

Is the Israeli-Palestinian Security Cooperation a Myth?

State Department officials and Middle East “experts” are always warning us that if the Palestinian Authority collapses, Israel will be harmed because Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation will come to an end. But an incident in Ramallah this week makes one wonder if that “security cooperation” really exists at all.

The Palestinian news agency *Ma'an* boasted on Dec. 22 that “Palestinian police ordered Israeli Border Police forces out of the Beituniya area of western Ramallah and threatened to use their weapons if they refused, according to local security sources.” Indeed, a YouTube video of the incident appears to confirm *Ma'an*’s characterization of the episode.

Ramallah is the capital of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and, under the Oslo accords, the city is under the complete security control of the PA—as opposed to some other parts of the territories where Israel has the responsibility for security. So what were Israeli Border Police doing inside Ramallah’s city limits?

“Israeli forces had been chasing Palestinian schoolchildren in the area, when a number of Palestinian police officers led by Lieutenant Akef al-Shalan arrived,” *Ma'an* reported.

Here we have a textbook case of how “Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation” is supposed to work. Young Palestinians were throwing rocks—a time-honored method of execution in the Middle East—in an attempt to maim or kill Israelis. Last September’s murder-by-stoning of 64-year-old Alexander Levlovitz as he was leaving Rosh Hashana dinner with his family is a grim reminder of how serious rock-throwing is.

The Israelis were in hot pursuit of a group of Palestinian

would-be murderers. When the terrorists crossed into Ramallah, the Palestinian police should have arrested them. Instead, the police turned against the Israelis, screaming and threatening them (as the YouTube video clearly shows) as they expel the Israelis from the area.

Writing on last March, Nicholas Heras and Ilan Goldenberg of the Center for a New American Security dramatically warned of “the West Bank’s potential transformation into an ungoverned space that could become a haven for terrorism” if the PA collapses.

In April, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy issued a report titled “Preserving Israeli-Palestinian Security Cooperation” which claimed that “security cooperation [between the PA and Israel] and the positive dynamics it creates are one of the few hopeful spots in an otherwise grim arena. ... Washington should prioritize efforts to protect and support security cooperation and clearly convey this sense of priority to Palestinian and Israeli leaders.”

This perspective has clearly filtered down into policymaking circles. On Dec. 5, Secretary of State John Kerry declared in a speech at the Brookings Institution that the collapse of the PA “would threaten the security of Israel” because it would lead to “chaos, lawlessness and desperation” and “Israel would be forced to assume all governance in the West Bank.”

If the current “governance” by the PA consists of protecting terrorists, then what kind of governance is that? How is it “hopeful”—as the Washington Institute put it—if PA security forces prevent Israeli soldiers from pursuing rock-throwers? While the Center for a New American Security is claiming that the collapse of the PA could turn the area into “a haven for terrorism,” doesn’t the Ramallah incident show that, in fact, it has already become a haven for terrorism?

The PA’s security forces have, in effect, informed young

Palestinians: Go ahead, try to cripple or murder Jews, and if the Israeli soldiers chase you, then come to us and we will protect you from them. If that's what Secretary Kerry and the foreign policy wonks call "security cooperation," then I guess we're speaking two different languages.{eoa}

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