

MEMMO

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Israel Takes Additional Positive Steps to Support Talks

Israel has stepped up efforts aimed at improving the quality of life in the West Bank, led by Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas. At the same time, Israel has facilitated an increase in humanitarian goods entering the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip -- despite sporadic rocket attacks and efforts by Hamas and other terrorist groups to build up their military capabilities. However, weapons smuggling into Gaza continues and the PA has yet to take sustained action against the terrorist infrastructure in the West Bank.



A Palestinian shepherd crosses the road at the site of a checkpoint in Ramallah that Israel recently removed as a goodwill gesture to the Palestinian Authority.

Israel is taking increased steps to bolster the PA in the West Bank and to facilitate humanitarian assistance to Gaza.

- Israel and the Palestinian Authority, led by President Mahmoud Abbas, have been engaged in ongoing peace negotiations. On August 25, Israel released nearly 200 prisoners as a goodwill gesture to PA President Mahmoud Abbas.
- A day after releasing the prisoners, Israel granted amnesty to 45 wanted Palestinians in the West Bank, giving them freedom of movement despite their terrorist ties.
- Israel approved the transfer of flak jackets, 1,000 Kalashnikov rifles and tens of thousands of bullets to the PA security forces even though such equipment has previously been used by terrorists to carry out attacks against Israel.
- Israel's removal of more than 100 roadblocks during the past few months and several major crossing points in the last several weeks has helped spur economic activity in the West Bank, including sharp increases in tourism in Bethlehem and Jericho and a 25 percent increase in crops exported to Israel.

- Despite Hamas' continuing military buildup, Israel has roughly doubled the goods transferred into Gaza daily, including new supplies such as cement. Terrorists in Gaza have routinely used the concrete supplies to reinforce underground bunkers and to construct the base of rocket-launching positions.
- Israel also reopened the Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel and Gaza in late August after the area underwent repairs from a terrorist attack carried out four months ago.

While the PA has taken tentative steps to combat terrorism in the West Bank, more sustained and effective action is needed.

- The Roadmap's first phase requires the PA to "begin sustained, targeted, and effective operations aimed at confronting all those engaged in terror and dismantlement of terrorist capabilities and infrastructure."
- The PA security force has thus far failed to take sustained action to confront terrorism and dismantle the terrorist infrastructure throughout the West Bank, focusing instead on more limited issues of law and order.
- Though the PA has recently closed charities connected to Hamas, more action is required to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure. The Israeli government reported that Israel gave the PA information on Hamas locations nearly a dozen times with no substantial measures taken.
- The PA security forces have repeatedly arrested members of terrorist groups only to release them shortly thereafter.

Israel also continues to facilitate humanitarian assistance for Gazans despite the military build-up by Hamas and other terrorists.

- Since the Egyptian-mediated reduction in hostilities went into effect, terrorists have fired nearly 50 rockets and mortars at Israel and have continued to develop longer-range rockets capable of hitting large Israeli population centers, including Ashkelon, which has more than 100,000 residents.
- Hamas has advanced its weapons capabilities, smuggling into Gaza 8,000 iron pipes — which serve as the base of the rocket — as well as toxic chemicals used to produce higher grade explosives.
- Terrorists in Gaza continue to build their military infrastructure by holding extensive military training drills, contrary to the stipulations of the Egyptian-mediated reduction in hostilities.
- Like every other sovereign nation, Israel has the right and duty to defend its citizens. If the military build-up and rocket attacks persist, Israel may be forced to take increased measures to protect its citizens being targeted in rocket or other attacks.