and even the words 'Eretz Israel' after the name 'Palestine', while refusing the Arabs the title 'Suriya al-Janubiyya' ('Southern Syria')."<sup>7</sup>

In July 1937, the Arab Higher Committee (AHC), the AEC's successor, justified its rejection of the Peel Commission's recommendation for the partition of Palestine on the grounds that "this country does not belong only to [the] Palestine Arabs but to the whole Arab and Muslim Worlds."<sup>8</sup> As late as August 1947, three months before the passing of the U.N. resolution partitioning Mandate Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, the AHC's mouthpiece, al-Wahda, advocated the incorporation of Palestine (and Transjordan) into "Greater Syria."<sup>9</sup>

Jerusalem Mufti, Hajj Amin Husseini, leader of the Palestinian Arabs during this period, never acted as a local patriot seeking national self-determination, but rather as an aspiring pan-Arab regional advocate. An early admirer of the "Greater Syrian" ideal, he co-edited the Jerusalem-based paper *Suria al-Janubiyya* (Southern Syria), as Palestine was named by pan-Arabists, and presided over the city's Arab Club, which advocated Palestine's annexation to Syria. He cast his sights much higher after fleeing the country in 1937 to avoid arrest for the instigation of nationwide violence. Presenting himself to Hitler and Mussolini as a spokesman of the entire "Arab Nation," Husseini argued that the "Palestine problem" necessitated an immediate solution not because of the national aspirations of the Palestinian Arabs, but because it constituted "an obstacle to the unity and independence of the Arab countries by pitting them directly against the Jews of the entire world, dangerous enemies, whose secret arms are money, corruption, and intrigue." His proposed solution, therefore, was not Palestinian statehood but "the independence of [unified] Palestine, Syria and Iraq" under his leadership. As he put it in one of his letters to Hitler, "[T]he Arab people, slandered, maltreated, and deceived by our common enemies, confidently expects that the result of your final victory will be their independence and complete liberation, as well as the creation of their unity, when they will be linked to your country by a treaty of friendship and cooperation."<sup>10</sup>

While the young generation of diaspora Palestinian activists in the 1950s who sought to avenge the 1948 "catastrophe" of the creation of Israel did not share the Mufti's grandiose ambitions, they were no less committed to the pan-Arab ideal. This was evidenced inter alia by the name of the first "resistance" group - the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM). The pan-Arab ideal was also evident in the diverse composition of the movement

comprising Palestinian (e.g., George Habash, Wadi Haddad) and Arab activists (notably Hani Hindi, scion of a respected Damascene family).<sup>11</sup>

Another prominent adherent to the pan-Arab ideal was Ahmad Shuqeiri, a Lebanon-born politician of mixed Egyptian, Hijazi, and Turkish descent who served as the Arab League's deputy secretary-general, as well as Syrian and Saudi delegate to the UN. On May 28, 1964 he became the founding chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), established that day by the Arab states at the initiative of Egyptian President, Gamal Abdel Nasser.

"Palestine is part and parcel in the Arab homeland," Shuqeiri told the Security Council on May 31, 1956";The Arab world is not prepared to surrender one single atom of their right to this sacred territory." Clarifying to which part of the "Arab homeland" this specific territory belonged, he added that Palestine "is nothing but southern Syria." In his account, "the Palestine area was linked to Syria from time immemorial" and "there was no question of separation" until the great powers brought this about by creating mandates under the League of Nations, with Britain controlling Palestine and France administering Syria.<sup>12</sup>

Against this backdrop, it is hardly surprising that the PLO's hallowed founding document, the Palestinian Charter, adopted upon its formation and revised four years later to reflect the organization's growing militancy, has little to say about the Palestinians themselves. Devoting about two-thirds of its thirty-three articles to the need to destroy Israel, it defines the Palestinians as "an integral part of the Arab nation", rather than a distinct nationality and vows allegiance to the ideal of pan-Arab unity - that is to Palestine's eventual assimilation into "the greater Arab homeland" - while seeking to harness this ideal to its short-term ends:

*The destiny of the Arab Nation and, indeed, Arab existence itself depend upon the destiny of the Palestinian cause. From this interdependence springs the Arab nation's pursuit of, and striving for, the liberation of Palestine. ... Arab unity and the liberation of Palestine are two complementary objectives, the attainment of either of which facilitates the attainment of the other. Thus, Arab unity leads to the liberation of Palestine, the liberation of*

*Palestine leads to Arab unity; and work toward the realization of one objective proceeds side by side with work toward the realization of the other.*<sup>13</sup>

Even the November 1988 "declaration of independence" by the Palestine National Council, the PLO's "parliament," while obviously endorsing the idea of Palestinian statehood (in language that massively plagiarized Israel's proclamation of independence),<sup>14</sup> vows allegiance to the pan-Arab ideal by describing the "State of Palestine" as "an integral part of the Arab nation, of its heritage and civilization and of its present endeavor for the achievement of the goals of liberation, development, democracy and unity."<sup>15</sup>

Azmi Bishara, founding leader of the nationalist Balad Party (with seats in the Israeli parliament since 1999), highlighted this in a statement he made in 2002: "My Palestinian identity never precedes my Arab identity.... I don't think there is a Palestinian nation, there is [only] an Arab nation.... Palestine until the end of the nineteenth century was the southern part of Greater Syria" and the idea of a distinct Palestinian nation is a "colonialist invention" that happens to coincide with the consistent Israeli attempt, by both left- and rightwing parties, to ignore the reality of pan-Arab nationalism.<sup>16</sup> He made this statement eight years after the PLO-dominated Palestinian Authority (PA) was established in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to lay the groundwork for Palestinian statehood in these territories.

While such plain speaking is hardly commonplace in PLO/PA current rhetoric, these words help explain the group's continued subscription to the pan-Arab ideal. This is also evidenced by the PLO/PA's deliberate failure to revise the Palestinian Charter so as to acknowledge the distinctness of Palestinian nationalism; the frequent articulation of pan-Arab themes by its tightly controlled media; its constitutional definition of the prospective state of Palestine as "part of the Arab homeland" committed to the "goal of Arab unity";<sup>17</sup> and the steady reiteration of the claim that the Palestinians are not fighting for their own corner but are rather the Arab nation's "front line of defense."<sup>18</sup> No less important, the PLO continues to subordinate its policies, and by extension Palestinian self-interest, to pan-Arab approval, and vice

versa, as illustrated most recently by Mahmud Abbas's successful rallying of the Arab League behind his "absolute and decisive rejection to recognizing Israel as a Jewish state."<sup>19</sup> Upholding this position - sixty six years after the creation of a Jewish state by an internationally recognized act of self-determination - effectively amounts to rejection of Palestinian statehood for the simple reason that Israel would not self-destruct while the Palestinians and the Arab state are in no position to bring this about.

