

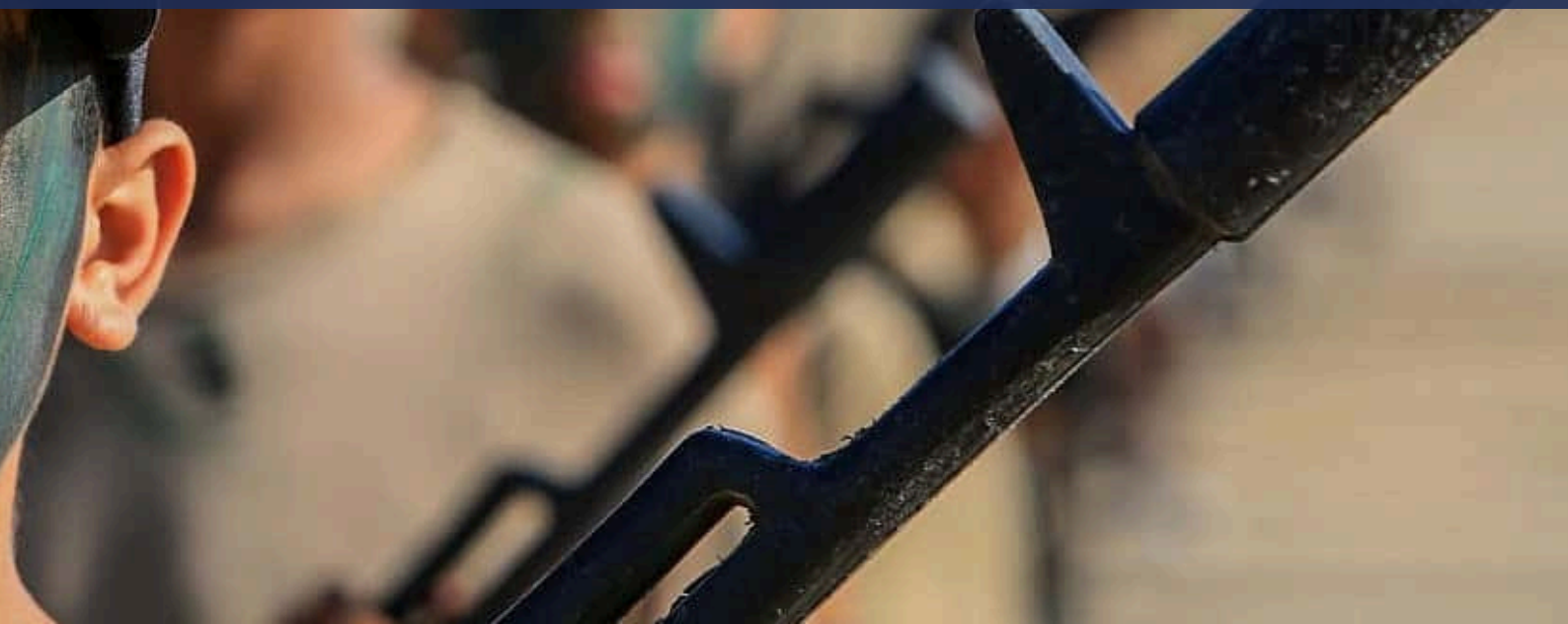


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GAZA AFTER HAMAS: THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY'S CAPACITY TO GOVERN



Jerusalem
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This report examines the reforms required of the Palestinian Authority (PA) if it is to be considered a legitimate player in the imminent governance of the Gaza Strip. Due to the geopolitical changes that followed October 7th, the United States' involvement in the region has shifted. The development and implementation of Trump's 20-point Gaza peace plan established the terms for an immediate ceasefire and a return of all hostages, while creating a framework for the demilitarization of Hamas and the redevelopment of Gaza. According to the peace plan, this redevelopment will take place under the temporary governance of a technocratic Palestinian committee, contingent on the completion of the Palestinian Authority's extensive reform plan.

Despite the Palestinian Authority's historical support for armed struggle against Israel, the PA's steadily eroding legitimacy among the Palestinian public, and deep Israeli distrust, alongside the absence of a stable and strong alternative leadership and the PA's response to the October 7 massacre, international discourse around the potential involvement of the Palestinian Authority in the Gaza Strip is growing. Some in the international community consider the PA the most legitimate potential actor to govern Gaza because the PA is the internationally recognized governing body of the Palestinian people through the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Oslo Accords. In their view, the PA is also the only Palestinian institution with pre-established ministries, security structures, and donor-backed administrative capacity to effectively run the Strip.

However, in order to be accepted on an international level (specifically according to the terms of the United States and Trump) as a candidate for the governance of the Gaza Strip, it must undergo verifiable reform on three main fronts: the elimination of the "Pay-for-Slay" fund, the eradication of indoctrinatory educational systems, and the establishment of stable government structures and cooperative leadership.

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I. Introduction: International Geopolitical Changes After October 7th

October 7th, 2023, not only shook Israel to its core but also acted as a catalyst for the transformation of geopolitics in the region and beyond. Hamas' assault quickly revived a multi-front war between not only Israel and Hamas, but also between Israel, Iran, and its other proxies, including the Houthis and Hezbollah.¹ Before October 7th, the region was moving towards normalization with Israel. The attack, however, froze normalization and dragged Washington back into a security role it had hoped to wind down. Iran's proxy network became ever more assertive, and the Palestinian issue returned to the forefront of global diplomacy: it was proven to Arab governments that normalization could not circumvent the Palestinian issue without serious cost. Israel's new strategy became that of "broad military dominance,"² that is, focusing on containing threats, devastating Hamas, and crippling Iran's proxies.

II. U.S. Goals in Gaza

The greatest objectives of the United States in this conflict are

(1) to ensure Israeli security and (2) to condition Palestinian progress on institutional change: that is, to set the foundation for long-lasting peace and a path forward to a viable two-state solution. These goals are the foundation for what came to be known as the "20-Point Plan."

