

MEMMO

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New Palestinian Government Retreats from PLO's Oslo Peace Commitments

The new Palestinian unity government fails to meet the international community's minimal conditions to receive aid and recognition and represents a major retreat from previous Palestinian peace commitments. Instead of recognizing Israel, rejecting violence and accepting previous Israeli-Palestinian accords, the government's platform calls for continued "resistance." It also fails to mention Israel and accept past peace agreements. The world must stand firm and insist that the new Palestinian government meet the internationally accepted standards before receiving aid and recognition.

The new government's platform does not meet international requirements and represents a major retreat from previous Palestinian commitments.

On Recognizing Israel:

- **New Platform:** The government's platform fails to recognize Israel's right to exist, refusing to mention Israel by name but rather referring to it (in parentheses) as "the Zionist entity." In addition, the government's insistence on the Palestinian refugees' "right of return" to Israel is incompatible with the existence of Israel as a Jewish state.
- **Previous Commitment:** The government's refusal to recognize Israel represents a major step back from Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat's official letter to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Sept. 9, 1993. The letter, an integral part of the original Oslo agreement, said, "The PLO recognizes the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security." None of this language remains in the new guidelines.

On Renouncing Violence:

- **New Platform:** The government calls for continuing violence, saying, "resistance is the legitimate right of the Palestinian people." Within 48 hours of the new government's formation, five rockets were fired at Israel and Hamas terrorists carried out a shooting attack on an Israeli civilian near the Gaza border.
- **Previous Commitment:** In his 1993 letter to Rabin, Arafat wrote, "The PLO... declares that all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations. ... Accordingly, the PLO renounces the use of terrorism and other acts of violence and will assume responsibility over all PLO elements and personnel in order to assure their compliance, prevent violations and discipline violators."

On Accepting Previous Agreements:

- **New Platform:** The government platform only calls for "respect" of previously signed agreements, falling short of the Quartets demand to "accept" previous agreements. In addition, the agreement only discusses "respect" of previous internal Palestinian agreements

and resolutions adopted by the Arab League, not agreements reached between the PLO and Israel, such as the Oslo accords.

- **Previous Commitment:** As part of the Oslo accords and other agreements with Israel, the PLO recognized Israel and agreed to settle disputes through negotiations, not violence. By refusing to acknowledge agreements with Israel and by refusing to use the term “accept,” the new Palestinian government grants itself full freedom to disregard previous agreements with Israel.

The new government solidifies Hamas control of the Palestinian Authority.

- Hamas, a U.S. and an E.U.-designated terrorist organization, will continue to hold a dominant majority in the Palestinian legislature and a plurality of cabinet seats.
- In addition to Hamas, the new government includes a representative of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), listed by the United States as a specially designated global terrorist group. Like Hamas, the DFLP supports continued violence against Israel.
- Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh formerly ran the “security” wing of Hamas and the office of the late Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmad Yassin. He has repeatedly refused to accept the international requirements, saying on March 17 that the new government “affirms that resistance in all its forms ... is a legitimate right of the Palestinian people.”

The international community must not provide aid or recognition to the new Palestinian government until it meets the international conditions.

- Hamas, feeling the weight of international pressure, hopes the creation of a unity government will provide a means to ease financial restrictions without the need to make real changes.
- Hamas knows that without international financial aid it is unable to meet the needs of its constituents and risks increasing voter backlash. Financial hardships have already led to worker strikes, greater criticism of the government and rising internal violence.
- Easing international pressure before Hamas accepts the international community’s demands will only alleviate the Palestinian public’s pressure on Hamas and allow it to strengthen its position with the electorate.

Basic Facts Summary

- The new government’s platform does not meet international requirements and represents a major retreat from previous Palestinian commitments.
- The new government solidifies Hamas control of the Palestinian Authority.
- The international community must not provide aid or recognition to the new Palestinian government until it meets the international conditions.