### **DENYING PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD: ISLAMIST IMPERIAL DREAMS**

If subscription to the pan-Arab dream has made the Palestinian cause captive to inter-Arab machinations, stirring unrealistic hopes and expectations in Palestinian political circles, and inciting widespread and horrifically destructive violence that has made the likelihood of Palestinian statehood ever more remote, adherence to Islamist ideals has subordinated Palestinian identity to the far wider ambition of Islamic world domination.

Consider the Islamic Resistance Movement, better known by its Arabic acronym Hamas. Since making its debut in the 1987-92 intifada, Hamas has established itself as the foremost political and military Palestinian force, winning a landslide victory in the 2006 general elections and violently evicting the PLO from Gaza the following year. Far from being an ordinary liberation movement in search of national self-determination, Hamas has subordinated its aim of bringing about the destruction of Israel and the creation of a Palestinian state on its ruins to the wider goal of establishing Allah's universal empire. In doing so, it has followed in the footsteps of its Egyptian parent organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, which viewed its violent opposition to Zionism from the 1930s and 1940s as an integral part of the Manichean struggle for the creation of a worldwide caliphate, rather than as a defense of the Palestinian Arabs' national rights. In the words of the senior Hamas leader Mahmud Zahar, "Islamic and traditional views reject the notion of establishing an independent Palestinian state ... In the past, there was no



independent Palestinian state. ... [Hence] our main goal is to establish a great Islamic state, be it pan-Arabic or pan-Islamic."<sup>20</sup> He further explained: "Our position stems from our religious convictions ... This is a holy land. It is not the property of the Palestinians or the Arabs. This land is the property of all Muslims in all parts of the world."<sup>21</sup>

Echoing standard Muslim Brotherhood precepts, Hamas's covenant adopted in 1988 presents the organization as designed not merely to "liberate Palestine from Zionist occupation" but to pursue the far loftier goals of spreading Islam's holy message and defending the weak and oppressed throughout the world: "As the Islamic Resistance Movement paves its way, it will back the oppressed and support the wronged [throughout the world] in all its might. It will spare no effort to bring about justice and defeat injustice, in word and deed, in this place and everywhere it can reach and have influence therein."<sup>22</sup> As the movement's slogan puts it: "Allah is [Hamas's] target, the Prophet is its model, the Koran its constitution: Jihad is its path, and death for the sake of Allah is the loftiest of its wishes."<sup>23</sup>

In other words, the "question of Palestine" is neither an ordinary territorial dispute between two national movements, nor a struggle by an indigenous population against a foreign occupier. It is an integral part of Islam's millenarian jihad to expand its domain and prevent the fall of any of its parts to the infidels: "[T]he land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf [Islamic religious endowment] consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgment Day... The day that enemies usurp part of Moslem land, Jihad becomes the individual duty of every Moslem."<sup>24</sup>

In this respect, there is no difference between Palestine and other parts of the world conquered by the forces of Islam throughout history. To this very day, for example, Arabs and many Muslims unabashedly pine for the restoration of Muslim Spain and look upon their expulsion from that country in 1492 as a grave historical injustice. Indeed, even countries that have never been under Islamic imperial rule have become legitimate targets of Islamist fervor. Since the late 1980s, various Islamist movements have looked upon the growing number of French Muslims as a sign that France, too, has become a potential part of the House of Islam. Their British counterparts have followed suit. "We will remodel

this country in an Islamic image," the London-based preacher Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad, told an attentive audience less than two months after 9/11. "We will replace the Bible with the Qur'an."<sup>25</sup>

Khaled Mash'al, head of Hamas's political bureau and the organization's effective leader, echoed this sentiment as a tidal wave of Muslim violence swept across the world in response to satirical depictions of the prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper. In February 2006 he declared:

*By Allah, you will be defeated... Hurry up and apologize to our nation, because if you do not, you will regret it. This is because our nation is progressing and is victorious... Tomorrow, our nation will sit on the throne of the world. This is not a figment of the imagination but a fact. Tomorrow we will lead the world, Allah willing. Apologize today, before remorse will do you no good.*<sup>26</sup>

Nor is this supremacist worldview limited to Hamas. Since its rise in the early seventh century, Islam has constituted the linchpin of Middle Eastern politics, and its hold on Palestinian society is far stronger than is commonly recognized. Contrary to the received wisdom in the West, the PLO is hardly a secular organization. Arafat was a devout Muslim, associated in his early days with the Muslim Brotherhood, as were other founding fathers of Fatah, the PLO's foremost constituent organization. And while the new generation of Fatah leaders in the territories may be less religious, they, nevertheless, have a draft constitution for a prospective Palestinian state stipulating that "Islam is the official religion in Palestine" and Shari'a is "a main source for legislation."<sup>27</sup>

They have, moreover, utilized the immense inflammatory potential of Islam to discredit the two-state solution - and by implication the prospect of Palestinian statehood - to express their grandiose supremacist delusions. In the words of the official PA television, "Where did Great Britain disappear? By Allah's will, He will get rid of the US like he got rid of them. We [Muslims] have ruled the world; a day will come by Allah, and we shall rule the world [again]. The day will come, and we shall rule America, the day will come, and we shall rule Britain. We shall rule the entire world."<sup>28</sup>

Within these grand overlapping schemes of pan-Arab regional unity and Islamic world domination, the notion of Palestinian statehood is but a single transient element whose supposed centrality looms far greater in Western than in Islamic and Arab eyes.

## **MANIPULATING THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE**

Having helped drive the Palestinians to national ruin, the Arab states continued to manipulate the Palestinian national cause to their own ends. Neither Egypt nor Jordan allowed Palestinian self-determination in the parts of Palestine they conquered during the 1948 war. Upon occupying the biblical lands of Judea and Samaria, King Abdullah moved to erase all traces of corporate Palestinian Arab identity. On April 4, 1950, the territory was formally annexed to Jordan to be subsequently known as the "West Bank" of the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan. Its residents became Jordanian citizens, and they were increasingly integrated into the kingdom's economic, political, and social structures. And while Egypt showed no desire to annex the occupied Gaza Strip, this did not imply support of Palestinian nationalism or of any sort of collective political awareness among the Palestinians. The refugees were kept under oppressive military rule, were denied Egyptian citizenship, and were subjected to severe restrictions on travel. "The Palestinians are useful to the Arab states as they are," President Gamal Abdel Nasser candidly responded to an enquiring Western reporter. "We will always see that they do not become too powerful. Can you imagine yet another nation on the shores of the eastern Mediterranean!"<sup>29</sup> Had these territories not come under Israel's control during the June 1967 war, their populations would have lost whatever vestiges of Palestinian identity they retained since 1948. For the second time in two decades, Israel unwittingly salvaged the Palestinian national cause.