A core policy demand is that the Palestinian Authority undergo comprehensive reform as a condition for receiving U.S. support and developing a credible pathway to self-determination.

A. The Gaza Peace Plan (Trump's 20-Point Plan)

The White House's 20-Point Plan, more officially known as the Gaza peace plan, outlined the requirements for the immediate end of the Gaza war, reciprocal prisoner and hostage exchanges, and the launch of a massive humanitarian and reconstructive effort. Drafted by Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff, with direct input from Trump,³ the plan was announced by Trump on September 29th, 2025, signed on October 9th, came into effect the next day, and was endorsed by the United Nations on November 17th.⁴ The initial phase of the plan has been successful;

[1] Matamis, Joaquín. 2024. "How October 7 Transformed the Middle East • Stimson Center." Stimson Center. October 7, 2024. <https://www.stimson.org/2024/how-october-7-transformed-the-middle-east/>.

[2] Mitchell, Gabriel. 2025. "The Long Global Shadow of October 7." GMFUS. 2025. <https://www.gmfus.org/news/long-global-shadow-october-7>.

[3] Silverman, Robert. 2025. "Stabilizing Gaza under the Trump Plan – GIS Reports." GIS Reports. November 24, 2025. <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/trump-gaza-peace-plan/>.

[4] UN News, 2025. "UN Security Council Authorizes Temporary International Force for Gaza." November 17, 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/11/1166391>.

however, the sustainability of the remainder of the plan is yet to be determined.

In the short term, governance relies on serious shifts. The plan provides explicit, conditional directions for the transitional governance of the Gaza Strip, which has been under the rule of Hamas for over two decades. The fundamental initial directive is that Gaza must become a “deradicalised terror-free zone that does not pose a threat to its neighbours.”⁵ This deradicalization also implies the complete and verifiable demilitarization of Hamas.

Another condition for establishing legitimate governance is the exclusion of terror groups from any form of Palestinian government. According to Point 13 of the peace plan, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and any of their surrogates must agree to destroy and not rebuild all military, terror, and offensive infrastructure, including tunnels and weapon production facilities. Additionally, these groups are prohibited from having any role in the governance of Gaza, in any way, shape, or form.

the peace plan consists of the “temporary transitional government of a technocratic, apolitical Palestinian committee,” composed of qualified Palestinians and international experts.⁶ The committee will operate under the oversight of a new international transitional body, the “Board of Peace,” which is to be headed and chaired by President Trump.⁷ Finally, a temporary International Stabilization Force (ISF), developed with Arab and international partners, must “immediately deploy in Gaza”⁸ to establish lasting security. The ISF is authorized to disarm Hamas “by force if necessary.”⁹ The United States Security Coordinator (USSC) also remains a pivotal part of U.S. engagement. It seeks to professionalize the Palestinian Security Forces (PASF) and reinforce security cooperation between Israel and the PA.¹⁰ This transitional model is to remain in place until the Palestinian Authority has completed its thorough reform program and can effectively regain control of Gaza.

In statements given to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on September 29, 2025, Trump commented that the Palestinian Authority will have “only themselves to blame”

The interim government established by

[5] BBC. 2025. “Donald Trump’s 20-Point Gaza Peace Plan in Full,” September 30, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c70155nked7o>.

[6] *Id.*

[7] *Id.*

[8] *Id.*

[9] Kemal, Levent. 2025. “Turkey Readies Military Brigade for Gaza Stabilisation Force.” Middle East Eye. 2025. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-readies-military-brigade-gaza-stabilisation-force>.

[10] Israel Policy Forum. 2025. “No Time to Lose: A Blueprint for Reforming the Palestinian Authority.” Israel Policy Forum. July 8, 2025. <https://israelpolicyforum.org/blueprint-for-reforming-the-palestinian-authority/>.

if they fail to faithfully carry out the reforms outlined in his 2020 “Peace to Prosperity” plan.¹¹ This document aligns with his 2025 peace plan, likewise calling for extensive reform in the PA as a precondition for Palestinian statehood.¹²

III. Other Players in the Governance of the Gaza Strip

The composition of the International Stabilization Force (ISF) is contested, particularly regarding non-Arab participation. However, it is generally expected to be comprised largely of troops from Arab and Islamic countries, taking into consideration the fear that Western forces may face clashes and lack local acceptance.¹³ Turkey has signaled a strong desire for a direct role in post-war security arrangements and reconstruction, going so far as to ready a peacekeeping brigade estimated to include at least 2,000 soldiers.¹⁴ However, Turkey’s participation is firmly opposed by Israel and the U.S. According to Israeli government spokesman Shosh

Bedrosian, there will be “no [Turkish] boots on the ground.”¹⁵

Ultimately, the PA remains the most viable, long-term option to stabilize the region and attract the investment necessary for recovery, though it currently faces a severe “crisis of legitimacy”¹⁶ and is widely regarded as replete with corruption and failed institutions. The PA is a dedicated sponsor of terror, embeds indoctrination into its institutions, and does not recognize Israel as a legitimate state. Polling data also indicates President Mahmoud Abbas’s approval rating is low, hovering just around 19%.¹⁷ But despite these serious shortcomings and lack of popularity, the PA remains the “sole internationally recognized representative of a Palestinian polity.”¹⁸ It is viewed by the international community as the entity that is most likely to attract support among Gazans, which is necessary for cooperation.¹⁹

[11] Peters, Gerhard, and John Woolley. 2025. “Remarks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel Announcing a Cease-Fire Proposal between Hamas and Israel | the American Presidency Project.” The American Presidency Project. 2025. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-with-prime-minister-benjamin-netanyahu-israel-announcing-cease-fire-proposal>.

[12] Trump, Donald J. 2020. “PEACE to PROSPERITY: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People.” <https://Trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/Wp-Content/Uploads/2020/01/Peace-To-Prosperity-0120.Pdf>. The White House.

[13] Callanan, Riley. 2025. “Who Will Govern Gaza Now?” GZERO Media. October 17, 2025. <https://www.gzeromedia.com/news/analysis/who-will-govern-gaza-now>.

