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ISRAEL NEWS

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Commentary...

Anti-Zionist Show Trials By Caroline Glick

One of the most disturbing side effects of the five-year-old Palestinian terror war against Israel is the wave of global anti-Semitism that arose in its wake. The fact that the new anti-Semitic wave is rooted in the Left rather than the Right is shocking for the majority of Western Jewry, which for generations has been politically aligned with the Left.

The main manifestation to date of the institutionalization of leftist anti-Semitism has been on the international legalistic front at the UN and its protean chorus of international human rights organizations. But on January 2, the trial of Zionism and World Jewry will be enacted not in an international legal forum of questionable credibility but in a Federal District Court in Virginia. There, two former senior staffers from the pro-Israel lobbying group AIPAC, Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman, will be tried on charges of "conspiracy to communicate national defense information to people not entitled to receive it," which carry a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison. The two are suspected of having received classified information from former Pentagon analyst Larry Franklin and of having passed this information to Naor Gillon of the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

As Eli Lake points out in the current issue of The New Republic, "prosecution of this kind is unprecedented." And yet, given the anti-Israel and anti-Semitic build-up it received since word of Franklin's investigation was leaked in August 2004, it would seem that this unprecedented case, which ascribes criminality to lobbyists engaged in work that Washington lobbyists and journalists engage in on a daily basis, is simply a step forward in the five-year assault on Israel and its advocates among World Jewry.

Almost as disturbing as the decision to prosecute Rosen and Weissman is the meek reaction that their indictment has elicited in the American Jewish community. Rather than launching a concerted and indignant public defense of these men, the organized Jewish leadership has remained mainly silent.

For its part, AIPAC fired both men and has disassociated itself from them. Pathetically, the pro-Israel lobby has sought to deal with the prosecution of its now former employees by symbolically separating itself from Israel. At its annual conference last April, for the first time since its founding, the group refrained from singing Hatikva at its dinner.

Sadly, no attempt to disassociate themselves from Rosen and Weissman will mitigate the damage that their prosecution has and will continue to cause for American Jews. Very simply, if these men are found guilty next winter then all Americans who seek to lobby the US government on behalf of Israel will be placed under scrutiny.

BUT PEOPLE in glass houses shouldn't throw stones and in Israel we have our own brand of anti-Semitism and our own anti-Zionist show trials. In Israel, the international Left's rejection of the Jewish state has caused an abandonment of Zionism by its Israeli fellow travelers. Israeli leftists - first at

the fringe and subsequently in its mainstream establishment - have accepted the view propagated by the international Left that Israel has no right to exist or to assert its sovereign rights as a Jewish state.

Case in point is the trial of Avri Ran that is set to begin in the Kfar Saba Magistrate's Court next Tuesday. Ran, a rancher in Western Samaria, is accused of aggravated assault against

two Arabs who infiltrated his cultivated clover field this past March with a tractor. Ran's case exposes two of the central pathologies of the Israeli Left - its activists' campaign to criminalize Jewish sovereignty and its establishment's acceptance of their right to do so. If these pathologies are not contended with, they have the potential to endanger the survival of Israel as the Jewish state.

Over the past decade, Ran has become a symbol of almost mythic proportions of Jewish settlement in Judea and Samaria. For his supporters Ran is a symbol of all that is good and right about Zionist settlement in the Land of Israel. For his detractors Ran is a symbol of the hated religious Jewish settler. Ran earned his position as a symbol legitimately. Ran is the father of the settlement ideology that Jews must expand our settlement of the Land of Israel by squatting on strategic hilltops in Samaria and Judea that are classified as state land and cultivating them. Since he moved to Samaria 12 years ago, Ran and his family have built four hilltop settlements west of the community of Itamar. In each case, Ran financed his moves with his own money and protected his settlements without assistance but in full coordination with the IDF. Seven years ago, Ran established the "Eternal Hills" ranch and has turned it into the largest organic farm in the country. The closest Arab settlement to "Eternal Hills" is Hirbat Yanoun, a tiny Arab community whose population had dwindled to two people by early 2003. Indeed, the entire region of Western Samaria is almost empty of Arabs.