Nor was Syria more sympathetic to the idea of Palestinian statehood. During his brief presidency (April-August 1949), Husni Zaim proposed the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in Syria in return for financial and political gain. Meanwhile, Hafez Assad (1970-2000), who as late as September 1974 described Palestine as "a basic part of southern

Syria,<sup>30</sup> was a persistent obstacle to Palestinian self-determination. He pledged allegiance to any solution amenable to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) - appointed by the Arab League in October 1974 as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people" - so long as it did not deviate from the Syrian line advocating Israel's destruction. Yet when in November 1988, the PLO pretended to accept the November 1947 partition resolution (and by implication to recognize Israel's existence) so as to end its ostracism by the United States,<sup>31</sup> Syria immediately opposed the move. The PLO then took this pretense a step further by signing the September 1993 Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-government Arrangements (DOP) with Israel. This provided for Palestinian self-rule in the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip for a transitional period of up to five years, during which Israel and the Palestinians would negotiate a permanent peace settlement. But the Syrian regime strongly condemned the declaration while the Damascus-based Palestinian terrorist, Ahmad Jibril, threatened PLO chairman Yasser Arafat with death.

A no less instrumental approach was exhibited by Saddam Hussein, another self-styled pan-Arab champion whose professed allegiance to the Palestinian cause was matched by a long history of treating that cause with indifference, if not outright hostility. Saddam stood firmly against Iraqi intervention to aid the Palestinians in Jordan during the "Black September" of 1970 and subsequently sought to exclude Palestinians from coming to work in Iraq's booming, oil-rich economy. Though a vociferous critic of Egypt's Anwar Sadat for reaching a separate peace agreement with Israel in 1979, Saddam quickly reconsidered when he needed Egyptian military aid in his war against Iran (1980-88), toiling tirelessly for Cairo's readmission into the Arab fold. Nor was Saddam deterred from collaborating with Israel against Syrian interests in Lebanon (to punish Assad for his support of Tehran in its war against Baghdad), or from seeking sophisticated Israeli military equipment. In 1984, at a time of pressure due to the war with Iran, he went so far as to voice public support for peace negotiations with the Jewish state, emphasizing that "no Arab leader looks forward to the destruction of Israel" and that any solution to the conflict would require "the existence of a secure state for the Israelis."<sup>32</sup>

This support, to be sure, did not prevent Saddam from attempting to link his August 1990 invasion of Kuwait to the Palestine problem. During the months of negotiations with the Kuwaitis before the invasion, Saddam made no mention of Palestine. Once confronted with a firm international response, he immediately opted to "Zionize" the crisis by portraying his predatory move as the first step toward "the liberation of Jerusalem." But this pretense made no impression whatsoever on most Arab states, which dismissed the spurious link as the ploy it obviously was and fought alongside the West to liberate Kuwait.

Nor did the anti-Iraq coalition collapse when Saddam, in a desperate bid to widen the conflict, fired thirty-nine Scud missiles at Israel - a move cheered by the Palestinians and by demonstrators in marginal states such as Yemen but otherwise greeted with conspicuous calm by the proverbially restive "Arab street." Not a single Arab regime was swept from power following its participation in the war, with the war even producing an ad hoc tacit alliance between Israel and the Arab members of the anti-Saddam coalition: Israel kept the lowest possible profile, eschewing retaliation for Iraq's missile attacks while the latter highlighted the hollowness of Saddam's pan-Arab pretenses by sustaining the war operations against Baghdad.<sup>33</sup> If anything, it was the Palestinians who paid a heavy price for their entanglement in the conflict. The PLO's endorsement of the Iraqi occupation led to its ostracism by the Arab world and the postwar expulsion of most of the 400,000 Palestinians who had been living and working in Kuwait, a move that created a major humanitarian crisis and denied the PLO the substantial income received from the earnings of those workers. With the additional loss of Gulf financial contributions and investments in Kuwaiti banks, the total amount forfeited by the PLO as a direct result of the 1990-91 Gulf conflict exceeded \$10 billion, bringing the organization to the verge of bankruptcy.<sup>34</sup> So much for pan-Arab solidarity with "the sole representative of the Palestinian people."

## UNWANTED GUESTS

The political manipulation of the Palestinian cause was mirrored by the dismal treatment of the Palestinian refugees based in Arab states

since the 1948 war. Far from being welcomed, the new arrivals were seen by their host societies as an unpatriotic and cowardly lot who had shamefully abdicated their national duty while expecting others to fight on their behalf. In Syria, Lebanon, and Transjordan there were repeated calls for their return to Palestine, or at the very least of the young men of military age, many of whom had arrived on the pretext of volunteering for the pan-Arab force to be assembled to fight in Palestine. The Lebanese government refused entry visas to Palestinian males between eighteen and fifty and ordered all "healthy and fit men" who had already entered the country to register officially or be considered illegal aliens and face the full weight of the law. The Syrian government took an even more stringent approach, banning from its territory all Palestinian males between sixteen and fifty. When these restrictions drove Palestinians to Egypt, they were often received with disdain. "Why should we go to Palestine to fight while Palestinian Arab fighters are deserting the cause by flight to Egypt?" complained Alexandria residents upon the arrival of refugee ships from Haifa in late April 1948. In Cairo, a large number of demonstrators marched to the Arab League's headquarters to lodge a petition demanding that "every able-bodied Palestinian capable of carrying arms should be forbidden to stay abroad." By October 1948 the Syrian and Lebanese governments were reportedly "following a policy of concentrating refugees in their territories in as small an area as possible, in order to be able to get rid of them quickly as soon as U.N.O [United Nations Organization] was made responsible. They were totally convinced that U.N.O. ought to take this responsibility and if it did not - it was quite possible that the Arab Governments would simply allow the refugees to die."<sup>35</sup>

This attitude was entrenched and institutionalized over time. Yet with their desire to offload their Palestinian guests, matched by the lingering dream of Israel's destruction, the Arab states as well as the Palestinian leadership rejected the U.N. General Assembly resolution 194 of December 11, 1948, which conditioned repatriation of the attainment of comprehensive peace and partial refugee resettlement in the host Arab states.<sup>36</sup> The resolution's subsequent transformation into the cornerstone of an utterly spurious claim to a "right of return" has only served to perpetuate the refugee problem as the Arab states used this "right" as a pretext to prevent Palestinian assimilation into their societies in anticipation of their eventual return to their homeland.

