

The Palestinians' Plight: Their True Oppressors

Introduction

The Palestinian people are indeed oppressed but not by Israel. Rather, the Palestinians are subject to tragic living conditions, their basic human security often denied, and their children indoctrinated to terror by their own leadership: Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

Regular Human Rights Abuses By Palestinian Leadership

In 2018, Human Rights Watch reported a pattern of arbitrary arrests and systematic torture in Gaza and Palestinian-controlled territories in the West Bank. Tom Porteous, Human Rights Watch's deputy program director, said, "Calls by Palestinian officials to safeguard Palestinian rights ring hollow as they crush dissent."

The evidence collected in the report indicates that Palestinian authorities consistently violate civilians' right to a fair trial, detaining them for such small infractions as writing a critical Facebook post. Additionally, "in the cases documented, Palestinian forces often threatened, beat, and forced detainees into painful stress positions for prolonged periods, including using cables or ropes to hoist up arms behind the back. Police often used similar tactics to obtain confessions by people detained on drug or other criminal charges."

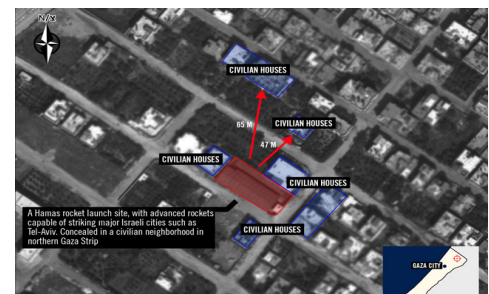


Overwhelmingly, the evidence reveals that there is no real freedom of the press in Palestinian-controlled territories where the Palestinian leadership, Mahmoud Abbas in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza, have sole or primary control of all major media outlets. Journalists are regularly detained, imprisoned, and tortured for their writing.

In Hamas-run Gaza, women are at best second-class citizens, and converts to Christianity face the death penalty. Furthermore, the human trafficking network is estimated to be worth \$64 million. Meanwhile, in the West Bank, Christians are treated as second-class citizens and women's

and minority rights are almost nonexistent.

Hamas regularly camouflages combatants in civilian clothes and deliberately fires rockets into Israeli population centers from (often booby trapped) Palestinian civilian population centers. They have regularly employed what Jonathan S. Tobin has called the "dead-baby strategy," by putting infants in harm's way as a public relations ploy to demonize Israel.¹



Lack of Political Rights

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has not held elections since 2006, and its Legislative Council has not convened since then, either. Rather than branches of government, the President of the PA, Mahmoud Abbas, makes decrees which are regarded as law.



Since Hamas forcibly took control of Gaza in 2007, they have executed over 500 political opponents and regularly execute, torture, and imprison civilians with impunity. Palestinians living under the PA and Hamas are not allowed to exercise their right to vote for their leadership, nor the right to assembly, as security forces in the West Bank and Gaza regularly break up both private and public assemblies using excessive force and weapons.²

In Gaza, Palestinians' right to privacy is routinely violated by Hamas which frequently interferes arbitrarily with personal privacy, family, and home. Hamas security forces monitor private communications systems, commonly demand passwords and personal information from civilians under suspicion, and detain individuals with no evidence.

Poor Living Conditions in Gaza and the West Bank

Since Hamas' takeover of Gaza in 2007, the average income per person for those living in Gaza has dropped from \$2,659 in 1994 to \$1,826 in 2018.³ In 2017, Gaza had the highest unemployment rate in the World Bank's development database.⁴

According to BBC, "The UN says there is a shortage of 120,000 housing units due to natural population growth, as well as damage caused by the 2014 conflict. They believe around 29,000 people remain displaced more than three years after the end of the conflict."⁵ However, of the shared investment into rebuilding Gaza's infrastructure, Hamas contributes only 5% while international organizations and the PA foot 65% and 35% of the bill, respectively.⁶

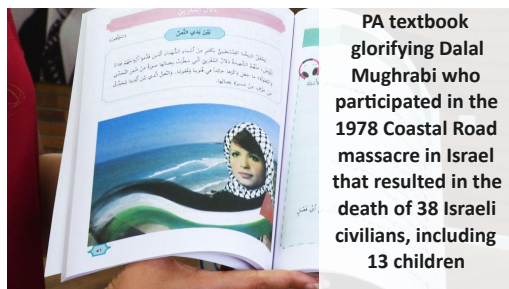


The West Bank, the economy of which grew at an astonishing rate of 30 percent a year from 1969 to 1979, constituting it (along with Gaza) as the fourth fastest growing economy in the world, was once booming with industrial plants, the construction of new towns, a growing population, and new institutions for higher education. However, this changed as Yasser Arafat returned from exile in Tunisia in 1994, and during the second Intifada between 2000 and 2005, the West Bank's economy shrank 40 percent, according to the World Bank. Today, real GDP growth in the Palestinian economy in the West Bank "has declined to around 2 percent in 2018, lower than its average in previous years."⁷

Indoctrination of Children by the PA and Hamas

The Palestinian Authority's regular TV programming for children incites them to terror, praising terrorists as "martyrs," demonizing Jews, and encouraging children to become terrorists. For example, in November 2018, a Palestinian girl avowed to "crush the Zionist soul" in a song on *The Best Home*, a Palestinian Authority TV's children's program.⁸

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident; it is a well-documented pattern.