[14] Middle East Eye. 2025. “Turkey Readies Military Brigade for Gaza Stabilisation Force.” Middle East Eye. 2025. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-readies-military-brigade-gaza-stabilisation-force>.

[15] *Id.*

[16] Israel Policy Forum. 2025. “No Time to Lose: A Blueprint for Reforming the Palestinian Authority.” Israel Policy Forum. July 8, 2025. <https://israelpolicyforum.org/blueprint-for-reforming-the-palestinian-authority/>

[17] Callanan, *Govern*.

[18] Israel Policy Forum, *Blueprint*.

[19] Callanan, *Govern*.

The following are the core requirements for reform within the Palestinian Authority in order for them to return to control of Gaza, according to the White House's peace plan.

IV. Required Reforms in the Palestinian Authority

A. Elimination of the "Pay-For-Slay" Fund

The term "Pay-for-Slay" refers to a highly contentious system of stipend payments administered by the Palestinian Authority (more precisely, through entities associated with the Palestine Liberation Organization) to Palestinians who have been imprisoned by Israel, as well as to families of those who have been wounded or killed in the conflict. The program amounts to a financial incentive for acts of terrorism, and its elimination is a non-negotiable reform required for the transformation of Palestinian governance.

1. Founding Legislation

A set of Palestinian legislation passed in 2004, which defined a prisoner as "anyone incarcerated in the occupation's prisons for his participation in the struggle against the occupation,"²⁰

established the basis for this "martyrs'" fund. This law, Law No. 14, opened a fund "dedicated to supporting the steadfastness of the prisoners and their families."²¹ Later, Law No. 19 further cemented the idea of Palestinian resistance as a legitimized campaign of terror against Israel. Article 2 maintains that "the prisoners and released prisoners are a fighting sector and an integral part of the fabric of the Arab Palestinian society."²²

Because the obligation to provide financial resources to security prisoners is formalized under Palestinian law, the stipend is effectively established not as a discretionary form of assistance but as a sustained legal entitlement. This mandate ensures that the payment system operates with the full authority and budgetary commitment of the governing bodies.

Article 7 of Law No. 19 explicitly dictates that the National Authority is obligated to pay every prisoner a monthly salary, further specifying that this sum will be linked to the cost-of-living index, providing a legal basis for sustained financial support that keeps pace with economic changes. Administratively,

[20] Kuperwasser, Yossi. 2016. "INCENTIVIZING TERRORISM: Palestinian Authority Allocations to Terrorists and Their Families." Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. https://jcfa.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/salaries_kuperwasser_12dec2016_nomarks_covers.pdf, 34.

[21] *Id.*

[22] *Id.*, 36.

although the PA furnishes the majority of the funding, the system's legal authority and operational oversight are often placed under the umbrella of the PLO. Channeling payments through PLO funds rather than directly through PA ministries is an attempt to insulate the PA from liability for controversial payments.²³

According to the Israel Policy Forum, Government Decision No. 15 of 2013 "expanded this welfare system by guaranteeing prisoners civil service employment upon their release. Through these laws, the PA established a tiered system in which prisoners receive more funding the longer they sit in prison, with more money waiting for them on the outside in the form of a monthly salary."²⁴ As sentences increase in length, these monthly salaries begin to amount to much more than the average Palestinian wage. Many Palestinian prisoners released in October 2025 under the Trump-orchestrated ceasefire deal left prison as millionaires.²⁵

The regulatory schedule establishes a progressive payment scale,

ensuring that individuals convicted of more severe offenses, which typically result in significantly longer sentences, receive proportionally higher monthly stipends.²⁶

The following table illustrates the substantial financial differences across various tiers of imprisonment, based on the original regulatory criteria.

[23] Avraham, Rachel. 2025. "The Palestinian Authority's Pay-To-Slay Dilemma - Defend Jerusalem." Defend Jerusalem -. October 2025. <https://defendjerusalem.com/the-palestinian-authoritys-pay-to-slay-dilemma/>.

[24] Israel Policy Forum. 2021. "Palestinian Prisoner and Martyr Payments Explained." Israel Policy Forum. April 2, 2021. <https://israelpolicyforum.org/2021/04/02/palestinian-prisoner-and-martyr-payments-explained/>.<https://israelpolicyforum.org/2021/04/02/palestinian-prisoner-and-martyr-payments-explained/#:~:text=The%20Palestinian%20Authority%20Martyrs'%20Fund,form%20of%20a%20monthly%20salary.>

[25] Isaac, David. 2025. "Terrorists Released by Israel Leave Prison as Millionaires." JNS.org. February 6, 2025. <https://www.jns.org/terrorists-released-by-israel-leave-prison-as-millionaires/>.

[26] "Incentivizing Terrorism: Palestinian Authority Allocations to Terrorists and Their Families." 2025. Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs. December 8, 2025. <https://jcfa.org/paying-salaries-terrorists-contradicts-palestinian-vows-peaceful-intentions/>.

ORIGINAL REGULATIONS GOVERNING MONTHLY STIPENDS TO SECURITY PRISONERS

LENGTH OF IMPRISONMENT	MONTHLY SALARY NIS	MONTHLY SALARY USD
UP TO 3 YEARS	NIS 1,400	\$400
3-5 YEARS	NIS 2,000	\$570
5- 10 YEARS	NIS 4,000	\$1,142
10- 15 YEARS	NIS 6,000	\$1,714
15-20 YEARS	NIS 7,000	\$2,000
20-25 YEARS	NIS 8,000	\$2,286
25-30 YEARS	NIS 10,000	\$2,857
OVER 30 YEARS	NIS 12,000	\$3,429

Source: Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, 15 April 2011 (via gov.il: How the Palestinian Authority Funds Terrorists: PA grants and salaries for Palestinian terrorists).^{27, 28}

[27] Prime Minister's Office. 2014. "How the Palestinian Authority Funds Terrorists: PA Grants and Salaries for Palestinian Terrorists." [Gov.il](#).
[28] Tepler, Ephraim D, and Itamar Marcus. 2025. "160 New Palestinian Terrorist Millionaires – Thanks to Pay-For-Slay." Palwatch.org. Palestinian Media Watch. October 15, 2025. <https://palwatch.org/page/41609>.