Nowhere has this state of affairs been more starkly illustrated than in Lebanon, the most liberal Arab state up until the mid-1970s. Fearful lest the burgeoning and increasingly radicalized Palestinian population (which grew from 100,000 in 1948 to about 500,000 in 2012)<sup>37</sup> undermine the country's fragile confessional edifice, the authorities barred their incorporation into Lebanon's social, political, and economic structures. As a result, the vast majority of Palestinians have remained stateless refugees with more than half living in abject poverty in twelve squalid and overcrowded camps (another five camps were destroyed during the Lebanese civil war of 1975-90), administered by the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), created in 1949 for the exclusive relief of Palestinian Arab refugees.<sup>38</sup>

Camp residents or not, Lebanese Palestinians have been excluded from numerous walks of life and spheres of activity due to their alien status; and unlike other foreign residents who can evade this discrimination by virtue of their countries' reciprocity treaties with Lebanon, the stateless Palestinians can claim no such rights and have consequently been singled out for distinct mistreatment including severe restrictions on travel, property ownership, and ability to work. For decades, they were barred by government decree from more than seventy professions, from doorkeepers, to mechanics, to file clerks, to schoolteachers, to personnel managers; and while the ministry of labor lifted the ban on fifty professions in June 2005, the actual application of this measure has been haphazard at best. Likewise, only 2 percent of Palestinians took advantage of the August 2010 legislation aimed at improving their access to the official labor market and the social security benefit system, with Lebanese law still barring Palestinians from at least twenty-five professions requiring syndicated membership (such as law, medicine, and engineering) and discriminating against their work and social conditions (e.g., Palestinians are underpaid in comparison to Lebanese workers for performing the same jobs and overpay for their pensions). Palestinian refugees are still prevented from registering property in accordance with a discriminatory 2001 law.<sup>39</sup>

While Lebanon may offer the starkest example of abuse, nowhere in the Arab world have the Palestinians been treated like "brothers" - by both the authorities and the population at large. In accordance with Arab League resolutions, all Arab states reject naturalization and/or resettlement as



solutions to the refugee problem. As a matter of principle, they all refuse to contribute to UNRWA's budget or to assume responsibility for any of its functions. All restrict the freedom of movement of their Palestinian residents as well as their property rights and access to such government services as health, education, and social benefits.<sup>40</sup> When in 2004 Saudi Arabia revised its naturalization law allowing foreigners who had resided in its territory for ten years to apply for citizenship, the estimated 500,000 Palestinians living and working in the kingdom were conspicuously excluded. The pretext: the Arab League's stipulation that Palestinians living in Arab countries be denied citizenship to avoid dissolution of their identity and protect their "right to return" to their homeland.<sup>41</sup>

Even in Jordan, where most Palestinians have been naturalized and incorporated into the country's fabric, they remain largely marginalized and discriminated against. Between 1949 and 1967, when Jordan was in control of the West Bank, some 250,000-500,000 Palestinians moved across to the East Bank or migrated abroad in search of a better life. But even East Bank Palestinians have been subjected to systematic discrimination. They pay much heavier taxes than their Bedouin compatriots; they receive close to zero state benefits; they are almost completely shut out of government jobs, and they have very little, if any, political representation: Not one of Jordan's twelve governorships is headed by a Palestinian, and the number of Palestinian parliamentarians is disproportionately low.<sup>42</sup>

The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that more than two million Palestinians, most of whom have full Jordanian citizenship, are registered as UNRWA refugees with some 370,000 living in ten recognized camps throughout the country.<sup>43</sup> This has in turn resulted in the perception of the kingdom's entire Palestinian population as refugees who would eventually depart to implement their "right of return."<sup>44</sup> This outlook can be traced to the founding of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, which quickly challenged Jordan as the focus of Palestinian national identity. The situation came to a head in the autumn of 1970 with the organization's attempt to overthrow the Hashemite dynasty. This forced King Hussein to drive the PLO out of the country, gaining traction in July 1988 when hundreds of thousands of West Bankers lost their Jordanian citizenship as a result of the king's severance of "administrative and legal ties" with the territory. After the signing of the DOP and the July 1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, the process shifted to the East



Bank where thousands of Palestinians were stripped of their Jordanian citizenship.<sup>45</sup> "For East Bankers, the right of return is often held up as the panacea which will recreate Jordan's Bedouin or Hashemite identity," read a 2008 confidential memo by the U.S. ambassador to Amman:

*At their most benign, our East Banker contacts tend to count on the right of return as a solution to Jordan's social, political, and economic woes. But underlying many conversations with East Bankers is the theory that once the Palestinians leave, "real" Jordanians can have their country back ... In fact, many of our East Banker contacts do seem more excited about the return [read: departure] of Palestinian refugees than the Palestinians themselves.<sup>46</sup>*

## **BROTHERLY MASSACRES**

Not only have the host Arab states marginalized and abused their Palestinian guests, but they have not shrunk from massacring them on a grand scale whenever this suited their needs. When in 1970 his throne was endangered by the Palestinian guerilla organizations, the affable and thoroughly Westernized King Hussein slaughtered thousands of Palestinians during a single month, now known as "Black September." Fearing certain death, scores of Palestinian fighters fled their Jordanian "brothers" to surrender themselves to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Civilian casualties were exorbitant with estimates ranging from three thousand to fifteen thousand dead - higher than the Palestinian death toll in the 1948 war.<sup>47</sup>

In the summer of 1976, Lebanese Christian militias, backed by the Syrian army, massacred some 3,500 Palestinians, mostly civilians, in the Beirut refugee camp of Tel Zaatar. Six years later, these very militias slaughtered hundreds of Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, this time under the IDF's watchful eye. None of the Arab states came to the Palestinians' rescue.

When in 1983 the PLO tried to reestablish its military presence in Lebanon, having been driven out the previous year by Israel, it was unceremoniously expelled by the Syrian government, which went on to

instigate an internecine war among the Palestinian factions in Lebanon that raged for years and cost an untold number of lives. So much so that Salah Khalaf (aka Abu Iyad), the number two man in the PLO, accused Damascus of committing worse crimes against the Palestinian people than "those of the Israeli enemy."<sup>48</sup>

In the summer of 2007, the Lebanese army killed hundreds of Palestinians, including many civilians, in the north Lebanese refugee camp of Nahr al-Bared, inflicting widespread environmental damage and driving some 30,000 persons to seek refuge in a nearby camp.<sup>49</sup>

Thousands of Palestinians have been killed in the ongoing Syrian civil war, and tens of thousands have fled the country with refugee camps subjected to military attacks and prolonged sieges that reduced their inhabitants to destitution and starvation. The large Yarmuk camp south of Damascus, once home to some 250,000 Palestinians, including 150,000 officially registered refugees, is now "nothing but ruins, and houses only around 18,000 residents who couldn't escape to Lebanon, Jordan, or elsewhere." "We live in a big prison," a local resident lamented. "But at least, in a prison, you have food. Here, there's nothing. We are slowly dying."<sup>50</sup>

