

Our World: The joke's on us

Caroline Glick , THE JERUSALEM POST

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'It's all a joke. It's just a joke.' That's how the Palestinian terror commanders in Judea and Samaria explained the show they made of handing in their weapons to Fatah commander Mahmoud Abbas's official militias over the weekend.

"This is all a big joke," they told reporters while posing for pictures. "Abbas asked us to sign a declaration saying we won't attack Israel and so we are." And why not? The Palestinian Authority Chairman agreed to pay them thousands of dollars in exchange for the photo opportunities. There is also the non-financial incentive. In exchange for their propaganda photos and their signatures on declarations not to engage in terror anymore, Israel has pledged to take these murderers off of its wanted list. So just for participating in a satire, these men get to walk without fear for the first time in years.

The deal between Prime Minister Olmert and Abbas claims that 178 members of Fatah's Aksa Martyrs' Brigades terror organization will hand in their weapons and pledge to stop being terrorists. From now on the only Palestinians in Judea and Samaria who will bear arms will be members of Abbas's "official" security forces. But since most of these men are already members of those official militias, and the rest are set to be commissioned in short order, the deal has no impact on any of them.

In anticipation of the formalization of the agreement at the Olmert-Abbas meeting yesterday, the IDF ended its nightly raids in Judea and Samaria for the first time in five years. Those raids, in which thousands of terrorists were apprehended in their sleep and their networks disrupted, were the main reason that Israelis in Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, Netanya and Hadera have been able to sleep in a modicum of safety for the past three years.

It is these raids, rather than Abbas's vaunted efforts to strengthen the so-called peace camp in Palestinian society or the security fence that have prevented suicide bombers from entering Israeli cities with any frequency.

SATURDAY the IDF's General Staff ordered Central Command to receive prior General Staff approval for any such raids in the future. By taking the ability to fight terrorists away from the commanders in the field, the General Staff essentially made fighting terrorists off limits for IDF forces in Judea and Samaria. That is, without officially announcing it, Israel has agreed to Abbas's demand that it extend its "unilateral cease-fire" in Gaza (which existed until Hamas rose to power last month), to Judea and Samaria.

It should be recalled that the Hamas takeover of Gaza was abetted by Israel's decision to declare a unilateral cease-fire there. Israel stood down in Gaza in an effort to strengthen Abbas's control over that area. Since Abbas refused to use his US and Egyptian supplied arsenal to take on Hamas, Israel's decision to stand down in Gaza played a central role in enabling Hamas to raise its Iranian-trained terror army in the area to which Abbas's forces abjectly surrendered.

Now, in the interest of strengthening Abbas and his terrorists-turned peace activists in Fatah in Judea and Samaria, Israel is extending the policy to the outskirts of its major population centers.

While disturbing, the General Staff cannot be blamed for ordering its forces to stand down in Judea and Samaria. The 178 terrorists who Olmert just took off the wanted list are themselves the IDF's main targets.

TAKE Daoud Hajj for example. On February 19, 2002 Hajj commanded an Aksa Brigade's attack on an IDF roadblock near Ramallah. The terrorists killed three off-duty soldiers in their sleep and another three soldiers who came to their rescue. After the attack, Hajj was given an officer's commission in the Palestinian security forces and moved into Arafat's presidential compound in Ramallah. He still lives in what has become Abbas's compound.

On Monday, Aaron Klein in World Net Daily released several other names on the list of pardoned murderers. These include the commanders and deputy commanders of the Aksa Brigades in Nablus, Ramallah and Jenin. Ala Senakreh and Nasser Abu Azziz in Nablus were the masterminds of all the suicide bombings in Israel in 2005 and 2006 that emanated from Judea and Samaria.

Kamal Ranam, from Ramallah commanded scores of shooting attacks against Israeli motorists in Judea and Samaria last year. In one such attack, against a school bus carrying middle-school girls, Ranam and his men boasted that they used US weapons that had just been shipped to Abbas to carry out the attack.

Zacharia Zudbeidi, the Aksa Brigades commander in Jenin is the darling of the Israeli Left due in large part to his well-developed propaganda skills and gutter Hebrew. Zubeidi has directed at least two suicide bombings and overseen scores of shooting attacks that have claimed the lives of dozens of Israeli civilians and soldiers.

And now, all of these men are free to go about their business in the open.

THE GOVERNMENT'S decision to grant immunity to these terror-masters represents a complete breakdown of Israeli strategic thinking. This cognitive break with reality is all the more disconcerting as it comes at a time when Iran, Syria, Hizbullah and the Palestinians remain firmly on war-footing.

The conference of Lebanese factions being held this week outside of Paris, which includes Hizbullah representatives, is a major victory for Hizbullah and Iran. In light of the clear Hizbullah and Iranian intention of dominating Lebanon and opening a new round of war with Israel, the Sarkozy government's decision to treat Hizbullah as a legitimate political force in Lebanon is both misguided and dangerous - especially to Israel.

