

MEMMO

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Palestinian Unity Government a Setback for Peace

The formation of a Palestinian Authority unity government backed by Hamas is a disturbing setback for peace. Rather than pursue a peace agreement with his willing Israeli partner, PA President Mahmoud Abbas chose to align with an Islamist terrorist organization that seeks Israel's destruction and continues to perpetrate terror attacks against Israel. Congress should suspend aid to the PA while it conducts a thorough review of continued U.S. assistance to ensure that U.S. law, which prohibits funds to a Palestinian government in which Hamas participates or has undue influence, is completely followed and implemented.

Hamas approved the formation of the new Palestinian government and intends to exert influence over it.

- Hamas' role in the unity government is not merely symbolic. Hamas leaders approved of the ministerial slate and now intend to help determine government policy, including the pathway forward to elections.
- The new government allows Hamas to participate in the PA even though the Islamist group has not accepted the Quartet's demands to renounce violence, recognize Israel's right to exist, and accept previous agreements.
- In approving the new government, outgoing Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh called it a "historic move." "We leave the government," he said, "but stay in power. ...We give up the chair but not the role we play."
- Hamas appears to be following the model of the terrorist group Hezbollah in Lebanon, by which it integrates itself into the political system while maintaining its terrorist force. Under the new government, Hamas will maintain authority over its military forces and rocket arsenal in Gaza.
- "This Palestinian unity government is a government of technocrats backed by terrorists, and should be treated as such," said Israeli Ambassador to the United States Ron Dermer. "With suits in the front office and terrorists in the back office, it should not be business as usual."



Outgoing Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh called the unity government a "historic move."

Hamas is an unrepentant Islamist terrorist organization that has shown no signs of moderation or reform.

- Both before and after it signed the agreement, Hamas failed to change a single part of its extremist agenda, which openly seeks Israel's destruction and its replacement with a radical Islamist society.
- In fact, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said that the purpose of the new government is to "unify the Palestinian people against ... the Zionist enemy" and to fight for the "liberation of Jerusalem, the West Bank and the rest of Palestine [i.e., the entire State of Israel]."

- In the past, Hamas' involvement in the political process has not moderated or otherwise altered its goals. Hamas seized Gaza by force and now rules the territory through fear and the imposition of its version of Islamic law.
- The Hamas charter, published a year after the organization's 1987 founding, is laced with anti-Semitism and racism, rejects peaceful efforts to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and calls for the destruction of Israel through *jihad*. Hamas considers all of Israel to be occupied territory.
- All of Israel's agreements with the Palestinians are predicated upon their recognizing Israel's right to exist and forswearing the use of violence — two conditions that Hamas refuses to accept.

Congressional leaders from both parties have strongly condemned the unity government and called for a review of its funding.

- “President Abbas argues that the new government is composed of ministers without political affiliation, but this new government appears dependent upon Hamas and Hamas continues to support terrorism in its quest to destroy the state of Israel,” said House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA).
- “Yesterday's action by the Palestinian Authority is a gigantic step backward. Hamas is a terrorist organization and its leaders continue to pursue the destruction of the state of Israel. I stand with Israel and condemn the Palestinians' decision to form this new government, which is clearly backed by Hamas,” said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV).
- “Until Hamas renounces violence, recognizes the Jewish State of Israel, and accepts previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, it should not be permitted a role in governing,” said House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (D-MD).
- “I will be joining Democrats and Republicans,” said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), “in efforts to suspend all aid to the Palestinian Authority as long as they continue this unity government or until Hamas recognizes the state of Israel and rejects terrorism.”
- “Funding for the Palestinians is off-the-table until it is clear that the unity government is committed to peace and security,” said Rep. Kay Granger (R-TX), chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, which controls funding to the PA.
- “As long as Hamas rejects the Quartet principles and the existence of the State of Israel, United States funding for this unity government is in jeopardy,” said Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY), ranking member of the House Appropriations Committee.

America should suspend aid to the PA while it conducts a thorough review of continued U.S. assistance in order to ensure compliance with U.S. law.

- The United States must ensure that any aid to the unity government remains consistent with existing U.S. law, which stipulates that no funds can be provided to a Palestinian government in which Hamas participates or has undue influence.
- The United States must reject Palestinian attempts to downplay Hamas' role in the government and insist that the group have no impact on determining government policy.
- The United States must closely monitor PA spending to ensure no funds are supporting Hamas, its “security forces,” or propaganda.
- The United States has consistently declared Hamas a terrorist organization and rejected any attempts to engage Hamas prior to its acceptance of the three criteria. President Clinton first designated Hamas a terrorist organization in 1997, and this policy has been fully supported and strengthened by subsequent U.S. administrations.