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On-going Evidence of Fatah Immoderation June 2008

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The Center for Near East Policy Research has done a series of reports monitoring the failure of Fatah, the controlling party of the Palestinian Authority, and PA president Mahmoud Abbas to demonstrate genuine moderation.

This issue has assumed particular relevance since Annapolis and the beginning of what is presumed to be negotiations with Israel for a peace agreement. The most recent update was published in May 2008. This paper documents notable instances of lack of Fatah moderation – and failure of good faith as a negotiating partner – since that update was completed.

Effort to sabotage Israeli development

Israel has been working hard to upgrade its relationship with the European Union, so that it will have the status of senior European partner, a status that will provide increased access to European markets and foster cooperation in diplomacy and science. At the end of May, Israel learned that Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad had sent a letter to the Organization for Economic Development asking that Israel's participation in Europe's markets be blocked.

Fatah relationship with Hamas

By the first week of June, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas had done a turn-about with regard to Fatah's relationship with Hamas. Previously he had indicated that until Hamas relinquished control of Gaza, which it had seized by force, there would be no dialogue. Now he waived this stipulation and called for a dialogue with Hamas.

Abbas says he will spare no effort in establishing national unity.

There is reason to believe that Abbas is disenchanted with the peace process. But Khaled Abu Toameh of *The Jerusalem Post* reported that some analysts are seeing this move toward Hamas as a ploy by Abbas. In Ramallah on June 5, Abbas delivered a speech in which he declared that there will be no agreement unless Israel returns to the 1967 lines – a position that is not tenable. He was thus essentially giving notice that either he gets everything he wants, or he is throwing his lot with Hamas.

On June 8, representative of Fatah and Hamas met in Sengal and signed an agreement to continue talks.

According to the Palestinian news agency Ma'an, as recently as June 28, Abbas's human rights representative, Kamal Ash-Sharafi, reaffirmed Fatah's intention of pursuing dialogue with Hamas. Speaking at a conference in Gaza City, he said that the Palestinian people are looking forward to national dialogue and the end of the state of division.

Failure of the PA to fight terror/support of terror

As part of this effort of reconciliation with Hamas, on June 24, the Palestinian Authority released at least three Hamas detainees who had been imprisoned on suspicion of attempting to attack within Israel and Judea and Samaria. This act ran counter to a PA pledge to Israel.

This happened nine days after IDF officials registered a complaint about the failure of 600 PA forces – who had been deployed in Jenin and Nablus – to fight terror. Said one IDF official: "The PA forces in the city are not combating the terrorists...they are doing nothing about terror which has grown in the past month since they deployed in Jenin." Another DF official complained that those terror suspects who were arrested were released within days and sometimes even hours.

Most significantly a top officer in the Central Command has warned that terrorists have infiltrated the PA police and military, and that weapons the US has provided to PA forces were finding their way to Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists in Jenin and Nablus. (Yaakov Katz, *The Jerusalem Post*, June 15, 2008)

Shooting rockets from Gaza

By the third week in June, Israel and Hamas in Gaza had agreed informally to a temporary ceasefire, known as a *tahdiyeh*. Not every terrorist group in Gaza opted to honor this, however. One of these groups is Al Aksa Brigades, an arm of Fatah. On June 29, a Fatah-associated member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Ashraf Jum'a, denied reports that because of this Fatah was withdrawing organization support for Al Aksa.

Praise for an arch-terrorist

On June 29, after considerable anguish, the Israeli Cabinet voted to trade the arch-terrorist Samir Kuntar, who is in Israeli prison, for what is understood to be the bodies of IDF soldiers Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev.

In 1979, Kuntar entered Nahariya, Israel, from Lebanon, by boat, with a group of three fellow terrorists. Entering the apartment of the Haran family, and knowing the police were on the way, they took Danny Haran and his four year old daughter, Einat, hostage and brought them down to the beach. When a shoot-out with police erupted, Samir Kuntar shot Danny in the back at close range in full view of his four year old daughter. Then he drowned Danny in the sea to make certain he was dead, and proceeded to smash Einat's head against the rocks, while she screamed, "Mommy, Daddy help me!" Then he crushed her head with the butt of his rifle.

Palestinian Media Watch has now reported that the PA sees Kuntar as embodying the "heroism" of those fighting Israel. PA TV broadcast a picture honoring Kuntar, in which he is shown beside a map of Israel completely covered by the Palestinian flag.