



# THE CHANGING FORMS OF INCITEMENT TO TERROR AND VIOLENCE: The Need for a New International Response



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# THE INCITEMENT AND CULTURE OF PEACE INDEX: METHODOLOGY AND TRENDS

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A stable Israeli-Palestinian peaceful relationship requires the cessation of Palestinian incitement against Israel and its replacement by the cultivation of a culture of peace. The demand for a halt to incitement has been adopted by the international community and incorporated into nearly every framework for Israeli-Palestinian peace, from Oslo II to the Roadmap to the Annapolis Agreement. Indeed in his first meeting with Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas, President Barack Obama stated that it was very important for the Palestinians "to continue to make progress in reducing the incitement and anti-Israel sentiments that are sometimes expressed in schools and mosques and in the public square, because all those things are impediments to peace."<sup>1</sup>

In order to track incitement levels and to encourage the PA to adopt policies conducive to the creation of a culture of peace, the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs developed, in coordination with other relevant bodies and organizations, the Incitement and Culture of Peace Index.

The index distinguishes between four dimensions of culture-of-peace development and incitement:

- a. Explicit incitement to violence and terror
- b. Encouragement of an atmosphere of violence and terror
- c. Incitement to hatred and demonization
- d. Education for peace or for the continuation of conflict

The index is scaled from +100 to -100. The scores for each of the first two dimensions make up 30 percent of the overall weighted index score, while those of the latter two each make up 20 percent. In each of these four dimensions, incitement or culture-of-peace development is measured according to eight categories:

- a. Chair of the Palestinian Authority (currently Mahmoud Abbas)
- b. PA and Fatah officials
- c. Media: PA-controlled newspapers, television, and radio
- d. Education: PA textbooks, formal and semiformal educational systems
- e. Basic documents of the PLO, Fatah, and the PA
- f. Religious messages: conveyed by PA-affiliated religious authorities or outlets
- g. Internet: PA and Fatah-affiliated Internet sites and social media platforms
- h. Culture/other: PA-sponsored cultural events, other relevant examples

The numerical value in each category, on a scale from +10 to -10, is determined by a range of factors including quantity and quality of examples, seniority or importance of source, and the degree of PA involvement, as based on the assessment of the index's authors. The categories are accorded different weights across the different dimensions based on their relative importance in each (for example, Education and Culture are given greater weight in measuring the dimension "Education for peace or the continuation of conflict" than they are in measuring "Explicit incitement to violence and terror").

The index is prepared on a quarterly basis by the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, in coordination with relevant governmental and nongovernmental bodies. The index covers only the PA and does not relate to the de facto Hamas government in Gaza.

## A RECORD OF ONGOING INCITEMENT

As of July 2012, indices had been prepared for eleven quarters. The values for each of the four dimensions, and for the overall index, have remained relatively consistent across all eleven. The indices have consistently shown lower levels of explicit incitement (with some notable exceptions) and higher levels of encouragement of an atmosphere of violence and terror, incitement to hatred and demonization, and education for a continuation of conflict rather than for peace. External events including developments in the political-diplomatic sphere have a limited impact on the overall degree of incitement.

The relative consistency across the different time periods despite external developments suggests that Palestinian incitement reflects the core components of the Palestinian narrative: These components include:

1. The belief that all of "historic Palestine" (from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River) will return to Palestinian control, and denial of Israel's right to exist as a state, let alone as the nation-state of the Jewish people.
2. Demonization and dehumanization of "the Zionists"—Zionist Jews in general and Israelis in particular.
3. All forms of struggle—including terrorist attacks—are legitimate in principle. The decision as to which form to employ is made according to the circumstances. Agreements with Israel do not negate the legitimacy of the struggle.

The continuous indoctrination reinforces values antithetical to peace as core elements of Palestinian national identity. This is the primary obstacle to an end to the conflict and to peace between the two peoples.

We turn now to a brief description of some of the main trends in each of the eight categories during the period in which the index has been prepared. The list of trends is in no way exhaustive.