Law No. 19 rules that these terrorists receive monthly stipends and additional benefits, including paid tuition at state universities and priority hiring for government jobs after their release. Their seniority in these positions is based on the amount of time they spent in prison.²⁹ While imprisoned, the PA provides incarcerated individuals with monthly funds for food and clothing.³⁰ Additionally, the National Authority is legally mandated to provide full legal aid to every prisoner during their period of incarceration.³¹ Upon release, prisoners who served at least one year are entitled to a one-time cash grant, which increases significantly based on the duration of their imprisonment.³² For instance, a prisoner who served over 30 years is entitled to a grant of \$25,000.³³ PA law also stipulates that released prisoners are given priority in annual job placements in all state institutions.³⁴

Those who served five years or more for men, or two years or more for women, are guaranteed a salaried position or a regular salary for life.³⁵ For those who become civil servants, the years spent in prison are calculated as years of seniority.^{36,37}

The PA is also responsible for paying the individual's social security and pension fees for the entire duration of their incarceration.³⁸ Released prisoners and the direct family members of "martyrs" are also entitled to various tuition fee waivers, free health insurance, and insurance exemptions.³⁹

The funds also directly support the families of deceased terrorists, even those who committed severe acts of terrorism. For example, the family of Mohammed Tararyeh, who stabbed a 13-year-old Israeli girl to death in her bed, became eligible for a monthly stipend under the Martyrs' Fund.⁴⁰

[29] UN Watch. 2022. "Report on Systemic Racism by the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, Part II." United Nations Watch. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/50/NGO/3>.

[30] JCFA. 2025. "Incentivizing Terrorism: Palestinian Authority Allocations to Terrorists and Their Families." Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs. December 8, 2025. <https://jcfa.org/paying-salaries-terrorists-contradicts-palestinian-vows-peaceful-intentions/>.

[31] *Id.*

[32] *Id.*

[33] *Id.*

[34] Israel Policy Forum. 2025. "Making the PAs 'Martyr' and Prisoner Payments Reform Real." Israel Policy Forum. November 21, 2025. <https://israelpolicyforum.org/making-the-pa-martyr-and-prisoner-payments-reform-real/>.

[35] JCFA, *Incentivizing*.

[36] *Id.*

[37] Israel Policy Forum, *Making*.

[38] *Id.*

[39] *Id.*

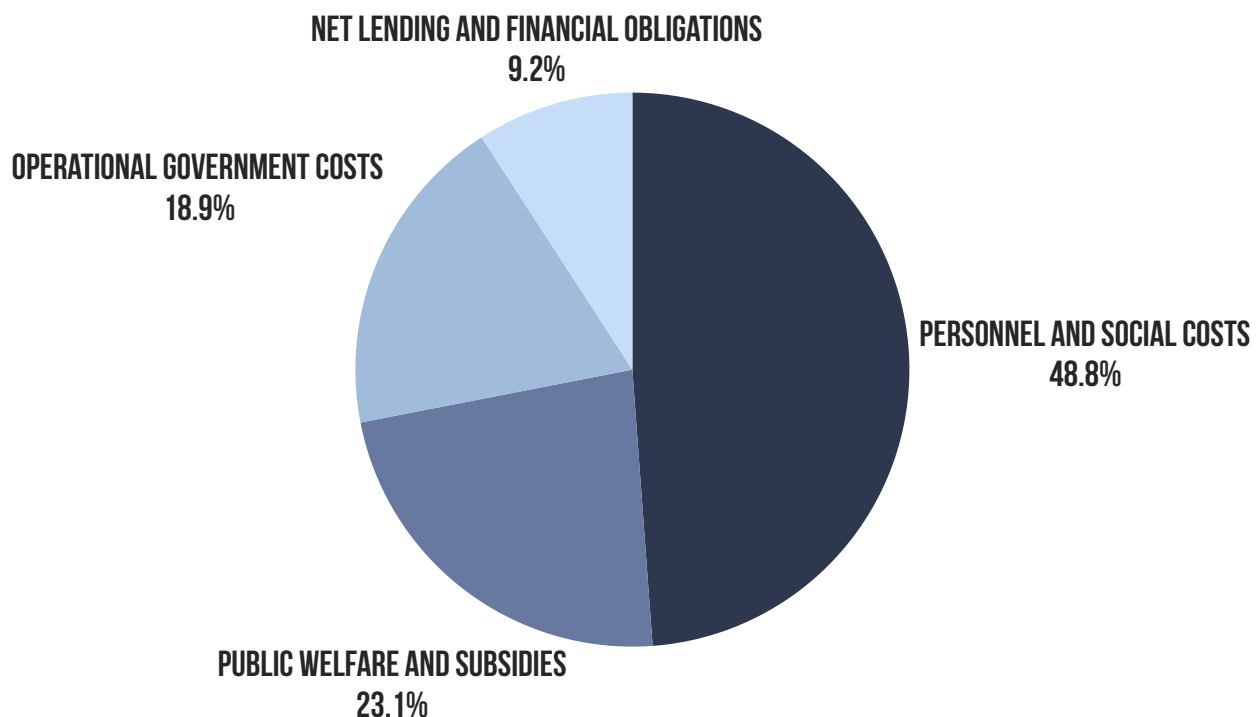
[40] JCFA, *Incentivizing*.