But then, it is nearly impossible to pin the blame on the French since Israel too is strengthening its enemies. The Aksa Brigades have deep and abiding ties to Syria, Iran and Hizbullah. Since 2001, much of the Aksa Brigades terror activity has been financed and directed by all three. Indeed, since 2000, there has been little distinction between the Aksa Brigades and Islamic Jihad, which is an overtly Iranian organization. Given this, it was no surprise when the Palestinian Authority offered to acquire Israeli clemency for Islamic Jihad terrorists as well.

The fact that Abbas himself is interested in strengthening Fatah ties with Iran, Syria and Hizbullah is made clear by his insistence that Olmert permit Fatah leader Farouk Kadoumi and DFLP leader Naif Hawatmeh to enter Judea and Samaria. Kadoumi, who has never accepted the so-called peace process with Israel, is a frequent visitor to Iran. In a visit there last November, Kadoumi met with Iran's Foreign Minister Manoucher Mouttahi. There he attacked the US for its refusal to recognize Hamas and applauded Iran for its plan to destroy Israel. Kadoumi said, "With the grace of Almighty God and firm determination of our youths and

brotherly stands adopted by the Islamic Republic of Iran and its leadership we will liberate Palestine and will say our prayers in Holy Jerusalem."

As for Hawatmeh, the unrepentant murderer of 22 Israeli children at the Ma'alot massacre in 1974 has been living in Damascus for the past generation. He is widely seen as an agent of Syria's intelligence services.

But, Abbas claims that these men are necessary to fight Hamas and so Israel has let them in.

FROM THE Palestinian perspective, there is no reason to suffice with Israel's military capitulation. After all, if Israel is willing to accept Fatah's lies, then why limit them? And so, ahead of Olmert's meeting with Abbas, Fatah Prime Minister Salam Fayad said that it would be "pathological" for Israel to believe that military capitulation is all that is required of it. Israel, Fayad said, must renew negotiations toward its withdrawal from Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem as well. Otherwise, he said, Fatah will never be strong enough to fight Hamas.

It is not coincidental that this entire exercise in national suicide has taken place this week. It is a fitting backdrop to the ascension of Israel's high priest of national delusion - Shimon Peres - to the presidency. Peres is the architect of Israel's decision to embrace lies and reject truth as a national strategy.

Israel's new head of state is the man who, as Israel's foreign minister in 2001 traveled to the US in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks and told the UN General Assembly that the proper response to the attacks on Washington and New York was Palestinian statehood and nanotechnology.

This is the man who demands an end to the study of history which he deems counterproductive to looking toward the nanotechnological future.

This is the man who in 1993 forced Israel's Zionist establishment to its knees by insisting that Yasser Arafat was a man of peace.

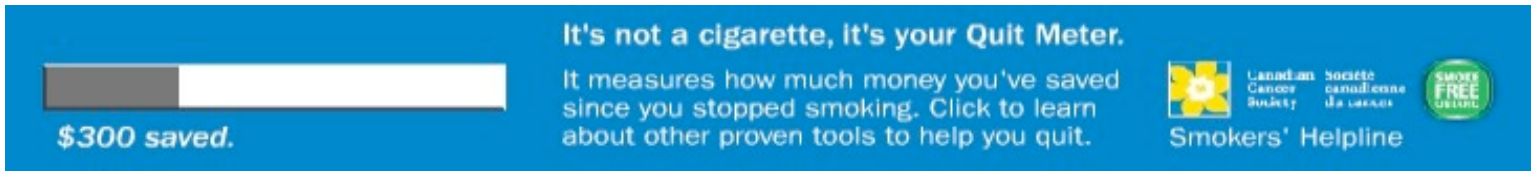
This is the man who in 2002 oversaw US President George W. Bush's abandonment of his demand that the Palestinians fight terror as a condition for US support of Palestinian statehood.

The role of Israel's president is by law restricted to ceremonial functions. But Peres didn't even wait to be sworn in before he announced his intention to ignore both the letter and spirit of the law in his single-minded quest to realize his dream of peace through Israeli capitulation to terror.

And really, why should he care what the law says? Peres is arguably the strongest man in Israeli politics since David Ben Gurion. He controls Kadima and Labor. He enjoys the complete backing of the print and broadcast media and the legal establishment. He enjoys massive support from Israel's plutocrats. And so, as he enters his 85th year, Peres is right to feel unfettered in backing the Palestinians against Israel in the name of peace.

For the Palestinians this is a joke. For Peres this is a dream. And for the Olmert government this is national policy.

The Israeli people must remember to laugh when the bombs begin to drop.



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