

US-Israeli Sponsored Coup d'Etat: Overcoming the Conspiracy against Palestine

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Mohammed Dahlan's 13 July 2003 letter to then Israeli defense minister Shaul Mofaz.

"Be certain that Yasser Arafat's final days are numbered, but allow us to finish him off our way, not yours. And be sure as well that ... the promises I made in front of President Bush, I will give my life to keep."

Those words were written by the Fatah warlord Mohammed Dahlan, whose US- and Israeli-backed forces were routed by Hamas in the Gaza Strip last month, in a 13 July 2003 letter to then Israeli defense minister Shaul Mofaz and published on Hamas' website on 4 July this year.

Dahlan, who despite his failure to hold Gaza, remains a senior advisor to Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas, outlines his conspiracy to overthrow Arafat, destroy Palestinian institutions and replace them with a quisling leadership subservient to Israel. Dahlan writes of his fear that Arafat would convene the Palestinian legislative council and ask it to withdraw confidence from then prime minister Mahmoud Abbas, who had been appointed earlier in 2003 at Bush's insistence in order to curb Arafat's influence. Dahlan wrote that "complete coordination and cooperation by all" was needed to prevent this, as well as "subjecting [Arafat] to pressure so that he cannot carry out this step." Dahlan reveals that "we have already begun attempts to polarize the views of many legislative council members by intimidation and temptation so that they will be on our side and not his [Arafat's]."

Dahlan closes his letter to Mofaz saying,

"it remains only for me to convey my gratitude to you and the prime minister [Ariel Sharon] for your continued confidence in us, and to you all respect."

This letter is a small but vivid piece of evidence to add to the existing mountain, of the conspiracy in which the Abbas leadership is involved. In the month since Abbas' appointment of a Vichy-style "emergency government" headed by Salam Fayad, historic Fatah leaders, such as Farouq Qaddumi and Hani al-Hassan have signalled their opposition to Abbas' actions, specifically rejecting his order that Palestinian resistance fighters disarm while Israeli occupation continues unchallenged.

This underscores that the split among Palestinians today is not between Hamas and Fatah,

nor between “extremist” or “moderate,” or “Islamist” or “secular,” but between the minority who have cast their lot in with the enemy as collaborators on the one hand, and those who uphold the right and duty to resist on the other.

Israeli leaders, at least, are crystal clear about what they expect from their Palestinian servants. Ephraim Sneh, until recently deputy defense minister, expresses the consensus view of the Israeli establishment:

“The most urgent and important mission for Israel at this time is preventing a Hamas takeover of the West Bank. It is possible to do this by weakening Hamas through visible diplomatic progress; helping the effective and successful functioning of Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayad’s government; and the creation of conditions for the total failure of the Hamas regime in the Gaza Strip” (“How to stop Hamas,” *Haaretz*, 17 July 2007).

Sneh makes clear that “in order to emerge victorious, military campaigns and arrests are not enough — it is imperative to bring about [Hamas’] political-public defeat via another Palestinian element.” This element is Fatah. Sneh lists a number of measures designed to achieve this, including employing more Palestinians as low-wage laborers in the Israeli economy, releasing Fatah prisoners and giving back Palestinian tax money stolen by Israel — but says absolutely nothing about stopping the construction of Jewish-only Israeli colonies, ending military occupation and abrogating racist laws and practices. With characteristic vagueness he only asserts that “it is necessary to embark on a discussion with the Palestinian president about the principles of the permanent status agreement.” Fourteen years after Oslo, this is not likely to convince too many skeptics.

Since the Oslo accords were signed, Israel has done all it can to undermine the prospects of Palestinian statehood, consistently hobbling the Palestinian Authority. What lies behind Israel’s determination to prop up Abbas’ quisling leadership? Why not just let it all collapse and declare victory?

Israeli leaders know that shoring up support for an ethnic “Jewish state” depends on concealing the reality that Jews are no longer the majority population in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip — the territory controlled by the Israeli state. Israel needs the fig leaf of a Palestinian sovereign to take millions of Palestinians off its books, the way apartheid South Africa attempted to deploy the cover of “independent Black homelands” — Bantustans — to prolong white rule and give it a veneer of legitimacy. If the Palestinian Authority collapses, Fatah which has no popular base, will collapse with it.

As for Hamas, it stands at a crossroads. It can survive the collapse of the Palestinian Authority, but what will it become? It grew from a segment of Palestinian society — poor, religiously mobilized masses, yet it draws much broader support for its resistance against Israel from Palestinians orphaned by their turncoat leaders and hungry for a principled alternative. Hamas has the choice to articulate an agenda that can live up to the aspirations of Palestinian society in all its diversity, or it can leap into the traps that are being set for it.

Hamas leaders have made exemplary statements in favor of pluralism, genuine democracy, and the rule of law, and were rightly proud of the release of BBC journalist Alan Johnston. But they must be judged by their actions, and there are discouraging signs. The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights has reported several cases of abuse, kidnapping and torture by members of Hamas’ Executive Force, and the death of a prisoner held by Hamas’ military

wing. It is true that these incidents do not occur in a vacuum — Israel and its Fatah allies continue to engage in far more widespread murder, torture and kidnapping directed at Hamas members, and Hamas is engaged in a struggle for survival. But Hamas earned legitimacy by promising to end the ugly practices of Israeli-backed Fatah militias. It must fulfill that promise or see its hard-earned support disappear. At the same time it must begin to articulate a vision for the future that takes into account the reality of 11 million Israeli Jews and Palestinians living in a small country. We know what Hamas is against, but no one is clear what it is for.

Hamas is edging towards accepting a two-state solution just as the reality is beginning to dawn even on stalwarts of the Oslo peace process industry that the two-state solution, needed to save Israel as an enclave of Jewish privilege, is slipping out of reach. As a two-state solution “is becoming less likely,” observes Aaron David Miller, a 25-year veteran of the State Department and senior Clinton Administration official at the 2000 Camp David summit, “there is more talk among Palestinians of a one-state solution — which of course is not a solution at all, and which would mean the end of Israel as a Jewish state.” (“Is peace out of reach?,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 15 July 2007).

Haaretz columnist Danny Rubinstein predicts that “sooner or later Hamas will fail in its war against Israel. But that [doesn’t] mean that there will then be a return to the days of Oslo and the two-state vision.” Rather, he fears, “there will be increasingly strong demands by Palestinian Arabs, who constitute almost half the inhabitants of this land, who will say: Under the present conditions we cannot establish a state of our own, and what remains for us is to demand civil rights in the country that is our homeland. They will adopt the slogans of the struggle of the Arabs who are Israeli citizens, who demand equality and the definition of Israel as a state of all its citizens.” (“Nothing to sell the Palestinians,” 16 July 2007). Thus we can see that Abbas is now Israel’s last best hope in the struggle against democracy. Such a pathetic coalition cannot stand in the way of liberation.

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