

Palestinian Leader Claims Hamas, Popular Front Aren't Terrorists at UN Event

Palestine Liberation Organization Secretary-General Saeb Erekat said Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) "are not terrorist organizations" at a United Nations event marking "50 years of occupation" by Israel in the disputed territories, The Jerusalem Post reported.

"We are a people who strive to achieve our independence, and our choice in the PLO ... is to achieve peace peacefully through negotiations," Erekat said.

Israeli Ambassador to the U.N. Danny Danon blasted Erekat and other Palestinian leaders, saying they "have no shame."

"These are lies and incitement from those who are paying terrorists to kill innocent Israelis," he said. "These obsessive attempts to besmirch our good name will not change the fact that the Palestinian leadership refuses to end their support for terror."

Prior to the U.N. event, Danon's office released evidence showing the two organizations behind the event, Al Haq and the Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, have ties to the Hamas and Popular PFLP terror groups. Most recently, the PFLP was behind the June 16 murder of an Israeli Border Police officer, Hadas Malka.

"The U.N. is colluding with supporters of terror seeking to harm Israel," said Danon. "It is beyond comprehension that U.N. funds are supporting organizations which aid terrorists and incite against Israel."

Stephane Dujarric, a spokesperson for U.N. Secretary-General

Antonio Guterres, said Guterres was “aware of the position of the Israeli government” and that the event “is not something that is being sponsored” by the U.N.’s leadership.

Danon later responded even more fiercely.

“The Palestinian leadership refuses to end their support for terror,” he said. “The PA spreads lies and incitement while continuing to pay terrorists who kill innocent Israelis. I call on the U.N. to close down all the biased anti-Israel bodies and agencies working with supporters of terrorism.”

It seems Israel’s Arab neighbors may actually support the Jewish state on this matter. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, who was elected to replace exiled Hamas political leader Khaled Mashaal in early May, is reportedly stranded in Gaza because the Arab countries refuse to host him. Qatari officials booted Hamas from their country, and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi rejected a request to allow Haniyeh to enter his country and keep a “low profile.”

Iran did offer to host the terror group’s leader, but Hamas rejected that invitation.

Meanwhile, Guterres has been walking the fence on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, at times taking both sides. He’s previously railed against anti-Semitism against Israel, but has also expressed “concern” over Israel’s “occupation” of territory it won during the Six-Day War.

He is scheduled to visit Israel in August. During that visit, which will be hosted by Danon, he is scheduled to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Reuven Rivlin, receive briefings from senior security officials, and visit Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust remembrance center.

“I am looking forward to showing the secretary-general the true Israel, which is an island of prosperity and stability in the tumultuous Middle East,” Danon said. “Particularly because

of the U.N.'s discriminating treatment of Israel, it's important for the secretary-general to see the complex challenges Israel is dealing with up close, along with its great contribution to the world as an innovative and groundbreaking country in many fields." {eo}

JNS contributed to this report.