

Israelophobia and the Weaponizing of the Oslo Peace Process

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ABSTRACT

Arafat exploited the peace process as a tool of political warfare, never straying from his goal of dismantling the Jewish State.

The Palestinian leadership methodically delegitimized Israel by denying Jewish history and Israeli political legitimacy while building their own, in an effort to replace and supersede the Zionist narrative and Israel.

This form of “diplomatic warfare” is prone to be more dangerous than physical terror, since it destroys Israel’s legitimacy, isolates it, removes it from an international framework, and grooms world public opinion against it, marking Israel for future elimination.

Palestinian Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat’s greatest innovation in the field of international relations was his success in transforming the peace process into a tool of war. Arafat never intended to walk on the path to peace that the Oslo Accords paved, with the aim of reaching a full and final peace agreement with Israel. The Oslo Accords were forced upon Arafat because of the PLO’s dire financial straits, caused by his support of Saddam Hussein’s invasion and declared annexation of Kuwait in August of 1990.



A child in Gaza stands on an Israeli flag and a photograph of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Photo: Said Khatib/AFP

Despite his agreement with Israel to engage in the 1993 Oslo peace process, Arafat never strayed from the declared goal of the PLO, which was the fulfilment of the Palestinian “right of return.” This essentially meant transforming the State of Israel into another Arab Muslim state. Arafat’s strategy was as successful as it was deceptive: he succeeded in legitimizing and ingratiating himself with the United States, the European powers, and the wider international community. Paradoxically, the PLO’s newfound international legitimacy enabled and empowered him to continue the PLO struggle to eliminate Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people. Arafat’s receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in full

military garb symbolized his strategy of depicting himself as a liberator, utilizing political violence and terror as a legal and acceptable form of a struggle for freedom.

Arafat's political thinking rested upon a certain kind of political replacement theory; he would undermine Israel's most important pre-Oslo advantage of international legitimacy and support while simultaneously legitimizing the PLO as an international diplomatic player.

There are at least two witnesses to Arafat's planned deception of Israel, and his taking advantage of the peace process with the true aim of waging war, as documented in the Second Intifada. The radical journalist Abd al-Bari Atwan wrote that immediately after Arafat signed the documents, Atwan criticized Arafat for the "capitulation agreements in Oslo." Arafat then responded to him in confidence, "I am going to Palestine through the Oslo gate, despite my reservations, in order to bring back to there [i.e. to Palestine] the PLO and the resistance. I promise you that the Jews will leave Palestine like rats abandoning a sinking ship. This will not come true in my lifetime, but it will in your lifetime."¹

Another insider was one of the heads of the People's Party in the West Bank, Abdel Al-Majid Hamadan, who came back from Tunis, shocked. He wrote, in *Al-Talyi'a*, the party newsletter, which was shut down by the PLO immediately after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, that in Tunis he had heard that what Arafat really wanted to do was not to bring peace, but to transfer the "Fakhani Republic" from Beirut to the West Bank territories.

The "Fakhani Republic" served as the PLO headquarters in west Beirut's Fakhani neighbourhood.² This is where the PLO managed its terror operations in Lebanon, against Israel, and around the world.



PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat speaks after the Oslo II Accords signing ceremony at the White House in Washington, DC on Sept.28, 1995.

Photo: Yaakov Saar/Israel Government Press Office

That is, the peace process was not intended for any purpose other than to reconstruct, within the Palestinian Authority, the terror base that the PLO lost in Beirut, as a result of the First Lebanon War. This time, though, the PLO's goal was to renew terrorism with international support for the "war of liberation."

After Arafat's death, the tactics changed, but the strategy remained the same. The PLO, now led by Mahmoud Abbas, officially gave up the "armed struggle" ideal, that is, terror, but not its final aim: the elimination of Israel by the realization of the right of return. Instead of classic terror, the Palestinian Authority turned to "diplomatic terror," to realize its aim of "international legitimacy," again, under the banner of "liberation from the burden of the colonial subjugator," Israel. In this manner, the PLO cancelled its recognition of "Israel's right to exist." Since Israel is a "colonial oppressor" of territories not belonging to it, it therefore has no right to exist.

Obviously, it could be argued that Israel is a "colonial oppressor" in the 1967 territories, yet the Palestinian Authority's stance on Jerusalem omits this claim. Why? What do the Palestinians say regarding Jerusalem? That there has never been Jewish sovereignty in Jerusalem, and the Holy Temple never existed.³

This stance regarding Jerusalem clarifies the nature of the Palestinian refusal to recognize Israel as the Jewish nation-state, because, as such, the PLO would recognize Israel's rights to the Land of Israel as the historical Jewish heir of the Jewish sovereignty and continuum of the First and Second Temples. That is to say, it served the PLO's purpose to claim that Jews are a religion that has synagogues, but not a people that possesses land, and certainly not the land of Palestine, that belongs to Palestinians.

It follows that the negation of Israel's right is not only to rule over Judea and Samaria, but the entire territory in question. So, the PLO's recognition of Israel's right to exist on the eve of signing the Oslo Accords, has no value whatsoever.

This form of "diplomatic warfare" is prone to be more dangerous than physical terror, since it destroys Israel's legitimacy, isolates it, removes it from an international framework, and grooms world public opinion for its future elimination.

This is, in essence, the end goal of the BDS. Besides the boycott on Israel and the damage to the Jewish state, it "marks" a political body as illegal, as a usurper, legitimizing its liquidation, in order to do "historical justice," to punish the "Zionist thief," and to return the land to its "rightful owners," the Palestinians.

In a more far-fetched analogy: BDS is like a symbolic "yellow badge" that was attached to the clothing of European Jewry on the eve of the Holocaust, in order to remove them from the public sphere, to mark them with the objective of eliminating them.

Related to these aims, is the Palestinian school curriculum. The PLO's aging leadership understands that it will not succeed in its "vision" in its lifetime. The curriculum is meant to pass the torch of struggle to the next generation. The leadership did not manage to accomplish its aims in its first generation. So, with its exit, the torch shall not be extinguished, and the next generation is charged to realize the cumulative aspirations of the older generation.

I witnessed this first-hand when, in 2018, I visited the 'Aida refugee camp near Bethlehem. While I was speaking to refugees about the refugee crisis, I saw pupils leaving their classrooms with plastic rifles slung over their shoulders. It isn't difficult to guess what they were taught in the classroom about the guns' function.

At the entrance of the camp, there is a large monument of the Key of Return (a similar key statue also stands at the entrance to Mahmoud Abbas's private villa in Ramallah), and anyone who knows simple arithmetic can tell you that a rifle slung over the shoulder represents a means to the end of bringing the key to the door of the lost home in "occupied Palestine." This maximalist ideology, employed for decades by the Palestinian leadership, and which characterizes their ongoing political warfare, closes the door to the legitimacy of the Jewish national home and the hope of peaceful coexistence.

Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.memri.org/reports/senior-palestinian-journalist-arafat-told-me-he-went-along-oslo-accords-because-it-would>
- 2 <https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198296430.001.0001/acprof-9780198296430-chapter-20>
- 3 <https://www.jpost.com/Israel/Jews-have-no-right-to-Western-Wall-PA-study-says>



An IDF rescue team searches for survivors following an Al-Qaeda truck bombing of the American Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, August 7, 1998.

Photo: IDF Spokesperson