Hakim Awad, who killed a family of five in Judea and Samaria, is paid \$14,000 yearly and is expected to receive \$1.9 million by the end of his lifetime (payments increase according to sentence length).⁴¹ The family of Bashar Masalha, who stabbed 11 people in Jaffa in 2016 (killing U.S. veteran Taylor Force), also benefited from the fund.⁴²

2. 2025 Palestinian Authority Budget (According to AMAN Transparency Palestine)

The following pie chart is a rough estimation of the projected 2025 PA budget, as provided by AMAN Transparency Palestine.⁴³

The total projected expenditures equal 19,396,000,000 ILS, and can be categorized into four main groups based on the economic nature of the spending. *Personnel and social costs* compose the largest part of the budget, which combines wages and salaries (8,622,000,000 ILS) and social contributions (850,000,000 ILS). This reflects the cost of maintaining the civil service structure. The second largest expenditure category is *public welfare and subsidies*. This covers money directly distributed to the population or used to maintain essential services prices.



[41] Kessler, Glenn. 2018. "Does the Palestinian Authority Pay \$350 Million a Year to 'Terrorists and Their Families'?" The Washington Post, March 14, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2018/03/14/does-the-palestinian-authority-pay-350-million-a-year-to-terrorists-and-their-families/>.

[42] JPost Editorial. 2018. "Moral Clarity | the Jerusalem Post." The Jerusalem Post | JPost.com. March 25, 2018. <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/moral-clarity-547069>.

[43] Farraj, Lamis. 2025. "The Semi-Annual Public Budget Report 2025." AMAN Transparency Palestine. https://www.aman-palestine.org/cached_uploads/downloadThe ad/2025/11/20/simiannual2025-1763634467.pdf.

It combines transfer expenses (3,661,000,000 ILS) and the fuel subsidy (820,000,000 ILS). Remaining expenditures include operational government costs, net lending, and financial obligations, with a sum of 5,443,000,000 ILS. Transfer expenses include welfare, pensions, and non-wage payments, including the contentious prisoner/martyrs' payments: "Thirty percent of transfer expenses go to the social sector (Ministry of Social Development and the Foundation for the Care of the Families of Martyrs), while 53% go for pension."⁴⁴ An estimated 1,508,387,000 ILS is budgeted for MOSD, Foundation for the Care of the Families of Martyrs and Wounded, and the Ministry of State for Relief in 2025. While the Palestinian Authority does not publish exact figures (considering they currently operate under the guise that the martyrs' fund has been eliminated), the most recent estimations for yearly spending on the prisoner stipends come out to over \$300,000,000 USD per year.⁴⁵

The concentration of martyrs' payments within the PA's yearly expenditure allocations is further proof of the incentivization of terror within the PA. It reveals that the PA encourages and

institutionalizes terrorism by embedding guaranteed rewards for violence in its budget.

3. Counter-Legislation

In response to the payment system, the United States Congress adopted the Taylor Force Act (TFA) in honor of U.S. veteran Taylor Force who was murdered in Tel Aviv in 2011. This act imposed strict legal conditions on U.S. financial assistance to the PA. The TFA directly restricts U.S. economic support funds unless the Secretary of State provides specific certifications regarding the PA's behavior.⁴⁶ The TFA lays out four stringent legal conditions required for the resumption of unrestricted financial interaction: revocation of laws, cessation of payments, ending terror attacks, and the public condemnation of acts of terror/cooperation with investigations into such attacks.⁴⁷

Israel has also implemented its own counter-legislation, often referred to as the "Freeze Law," designed to apply direct fiscal pressure on the PA. This law authorizes the government to withhold tax and customs revenues collected on behalf of the PA.⁴⁸ The specific amount withheld is calculated to equal the total sum that the PA disburses annually in prisoner payments.

[44] *Id.*

[45] Ofek Kehila. 2025. "The Palestinian Authority Martyrs Fund: What Is the 'Pay-To-Slay' Policy?" Mideast Journal. November 4, 2025. <https://www.mideastjournal.org/post/what-is-the-pay-to-slay-policy>.

[46] EMET. "Palestinian Authority 'Pay for Slay' Fact Sheet." n.d. https://emetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Pay4Slay_Fact-Sheet-FINAL.pdf.

[47] Israel Policy Forum, *Making*.

[48] *Id.*

4. Analysis of PA Compensation Restructuring

In early 2025, PA President Mahmoud Abbas issued a decree formally revoking the prior laws that explicitly established this compensation system.⁴⁹ This action achieved technical, or formal, compliance with the first legislative condition of the U.S. Taylor Force Act, which demands that the PA revoke all laws setting up the payments system.⁵⁰

However, detailed analysis, aligning with claims from Israeli watchdog organizations, confirms that this reform amounts to strategic institutional reallocation rather than genuine cessation. The payments were rerouted to a newly emphasized governmental body, the Palestinian National Economic Empowerment Initiative (PNEEI).⁵¹ This is NOT a comprehensive dismantling of the system, but a calculated maneuver to obscure the financial mechanism⁵² and continue to incentivize terror. By transferring the politically sensitive payments to a generalized poverty relief body,

the PA achieved functional equivalence to the old system. The PA designed the PNEEI's "need-based" criteria to ensure that most previous beneficiaries still qualified for government assistance anyway.⁵³ Because the PA achieved only formal compliance with one Taylor Force Act condition (revoking laws) but failed the critical requirement that payments must have actually ended, punitive measures by Israel (sustained clearance revenue deductions) and the U.S. Congressional response have intensified.⁵⁴

The dedication of the Palestinian Authority to continue to sponsor terrorists under the table aligns with statements made by Mahmoud Abbas in 2018, following the passing of the Taylor Force Act:⁵⁵

[49] *Id.*

[50] U.S. Congress. 2025. "S.Hrg. 115-705 — CONSIDERATION of the TAYLOR FORCE ACT." Congress.gov. 2025. <https://www.congress.gov/event/115th-congress/senate-event/LC64481/text>.

[51] Israel Policy Forum, *Making*.

[52] The World Bank. 2025. "PROJECT APPRAISAL DOCUMENT on a PROPOSED GRANT in the AMOUNT of US\$20 MILLION from the TRUST FUND for GAZA and the WEST BANK to the PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION (for the BENEFIT of the PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY)."

<https://Documents1.Worldbank.org/Curated/En/099032625184027170/Pdf/BOSIB-F714c246-Fccb-4351-8ea5-D174dd151474.Pdf>. The World Bank.

