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New Internal Palestinian Agreement Marks Major Retreat from Previous Peace Accords

An internal Palestinian agreement seeking to unify Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah faction and the Hamas-led PA is a major retreat from previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements. The revised accord, originally drafted by Palestinian prisoners, reverts to Palestinian positions held before the United States recognized the PLO and moves Abbas' Fatah closer to Hamas' rejectionist positions. The agreement does not recognize Israel's right to exist, reject violence, or accept previous Israeli-Palestinian accords—the international community's key conditions for the acceptance of contacts with Hamas. By contrast, Israel remains committed to peace talks based on the internationally backed Roadmap, which requires an end to violence and would lead to a two-state solution to the conflict.

The accord does not recognize Israel's right to exist.

- The document calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state “on all territories occupied in 1967” but does not recognize Israel's right to exist or a two-state solution. This formulation harkens back to the days before the Oslo agreement when PLO doctrine sought to establish a Palestinian state in any area given to their control as a first step toward the ultimate destruction of Israel.
- The document's repeated insistence on the Palestinian refugees' “right of return”—without specifying a return to a *Palestinian state, and not to Israel*—is incompatible with the existence of Israel as a Jewish state.
- Hamas is adamant that the agreement does not recognize Israel. Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said: “We agreed to all the articles of the document without having to recognize Israel. ... This is a major achievement for Hamas because the agreement also allows us to pursue the resistance [violence and terror] against Israel.”

The Palestinian agreement calls for continued violence and terrorism against Israelis.

- The document advocates the continuation of terror against Israelis by calling for continued Palestinian “resistance.” The renunciation of violence is a core principle underpinning all previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements and was a fundamental condition for the recognition of the PLO as a legitimate negotiating partner.
- While the agreement calls for “focusing” violence in the West Bank and Gaza, it does not rule out attacks in Israel, such as the June 25 attack that resulted in the killing of two soldiers and the kidnapping of soldier Gilad Shalit.
- The accord elevates the freeing of Palestinian prisoners to a “sacred national duty,” which is being interpreted by Palestinians as a justification for the kidnapping of Israelis who can then be exchanged for Palestinian prisoners.

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The accord fails to meet the international community's requirement to accept previously signed Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

- The document fails to accept previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians. While the document acknowledges the legitimacy of the PA, it does not acknowledge the validity of the Oslo accords or other agreements with Israel, which serve as the basis for the creation of the PA.
- The document only recognizes the provisions of international agreements that are deemed in the interests of the Palestinians.
- By stipulating the inclusion of Hamas within the PLO, the agreement undermines the international community's view that the PLO is a legitimate negotiating partner for peace.

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