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Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas meets Israeli delegation in Ramallah, May 17, 2016. (Photo by: MARC ISRAEL SELLEM/THE JERUSALEM POST)

## Our world: The end of Mahmoud Abbas

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16 years after the failed Camp David summit, the fiction of the two-state solution is about to be shattered once and for all. The only relevant question today, is what does Israel intend to do next?

Like it or not, the day is fast approaching when the Palestinian Authority we have known for the past 22 years will cease to exist.

PA leader Mahmoud Abbas's US-trained Palestinian security forces have lost control over the Palestinians cities in Judea and Samaria. His EU- and US-funded bureaucracies are about to lose control over the local governments to Hamas. And his Fatah militias have turned against him.

Palestinian affairs experts Pinchas Inbari of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and Khaled Abu Toameh of the Gatestone Institute have in recent weeks reported in detail about the insurrection of Fatah militias and tribal leaders against Abbas's PA.

In Nablus, Fatah terrorist cells are in open rebellion against PA security forces. Since August 18, Fatah cells have repeatedly engaged PA forces in lethal exchanges, and according to Inbari, the town is now in a state of "total anarchy."

In Hebron, tribal leaders, more or less dormant for the past 20 years, are regenerating a tribal alliance as a means of bypassing the PA, which no longer represents them. Their first major action to date was to send a delegation of tribal leaders to meet with King Abdullah of Jordan.

Even in Ramallah, the seat of Abbas's power, the PA is losing ground to EU-funded NGOs that seek to limit the PA's economic control over the groups and their operations.

All of this fighting and maneuvering is taking place against the backdrop of the encroaching PA municipal elections, scheduled for October 8.

Hamas is widely expected to win control over most of the local governments in Judea and Samaria. Hamas's coming takeover of the municipalities is likely playing a role in decisions by Fatah terrorist cells to reject the authority of the PA. Many of those cells can be expected to transfer their allegiance to Hamas once the terrorist group wins the elections.

Given his Fatah party's looming electoral defeat, more and more PA functionaries are wondering why Abbas doesn't use the growing anarchy in Palestinian cities as a reason to cancel them. Abbas seems to have calculated that Israel will step in and, as it has repeatedly done over the past 20 years, cancel the elections for him.

Media organs Abbas controls are full of conspiracy theories whose bottom line is that Israel is not canceling the elections Abbas declared because it is in cahoots with Hamas and other "collaborators" to undermine the PA.

Although Israel, of course, is in cahoots with no one, it is the case that the government has apparently finally lost its patience with Abbas and is looking past him.

Repeated angry denunciations by government leaders of Abbas for his lead role in inciting violence against Israelis, leading the international movement to delegitimize Israel, refusing to negotiate anything with its leaders, and radicalizing Palestinian society, are finally being translated into policy.

Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman's recent announcement that Israel is adopting a carrot-and-stick approach not toward the PA but toward the Palestinians themselves, and will advance development projects in areas where terrorism levels are low and take a hard line against areas where terrorist cells are most active, has sent shock waves through Abbas's palaces.

For 22 years, Israel has bowed to Palestinian and Western demands and agreed to speak only to PA functionaries and Palestinian civilians authorized by the PA to speak to Israelis. Liberman's decision to base Israel's actions on the ground on the behavior of the Palestinians themselves rather than act in accordance with PA directives, along with his decision to speak directly to Palestinian businessmen and others, marks the end of Israel's acceptance of this practice.

Without a doubt, Israel's willingness to let Abbas fall is in part a function of the wider Arab world's increased indifference to, if not disgust with the Palestinians. As MEMRI has documented, the Arab media is registering growing impatience with PA spokespeople. Arab commentators have harshly criticized PA functionaries who continue to insist their conflict with Israel is the most pressing issue on the pan-Arab agenda.

The disintegration of Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya and the rise of Iran as a mortal threat, along with Israel's growing importance as an ally to Sunni Arab regimes have made the Palestinian cause look downright offensive to large swaths of the Arab world.

Part of Israel's willingness to let Abbas fall also owes to its inevitability. Once Hamas wins the elections and takes control over the local governments, Abbas's already weakened position will become unsustainable. As is already happening in towns and villages throughout the areas, Fatah cells will transfer their allegiance to Hamas. The areas will become Balkanized and radicalized still further.

Confrontation between Israel and the Hamas-controlled Palestinians in Judea and Samaria is inevitable.

Moreover, this process will likely be rapid. Just as Hamas's complete takeover of Gaza from Fatah forces happened seemingly overnight in June 2007, so its seizure of control over Judea and Samaria will happen in the blink of an eye.

Many Westerners, Israeli leftists and PA functionaries hope that some deus ex machina will fall

from the sky at the last minute and cancel the elections.

But even if that happens, the underlying reality in which Abbas is rapidly losing all semblance of control over events in Judea and Samaria will not be reversed. Abbas has incited the Palestinians to the point where they reject not only Israel, but Abbas and the PA.

Last week, the left-leaning Israeli Democracy Institute released the results of its joint survey with the Palestinian Center for Policy Survey Research regarding levels of support for a two-state solution.

For a generation, we have been told by world leaders that “everyone who is anyone” knows that the only way to reconcile the Palestinians and Israelis is to establish an independent Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria and parts of Jerusalem, as well as Gaza, roughly along the 1949 armistice lines, with land swaps between the sides involving continued Israeli control over a small percentage of the land in exchange for Palestinian control over lands Israel has controlled since its establishment.

The same formula that “everyone who is anyone” agrees on assumes that the Palestinian state will be demilitarized and that Israel will accept around a hundred thousand Palestinians who were displaced in 1949 as citizens in a token acceptance of the Palestinian demand for a so-called “right of return” of the descendants of Arabs who left Israel in 1948-9.

The poll showed that this plan is a nonstarter for the majority of Palestinians and Israelis. Only 46 percent of Israelis accept the formula and a mere 39% of Palestinians do.

The PA itself rejected the two-state formula at Camp David 16 years ago.

The fictional peace process based on the failed policy model has been maintained ever since for two reasons. First, successive Israeli governments have been intimidated by successive US administrations into maintaining faith with it despite its obvious failure.

Second, Abbas has built, secured and maintained his corrupt dictatorship over Palestinian society on the West’s obsession with the two-state formula.

This practice has allowed him to serve into the 11th year of his five-year term of office. It has allowed Abbas, his sons and his cronies to build fortunes on the backs of the Palestinians they are supposedly serving.

Now that Abbas’s reign is ending, the West is losing their man in Ramallah. Abbas’s Hamas successors will not be beholden to Western donors, although to their discredit, the Europeans in all likelihood will shower them with cash and side with them against Israel.

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