**Chair of the PA:** PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas has repeatedly stated his view that terror attacks against Israelis run counter to Palestinian national interests at present, given the current geopolitical reality. Changing this reality is, at this time, beyond the capability of the Palestinians or the Arab states. Instead, Abbas has called for the expansion of "popular resistance" or "nonviolent popular resistance." While describing terror attacks as counterproductive, Abbas has on a number of occasions glorified and praised arch-terrorists, and has distributed payments to them or their families. He has used prominent forums to

demonize Israel and Israelis, for example, by accusing them of training wild boars to uproot Palestinian trees, and of targeting civilians, threatening Islamic holy places, and carrying out ethnic cleansing. He has stated repeatedly his refusal to accept Israel as a Jewish state or to insist that Hamas recognize Israel before a Fatah-Hamas reconciliation. At the same time, Abbas has declared on several occasions his desire to see Palestinians and Israelis living side by side in peace.

**PA and Fatah officials:** PA and Fatah officials have frequently used public platforms to glorify terrorists and *shahids* (martyrs) and present them as role models. They are generally more explicit than Abbas regarding the continued legitimacy and praiseworthiness of armed attacks against Israel, even if the PA has decided to pursue other forms of “resistance” at the current time. PA officials promote the libels that Israel steals Palestinian organs, is spreading aids and drugs among the Palestinian population, is plotting to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and that its actions are worse than those of the Nazis. PA and Fatah officials frequently deny that Israel has any legitimacy, or that the Jewish people have any connection or right to any part of the Holy Land or its holy sites.

**Media:** The same trends seen among PA and Fatah officials are present in abundance in PA-controlled media, often in more extreme forms. Video clips aired to commemorate the day of Fatah's founding or Yasser Arafat's death glorify terrorist attacks and repeat the message that Fatah remains committed to the rifle and armed struggle. Official PA TV often airs documentaries and music videos that describe Israeli cities such as Haifa, Tiberias, and Ashkelon as Palestinian. Israel is frequently referred to as the “'48 territories” or the “occupied interior,” thereby denying the legitimacy of its existence.

**Education:** PA textbooks, while seldom calling directly for attacks against Israel or Jews, include numerous texts that present *shahada* (martyrdom), jihad, and the armed struggle for Palestine in a positive light. Israelis are depicted almost exclusively in a negative manner as harming Palestinians, and Israel is portrayed as a racist colonial implant and a tool of Western imperialism. Israel and the pre-1967 “Green Line” do not appear on most of the maps published. Textbooks on religious subjects and those used in the religious school system (the Wakf) contain anti-Semitic material in which Jews are cast as the enemies of Islam, and as imbued with negative character traits. The index's findings also indicate that incitement in semiformal educational settings such as youth movements and summer camps, and in lessons given orally within the classroom, may be more severe than that contained in official textbooks.

**Basic documents:** Core or founding documents of Fatah and the PLO, such as the Fatah constitution, call for armed struggle against Israel until it is destroyed. Israel is described in these documents as a racist, colonial entity with no legitimacy or right to exist. The PLO charter, which calls for the elimination of Israel, appears in full on a number of official PLO websites. While the charter was supposedly modified by Arafat in 1998 to remove the articles contradicting the Oslo Accords, some of these sites fail to mention any such modification.

**Religious messages:** Israel is frequently accused by PA religious figures and media of plotting and even training to destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque so as to rebuild the “alleged Temple” in its place. Jewish holy sites such as the Western Wall and the Cave of the Patriarchs are described as exclusively Islamic. At the same time, there appears to be relatively little incitement in PA-area mosques, in which the subjects of sermons are heavily controlled by the PA. One prominent (though certainly not sole) exception was the decision of the mufti of the PA, Muhammad Hussein, to recite at an official Fatah ceremony on January 9, 2011,

the *hadith* (tradition attributed to Muhammad) stating that "the Hour of Resurrection will not come until the Muslims fight and kill the Jews."