## **BROTHERLY NAKBA**

Much has been made of the Palestinian exodus of 1948, though far more Palestinians were actually driven from their homes by their own leaders and/or by Arab armed forces than by Jewish/Israeli forces.<sup>51</sup> Nowadays, the collapse and dispersal of Palestinian society has come to be known in Arab discourse as al-Nakba, "the catastrophe," but it was not known as this at the time. To the contrary, as a senior British official discovered to his surprise during a fact-finding mission to Gaza in June 1949, "while [the refugees] express no bitterness against the Jews (or for that matter against the Americans or ourselves) they speak with the utmost bitterness of the Egyptians and other Arab states. 'We know who our enemies are,' they will say, and they are referring to their Arab brothers who, they declare, persuaded them unnecessarily to leave their homes.... I even heard it said that many of the refugees would give a welcome to the Israelis if they were to come in and take the district over."<sup>52</sup>

Given this attitude, it is hardly surprising that during their decades of dispersal the Palestinians have been subjected to similarly traumatic ordeals at the hands of their Arab brothers. As early as the 1950s, the Arab Gulf states expelled striking Palestinian workers, while the Black September events led to the expulsion of some 20,000 Palestinians from Jordan and the demolition of their camps.<sup>53</sup> And this tragedy pales in comparison with the eviction of most of Kuwait's 400,000 Palestinians after the 1991 Gulf War. "What Kuwait did to the Palestinian people is worse than what has been done by Israel to Palestinians in the occupied territories," Arafat lamented, as if it were not the PLO's endorsement of Iraq's brutal occupation (August 1990-February 1991) that triggered this deadly retribution.<sup>54</sup>

It mattered not that this community had nothing to do with the PLO's reckless move. Within months of the country's liberation, only 50,000-80,000 Palestinians remained in the emirate, and by the end of the year, the number had dwindled to some 30,000. Most of these were holders of Egyptian travel documents, originally from Gaza; they were unable to obtain visas to anywhere in the world, including Egypt, the governing power in their homeland at the time when they left for the gulf. By contrast, as noted in *The Palestine Yearbook of International Law*, "Israel generally placed no obstacles on the post-war return to the territories of Palestinian families from the West Bank," repatriating some 30,000 West Bankers and 7,000 Gazans with valid Israeli identity cards who had been living and working in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.<sup>55</sup>

No sooner had the dust settled on the Kuwait exodus, the Palestinians experienced yet another expulsion, this time from Libya. In a speech on September 1, 1995, as Israel was about to surrender control of the Palestinian populated areas in the West Bank to Arafat's Palestinian Authority (control of the Gaza population had been surrendered the previous year), Muammar Qaddafi announced his intention to expel all Palestinians living and working in the country, urging the Arab states to follow his lead so as to expose the hollowness of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. He argued,

*Since the Palestinian leaders claim they have now got a homeland and a passport, let the 30,000 Palestinians in Libya go back to their homeland, and let's see if the Israelis would permit them to return. That's how the world will find out that the peace it's been advocating is no more than treachery and a conspiracy.*<sup>56</sup>

While no Arab state took up Qaddafi's advice and some implored him to rescind his decision, none opened their doors to the deportees. Lebanon denied entry to several thousand arrivals without Lebanese travel documents and banned maritime transport from Libya to preempt the possible flow of deportees while Egypt allowed Palestinians with Israeli permits for entry to Gaza or the West Bank to cross its territory - under escort - to the Palestinian-ruled areas, leaving thousands of hapless refugees stranded in the Egyptian desert for months. Holders of residence permits elsewhere were gradually able to move out; the rest were eventually allowed to remain in Libya when Qaddafi rescinded his decision in early 1997.<sup>57</sup>

Last but not least, the toppling of Saddam Hussein in April 2003 unleashed a tidal wave of violence and terror against Iraq's 34,000-strong Palestinian community, driving some 21,000 people to flee the country in fear for their lives. Yet far from protecting their long time "guests," the internationally-propped Iraqi government was implicated in the arbitrary detention, torture, killing, and disappearance of Palestinians while none of the neighboring Arab states (with rare, temporary exceptions) opened their doors to fleeing Iraqi Palestinians. "It's hard to understand why Syria has provided refuge to nearly a million Iraqi refugees but is shutting the door on hundreds of Palestinians also fleeing Iraq," commented a leading human rights watchdog. "The Syrian government's mistreatment of these Palestinian refugees contrasts sharply with its declarations of solidarity with the Palestinian people."<sup>58</sup> A few years later the same watchdog was voicing the same grievance vis-à-vis the Lebanese government for preventing Palestinian refugees fleeing the Syrian civil war from entering its territory.<sup>59</sup>

## **No Love Lost**

In fairness to the Arab states, their animosity and distrust were more than reciprocated by the Palestinians. As early as the 1948 war, the pan-Arab volunteer force that entered Palestine to fight the Jews found itself at loggerheads with the community it was supposed to defend. Denunciations and violent clashes were common with the local

population often refusing to provide the Arab Liberation Army, as this force was ambitiously named, with the basic necessities for daily upkeep and military operations. For their part, Arab army personnel abused their Palestinian hosts of whom they were openly contemptuous.

This mutual animosity was greatly exacerbated in subsequent decades by the recklessness of the Palestinian leadership, headed from the mid-1960s to November 2004 by Arafat, which turned on Arab host societies whenever given the opportunity. As noted above, it was the PLO's subversive activities against the Jordanian regime that set in train the chain of events culminating in the "Black September" massacres. Likewise, the PLO's abuse of its growing power base in Lebanon, where it established itself after its expulsion from Jordan, and its meddling in that country's internal politics, helped trigger the Lebanese civil war that raged for nearly two decades and cost hundreds of thousands of lives.

"I remember literally screaming at him in my own house," the Palestinian academic Walid Khalidi, then based in Beirut, said, recalling his desperate attempt to dissuade Arafat from taking sides in the nascent civil war. "I told him that we as Palestinians had no business calling for the ostracism of the Phalangists, and that it would drive them all the way into the hands of the Israelis."<sup>60</sup> This point was not lost on ordinary Palestinians, who often blamed Arafat for their Lebanese misfortunes. When in summer 1976 the PLO chairman visited survivors of the Tel Zaatar massacre, he was treated to a barrage of rotten vegetables and chants of "traitor" by the embittered refugees, who accused him of provoking the camp's blood-drenched fall.<sup>61</sup>

This political meddling was accompanied by wanton violence wreaked by the PLO on its host society. In a repeat of their Jordanian lawlessness, Palestinian guerrillas turned the vibrant and thriving Lebanese state, whose capital of Beirut was acclaimed as the "Paris of the Middle East," into a hotbed of violence and anarchy. Several districts of Beirut and the refugee camps came under exclusive Palestinian control, so much so that they became generally known as the Fakhani Republic, after the Beirut district in which Arafat had set up his headquarters. Substantial parts of southern

Lebanon or "Fatahland" were also under Palestinian control. In flagrant violation of Lebanese sovereignty, the PLO set up roadblocks, took over buildings and drove out local residents, operated extortion rackets, protected criminals fleeing from Lebanese justice, and committed countless atrocities against Lebanese civilians. Most notable was the January 1976 massacre of hundreds of residents of the Christian town of Damour, south of Beirut, and the expulsion of the remaining population.<sup>62</sup>

### **PALESTINIAN SELF-BETRAYAL**

As if the Palestinians' longtime manipulation and abuse by their supposed Arab "brothers" has not been enough, their own leaders have never had a real stake in leading them to statehood. This is both because the hopes and wishes of their constituents did not figure in their calculations, and because they have vastly profited from having their hapless constituents run around in circles for nearly a century, while milking world sympathy for the plight they brought about themselves in the first place.

