



Palestinian security cooperation with Israel

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Cover: *Palestinian Authority Security Forces stand guard at the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem, January 6th 2010. Image by Apalmages.*

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History

- Set up under the 1993 [Oslo Accords](#)¹, security coordination involves the sharing of intelligence between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The PA was also established under Oslo.
- Before the official signing of the agreement, the two sides had agreed on a “Declaration of Principles”, which included a pledge from PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to uphold UN Security Council Resolution 242. That created a framework allowing for Palestinian statehood in exchange for Israeli security.
- Under Oslo II (signed in 1995), the West Bank was split into three areas: the PA was given nominal control of Area A, the smallest area of land, while Area B came under shared control with the Israelis; Area C fell under full Israeli control. The idea was that a final status peace agreement would be reached within 5 years, and all areas would then come under Palestinian jurisdiction.
- Whilst the security partnership was meant to bring stability to both sides, the elements of the agreement were very much focused on creating a structure which would primarily ensure the security of Israel.
- Security cooperation remained strong until the second Intifada (2000-2005) when it broke down, but it was revived under Arafat’s successor, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.
- Today, security cooperation remains in place despite the fact that, more than twenty years after the Oslo Accords, a viable Palestinian state looks unlikely to be established.

UK’s Department for International Development (DfID) allocated £76 million to the PA for “security sector reform”.

International support for the PA security sector

- The bolstering of the PA security sectors has been largely supported by the US and Britain.
- *As Electronic Intifada* has [reported](#)², in 2005, US Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton began training in Jordan for security forces loyal to the PA. Reporting directly to the US Secretary of State, Dayton's mission was to train Palestinian forces which would cooperate with Israel.
- On 31 January 2009, it was [revealed](#)³ that Britain's Department for International Development (DfID) had allocated £76 million to the PA for what it defined as "security sector reform".
- It was claimed that only £3 million actually went to the PA police, whilst "[£] 17 million pays the salaries of the PA's array of security organisations - including the Presidential Guard intelligence service and the feared Preventive Security Organisation."

Who benefits?

- The [PA security sector](#)⁴ today employs almost half of the 145,000 people on the PA payroll, and consumes \$1 billion of the PA's \$3.9 billion budget; that's roughly the same amount as health and education combined.
- Whilst in 2011 one-third of the PA's budget was spent on security, the main beneficiary of such large national expenditure is Israel.
- Israel's Yossi Kuperwasser, Director General at the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, [said during a court case](#)⁵ waged against the PA, "...one of the reasons Shin Bet officials are presenting things in this fashion is their desire to cover up their inability to use this tool called the Palestinian security forces in supplying them with the purpose for which they exist: preventing terror." Not only is it recognised that the PA is openly sharing files with Israel's notorious domestic intelligence agency, the Shin

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Bet, but there is also no attempt to hide the fact that the entity of the PA has been created as a “tool” solely for this purpose.

How far the PA is prepared to go?

[The Palestine Papers](#)⁶, the largest-ever leak of confidential documents from a decade of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, revealed how far the PA has been willing to go as part of its role in security coordination.

EXTRA JUDICIAL ASSASSINATION

- Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said in one of the security meetings between Israel and the PA that the authority has been forced to kill its “own people” in order to prove that it was establishing law and order in territories under its control.
- Erekat was referring in this instance to an incident in Qalqilyah in which Palestinian police killed six Hamas members; two police officers were killed in the firefight.
- Notes between then Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz and Palestinian Authority Interior Minister Nasser Yousef [outline a plan](#)⁷ in 2005 to kill Gaza-based Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade leader Hassan Al-Madhou.

GAZA STRIP

- According to one leaked document, Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad opposed the opening of Gaza’s border crossings, fearing that this would be interpreted as a victory for Hamas.
- Another document revealed that the Palestinian Authority considered a British proposal for dealing with the smuggling tunnels on the Gaza-Egypt border.
- More recently, in 2010, the PA’s reputation was dented by leaked cables that suggested Abbas had been warned in advance of Israel’s major attack on Gaza in late 2008

The Israeli Defence Minister and Palestinian Authority Interior Minister colluded in creating a plan in 2005 to kill Gaza-based Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade leader Hassan Al-Madhou

known as “Operation Cast Lead”. The military offensive killed 1,400 Palestinians, most of them civilians.