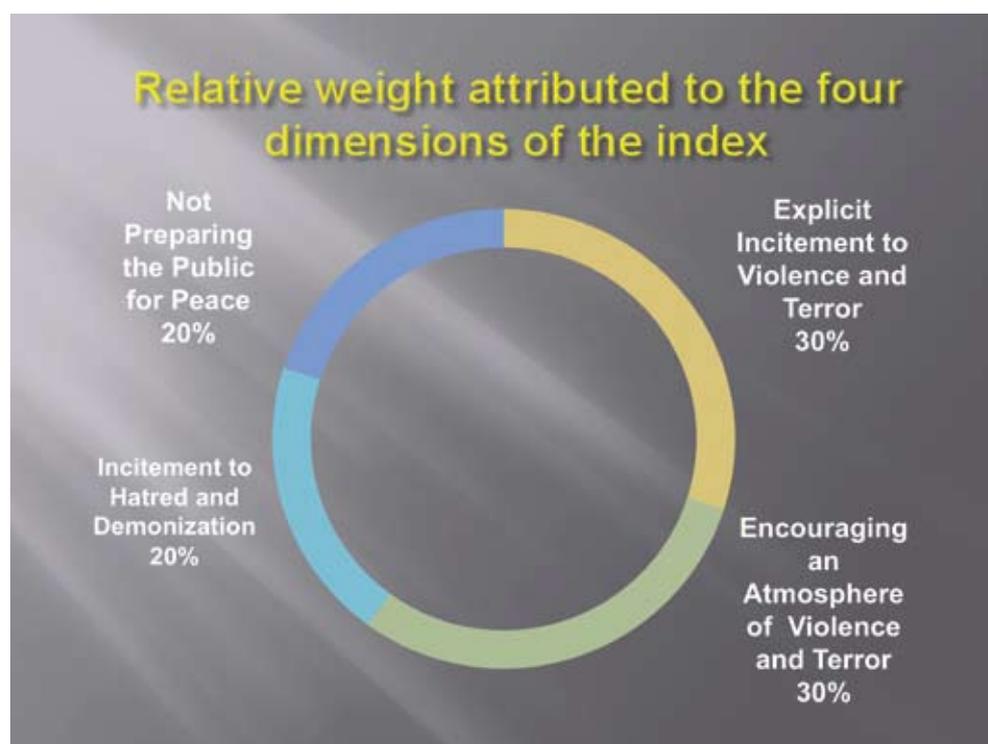
**Internet:** Videos and discussions on PLO and Fatah-affiliated websites and social media often contain explicit calls or praise for terrorist attacks. More systematic tracking of such sites is needed so as to gain a clearer picture of web-based incitement. The authors of the index have set this as a goal in the index's continued development.

**Culture:** Cultural performances and events under PA auspices often repeat the inciteful messages promoted in PA-controlled media. These include veneration of the rifle and armed struggle, praise for terrorists, *shahids*, and *shahada*, and the description of Israeli cities as Palestinian. Israel is frequently accused of stealing Palestinian culture in the form of food, dress, and music.

### The Requisites of Peace

The much-desired Israeli-Palestinian peace can only be achieved once the PA eliminates incitement against Israel, cultivates a culture of peace, and accepts Israel's existence as the nation-state of the Jewish people. Members of the international community and human rights organizations should insist that the PA respect international standards regarding incitement, renounce the glorification of violence and terrorism, and promote a culture of peace.