In mandatory Palestine, ordinary Arabs were persecuted and murdered by their alleged betters for the crime of "selling Palestine" to the Jews. Meanwhile, these same betters were enriching themselves with impunity. The staunch pan-Arabist Awni Abdel Hadi, who vowed to fight "until Palestine is either placed under a free Arab government or becomes a graveyard for all the Jews in the country,"<sup>63</sup> facilitated the transfer of 7,500 acres to the Zionist movement. Some of his relatives, all respected political and religious figures, went a step further by selling actual plots of land. Many prominent leaders including Muin Madi, Alfred Rock, and As'ad Shuqeiri (father of Ahmad, PLO founder) also sold land. Musa Alami, who bragged to David Ben-Gurion that "he would prefer the land to remain poor and desolate even for another hundred years" if the alternative was its rapid development in collaboration with the Zionists,<sup>64</sup> made a handsome profit by selling 225 acres to the Jews. So, too, did numerous members of the Husseini family, the foremost Palestinian Arab clan during the mandate period, including Musa Kazim (father of Abdel Qader Husseini, the famous guerrilla leader) and Muhammad Tahir, Hajj Amin's father.<sup>65</sup>

Hajj Amin himself had few qualms about profiting from the Jewish national revival which he sought to eradicate whenever this suited his needs. Prior to his appointment as the Jerusalem mufti, he pleaded with Jewish leaders to lobby on his behalf with (the Jewish) Herbert Samuel, the first British high commissioner for Palestine, and in 1927, he asked Gad Frumkin, the only Jewish Supreme Court justice during the mandatory era, to influence Jerusalem's Jewish community to back the Husseini candidate in the mayoral elections. He likewise employed a Jewish architect to build a luxury hotel for the Supreme Muslim Council, which he headed, while ordering his constituents to boycott Jewish labor and products.<sup>66</sup> Needless to say, the mufti never sought to apply to his own father his religious authorization (fatwa) to kill those who sold land to Jews.

"Arab nationalist feelings were never allowed to harm the interests of the Husseini family," wrote the prominent Jerusalem lawyer and Zionist activist Bernard (Dov) Joseph, a future minister of justice in the Israeli government.

*One of [the mufti's] kinsmen, Jamil Husseini, had once engaged my services in land litigation which went as high as the Privy Council in London ... For years, one of the Mufti's close relations prospered mightily by forcing Arab small-holders to sell land, at niggardly prices, which he then resold to Jews at a handsome profit.<sup>67</sup>*

This institutionalized racketeering skyrocketed to new heights under the PLO. Just as the Palestinian leadership during the mandate had no qualms about inciting its constituents against Zionism and Jews while lining its own pockets from the fruits of Jewish development and land purchases, so too have the cynical and self-seeking PLO "revolutionaries". They have used the billions of dollars donated by the Arab oil states and the international community to lead a luxurious lifestyle in sumptuous hotels and villas, globe-trotting in grand style, acquiring properties, and making financial investments worldwide - while millions of ordinary Palestinians scrambled for a livelihood.

This process reached its peak following the September 1993 signing of the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-government

Arrangements (DOP, or Oslo I) and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. For all his rhetoric about Palestinian independence, Arafat had never been as interested in the attainment of statehood as in the violence attending its pursuit. In the late 1970s, he told his close friend and collaborator, the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, that the Palestinians lacked the tradition, unity, and discipline to become a formal state, and that a Palestinian state would be a failure from the first day.<sup>68</sup> Once given control of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza as part of the Oslo process, he made this bleak prognosis a self-fulfilling prophecy. He established a repressive and corrupt regime in the worst tradition of Arab dictatorships where the rule of the gun prevailed over the rule of law and where large sums of money donated by the international community for the benefit of the civilian Palestinian population were diverted to funding racist incitement, buying weaponry, and filling secret bank accounts. Extensive protection and racketeering networks run by PA officials proliferated while the national budget was plundered at will by PLO veterans and Arafat cronies. For example, in May 1997, the first-ever report by the PA's comptroller stated that \$325 million, out of the 1996 budget of \$800 million had been "wasted" by Palestinian ministers and agencies or embezzled by officials.<sup>69</sup>

Arafat himself held a secret Tel Aviv bank account accessible only to him and his personal advisor Muhammad Rashid, in which he insisted that Israel deposit the tax receipts collected on imports to the Palestinian territories (rather than transfer them directly to the PA). Between 1994-2000, nearly eleven billion shekels (about US\$2.5 billion) were reportedly paid into this account, of which only a small, unspecified part reached its designated audience.<sup>70</sup> Small wonder that in 2004 the French authorities opened a money-laundering inquiry into suspect regular transfers into the Paris bank accounts held by Arafat's wife Suha, who resided there with their daughter. After Arafat's death Suha was reportedly promised an annual pension of \$22 million to cover her sumptuous lifestyle, paid from an alleged \$4 billion "secret fortune" managed personally by the PA president and kept in a number of bank accounts in Tel Aviv, London, and Zurich.<sup>71</sup>

Though this breathtaking corruption played an important role in Hamas's landslide electoral victory of January 2006, the PLO/PA leadership seems to have learned nothing and to have forgotten nothing. Not only



did Abbas, who succeeded Arafat as PLO chairman and PA president, blatantly ignore the results of the only (semi) democratic elections in Palestinian history - establishing an alternative government to the legally appointed Hamas government and refusing to hold new elections upon the expiry of his presidency in January 2009 - but he seems to have followed in his predecessor's kleptocratic footsteps, reportedly siphoning at least \$100 million to private accounts abroad and enriching his sons at the PA's expense.<sup>72</sup> In the words of Fahmi Shabaneh, former head of the Anti-Corruption Department in the PA's General Intelligence Service:

*In his pre-election platform, President Abbas promised to end financial corruption and implement major reforms, but he hasn't done much since then. Unfortunately, Abbas has surrounded himself with many of the thieves and officials who were involved in theft of public funds and who became icons of financial corruption.... Some of the most senior Palestinian officials didn't have even \$3,000 in their pocket when they arrived [after the signing of the Oslo Accords]. Yet we discovered that some of them had tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars in their bank accounts.... Had it not been for the presence of the Israeli authorities in the West Bank, Hamas would have done what they did in the Gaza Strip. It's hard to find people in the West Bank who support the Palestinian Authority. People are fed up with the financial corruption and mismanagement of the Palestinian Authority.<sup>73</sup>*

## CONCLUSION

For nearly a century, Palestinian leaders have missed no opportunity to impede the development of Palestinian civil society and the attainment of Palestinian statehood. Had the Mufti chosen to lead his constituents to peace and reconciliation with their Jewish neighbors, as he promised the British officials who appointed him to his high rank in 1921, the Palestinians would have had their independent state over a substantial part of mandate Palestine by 1948, if not a decade earlier, and would have been spared the traumatic experience of dispersal and exile. Had Arafat set the PLO from the start on the path to peace and reconciliation

instead of turning it into one of the most murderous and corrupt terrorist organizations in modern times, a Palestinian state could have been established in the late 1960s or the early 1970s; in 1979 as a corollary to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty; by May 1999 as part of the Oslo process; or at the very latest with the Camp David summit of July 2000. Had Abbas abandoned his predecessors' rejectionist path, a Palestinian state could have been established after the Annapolis summit of November 2007, or during President Obama's first term, after Netanyahu broke with the longstanding Likud precept by publicly accepting the two-state solution and agreeing to the establishment of a Palestinian state.

But then, why should they engage in the daunting tasks of nation-building and state creation if they could drive their hapless constituents to lasting dispersal and statelessness while basking in international sympathy for the Palestinian plight and lining their pockets from the proceeds of this self-inflicted tragedy? The attainment of statehood would have shattered Palestinian leaders' pan-Arab and Islamist delusions, not to mention the kleptocratic paradise established on the backs of their long suffering subjects. It would have transformed the Palestinians in one fell swoop from the world's ultimate victim into an ordinary (and most likely failing) nation-state thus terminating decades of unprecedented international indulgence. It would have also driven the final nail in the PLO's false pretense to be "the sole representative of the Palestinian people" (already dealt a devastating blow by Hamas's 2006 electoral rout) and would have forced any governing authority to abide, for the first time in Palestinian history, by the principles of accountability and transparency. Small wonder, therefore, that whenever confronted with an international or Israeli offer of statehood, Palestinian leaders will never take "yes" for an answer.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel in Press Availability," May 18, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Walid Khalidi, "Thinking the Unthinkable: A Sovereign Palestinian State," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1978, pp. 695-96; Hisham Sharabi, *Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1966), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Hearing before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, Washington, D.C., State Department, Jan. 11, 1946, Central Zionist Archives (CZA), V/9960/g, pp. 10-11.

<sup>4</sup> "Interview [by] Clare Hollingwith with Azzam Pasha, Mar. 23, 1948, S25/9020. See also: "Fortnightly Intelligence Newsletter No. 57," issued by HQ British Troops in Palestine for the period 6 Dec-18 Dec 1947, WO 275/64, p. 2; Cunningham to Creech Jones, Feb. 24, 1948, Cunningham Papers, VI/1/80; Kirkbride to Bevin, Dec. 23, 1947, FO 371/61583; Musa Alami, "The Lesson of Palestine," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (October 1949), p. 385.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Daniel Pipes, "Palestine for the Syrians?," *Commentary*, Dec. 1986.

<sup>6</sup> Jamal Husseini, "Report of the State of Palestine during the Four Years of Civil Administration, Submitted to the Mandate's Commission of the League of Nations through H.E. the High Commissioner for Palestine, by the Executive Committee of the Palestine Arab Congress—Extract," Oct. 6, 1924, Central Zionist Archive (CZA, Jerusalem), S25/10690, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> "Minutes of the Ninth Session, Held at Geneva from June 8th to 25th, 1926, including the Report of the Commission to the Council," Twenty-Second Meeting, Permanent Mandates Commission, League of Nations, June 22, 1926.

<sup>8</sup> "The Arabs Reject Partition," quoted from *Palestine & Transjordan*, July 17, 1937, p. 1, CZA; "Minutes of the JAE Meeting on Apr. 19, 1937," Ben-Gurion Archive (Sde Boker).

<sup>9</sup> *The New York Times*, Aug. 25, 1947.

<sup>10</sup> The Ambassador in Turkey to the Foreign Ministry (Enclosure), July 6, 1940, *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945* (London: HMSO, 1949), ser. D, vol. 10, pp. 143-4; The Grand Mufti to Adolf Hitler, Jan. 20, 1941, *ibid.*, ser. D, vol. 11, pp. 1151-5; Record of the Conversation between the Führer and the Grand

Mufti of Jerusalem on Nov. 28, 1941, in the Presence of Reich Foreign Minister and Minister Grobba in Berlin, Nov. 30, 1941, *ibid.*, pp. 881-5.

<sup>11</sup> Ghada Hasehm Telhami, *Syria and the Palestinians: the Clash of Nationalisms* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), pp. 49-50.

<sup>12</sup> "Excerpts from Statements in the U.N. on Mideast," *New York Times*, June 1, 1956; "Syria Says in U.N. Palestine is Hers," *ibid.*, June 1, 1956.

<sup>13</sup> The Palestinian National Charter, Resolutions of the Palestine National Council, July 1-17, 1968, art. 13-14; see, also, art. 11, 12, 15.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Pipes, "Declaring Independence: Israel and the PLO," *Orbis*, Mar. 1989, pp. 247-60.

<sup>15</sup> "Declaration of Independence (1988)," Website of the "State of Palestine."

<sup>16</sup> Ari Shavit, "Ha'ezrah Azmi," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), Nov. 25, 2002; Bishara on Israeli Channel 2 TV, n.d., YouTube.

<sup>17</sup> 2003 Permanent Constitution Draft, Palestinian Basic Law, chap. 1, art. 2, May 4, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, statements by Fatah's official spokesman Ahmad Assaf on official PA TV and Egyptian TV, Mar. 19, 2014, "Fatah Spokesman: Israel's goal is to rule 'from the Euphrates to the Nile,'" Palestine Media Watch (Jerusalem), Mar. 23, 2014.

<sup>19</sup> *Haaretz*, Mar. 26, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> "Exclusive Interview with Hamas Leader," *The Media Line*, Sept. 22, 2005; Walid Mahmoud Abdelnasser, *The Islamic Movement in Egypt: Perceptions of International Relations, 1967-81* (London: Kegan Paul, 1994), p. 39.

