



PERSPECTIVES

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Palestinian Double-Dealing Won't Work Forever

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: By refusing to be Israel's direct interlocutor, and by turning instead to third parties in the hope of cornering Israel into submission, while also demanding that it be prosecuted for "war crimes," the PLO manifests inordinate duplicity vis-à-vis Israel. It disqualifies itself entirely from the trust of the Jewish state. The PLO will have to face the consequences of its actions: for, short of imperiling its own legitimacy, no "honest broker" could abet the PLO's double dealings much longer.

"The General Delegation of the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) to the US" – to use its formal name – is located at 1732 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington DC. In the good old days of the Obama administration, the delegation was granted permission to display a flag at that address, a courtesy it has used to [declare](#) the building an "Embassy." This appears to be yet another case of "fake hat, no cattle." It is a mystery why no one bothers to refute this illegal pretense, phony self-arrogation, abusive self-aggrandizement, and deliberately misleading grandiloquence.

On November 22, 1974, UNGA Resolution 3236 recognized "the right" – not "of Arabs of, or in, Palestine," not even "of Palestinian Arabs" – but "of the Palestinian people" to self-determination, national independence, and sovereignty "in Palestine" (a "people," on "its own exclusive land," as this callously monopolized generic name seeks to suggest). Recognizing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, UNGAR 3236 conferred upon it "observer status" at the UN.

Though it still flies the flag of a non-state, and despite the fact that its "peoplehood" remains a project in the making, the PLO has managed to ratchet up its status at the UN and in UN institutions such as UNESCO and

the ICC. Little wonder then that the organization is in no hurry to settle directly with Israel the parameters of the statehood it covets.

This phenomenon does a disservice to genuine peoples, like Catalans and Kurds, who are by far more amply qualified to govern themselves.

The designation "Palestine" for the PLO was adopted by the UN – as recently as 1988 – in acknowledgment of the PLO's unilateral declaration of "Palestinian independence," even though the proclaimed Palestinian state has no formal status in the established international system. Yet non-statehood did not disqualify the "State of Palestine" from being "recognized" by developing countries in Africa and Asia (the 21 member countries of the Arab League; the 56 states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation; and many formerly communist and "non-aligned" G-77 states, among them) as soon as the PLO declared its "independence" – without a referendum.

Beyond tailored lies designed to promote "Palestine" as an entity that it is not, what the PLO seems to need right now is self-sufficiency and well-governed societal stability. That combination would be conducive to modern democratic rule that can integrate rival factions, disarm rival militias, and steer a viable economy with a capacity to generate – and to redistribute – income fairly to its geographically, culturally, and traditionally disparate tribal subjects.

Despite the fact that a "State of Palestine" does not exist, it was, by September 14, 2015, already "recognized" by 136 (70.5%) of the 193 member states of the UN and two non-member states. The label does not guarantee Palestine's viability as a functional entity until and unless it can also reach a "mutually just and durable peace" agreement with the democratic Jewish state of Israel, with which it must sincerely want to coexist. The sad realities on the ground indicate that the conditions for such mutual concordance and fraternal coexistence are not only nonexistent right now but unattainable for the foreseeable future, owing to the persistent absence of a shared ethical foundation.

The PLO can no longer credibly pretend to be amenable to negotiating peaceful coexistence with Israel at the same time that it refuses direct contact with it; waits for "an acceptable final deal" to be served up by a third party; and instructs yet another third party to prosecute its future peace partner for "serious war crimes" – in utter disregard of binding agreements to the contrary long known to all the stakeholders.

One cannot pretend to be ready in good faith to engage in peace negotiations with a putative future partner whom one formally asks the ICC to pursue and condemn for matters that should be resolved through direct negotiation. One must not expect to continue duping all of the parties all of the time by

simultaneously undertaking actions and contradictory counteractions. One should not abuse the generous tolerance shown for too long by an honest broker whose patience is not endless. And one most certainly should not get on one's high horse by suggesting that the foreseeable – and lawful – closure of PLO headquarters in the US capital as a result of the PLO's defiance of the law of the land would result in the PLO's irreversible discontinuation of all peace talks to be held via US mediation. Times have changed. The PLO's duplicity, at long last, just might blow up in its face.

The Middle East is transforming. Lebanon's double-speak about the need to keep its "South" aligned with the UN Resolution's exigencies ("no militias") while also asking its troops not to provoke a conflict with Hezbollah or a war with Israel; Saudi Arabia's labeling of Hezbollah as a terror group; the Arab League's recognition of Iran as a warmonger, exporter of terror, and meddler in regional countries' internal affairs; Qatar's role in the Gulf's disquiet; Iran's opportunistic pursuits and direct threats to Israel's longevity; Assad's gratitude to Moscow for "saving [whatever little is left of] Syria" are not good omens for stable peace or sustainable prosperity in this fragile, volatile, and divided region.

For the moment, the PLO's US office will not be closed. If it knows what's good for it, the PLO would be well advised henceforth to behave honestly.

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