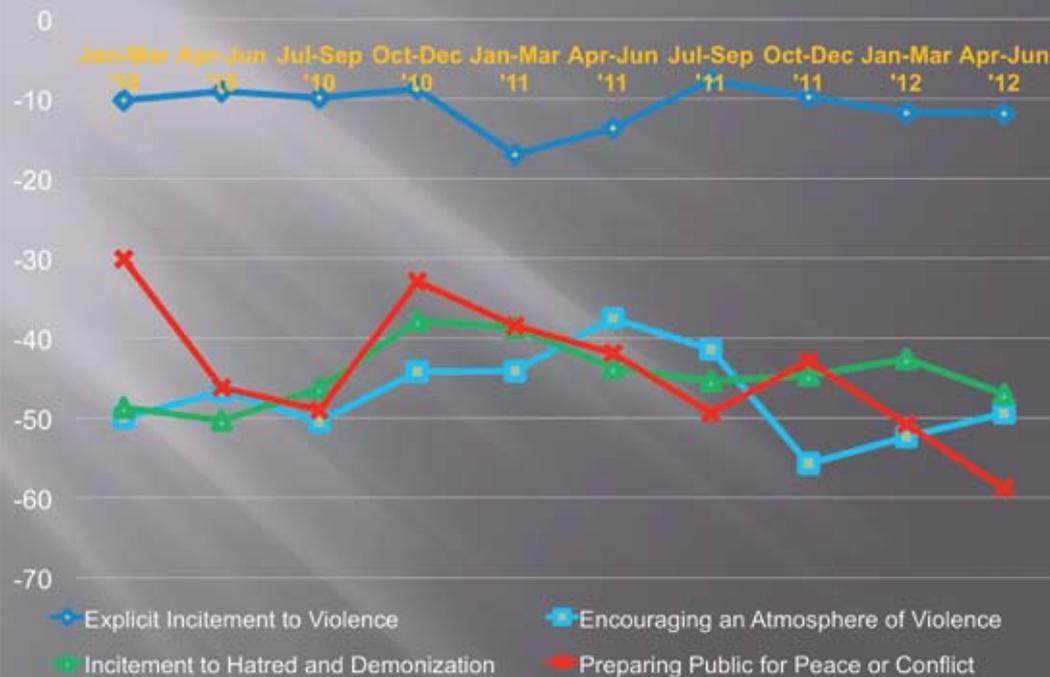
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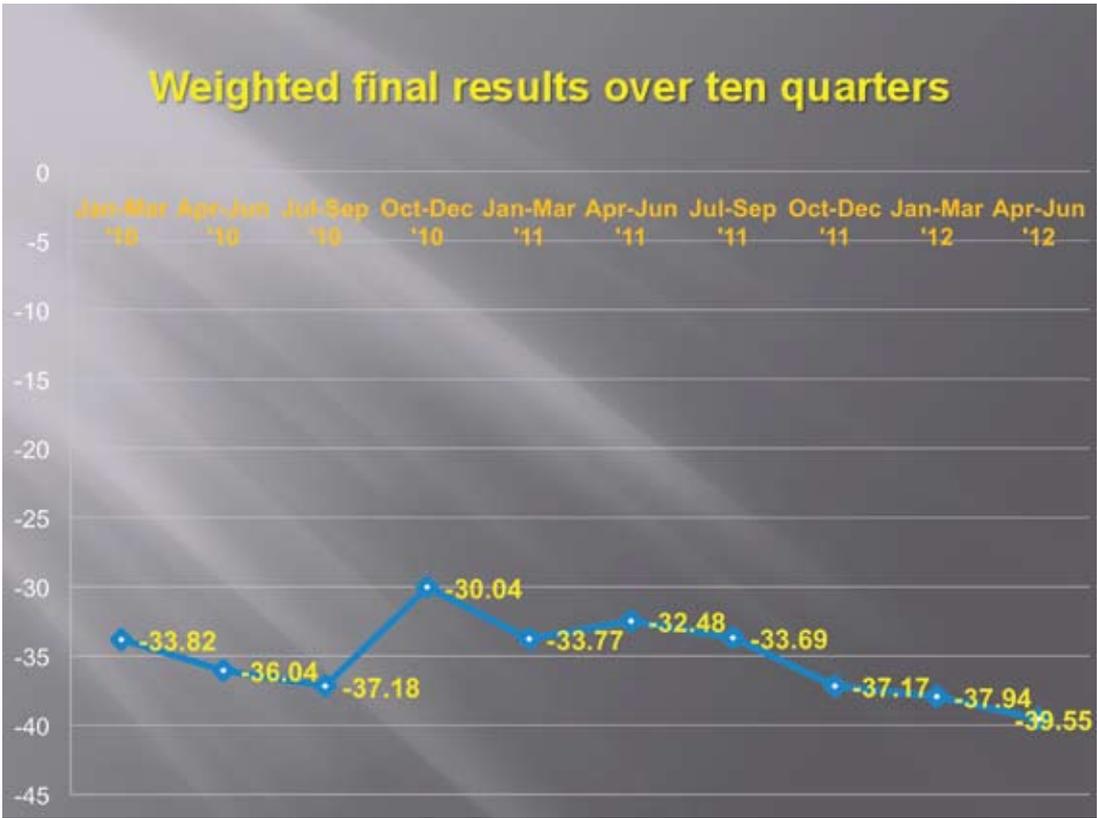


**Example of graph illustrating levels of incitement across eight categories in one of the four dimensions  
Not Preparing the Public for Peace**



**Results over ten quarters for each of the four dimensions**





**ENDNOTES**

1 "Images of Abbas," *The White House Blog*, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2009/05/28/images-abbas>.