<sup>21</sup> Zahar's interview with *Asharq al-Awsat* (London), Aug. 18, 2005, in Special Dispatch, no. 964, Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI- Washington, D.C.), Aug. 19, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> "Hamas Covenant," Yale Law School, Avalon Project, art. 10.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 8.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 11, 15.

<sup>25</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 306; Michel Gurfinkiel, "Islam in France: The-French Way of Life Is

in Danger," *Middle East Quarterly*, Mar. 1997; *The Observer* (London), Nov. 4, 2001; Anthony Browne, "The Triumph of the East," *The Spectator* (London), July 24, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Mash'al's address at the al-Murabit Mosque in Damascus as aired on Aljazeera TV on Feb. 3, 2006, MEMRI, "Special Dispatch No. 1087," Feb. 7, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> 2003 Permanent Constitution Draft, chap. 1, art. 5, 7.

<sup>28</sup> Palestinian Authority TV, May 13, 2005, PMW.

<sup>29</sup> John Laffin, *The PLO Connections* (London: Corgi Books, 1983), p. 127.

<sup>30</sup> *Damascus Radio*, Mar. 8, 1974.

<sup>31</sup> Palestinians leaders went out of their way to reassure their constituents that this was merely a tactical ploy aimed at enhancing the PLO's international standing and, as a result, its ability to achieve the ultimate goal of Israel's destruction. "We vowed to liberate Palestine before 1967," stated Abu Iyad, Yasser Arafat's second in command. "We will restore Palestine step by step and not in one fell swoop, just as the Jews had done." "The borders of our state noted [by the PLO declaration] represent only a part of our national aspirations," he added. "We will strive to expand them so as to realize our ambition for the entire territory of Palestine." A few days later he reiterated this pledge: "The establishment of a Palestinian state on any part of Palestine is but a step toward the [liberation of the] whole of Palestine" (*Al-Anba*, Kuwait, Dec. 5 & 13, 1988). For other Palestinian statements in the same vein see, for example, interview by Khaled Hassan, head of the Palestine National Council's (PNC) committee for external and parliamentary relations, with *al-Musawar* (Cairo), Jan. 20, 1989; interview with PNC Deputy Chairman Salim Zaanun with *al-Anba* (Kuwait), Nov. 21, 1988; interview by Ahmad Sidqi Dajani, a senior PLO member, with *Ukaz* (Riyadh), Nov. 22, 1988.

<sup>32</sup> *International Herald Tribune*, Nov. 27, Dec. 5, 1984; *Davar* (Tel Aviv), Nov. 12, 1987; *Hadashot* (Tel Aviv), Nov. 13, 15, 1987.

<sup>33</sup> For further discussion of this issue see: Efraim Karsh & Inari Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography* (New York: Grove, 2003; revised and updated edition); Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>34</sup> *New York Times*, Mar. 16, 1991; "A New Beginning," *US News & World Report*, Sept. 13, 1993, p. 30.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example: Beirut Radio, May 4, 1948, in *Foreign Broadcasts Information Service* (FBIS), European Section: Near & Middle East and North African Transmitters, May 5, 1948, II2; Tzuri to Tene, "New from Semakh after the Evacuation," May 10, 1948, Hagana Archive (HA), 105/31, p. 46; "Summary of News for the Alexandroni Brigade," Apr. 9, 1948, HA 105/143, p. 174; Philip Ernst (American Consul in Port Said) to Department of State, "Arrival of Palestine Arab Refugees," Apr. 29, 1948 (dispatched May 11), RG 84, 800 - Refugees; Beirut Radio, Apr. 25, 1948, in BBC – Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB), No. 48, Apr. 29, 1948, p. 60; Cairo to High Commissioner for Palestine, May 1, 1948, Cunningham Papers, St. Antony's College, Oxford University; C. Waterlow, "Arab Refugees," Oct. 22, 1948, FO 371/68681.

<sup>36</sup> UN General Assembly, "194 (III). Palestine - Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator," Dec. 11, 1948, Article 11. Refugee resettlement elsewhere was reiterated in subsequent UN resolutions. See, for example: UN General Assembly, "393 (v) - Assistance to Palestine Refugees," Dec. 2, 1950, Article 4; General Assembly, "Special report of the Director and Advisory Commission of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East," Nov. 29, 1951, A/1905/Add. 1, p. 4. For Arab rejection of Resolution 194 see: Israel Foreign Office, Middle Eastern Department, "Arab Broadcasts: Daily Summary," No. 36, Sept. 12-13, 1948, HA 105/88, p. 153; summary of Emile Ghouri's article in the *Beirut Telegraph*, HA 105/102, pp. 43-43; "Arabs Firm on Refugees," *New York Times*, Sept. 9, 1948; British Middle East Office (Cairo) to Foreign Office, Sept. 11, 1948, FO 371/68341; *Davar* (Tel Aviv), Aug. 8, 1948; *al-Masri* (Cairo), Oct. 11, 1948 as quoted in Israel's Foreign Ministry, Research Department, "Refugee Repatriation - A Danger to Israel's security," Sept. 4, 1951, FM 2564/1.

<sup>37</sup> In 2012 there were 436,154 refugees registered with UNRWA, alongside 10,000-35,000 non-registered "illegal aliens" and tens of thousands naturalized Palestinians. At the same time, some 100,000 UNRWA-registered Palestinians have reportedly left the country in search of livelihood elsewhere. See: UNRWA, "Where We Work – Lebanon," accessed December 8, 2013; *Amnesty International*, "Exiled and Suffering: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon," October 2007, pp. 2, 10; Julie Peteet, "From Refugees to Minority: Palestinians in Post-War Lebanon," *Middle East Report*, No. 200 (Jul.-Sept. 1996), p. 29.

<sup>38</sup> Lena El-Malak, "Betrayed and Forgotten: Palestinians Refugees in Lebanon," *Yearbook of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law*, Vol. 9 (2002-03), pp. 136-37; Souheil

al-Natour, "The Legal Status of Palestinians in Lebanon," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1997), pp. 360-77.

<sup>39</sup> International Labor Organization, "Palestinians in Lebanon working under precarious conditions," Nov. 20, 2012; Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2010: Lebanon*, *World Report 2011: Lebanon*, *World Report 2013: Lebanon*; *Amnesty International*, "Exiled and Suffering," pp. 18-22.

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<sup>46</sup> U.S. Ambassador to Jordan David Hale, "Confidential Memo on the Debate in Jordan Concerning the Palestinian Right of Return, Amman, Feb. 5 2008," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Winter 2012), pp. 220, 222.

<sup>47</sup> Said Aburish, *Arafat: From Defender to Dictator* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), p. 114.

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