[53] Times of Israel. 2025. "PA Document Shows 'Pay-To-Slay' Has Been Scrapped, New System in Place." Timesofisrael.com. 2025. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/pa-document-shows-pay-to-slay-has-been-scrapped-new-system-in-place/>.

[54] "US - S198." 2025. BillTrack50. 2025. <https://www.billtrack50.com/billdetail/1799939>.

[55] i24NEWS. 2018. "Abbas Vows to Continue to Pay Terrorists 'Even If It Costs PA Its Last Penny.'" i24NEWS. i24news. July 24, 2018. <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/middle-east/180122-180724-abbas-vows-to-continue-to-pay-terrorists-even-if-it-costs-pa-its-last-penny>.

“EVEN IF WE HAVE ONLY A PENNY LEFT, WE WILL GIVE IT TO THE MARTYRS, THE PRISONERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES... WE VIEW THE PRISONERS AND THE MARTYRS AS PLANETS AND STARS IN THE SKIES OF THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE, AND THEY HAVE PRIORITY IN EVERYTHING.”

Mahmoud Abbas, 2018

B. Reform of Education Systems

If the Palestinian Authority is to become a credible and viable governing entity in the Gaza Strip, comprehensive reforms are required to address its institutionalized support for terror. In addition to state-funded programs like their “martyrs’ fund,” the PA-controlled educational system is riddled with the promotion of hate and violence.

1. PA-Controlled Educational Environments

The Palestinian education system, which has been overseen by the Palestinian Authority since the Oslo Accords in 1994, serves as a primary vehicle for transmitting messages of delegitimization against Israel.⁵⁶ This environment includes staff, textbooks, school activities, and summer camps.

Palestinian Authority school textbooks, used across all grades and subjects, have been found to contain intentional support for antisemitism, martyrdom,

and jihad, with reports finding that the textbooks have become even more extreme in recent years.⁵⁷

Textbooks have also been edited to exclude information concerning political agreements made with Israel, specifically excluding the PLO’s statement calling for peace and coexistence with Israel.⁵⁸ Children are not taught to seek peace with their neighbors. For example, children as young as eight years old are taught poetry such as, “I vow I shall sacrifice my blood, to saturate the land of the generous and will eliminate the usurper from my country, and will annihilate the remnants of the foreigners.”⁵⁹ Textbooks even use the Palestinian youth’s use of slingshots against Israelis to teach Newton’s Second Law.⁶⁰ A 4th-grade math textbook teaches addition as such: “The number of martyrs of the First Intifada during 1987–93 totaled 2026 martyrs, and the number of martyrs of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Intifada in the year 2000 totaled 5,050 martyrs, while the number of the wounded reached 49,760. How many martyrs died in the two Intifadas?”⁶¹

[56] UK Parliament. 2024. “Palestinian School Curriculum: Radicalisation - Hansard - UK Parliament.” Parliament.uk. 2024. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-03-10/debates/C9D591A4-1B68-4D6B-8AD3-5BBC90398051/PalestinianSchoolCurriculumRadicalisation>.

[57] *Id.*

[58] Times of Israel. 2019. “Monitoring Group: Palestinian Authority Removes Pacts with Israel from Textbooks.” Timesofisrael.com. 2019. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/monitoring-group-palestinian-authority-removes-pacts-with-israel-from-textbooks/>.

[59] i24NEWS. 2015. “New Palestinian Curriculum ‘Indoctrinates for Death, Martyrdom’, Report Claims.” i24news.tv. 2015. <https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/middle-east/184578-180920-new-palestinian-curriculum-indoctrinates-for-death-martyrdom-report-claims>.

[60] IMPACT-se. 2019. “The New Palestinian School Curriculum.” The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/PA-Reports_-Combined-Selected-Examples.pdf.

[61] Abrams, Elliot. 2017. “Teaching Palestinian Children to Value Terrorism.” Council on Foreign Relations. 2017. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/teaching-palestinian-children-value-terrorism>.

Additionally, children are taught that Jerusalem is a holy city only for Muslims and Christians,⁶² and Jews are referred to as “enemies of Islam.”⁶³ The existence of the state of Israel is denied, and maps frequently portray the entire area of Israel and PA territories as “Palestine,” often with text proclaiming, “We will return.”⁶⁴

The PA-controlled educational system explicitly glorifies terrorism by honoring terrorists and naming facilities after them. Numerous schools in Judea and Samaria are named in honor of perpetrators such as Amin Al-Hussaini, Dalal Al-Mughrabi, Abdullah Azzam, and Nashat Abu Jabara.⁶⁵ These terrorists are portrayed as role models and heroes for children to aspire to. Additionally, summer camps are held every year in Judea and Samaria, with over 65,000 children in attendance. Sponsored by the PLO, these camps further glorify terrorists and disavow the existence of the state of Israel.⁶⁶

For example, Fatah Summer Camp in Salfit “conducts military activities and lessons on the Palestinian struggle, including assembling and disassembling firearms and visiting the graves of ‘martyrs.’”⁶⁷ Therefore, “it is no surprise that Palestinian children perpetrate violent attacks against Israelis and participate in violent confrontations with the goal of harming Israeli soldiers and civilians.”⁶⁸ These summer camps and educational tactics have a brainwashing effect on children, making them more susceptible to future recruitment for terrorist purposes.

2. UNRWA Involvement

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) serves mainly as a vehicle for humanitarian aid to Gaza and Judea and Samaria. Around 96 schools in Judea and Samaria are overseen by UNRWA,⁶⁹ and these schools teach using official Palestinian Authority curricula.

[62] IMPACT-se. 2019. “The New Palestinian School Curriculum.” The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/PA-Reports_-Combined-Selected-Examples.pdf.

[63] *Id.*

[64] Ephraim, Marcus, and Nan Zilberdik. 2024. “Special for World Children’s Day: How Does the Palestinian Authority Indoctrinate Children?” Palwatch.org. Palestinian Media Watch. November 20, 2024. <https://palwatch.org/page/35673>.

