



Written by on July 27, 2009

U.S. Gives \$200 Million to Palestinian Authority

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced on July 24 that the United States has given \$200 million to help the operations of the cash-strapped Palestinian Authority (PA).

"I wanted personally to announce the delivery of budget support to the Palestinian Authority, under the leadership of President [Mahmoud] Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad," Clinton said at a video teleconference in Washington, in which she was joined from Ramallah with Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. Clinton continued:



This shared goal depends on strengthening the Palestinian Authority and its ability to meet the needs of its people. In just over two years, President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad have put in place the foundations of a responsible, transparent, accountable government. Therefore, I am pleased to announce that the United States has transferred \$200 million in direct support to the Palestinian Authority. This transfer fulfills a critical portion of the assistance package that I announced in March in Sharm el-Sheikh [Egyptian resort on the Red Sea]. The ability of the United States to provide support directly to the Palestinian Authority is an indication of the bipartisan support for the effort to secure the peace in the Middle East, as well as for the fundamental reforms that the Palestinian Authority has undertaken. Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle worked closely with us to make this assistance possible.

Clinton observed that many other nations, including some in Europe, "have contributed generously to support the PA." Yet Prime Minister Fayed put the U.S. contribution into better perspective when he told Clinton that the "\$200 million assistance package of yours represents the largest amount of external financial assistance to be made available to the Palestinian Authority in a single tranche by any donor toward any purpose since the inception of the PA, Palestinian Authority."

Voice of America (VOA) news reported in conjunction with the announcemnt of the Palestinian aid that the Obama administration's special Middle East envoy, George Mitchell, arrived in Damascus on July 25 for talks with Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, to take place the following day. Mitchell followed up his visit to Syria with one to Israel.

VOA noted Syria's important role in the Middle East, since it has close ties with Iran and also supports the militant groups Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas, which controls the Gaza strip.

During the teleconference, Clinton said of the more radical Palestinian group: "With respect to Hamas being a part of any negotiations, we've set forth the conditions that would be necessary for Hamas to meet.... the conditions are clear — Hamas has to renounce violence, recognize Israel, and agree to the enforcement of prior agreements that have been entered into by the Palestinian Authority."

Political bodies vying to represent Palestinians include the Palestinian Liberation Organization and its largest political faction, Fatah, the party of Mahmoud Abbas, based in Ramallah, West Bank. The



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Palestinian Authority is a subsidiary agency of the PLO, created pursuant to the 1993 Oslo accords between the PLO and Israel to administer Palestinian lands in the West Bank and Gaza.

When the radical Hamas party won the PA's legislative elections in 2006, Israel, the United States, Canada, and the European Union (all of which regard Hamas as a terrorist organization) froze all funds to the Palestinian Authority. Hamas has refused to recognize Israel's right to exist, refuses to renounce violence, and has not agreed to abide by past agreements.

After the takeover in Gaza by Hamas in June 2007, PA Chairman Abbas dismissed the government and appointed Salam Fayad Prime Minister to form a new government. The new government claimed authority over all Palestinian territories, but since Hamas retains control of Gaza, Fatah/PA in reality exercises authority only over PA-controlled areas of the West Bank. Ismail Haniyeh, the Hamas leader who was dismissed by Abbas, continues to exercise prime ministerial authority in the Gaza Strip.

The latest aid package delivered to the PA is obviously predicated on the widely held belief that as the more moderate of the PA factions (at least in contrast to Hamas) the Ramallah-based quasi-government headed by Chairman Abbas and Prime Minister Fayad represents the best chance for establishing a moderate Palestinian state willing to coexist peacefully with Israel. The success of any such state depends, of course, on the credibility of the PA.

In determining how credible a partner in the Middle East peace process the PA will be, it is essential to remember that the PA is an offshoot of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Also recall that the Chairman of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, was elected as president of the PA in a landslide victory in 1996. Neither Israel nor the United States had confidence in Arafat, because of his past terrorist connections, and refused to negotiate with him.

A report in the May 29, 2000, issue of *Newsweek* quoted Mahmoud Hamdouni — a small landowner and businessman who has been beaten, accused of treason, summarily jailed, and forced to deed over his land to Arafat's regime: "The [Palestine] Authority is like the 40 thieves and Arafat is Ali Baba."

The *Newsweek* article also observed: "Both the Israeli government and foreign aid donors are quietly complicit in [the Arafat regime's] corruption. Critics say Israel uses its stranglehold over the Palestinian economy to create an elite that is dependent on the good will of Israel.... International aid organizations fear that a full assault on corruption would destabilize the Arafat regime, damage the peace process and, in turn, threaten many of the projects that have already eaten up \$3.8 billion in donor cash since 1994."

It was Arafat who appointed Abbas as prime minister of the PA on March 19, 2003. Abbas became the chairman of the PLO on November 11, 2004 upon the death of Yasser Arafat. He became president of the PA on January 15, 2005.

It is true that many Palestinian people were displaced from their homelands following the creation of Israel in 1948 and have suffered much economic hardship. It is to be hoped that a homeland for these unfortunate people can be established and will be governed by moderate individuals who can coexist alongside Israel as a peaceful and prosperous neighbor.

However the history of the PLO shows strong influence with the communist world, and that radicalizing influence has persisted through the PLO network, including the PA. Space precludes more detailed history here, but consider just a few examples of PLO-communist connections:

Following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the PLO began sending hundreds of recruits to terrorist training



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camps in the Soviet Union — in Moscow, Tashkent, Batum, Odessa, Baku, Simferopol — as well as East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Cuba. Arafat's Fatah/PLO thugs, in turn, trained and aided communist insurgents such as the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the FMLN in El Salvador, the ANC in South Africa, Khomeini's revolutionaries in Iran, and Idi Amin's butchers in Uganda.

In 1974, the Soviet Union invited Arafat to open a PLO office in Moscow, and he jumped at the chance. In 1979, Arafat led a PLO delegation to Moscow for a meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Boris Ponomarev, head of the International Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The minutes of that PLO meeting indicated that the Soviets attached great importance to the PLO for Middle East strategy.

It is also noteworthy that the current PA president (and onetime Arafat protégé) Abbas earned his Candidate of Sciences degree (the Soviet equivalent of a PhD) at the Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow. So highly did Abbas regard Arafat that he named one of his sons Yasser Abbas, after the PLO leader.

And if the PA's radical history is not enough of a reason against providing U.S. aid to the organization, there is an even more compelling argument: nowhere does the U.S. Constitution authorize our government to send U.S. taxpayer dollars to any foreign government or entity.

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