The fact that Ran had apparently hit on a successful manner of settling the land caused a furor in the radical Left. Since the outbreak of the Palestinian terror war five years ago, extremist Israeli leftist organizations like Ta'ayush and Rabbis for Human Rights have taken an active role in inciting Arab violence against Israeli settlers and security forces. In the case of Hirbat Yanoun, Ta'ayush members along with foreign volunteers from the International Solidarity Movement moved into the all-but-abandoned village at the beginning of 2003 with the intent of convincing the residents who had left to return.

Their provocations of Ran began almost immediately afterwards. In February 2003, Ta'ayush member David Nir and two foreign volunteers came to the ranch. They were met there by an IDF detachment that they had secured by claiming that they needed to enter the ranch in order to reclaim a video camera and cellular phone they claimed they abandoned the day before. Alerted to the infiltration of the radical Leftists, Ran and his employees ran to throw the trespassers off their property. In the event, Nir claimed that Ran attacked him and bludgeoned him with the butt of his rifle. Ran was arrested and charged with aggravated assault.

In March 2004, Ran, supported by the testimony of three of the soldiers, was acquitted of the charges against him. In her ruling, the judge claimed that Nir's allegations were contradictory and lacked credibility. The judge further stated that Nir "was very passionate in his testimony and I fear that his testimony was stained by a lack of objectivity towards the defendant and that he would not hesitate to point an accusatory finger at him even if the defendant was not involved in the incident."

More disturbingly, the judge noted that the state prosecution had called for the three soldiers' testimonies to be discounted "because their behavior at the event is testimony to the sympathies of their hearts" and therefore are not worthy of trust." The notion that Israel's state prosecution can argue that a citizen's political sympathies should in any way discount his credibility as a witness is simply shocking to anyone who believes that justice should be meted out in courts of law without prejudice.

גמר חתימה טובה

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But the fact of the matter is that the view of the prosecution, like the actions of Ta'ayush generally and Nir specifically, has not been influenced by the 2004 judgment. On March 20, 2005, immediately after Ran was alerted that two Arabs had entered his clover field with a tractor and were poised to destroy a year's crop two months before the harvest, he went down to deal with the trespassers with three of his workers. According to his indictment, Ran immobilized the tractor by pulling out its electrical cables and punched the tractor's operator. The other three men are accused of hitting the other infiltrator with a rifle butt. Before Ran could say Jack Robinson, out popped Nir with Arik Asherman from Rabbis for Human Rights with a video camera (they now claim that their film mysteriously disappeared), and a detachment of police immediately arrived on the scene and proceeded to arrest Ran for aggravated assault.

Although no one disputed that the land in question was cultivated by Ran, and that he owns the farm, the police never questioned the two Arabs as to what they were doing on his field with a tractor. They claimed that the owner of the field asked them to work it, but they never produced this mysterious owner or named him. Israeli law says that a property owner or leaser may use reasonable force to protect his property, and yet, the question of trespass was never raised by anyone except Ran. Instead, the police, the state prosecution and the Supreme Court have repeatedly stated that pending the conclusion of his trial, which is only set to begin next Tuesday - seven months after the altercation - Ran must be prohibited from entering Judea and Samaria lest he repeat his assaults against Arabs and radical leftists who maliciously trespass his property.

FOR THE past seven months, the question of whether Ran can or cannot be released, and under what conditions, pending his trial has been heard in no less than eight separate tribunals. In the latest ruling last week, Supreme Court Justice Esther Hayut decided in favor of the state prosecution that insists that Ran manifests a danger to the public and must be jailed pending the completion of his trial. In her ruling, Hayut noted Ran's "ideological zealotry" as one of the reasons for her decision to incarcerate him. In this, Hayut shows that from her perspective, there is a legal significance to a person's ideological motivations for his supposedly criminal actions.

In many respects, Ran's trial, like Rosen and Weissman's trial, is supposed to be a forum for determining whether he is guilty of criminal activity. However, given the ideological basis for the prosecution's pursuit of Ran, both in this case and in the case brought against him by David Nir two years ago, and in light of the prosecution's refusal to even look into Ran's complaint of trespass, his trial, like that of Weissman and Rosen, has become much greater than the sum of its parts. The question that will be raised before the magistrate's court next Tuesday will quite simply be whether a Jew in the Land of Israel has a right to defend his land against those who seek to maliciously trespass his property. That is, the entire idea of Zionism is about to be put on trial.