[65] The Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism . 2024. “The Palestinian Authority’s Education System: Indoctrinating Students with Antisemitism and Glorifying the Destruction of the State of Israel.” [www.gov.il. https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/reports/palestinian_education/en/Publications_strip_Pal_educ_eng.pdf](https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/reports/palestinian_education/en/Publications_strip_Pal_educ_eng.pdf).

[66] *Id.*

[67] *Id.*

[68] *Id.*

[69] UNRWA. 2024. “UNRWA Launches the 2024-2025 Academic Year in the West Bank amidst Increasing Insecurity | UNRWA.” <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/news-releases/unrwa-launches-2024-2025-academic-year-west-bank-amidst-increasing-insecurity-insecurity>.

Notably, UNRWA has uniquely extended its definition of a “refugee” to include the descendants of all Palestinian refugee males from 1946-1948.⁷⁰ Therefore, UNRWA recognizes millions more people as refugees than actually exist, especially within Judea and Samaria. In addition to the glorification of terrorism and antisemitism in the textbooks, this operational definition of a Palestinian refugee is taught to children within the schools. This definition emphasizes that those children are refugees of the Palestinian state and will one day return, which is incompatible with a viable two-state solution.⁷¹

C. Establishment of Stable Leadership and Election Cycles

1. Criteria for Statehood

Under international law, the Montevideo Convention of 1933 provides the most widely accepted formulation of the basic criteria for statehood.⁷² According to Article I of the Convention, an entity must possess four main qualifications to

be considered a member of international law: a permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states.⁷³ In talks of potential Palestinian statehood, the criterion of an “effective government” remains the PA’s primary legal hurdle.

Palestine more-or-less satisfies the permanent population requirement, as it has a population residing in Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip.⁷⁴ The criterion for a defined territory is slightly more complex, as borders remain unclear due to the lack of a final status agreement.⁷⁵ Thirdly, because of its 2012 UN “non-member observer state” status, membership in the International Criminal Court (ICC), and diplomatic missions recognized by over 150 states, Palestine has largely fulfilled the requirement to be able to enter into relations with other states.

However, the “effective government” criterion is the most significant challenge for the PA under the declaratory theory of statehood, which argues that an entity

[70] Levinthal, Batya. 2025. “UNRWA’s Millionaires: The Debate over Org’s Defining Policy and Future | the Jerusalem Post.” The Jerusalem Post | JPost.com. March 13, 2025. <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/article-845962>.

[71] UK Parliament. 2024. “Palestinian School Curriculum: Radicalisation - Hansard - UK Parliament.” Parliament.uk. 2024. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-03-10/debates/C9D591A4-1B68-4D6B-8AD3-5BBC90398051/PalestinianSchoolCurriculumRadicalisation>.

[72] DelGrande, Joe. 2021. “An Examination of Palestine’s Statehood Status through the Lens of the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber’s Decision and beyond – NYU JILP.” Nyujilp.org. October 20, 2021. <https://nyujilp.org/an-examination-of-palestines-statehood-status-through-the-lens-of-the-icc-pre-trial-chambers-decision-and-beyond/>

[73] *Id.*

[74] *Id.*

[75] *Id.*

becomes a state only when it exists as a “fact,” that is, once an entity objectively meets the criteria for statehood, it automatically becomes a state, regardless of international recognition or political will.⁷⁶ First of all, the Palestinian entity lacks exclusive authority over its territories, with Israel retaining full security and civil control over Area C (60% of the land).⁷⁷ Additionally, since the 2007 civil conflict, the Palestinian administration has been split between the rival parties Hamas and Fatah.⁷⁸ The Fatah-led PA governs parts of the West Bank, while Hamas maintains de facto control over the Gaza Strip, meaning no single government possesses unified, effective control.⁷⁹ Currently, the PA also lacks a monopoly on force, as it competes with various armed groups that do not take orders from the central authority.⁸⁰

2. Is the Palestinian Authority a Sustainable Governing Force?

The Palestinian Authority, originally

established in 1994 as an interim self-governance body, currently faces a serious crisis of legitimacy on multiple fronts.⁸¹ While the PA remains the only internationally recognized Palestinian governing body, its flaws make its ability to govern Judea and Samaria doubtful, and its potential takeover of Gaza seriously problematic.⁸²

The majority of the Palestinian public lacks faith in the PA, with a staggering 87% of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza believing the PA is corrupt, and 78% wanting President Mahmoud Abbas to resign.⁸³ These polling numbers are the result of years of authoritarian rule and democratic decline; according to *The Economist's* 2020 democracy index, Palestine is officially an authoritarian regime.⁸⁴ Since the 2006 legislative elections resulted in a Hamas victory, the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) has been functionally suspended, leading Abbas to rule primarily via presidential decree.⁸⁵

[76] JUSTIA. 2021. “Formation and Recognition of States under International Law.” Justia. June 9, 2021. <https://www.justia.com/international-law/formation-and-recognition-of-states-under-international-law/>.

[77] Staff, CIE. 2020. “West Bank Areas A, B and c – How Did They Come into Being? | CIE.” CIE. June 10, 2020. <https://israeled.org/west-bank-areas-a-b-and-c-how-did-they-come-into-being/>.

[78] Wojnarowicz, Michał. 2025. “After Abbas: Implications of the Palestinian Authority Succession.” Pism.pl. The Polish Institute of International Affairs. 2025. https://pism.pl/publications/After_Abbas_Implications_of_the_Palestinian_Authority_Succession.

[79] DelGrande, Joe. 2021. “An Examination of Palestine’s Statehood Status through the Lens of the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber’s Decision and beyond – NYU JILP.” Nyujilp.org. October 20, 2021. <https://nyujilp.org/an-examination-of-palestines-statehood-status-through-the-lens-of-the-icc-pre-trial-chambers-decision-and-beyond/>.

