

HOW HAMAS WILL GAIN INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

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by David Bedein

Thanks to Israel's past leaders.

Hamas, defined by the United States and almost all Western nations as an Islamist terrorist organization, formally assumed the reigns of the provisional government of the Palestinian Authority without relinquishing its principles. It now fully expects to gain international respect and recognition.

Yet, the consistent thinking of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs had always been that a Hamas-based regime would never gain any international legitimacy, and that Israel's status would indeed gain the upper hand in the propaganda war. Instead, however, the Hamas-based regime correctly assesses that it is heading towards full international recognition and legitimacy, without recognizing Israel and without relinquishing terror.

The question remains: How will that come about?

There is a clause in the platform of the new Palestinian government stating that the new government, led by Hamas and not by the PLO, will recognize all agreements that the PLO ratified with Israel. Indeed, the Oslo Accords "Declaration of Principles" denounced violence and was publicly signed by Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas on the White House lawn on September 13, 1993.

Yet, hardly anyone in Israeli diplomatic circles understands that the Palestinian regime's "recognition of all agreements that the PLO ratified with Israel" carries a double meaning. That is because the PLO never ratified the "Declaration of Principles" and never canceled its PLO charter, despite binding agreements signed by Arafat and Abbas with the Israeli government. Those signatures facilitated the Knesset ratification of the Oslo Accords.

Why does no one know that the PLO never ratified the "Declaration of Principles," which is the Oslo Accords?

Well, there was only one Israeli reporter in Tunis on the day that the

"Declaration of Principles" was brought to the PLO executive committee for ratification on October 6th, 1993. That correspondent, Pinchas Inbari, writing for the now-defunct Al HaMishmar newspaper owned by the left-wing Mapam movement, reported in a front page headline that the PLO executive would not ratify the Oslo agreement. A statement issued by Arafat conveyed that he simply could not get a quorum. Even so, senior Israeli government officials flew to Tunis the next day to congratulate Arafat for signing the Oslo Accords.

Inbari flew back to Israel, where he was scheduled to be interviewed by the Voice of Israel for the Israel Broadcasting Authority's newsreel. However, the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin personally called the Voice of Israel to ask that Inbari not be interviewed. So, the news story that the PLO never ratified the Oslo Accords' "Declaration of Principles" remains a virtual secret to the Israeli public.

The other agreement that the PLO made with Israel as part of the Oslo Accords involved the absolute PLO obligation to cancel the PLO covenant, which calls for the destruction of Israel. Indeed, the PLO covenant was discussed in a special session of the Palestinian National Council on April 24, 1996. Minutes before that session, the PLO issued a statement that the covenant had been canceled. The wording of that statement was carefully worked out with senior officials representing former Prime Minister Shimon Peres and former Foreign Minister Ehud Barak.

However, our news agency had the only TV crew covering the session, where the film showed that the PLO Covenant was only discussed - and not canceled. Prof. Yehoshua Porat, expert on Arab affairs, founder of Peace Now and Meretz candidate for Knesset in 1992, examined the protocols of the PNC meeting and declared that the PLO had, indeed, not even considered canceling its covenant.

Porat subsequently endorsed Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu for Prime Minister. Netanyahu went on to beat Peres for the premiership a month later.

Prime Minister Netanyahu insisted that the cancellation of the PLO Covenant be etched in stone as part of any future agreement, and made sure it was part of the Wye Agreement in October 1998. This reporter, covering the Wye negotiations, asked how this was going to happen. President Bill Clinton's spokesman answered that the President would personally fly to Gaza to witness a special session of the PNC. And such a session was indeed convened on December 14th, 1998, in the presence of President Clinton.

At the PNC meeting, Clinton asked for a show of hands for peace. However, the PLO announced to the media that it never canceled the PLO Covenant, which remained its charter - to obliterate the state of Israel. Yet, Netanyahu's

government representatives told the whole world that the PLO Charter had been canceled.

So, there you have it. If and when the new Palestinian government declares that it will

The PLO never ratified the Oslo Accords and never canceled its founding covenant.

abide by agreements that were ratified by the PLO, that will not include recognition of Israel, denunciation of violence or cancellation of the PLO Covenant, which calls for Israel's liquidation. However, the government of Israel and the opposition leader of the government of Israel are on record saying that the PLO agreed to both the "Declaration of Principles" and to the cancellation of the PLO Covenant. The Hamas government's recognition of the PLO's previously signed agreements with Israel, therefore, will be misunderstood as a gesture of reconciliation and progress toward Middle East peace.

Such a tactic will checkmate the Israeli government and Binyamin Netanyahu, neither of whom are about to admit that the PLO never ratified the Oslo Accords and that the PLO never canceled its sacred covenant.

Wait for that momentous day when the new Palestinian regime to announce that it will abide by all agreements ratified by the PLO with the government of Israel. Viva double entendre.

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