As Ran himself put it in a television interview last July, "In the Supreme Court I understood that the legal system is willing to take views and a political situation and to manipulate them to advance processes that suit its own interests. I understand that what I am saying is terrible. There is a civil war going on here. But it isn't a war between brothers and it isn't being fought by both sides."

No, as in the case of the prosecution of Rosen and Weissman so in the case of Avri Ran, this war is being fought against the Jews by those who have internalized the anti-Semitic view that Jews have no right to defend themselves. (Jerusalem Post Oct 6)

Flight of Fancy By Shmuel Katz

The load of misery which Ariel Sharon inflicted on the Jews of Gush Katif has affected the nerves, the hearts and the minds of myriads (conceivably a majority) of the Jews in Israel. In the tragedy of the expulsion an effective supporting role was played by most of the Hebrew media.

Shockingly, neither they nor our hyper-activist judiciary found it morally unacceptable to use the army to implement it. Here were young men and women who thought when they enlisted that they were being trained to fight a putative enemy, found themselves doing the noxious work of forcibly driving innocent fellow Jews from their homes. The obscene task imposed on these youngsters will not leave them unscarred.

In destroying a Jewish community, Sharon thus diminished the image of Israel's army, but on the way to his Gaza abandonment he also encompassed a mighty side sweep at Israel's parliamentary democracy.

Sharon was elected prime minister precisely on the strength of his undertaking not to do what his opponent, Amram Mitzna, aimed to do. When he revealed to his Likud party that his game-plan was to hijack Mitzna's policy, a majority in the party rejected it overwhelmingly. Instead of accepting

its verdict, and either retracting or resigning, he then makes a compact with the only too willing Labor minority.

Supported by part of the Likud Knesset members, he cobbles together a different majority in the Knesset to carry out the policy of the minority. In the course of these maneuvers he rejects the idea of a national referendum – manifestly from fear of a second defeat – and goes ahead with his plan.

To add insult to the injury of their expulsion, the Jews of Gush Katif are then subjected to a tongue-lashing by Sharonist politicians and assorted journalists.

It is their duty, they are told, to obey the orders of a "democratically elected" government. In short, everything connected with Sharon's project – conceived in sin, most dangerous to Israel's future, yet technically legal – was rotten to the core, and continues to stink to high heaven.

BUT NOW it is the day after; and Israel is faced with the far-reaching effects of Sharon's manipulations. Their first fruits, in public relations, have been wondrous to behold.

Suddenly "everybody" loves Israel. All the friends of our enemies, all those who have been cursing us over the years, all those who have been urging on our would-be killers, all those who have been demonizing our nation, are now hailing the hero Sharon.

Together with them, indeed well to the forefront, have rushed the left-wing and other defeatist Israelis. Their dearest wishes, their fondest dreams – of Israeli retreats, of Jewish "settlers" crushed – are being realized. For they are certain that Gaza was only a beginning, and that Sharon deliberately dragged in the abandonment of north Samarian villages so as to provide a sampling of what is yet to come.

Indeed the friendly tailwind generated by Operation Gaza has already added momentum to the international pressure on Sharon. The US secretary of state hastened to declare that "Gaza only" is not enough, and that she expects further territorial concessions that would lead to an independent Palestinian state. French President Chirac chimes in with a specific demand: he wants more arms to be given to Mahmoud Abbas. As for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, even the "Road Map" seems no longer to interest him. He merely wants the "West Bank" to go the way of Gaza.

They all seem to have forgotten the clause in the "Road Map" diktat to Israel, which at least requires Arab disarmament before Israel helps to establish the Palestinian state. They also persist in ignoring Abbas's repeated assurances to his people that he does not intend starting a civil war – which would follow any attempt to confiscate arms from anybody.

Meanwhile Hamas and Islamic Jihad are taking advantage of the hudna to prepare the next offensive against Israel. Joyously breaking down the wall between Gaza and Egypt, thousands of Arabs have infiltrated in both directions and a considerable quantity of arms has been smuggled unhindered into Gaza.

As for their systemic conduct of the war, however, they will undoubtedly be expanding the two operations which Israeli ingenuity has so far been unable to overcome: importation of arms by way of the tunnels dug under Egypt's nose, and the dispatch of rockets – whose launching pads can now be advanced within Gaza, so as to bring some 40 additional Israeli targets beyond Sderot into range.