[80] Shannon, Michael. 2025. “Roadmap to Viable Statehood: Holding the PA to Account - AIJAC.” AIJAC. September 18, 2025. <https://aijac.org.au/submissions/roadmap-to-viable-statehood-holding-the-pa-to-account/>.

[81] Office of The Historian. n.d. “The Oslo Accords and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process.” Office of the Historian. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1993-2000/oslo>.

[82] Neumann, Neomi. 2025. “PA Reform Is Key to West Bank Stability—and Possible Rule in Gaza.” The Washington Institute. 2025. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/pa-reform-key-west-bank-stability-and-possible-rule-gaza>.

[83] *Id.*

[84] Oppenheim, Beth. 2021. “Halting Palestine’s Democratic Decline.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 2021. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2021/04/halting-palestines-democratic-decline?lang=en>.

[85] *Id.*

This system cultivates corruption through patronage networks where public funds are used for the enrichment of officials and appointments are given based on loyalty, not merit.^{86, 87} Furthermore, the PA's governance is seriously limited by the architecture established under the Oslo Accords, which created an entity lacking the features of complete sovereignty. Because Israel maintains full civil and security control over Area C (60% of the territory), the PA's viability depends on managing stability through cooperation with Israel, furthering public disillusionment.⁸⁸

In order to break the political stagnation, PA leadership must transition away from rule by decree by formally ending executive overreach and strengthening checks and balances.⁸⁹ Most importantly, the PA must commit to holding democratic and transparent elections for the Legislative Council and the presidency.⁹⁰ However, any election framework faces an obstacle: elections that include popular actors may threaten the ruling elite and risk an outcome that

is internationally rejected (like the elections of 2006).⁹¹

The PA also faces a contested succession plan for President Abbas. While the Palestinian Basic Law stipulates that the Hamas-aligned PLC Speaker would assume duties if Abbas is incapacitated, Fatah plans to bypass this, using the PLO Central Committee to select a successor and sideline Hamas.^{92, 93}

To govern Gaza, the PA must also establish the principle of "One State, One Government, One Law, and One Gun," that is, the unification of the Palestinian territories under one governing body and security force. This is contingent on the disarmament of Hamas and other armed groups and preventing Hamas from retaining any security role. However, this model is deeply unpopular among the Palestinian population, many of whom oppose the dismantling of armed groups or the PA arresting their members.⁹⁴

[86] Israel Policy Forum. 2025. "No Time to Lose: A Blueprint for Reforming the Palestinian Authority." Israel Policy Forum. July 8, 2025. <https://israelpolicyforum.org/blueprint-for-reforming-the-palestinian-authority/>.

[87] Shannon, Michael. 2025. "Roadmap to Viable Statehood: Holding the PA to Account - AIJAC." AIJAC. September 18, 2025. <https://aijac.org.au/submissions/roadmap-to-viable-statehood-holding-the-pa-to-account/>.

[88] Staff, CIE. 2020. "West Bank Areas A, B and C – How Did They Come into Being? | CIE." CIE. June 10, 2020. <https://israeled.org/west-bank-areas-a-b-and-c-how-did-they-come-into-being/>.

[89] Israel Policy Forum, *No Time to Lose*.

[90] Shannon, *Roadmap*.

[91] *Id.*

[92] Wojnarowicz, *After Abbas*.

[93] Arab Center Washington DC. 2021. "Replacing Mahmoud Abbas: Issues and Likely Candidates." Arab Center Washington DC. April 30, 2021. <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/replacing-mahmoud-abbas-issues-and-likely-candidates/>.

[94] Shannnon, *Roadmap*.

Because the Palestinian entity fails the strict Montevideo criteria due to the lack of effective authority, but still is recognized by over 145 states,⁹⁵ many argue that Palestinian statehood is constitutive (based on international recognition) rather than declaratory (based on facts on the ground).⁹⁶ Objectively, while the PA holds legal titles and recognition, it cannot realistically claim to “run” the entity until it possesses total physical control over its assets.

V. Conclusion

Two and a half years after the October 7 massacre and the geopolitical shifts it unleashed, the question of whether the Palestinian Authority can credibly assume control of the Gaza Strip is once again being tested, nearly two decades after its officials were violently thrown from Gaza’s rooftops.

Absent deep, verifiable structural change, the Palestinian Authority remains a legal representative largely on paper, lacking the practical credibility and moral standing required to secure a stable future for Gaza. The evidence presented throughout this report demonstrates that, in its current form, the PA does not meet the threshold of a governing entity that can be entrusted ‘with Gaza’s recovery’.

Profound doubts remain regarding both the PA’s capacity and its willingness to implement the far-reaching reforms presented as prerequisites for any renewed role in Gaza’s administration under Trump’s “20-Step Plan.” These reforms would go far beyond administrative or institutional change. They would require the Palestinian leadership to redefine its political objectives and move away from an overarching national aim framed as removing Israel “at any cost”, an aim reflected in foundational texts and reinforced through longstanding narratives, and expressed in the PA’s political conduct, including its consistent refusal throughout history to accept or sustain peace arrangements. In practical terms, this would mean revising the core premises that have shaped the Palestinian national project and breaking with the unwritten understanding that has traditionally bound the public to its leadership.

The reforms outlined in this report should be understood not as punitive demands, but as the minimum standard for any authority claiming to govern in the interests of its people. The Palestinian Authority must therefore choose: undertake genuine reform, cooperate constructively with Israel, and assume responsibility as a credible governing body, or forfeit its claim to lead Gaza’s future.

[95] Choi, Annette, and Lauren Kent. 2025. “Here Are the Countries That Have Recognized a Palestinian State.” CNN. August 11, 2025. <https://edition.cnn.com/world/middleeast/countries-recognize-palestinian-state-intl-vis>.

[96] DelGrande, Joe. 2021. “An Examination of Palestine’s Statehood Status through the Lens of the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber’s Decision and beyond – NYU JILP.” Nyujilp.org. October 20, 2021. <https://nyujilp.org/an-examination-of-palestines-statehood-status-through-the-lens-of-the-icc-pre-trial-chambers-decision-and-beyond/>.