SUPPRESSING RESISTANCE TO THE OCCUPATION

- Palestinian security forces follow Israeli orders and withdraw to their barracks when Israeli army and police want to enter Palestinian areas to make arrests.
- During last summer’s [“Operation Brother’s Keeper”⁸](#), Israel’s response to the [kidnap of three teenagers⁹](#), the Israeli army took control of the West Bank city of Ramallah for the first time since 2007, using the PA police headquarters as its base. Palestinian protestors who had confronted the army turned on the Palestinian police when the Israelis left; the police responded with live fire. Minutes later, the Israeli army returned to [give armed assistance¹⁰](#) to the Palestinian police force.
- During the 2014 war against the people of Gaza that followed “Brother’s Keeper”, Abbas continued to maintain security co-operation with Israel, going so far as to crush protests in the West Bank.
- In recent clashes in the West Bank from September to October this year, many areas of the occupied territory stayed quiet, as the Palestinian security forces prevented protests in cities.
- [Israeli Channel 10 announced¹¹](#) early in October 2015 that Palestinian security forces have stepped up cooperation with their Israeli counterparts after Abbas instructed them to make precautionary arrests among Palestinians in the West Bank to prevent the deterioration of the security situation and avoid escalation.

Palestinian Authorities security forces often prevent protests against Israel in West Bank cities

TARGETING OF HAMAS MEMBERS

- On 11 February, 2008, Hazem Atallah, the head of the Palestinian Civil Police presented the [Israelis with a laundry list¹²](#) of actions taken by the PA against Hamas. During a meeting with Israeli minister Tzipi Livni, he said, “We made

arrests, confiscated arms, and sacked security individuals affiliated with Hamas.”

- Last July, a wide-scale PA arrest campaign against Hamas began after the West Bank witnessed a series of armed Palestinian attacks. At least 120 members were detained.
- After the victory of a Hamas-aligned group over Fatah rivals in student council elections at Birzeit University in April, Human Rights Watch released a report giving details of 25 students who had been [arrested, detained or summoned](#)¹³ for interrogation from West Bank universities since the election. According to Sarah Leah Whitson, the Middle East and North Africa director of Human Rights Watch: “It is deeply worrying that students are being held by Palestinian forces for no apparent reason other than their connection to Hamas or their opinions. Palestinians should be able to express critical political opinions without being arrested or beaten.”
- From the beginning until mid-October, Palestinian Authority security forces have reportedly arrested at least 14 Hamas members, [Hamas officials told Al Jazeera](#)¹⁴.

How security cooperation damages PA legitimacy

- The PA was sold as a national project that would oversee the switch of Palestine from an occupied territory to an internationally-recognised state, yet years later, while the security cooperation has remained in place, so has Israel’s brutal occupation.
- Instead of viewing the authority as a vehicle for statehood, many Palestinians now see the PA as an arm of the occupation and an obstacle to resistance.
- PA-run schools and hospitals, supported by foreign aid, maintain a status quo allowing Israel to ignore its obligations as an occupying power. Instead of tackling the underlying political issues, millions of dollars of aid are poured into the PA and projects in the West Bank, acting

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as temporary measures designed to make the current situation appear to be viable.

- This has fuelled a decline in Abbas's popularity and, in turn, led to calls for the third intifada to be pitted against the PA. Abbas has explicitly defended his security coordination with Israel, claiming that it is "[a Palestinian national interest.](#)"¹⁵ He has also described it as "[sacred.](#)"¹⁶
- The situation complicates the interim unity-government because some factions within Fatah and some within Hamas reject security cooperation.
- Abbas often uses the threat of cutting security cooperation as a way to pressure Israel. He has [threatened to suspend security cooperation](#)¹⁷ on numerous occasions. In October last year, the PA president threatened to reconsider the cooperation unless a framework for ending the Israeli occupation was set in motion. In November, he threatened the same unless negotiations resumed. At the time, Palestinian journalist [Khaled Abu Toameh](#)¹⁸ calculated via Twitter that Abbas has threatened to do this 58 times.

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