They keep reminding the world that their Gaza victory has brought their aim closer to – not a Palestinian state, but the "liberation of all the lands between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea."

To any long-term observer of the Arab scene – through 1948 with the Arab League's war they then launched to abort the birth of the Jewish state; through 1967 when, with Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Golan in Arab hands, president Nasser of Egypt in 1967 proclaimed the war of annihilation on Israel – and all that has followed – it is obvious that not only Hamas sees the great retreat under terror from Gaza, its political implications and its psychological significance, as a great step forward towards that deadly purpose.

TO HEIGHTEN their euphoria, Arabs need only read the words recently spoken by the Vice Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Olmert. On June 8, shortly before the Gush Katif operation, he was addressing a meeting in New York of the "Israel Policy Forum," a noted left-wing organization.

He expressed his great joy at having been invited (for the first time), being so warmly welcomed and at the fact that Sharon, for whom they "had not had much love in the past," had sent them a special letter. He spoke of the new "process" that will bring more "security, prosperity and joy to everybody living in the Middle East!"

He went on to explain: "We all desperately need it. We are tired of fighting, we are tired of being courageous, we are tired of winning, we are tired of defeating our enemies, we want that we will be able to live in an entirely different environment of relations with our enemies. We want them to be our friends, our partners, our good neighbors, and I believe that this is

not impossible."

What greater encouragement could there be for an enemy? This surprising rationale emphasizes how essential it is for Israel's future that Sharon and the various Olmerts who surround him must be given their freedom from office. Following the Gaza retreat, a crucial phase of the war is being thrust on Israel, and the Arab war effort is growing in intensity.

The leaders of Israel must do some deep rethinking.

A nation cannot fight wars against an enemy aiming at its destruction while its leaders are occupied with fatuous flights of fancy about peace and formulae for negotiations. That is the lesson we should have learned from bitter experience time after time since 1948.

Negotiations must wait until the war is won. (Jerusalem Post Oct 6)

The writer, who co-founded the Herut Party with Menachem Begin and was a member of the first Knesset, is a biographer and essayist.

Inconsolable Hope By Ellen W. Horowitz

"All of his sons and all of his daughters tried to console him, but he refused to be comforted." (Genesis 37:35)

It is beyond heartache or heartbreak. There's this constant gnawing feeling with little or no reprieve.

Can you put your finger on it? There was the pure pain of watching productive, G-d-fearing families and communities uprooted from their land and torn from their homes.

There was the utter frustration, humiliation and regret of having taken an impotent or passive stance. There is the torment that goes hand-in-hand with seeing the immorality of it all - the pillaging by our enemies, the abuse and neglect from our brethren, and the absolute corruption, callousness and stupidity of our leaders. But these are the types of feelings that are universally felt by all good people when they bear witness to, or are victims of, gross injustice and betrayal.

For the Jew, it goes even further - especially at this time of year. We are supposed to be looking forward to a new year of hope and renewal. It is a time when we finish up old business, tie up loose ends and move forward. But there's a catch. Before we can enjoy the benefits of a clean slate, we're required to take an accounting of our past and present actions. And to take a good look at our mistakes.

But at present, there appears to be an utter lack of accountability in this world. And without a proper accounting, there can be no rectifying. For a Jew, this means that we risk losing our entire *raison d'être*.

We are a people in limbo, and that's a dangerous place for a Jew to be.

But how can we move on? How can we accept the unacceptable? Are we to be condemned to a state of perpetual mourning and incessant mistakes?

Upon hearing the account of Yosef's death, the patriarch Yaakov was inconsolable. Our sages inform us that, subconsciously, Yaakov knew that Yosef must be alive, because in death there is no hope, and eventually the grieving process runs its course and leads to a sense of acceptance. But when someone goes missing, there is always a longing and a hope that they will return. And so - rightfully so - Yaakov refused to be comforted.

The uprooted Jewish communities in Gaza and Samaria are an inseparable part of us, and we will return to them and they will be returned to us. The former residents of those thriving neighborhoods may move into caravans, but don't expect them to move on. They most probably will create other thriving communities in Eretz Yisrael, but don't expect them, or the rest of us, to forget. And that's a good thing.

So, we struggle to take an agonizing accounting, and to try and recalibrate in a world of faulty measurements and tipped scales. Because we know that as soon as the proper corrections have been made, the pain and emptiness in our hearts will be alleviated.