Children's school textbooks curated by the PA are no better. In a children's textbook for 8th grade, consistent with other PA school curriculum, the Jews are demonized: "Today the Muslim countries urgently need Jihad and Jihad fighters in order to liberate the robbed lands and to get rid of the robbing Jews from the robbed lands in Palestine and in the Levant."⁹

Palestinian Media Watch reports that the promotion of hatred and violence notwithstanding, PA school curriculum presents a world without Israel, a world in which Israel does not exist at all as maps of Palestine in geography textbooks encompass all of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza.¹⁰ Today's Palestine is said to be a "state" with water access in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, a reality which would be possible only if Israel did not exist.¹¹

This abominable glorification of martyrdom and demonization of Israel pervades all of society in Palestinian-controlled territories, not just children's TV programs and schools. In January 2019, a volleyball championship in Gaza was named after terrorist leaders.¹² In March, a Fatah Revolutionary Council member, on PA TV, called two terrorists who recently killed four Israelis "role models for the children who are resisting the occupation."¹³ In Gaza, over 100,000 children attend summer camps that are best described as child military boot camps.¹⁴ Unfortunately, incidents such as these abound.

Israel's Vibrant Democracy

Conversely, Israel's Declaration of Independence states, "the State of Israel . . . will establish equal social and political rights for all its citizens without distinguishing on the basis of religion, race or gender." Israeli citizens represent over 100 countries. Over 20% of Israelis are of Arab ethnicity, and all Israelis regardless of background enjoy full and equal rights under the law. Women have equal rights and dignity in Israel, and they participate in every facet of society, including in the role of Prime Minister, Knesset members, and fighter jet pilots. Christians, too, are thriving and free in Israel, as are people of minority faiths such as, Druze, and Baha'i.

In stark contrast to the Palestinian plight under Palestinian leadership, Israel's free press is one of the world's most vibrant, elections are held every two to five years, and Israel recognizes freedom of assembly and the right to petition the government without the threat of harassment or imprisonment.



The treatment of the Palestinian people by their own leadership in the West Bank and Gaza is both tragic and immoral. In the future, if the situation is to be improved, the PA and Hamas must abandon their flagrant disregard for human life and human rights, choosing instead to uphold the rights of the Palestinian people and acknowledge the inherent value of each of God's children.

¹ Jonathan S. Tobin, The dead-baby strategy (18 May 2018), *JNS*, <https://www.jns.org/opinion/the-dead-baby-strategy/>.

² "Two Authorities, One Way, Zero Dissent" (23 October 2018), *Human Rights Watch*, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/10/23/two-authorities-one-way-zero-dissent/arbitrary-arrest-and-torture-under>.

³ "Israel-Palestinian conflict: Life in the Gaza Strip" (15 May 2018), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20415675>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Hamas' Exploitation of Humanitarian Aid," *IDF*, <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/hamas/hamas/hamas-exploitation-of-humanitarian-aid/>.

⁷ Palestine's Economic Update – April 2019 (1 April 2019), *World Bank*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/publication/economic-update-april-2019>.

⁸ PMW Bulletins, Palestinian children's TV - a world of hate (19 Nov 2018), http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc_id=26705.

⁹ "Palestinian Authority Education: A Recipe for Hate and Terror," PMW <http://palwatch.org/STORAGE/special%20reports/PMW%20Comprehensive%20Report%20on%20PA%20Education%20July%202015.pdf>, 35.

¹⁰ Ibid., 36.

¹¹ "Palestinian Authority Education: A Recipe for Hate and Terror," PMW, found in Physical Geography and Human Geography, Grade 12, p. 105. See <http://palwatch.org/STORAGE/special%20reports/PMW%20Comprehensive%20Report%20on%20PA%20Education%20July%202015.pdf>

¹² PMW, Championship in Gaza named after terrorist leaders (26 Jan 2019), http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=339&doc_id=27244.

¹³ PMW, 2 Murderers who killed 4 are "the role models for the children," says Fatah official (18 March 2019), http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=339&doc_id=27525.

¹⁴ Riley Clifton, "At Summer Camp, Hamas Raises the Next Generation of Killers," (August 2016), <http://www.thetower.org/article/at-summer-camp-hamas-raises-the-next-generation-of-killers/>.