

Some Major Problems With the Statement of Palestinian President Abbas

President Donald Trump met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, after which the two of them delivered scripted remarks in English and Arabic, respectively. What Abbas said reveals just how deep the gulf remains between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

In Trump's remarks, he said, "I want to support you in being the Palestinian leader who signs his name to the final and most important peace agreement that brings safety, stability, and prosperity to both peoples and to the region."

And while emphasizing that the United States could not impose an agreement on the Israelis and Palestinians, he said, "I would love to be a mediator or an arbitrator or a facilitator. And we will get this done."

He then praised the efforts made so far by the Israelis and Palestinians, in particular, in coordinating security. He also stated, "But there cannot be lasting peace unless the Palestinian leaders speak in a unified voice against incitement to violate—and violence and hate."

He pledged America's commitment to help improve business opportunities for the Palestinians and reiterated his desire to work for peace.

Unfortunately, the remarks of Abbas only underscore just how distant real peace seems to be.

Immediately after his opening greetings, he had this to say: "Mr. President, our strategic option, our strategic choice is to bring about peace based on the vision of the two-state—a

Palestinian state with its capital of East Jerusalem that lives in peace and stability with the state of Israel based on the borders of 1967.”

Talk about a slap in the face.

First, Israel’s 1967 borders are indefensible, as was reiterated in 2011 after President Obama seemed to advocate a return to those borders. (To give one example of indefensible borders, the Netanya area of Israel would be less than 10 miles wide.)

Second, dividing Jerusalem will not lead to lasting peace, and it is only the Jewish people, not the Palestinians, who have a true historic claim to the city as their capital. As Prime Minister Netanyahu said last year, “The idea of a divided, split, wounded city is one we will never return to.”

Ironically, Abbas’ remarks come just weeks before Israel celebrates the 50th anniversary of the liberation of East Jerusalem in the Six Day War, which also marks the end of the pre-1967 borders. Yet this was the starting point of his presentation.

President Abbas then emphasized the desire of his people to have a two-state solution, along with his determination to fight against ISIS, expressing real hope that President Trump would help broker a lasting peace agreement.

He also made some opaque remarks about “the issue of the refugees and the issue of the prisoners” in light of the stipulations of international law. But it was not clear (at least, to me) if he was speaking of the return of all so-called Palestinian refugees worldwide, along with the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Abbas then said, “Mr. President, it’s about time for Israel to end its occupation of our people and of our land after 50 years. We are the only remaining people in the world that

still live under occupation. We are aspiring and want to achieve our freedom, our dignity and our right to self-determination. And we also want for Israel to recognize the Palestinian state just as the Palestinian people recognize the state of Israel.”

This paragraph is also fraught with problems, as much as I have great sympathy for the plight of the Palestinian people.

First, the reason for the so-called occupation is: 1. the refusal of Arab leadership to agree to previous two-state offers, first in 1937 and then in 1947; 2. the attempted Arab destruction of Israel in 1967, which Israel preempted with the Six Day War, expanding its borders in the process and 3. ongoing Arab and Palestinian attacks on the Jewish people, because of which Israel has continued to control the West Bank of the Jordan (ancient Judea and Samaria). To lay the blame on Israel here is to have the situation backwards.

Second, it is misleading to speak of Palestinian recognition of Israel. Has President Abbas, in Arabic, recognized Israel as a Jewish state? And if not, what does this imply? And what about a report from early this year stating that Palestinian Authority textbooks “ignore the existence of Israel”?

But the worst of President Abbas’s remarks was still to come.

He said, “Mr. President, I affirm to you that we are raising our youth, our children, our grandchildren on a culture of peace.”

A culture of peace? By naming schools after Palestinian terrorists? (Last year, an elementary school was named the planner of the Munich massacre.) By celebrating them as martyrs and making them heroes for the children to emulate? By spreading false information about Israel and the Temple Mount that so provoked Palestinian young people that teens as young as 13 engaged in spontaneous acts of terror?

To give one case in point from 2016, “Fatah Central Committee member Sultan Abu al-Einein, a top adviser to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, told a Palestinian website in June, ‘If you ask me my blunt position, I would say—every place you find an Israeli, slit his throat.’ A few days later, 17-year-old Muhammad Nasser Tarayrah broke into the home of 13-year-old Hallel Yaffa Ariel and stabbed her to death in her bed.”

Or consider this headline reported on [this site](#), which monitors Palestinian media: “Suicide bomber honored a year later with monument and youth procession.” (The actual Palestinian news report from April 19 is translated there. I recommend you take some time to explore the site and read actual quotes from Palestinian leaders.)

This is what you call “raising our youth, our children, our grandchildren on a culture of peace”?

I do believe that the great majority of the Palestinians want to live in peace (as do the great majority of Israelis), and I do not claim that the Israelis are all guiltless and the Palestinians are all guilty.

But it is clear that, despite the good words spoken by President Abbas, words of appreciation for President Trump and words of aspiration for peace for all, the path he is taking will not lead to peace.

If he really does want peace, then let him stop funding terrorism, let him stop teaching children to hate, and let him give up the false claim to Jerusalem.

That alone will lead to the real liberation of his people. It’s time these downtrodden Palestinians have leaders who will represent their best interests. {eo}