But each year, the task becomes more difficult, as our situation deteriorates.

For the past several years, not only has our generation "stood by our brother's blood," but we ate pizza and drank cappuccino on it. In a show of deviant defiance, we opted to continue as "normal", rather than remove the butchers from our midst. And our leaders encouraged us and patently allowed the bloodletting of our citizens, rather than risk criticism from America and the rest of the international community.

Our nation can be brought to an abrupt halt over the issue of union wages, but where were the men and where was the rage when women and children were going up in smoke, and homes were being wrecked, and synagogues torched?

Is this the state of depravity that Shimon Peres intended when he coined the phrase "depth of the peace". How low can we go?

Perhaps, the question we need to be asking ourselves is: Do we love enough to hate? In other words, are we willing to accept the responsibility of

nationhood and to protect our posterity, our heritage, and inheritance as we were commanded?

"You shall erase the memory of Amalek from beneath the heavens, you shall not forget."

Some people speak about the darkness before the dawn and they anxiously await sunrise. But something has to occur before that. I'm waiting for the stars to shine brightly - in the form of true leaders. I know that they're out there - they're just hidden. And when the outrage and the anguish becomes too much for them, they'll step forward in all of their brilliance.

I believe the source of the pain radiating from our hearts is a dream that refuses to die. So, for those of you who can still feel, be grateful for the anger and the tears, because without them there would be no hope, and with them comes redemption.

Shana Tova. Wishing all of Am Yisrael a year of healing and homes in a whole Eretz Yisrael. (Israel National News Oct 10)

The writer, a resident of the Golan Heights, is a painter, columnist and author of The Oslo Years: A Mother's Journal.

[Space restraints prevent me from including the extensive footnotes to the piece below. Please consult <http://www.jcpa.org/brief/brief005-6.htm> - Ed.]

The Murder of Musa Arafat and the Battle for the Spoils of Gaza

By Pinhas Inbari and Dan Diker

- Israeli assessments have pointed to both Fatah and Hamas as responsible for the murder of Gen. Musa Arafat - security advisor to PA Chairman Mahmud Abbas and former head of Military Intelligence and the National Security forces in Gaza - on September 7, 2005. However, ongoing Palestinian investigations have led some senior officials to assign responsibility to Mohammed Dahlan, the PA Minister of Civil Affairs and former head of PA Preventative Security in Gaza.

- Dahlan's Preventative Security force established local racketeering networks that generated hundreds of thousands of dollars monthly in protection money and from suppliers of gasoline and cigarettes. Dahlan was also accused of receiving kickbacks for issuing licenses and for charging illegal fees for VIP border crossings into Israel.

- Beginning in 1997, taxes collected at the Karni cargo crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip were transferred to a new account controlled personally by Dahlan. Documents captured by the IDF show how Dahlan's Preventative Security force was involved in joint investments in the Gaza construction business, from cement production and gravel import to resort development.

- An unprecedented competition among local Gaza warlords and crime families has broken out over control of Gaza real estate, as well as for hundreds of millions of dollars in international financial investment and aid earmarked for infrastructure development. According to Palestinian assessments, the market price of Gaza land adjacent to the evacuated Jewish settlements has risen from approximately \$52,000 dollars per acre just six months ago to \$300,000 per acre near the Gaza coast.

- At present, all international investment activities in Gaza are subject to the ultimate control of local warlords and terror groups. The current instability in Gaza and the West Bank makes it virtually impossible for foreign investment and, to a degree, foreign aid to be managed transparently and distributed properly. The security problems in Gaza do not emanate from the Hamas-Fatah rivalry alone, but also from an internal crisis within Fatah that pits one Palestinian security organization against another.

Who Did It?

The gangland-style assassination of General Musa Arafat - security advisor to Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmud Abbas and former head of PA Military Intelligence and the PA's National Security forces in Gaza - on September 7, 2005, was another sign of the PA's inability to impose law and order in the Palestinian areas since Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. In a pre-dawn raid, 100 heavily armed men from the Palestinian Popular Resistance Committees opened fire on Musa Arafat's Gaza home. Following a fierce thirty-minute shootout, the attackers overcame Arafat's personal bodyguards, dragged him into the street, and shot him in the head. The Arafat attack was apparently not an isolated incident. On October 5, 2005, Fatah gunmen seriously wounded Bassam Azam, a senior PA Military Intelligence officer in Gaza and a close associate of Musa Arafat.

