

MEMMO

October 6, 2015

Palestinian Incitement Fueling Terrorism

The recent surge in Palestinian incitement and terror since mid-Sept. in Jerusalem and the West Bank poses a direct threat to the security of both Israelis and Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has sought to ease the violence, but recent inflammatory remarks about the peace process and the Temple Mount made by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and other Palestinian leaders have exacerbated an already incendiary atmosphere. The United States must urge President Abbas to do more to reduce tensions, condemn the recent wave of violence and return to direct bilateral Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

Abbas' Inflammatory United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Speech

- In his UNGA address, Abbas said he was no longer bound by agreements signed with Israel.
- He claimed, incorrectly, that Israel “insists on continuing its destruction of the two-state solution,” which he said makes it “an apartheid regime.”
- Abbas inflamed the incendiary Temple Mount issue by inaccurately claiming that the Israeli government used “brutal force to impose its plans to undermine the Islamic and Christian sanctities in Jerusalem.” Falsely, he argued that Israel was attempting to change the status quo on the Temple Mount, “dangerously transforming the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a diplomatic one to a religious one.”
 - In fact, Israel’s Temple Mount policy since 1967 has been to ban Jewish prayer. Jewish visitors are also prohibited from bringing prayer books or displaying national symbols on the Temple Mount. In recent weeks, Israeli authorities have limited all access to the Temple Mount in order to ease tensions.
- Rather than returning to the direct bilateral negotiations necessary to yield a Palestinian state, Abbas vowed to “continue...[Palestinian] efforts to accede to international conventions and organizations,” including more action at the International Criminal Court.

Deadly Attacks on Israeli Civilians

- On Oct. 3, two Israeli men were killed by a Palestinian in a stabbing attack in Jerusalem’s Old City. Two others, the wife and two-year-old toddler of one of the victims, were also wounded in the attack. In response, the Palestinian Authority blamed Israel for killing the terrorist.

- On Oct. 1, almost immediately after President Abbas' UNGA speech, two Israeli parents—one of which was Israeli-American—driving in the West Bank were murdered in front of their children by Palestinian terrorists. Abbas' Fatah party praised the shooting, calling it a “necessary action.” Israel has arrested members of a Hamas cell in connection with this attack.
- During the Jewish religious holiday of Rosh Hashanah on Sept. 14, a 64-year-old Israeli man was killed in a car crash after Palestinians stoned his car causing him to veer off the road. A few days later, a mother and her baby were injured in a similar attack.
- Also during Rosh Hashanah, Palestinians barricaded themselves inside the Al-Aqsa mosque with improvised weapons, intending to provoke clashes with the non-Muslim visitors and prevent them from visiting the site. Israel responded by sending riot police to the Temple Mount to disarm them, resulting in clashes.
- In recent weeks, Palestinian youths armed with rocks and firebombs have attacked Israeli drivers and police and instigated clashes on the Temple Mount.
- In a marked departure from previous protocol, Abbas has not condemned the terror, instead criticizing Israel for its efforts to restore security. On Oct. 5, only after the attacks intensified, did Abbas reportedly order his security chiefs to stop West Bank protests.

Palestinian Leaders Deny Jewish Connection to Temple Mount, Jerusalem

- In a Sept. 16 speech, Abbas declared, “Every drop of blood spilled in Jerusalem is pure, every shahid [martyr] will reach paradise, and every injured person will be rewarded by God.”
- In that same speech, Abbas said, “They [Jews] have no right to desecrate the mosque with their dirty feet, we won't allow them to do that.” U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon reportedly chided Abbas for this inflammatory remark.
- Also on Sept. 16, Sheikh Ekrima Sabri, the head of the High Islamic Council on the Temple Mount, condoned the recent violence. “When a house of God is attacked, that is worse than me personally being attacked. Al-Aqsa is part of our faith. Defending our faith is the most powerful form of defense,” he stated.

Israel is Committed to Peace and Access to the Temple Mount

- Israel has worked to address Jewish extremism against Palestinians. Even before the most recent attacks, the Israeli government approved unprecedented measures to hold Jewish terror suspects in administrative detention for up to six-months in renewable increments. So far, three Jewish extremists are being held under the new detention policy.
- In his Oct. 1 speech to the UNGA, Prime Minister Netanyahu called on Abbas to immediately return to negotiations without preconditions. “I remain committed to a vision of two states for two peoples in which a demilitarized Palestinian state recognizes the Jewish state,” Netanyahu said.
- Israel is committed to safeguarding access to the holy sites for the three monotheistic faiths in Jerusalem. In his UNGA speech, Netanyahu explicitly stated, “Israel is fully committed to “[...] strictly maintaining the status quo on the Temple Mount and is committed to continuing to do so

in accordance with the agreements between us and the Jordanians and the Waqf [Moslem religious council].”

- The Temple Mount is the holiest site in Judaism. For over 3000 years, it has been revered as the location of the two ancient holy temples. From 1948 to 1967, Jordan controlled the area and barred Jews from entering the holy complex. Since coming under Israeli control in 1967, people of all religions have been granted access to the Temple Mount and Jerusalem’s holy sites, and Israel has allowed the Islamic religious authorities under Jordanian patronage to administer the Temple Mount complex.