Musa Arafat's murder did not shock or even surprise most Palestinians, and failed to elicit concern from the Israeli government, security officials, or Western leaders. Musa, Yasser Arafat's cousin, was widely known to be highly corrupt and was a hated figure to many in the Palestinian Authority as well as among leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Musa Arafat had also angered U.S. officials after admitting that he knew the identities of the

Palestinian terrorists responsible for the murder of three American security officials in a 2003 Gaza attack, but "could not divulge their names while the conflict with Israel continued."

Israeli assessments have pointed to both Fatah and Hamas as responsible for Arafat's murder. However, ongoing Palestinian investigations have led some senior officials to assign responsibility for the murder to Mohammed Dahlan, the PA Minister of Civil Affairs and former head of PA Preventative Security in Gaza. Dahlan, who is from Khan Yunis, had been involved in a number of earlier power struggles with Musa Arafat, Police Chief Razi Jibali, Interior Minister Nasser Yusuf, and other PA officials in the Gaza Strip.

While the exact address for Arafat's murder is still a subject of debate in Palestinian circles, it served as a clear warning to Mahmud Abbas and Nasser Yusuf not to obstruct the efforts of local militias and Gaza warlords from dividing up the spoils after the Israeli withdrawal. To be sure, the assassination may be seen as an indicator of an ongoing political and economic battle among various Palestinian groups for control of Gaza, particularly the former Gush Katif settlement bloc. An unprecedented competition among local Gaza warlords and crime families has broken out over control of Gaza real estate, as well as for hundreds of millions of dollars in international financial investment and aid earmarked for infrastructure development. The resulting anarchy has further discredited the PA, which faces a growing challenge from the radical Islamic Hamas in the run-up to legislative elections scheduled for January 2006.

In addition, the reigning state of lawlessness and anarchy in "post-disengagement Gaza" must be taken into account by international aid and investment groups that are seeking to help Mahmud Abbas in his efforts to rehabilitate Gaza.

Abbas has declared illegal independent attempts to purchase and register land in Gush Katif by private individuals. However, the lure of massive international investments and aid donations has raised the stakes for local militias, terror elements, and crime families. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has called for the dismantling of Fatah militias, which she called a threat to the PA's authority and its ability to carry out democratic reforms.

Musa Arafat's assassination took place just prior to the Israeli Army's final withdrawal from Gaza on September 11, 2005. The Popular Resistance Committees that claimed responsibility are no more than a patchwork of operatives from Preventative Security, Hamas, Fatah's Al Aqsa Martyr's Brigades, and local warlords, as well as the widely feared Dagmush and Abu Samhadna crime families. While former Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) head Avi Dichter and certain Palestinian affairs analysts placed the blame squarely on Hamas, Maj.-Gen. (res.) Amos Gilad, head of the Israel Defense Ministry's Political and Strategic Desk, asserted that Fatah and Hamas coordinated the deadly assault on Arafat. However, other Palestinian assessments are more confident of Dahlan's specific involvement.

Most Fatah websites also pointed to the Preventative Security forces, formerly headed by Dahlan, as responsible for Arafat's assassination, a charge later repeated by certain PA leaders and security officials. Indeed, Dahlan had been accused of backing an attempted assassination of Musa Arafat on October 12, 2004. The week before Arafat's murder, Dahlan suddenly left Gaza for emergency medical treatment in Jordan for a herniated disc, but the fact that his entire family accompanied him to Amman raised eyebrows among PA officials.

Dahlan-Yusuf Rivalry Undermines Palestinian Security Reform

Dahlan's security and business interests have also collided with efforts by Interior Minister Nasser Yusuf, who was appointed by Abbas to unify and reform the Palestinian National Security forces while bringing calm to the Palestinian public and preventing terror attacks against Israel.

Dahlan, who had headed the local Fatah Hawks terror group in Khan Yunis, built the Palestinian Preventative Security force in Gaza from previously competing local militias after the Oslo agreement. Dahlan's Preventative Security force also established local racketeering networks that generated hundreds of thousands of dollars monthly in protection money and from suppliers of gasoline and cigarettes. Dahlan was also accused of receiving kickbacks for issuing licenses and for charging illegal fees for VIP border crossings into Israel.

Dahlan is not usually at the top of the list in Western circles when PA corruption is discussed. Yet he purchased the luxurious estate of former Gaza mayor Rashad Shawwa for a reported \$600,000. Moreover, beginning in 1997, taxes collected at the Karni cargo crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip were transferred to a new account controlled personally by Dahlan, following a pattern in which the various Palestinian security forces increasingly ran areas of PA territory as private fiefdoms. Sakher Habash, an old pro-Arafat Fatah ideologue, after making implicit references to Dahlan, in October 2004 called on the Palestinians to rise up against the "new major tribal leaders."

Documents captured by the IDF in 2002 show how Dahlan's Preventative Security force was involved in joint investments in the Gaza construction business, from cement production and gravel import to resort development. According to the IDF, Dahlan and Sami Abu Samhadna are partners in a Gaza contracting firm that owns cement plants.

At a May 2005 hearing before the Palestinian Legislative Council, Nasser Yusuf emphasized that "the direct contact of certain Palestinian security organizations with foreign intelligence services, that have also provided financial support, has undermined the Palestinian Interior Ministry and has weakened the official Palestinian security apparatuses." He added that "the ongoing foreign financial support for various Palestinian security organs has also torpedoed Palestinian reform efforts."

The rivalry between Dahlan and Nasser Yusuf reached a peak in Ramallah on September 25, 2005, when Dahlan loyalists in the Palestinian Legislative Council filed a no-confidence motion to topple the government of Prime Minister Ahmed Qurie. They planned to nominate Salam Fayyad for prime minister and Dahlan for interior minister.

Who Owns Gush Katif?

Aside from the political tensions between the PA and Hamas, within Fatah, and among local Gaza warlords, there is an underlying and equally important economic struggle over Gaza. According to Palestinian assessments, the market price of Gaza land adjacent to the evacuated Jewish settlements has risen from approximately \$52,000 dollars per acre just six months ago to \$300,000 per acre near the Gaza coast. Hani al-Masri, an official in the PA Ministry of Information, noted that Dahlan would have "much to gain" by Israel's withdrawal from Gaza.

The PA had announced that a special ministerial committee would decide how the PA would develop the areas evacuated by Israel: which land tracts would be approved for real estate development and which others for agricultural cultivation. However, on August 5, 2005, Qurei Abu Middein, director of the Palestinian land registry in Gaza, told the London-based Al Hayat newspaper that 80 percent of Gaza lands were being usurped by certain senior PA officials who, he feared, would also lead the land grab in Gush Katif.

Moreover, on several occasions since January 2005, gun-toting militiamen representing "official and private Palestinian interests" raided the PA land registry office and stole blueprints and other details of the Gush Katif lands. In view of the break-ins and the flurry of land transactions in recent months, the Palestinian Authority has published notices warning the public to refrain from engaging in private land sales and purchases that would be considered null and void.

International Investors and Warlords

At present, all international investment activities in Gaza are subject to the ultimate control of local warlords and terror groups. The current instability in Gaza and the West Bank makes it virtually impossible for foreign investment and, to a degree, foreign aid to be managed transparently and distributed properly. This fact creates further resentment among the Palestinian public.

It must be emphasized that the security problems in Gaza do not emanate from the Hamas-Fatah rivalry alone, but also from an internal crisis within Fatah that pits one Palestinian security organization against another. Many of the local warlords are intimately tied to PA corruption. International investment funds and aid groups, therefore, must show greater diligence in learning who their Palestinian business partners are and what practices are being employed to govern multimillion dollar international investments in PA-controlled areas.

The lack of economic dividends and social benefits for most Palestinians, in turn, continues to fuel a groundswell of popular support for the radical Islamic Hamas, which identifies with the public and is now determined to offer Palestinians an alternative political horizon. This is not a future that bodes well for the peaceful, democratic Palestinian state that the international community envisions.

Pinchas Inbari is a veteran Palestinian affairs correspondent who formerly reported for Israel Radio and Al Hamishmar newspaper, and currently reports for several foreign media outlets. He is the author of a number of books on the Palestinians including The Palestinians: Between Terror and Statehood. Dan Diker is a senior policy analyst at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and heads its Defensible Borders Initiative. He also serves as Knesset correspondent and analyst for the Israel Broadcasting Authority's English News. (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs Oct 10)