

Mahmoud Abbas has failed the Palestinian people

Yoni Michanie



Mahmoud Abbas has failed the Palestinian people. Despite the hopes for peace that followed after Arafat's death, Israelis once more face a Palestinian leadership unable to move past the determination to delegitimize and obstruct.

While tensions were high between the United States and Israel during Obama's eight year presidency, Netanyahu managed to resist international pressures to reach any final agreement with the Palestinian Authority. These offers consisted largely of recognizing Hamas as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, retreating to unsecure borders, or making unacceptable security concessions that would have only perpetuated the conflict. With the polemic diplomatic decisions of the White House, Israel faced growing international pressures to succumb to the historic and successful victimization strategy of the Palestinian leadership. Everything changed in January 2017.

As Trump continues to build his foreign policy without a detailed doctrine, he has made it clear that the American administration will not coerce the parties into a two-state solution if agreements on preconditions are not reached. Despite the deteriorating relationship between the incumbent US administration and Mahmoud Abbas, it would be the changing dynamics of the Middle East however, that would lead to the diplomatic downfall of the incumbent Palestinian chairman. For years, the demise of Israel was the main concern of Sunni Arab countries in the region. This all changed with the Syrian civil war and the direct involvement of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard in the Levant.

As Iran's proxy Hezbollah is empowered by a growing Shia axis, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf states have shifted their concerns towards Tehran. While historically the Palestinian cause has been used by Arab countries to wage an unconventional warfare against Israel, it became very clear now to Mahmoud Abbas that he was no longer a priority in the region. For a government that has used a strategy of victimization to gain international empathy, this became an obstacle to the Palestinian leadership's ability to wage a diplomatic siege on Israel. Adding President Trump's decision to recognize West Jerusalem as Israel's rightful capital and to restore the historical parameters of the conflict (which inevitably favor Israel), Mahmoud Abbas became politically paralyzed.

The Palestinian response was an immediate shift to a policy of "tantrumizing". With Senior Palestinian officials denying a visit from Vice President Pence in December 2017, recent anti-semitic outbursts by Mahmoud Abbas which gained wide European condemnation, and the "on and off" relationship with Hamas, the Palestinian leadership continues to delegitimize its own cause by isolating itself from the international community. It seems that Mahmoud Abbas failed to remain on the track of diplomacy and has therefore condemned the Palestinian people to further suffering at the hands of of an insolvent leadership too invested in its own terror infrastructure.

What Mahmoud Abbas failed to see is that President Trump is not a Zionist. He is not Pro-Palestinian and he is not a humanitarian. President Trump is pro-solutions. With less than two years in office, this American administration set out to solve the international threats posed by North Korea and Iran. He is an experienced negotiator and is obsessed with success. In understanding this, it would have become clear that President Trump was making the necessary concessions to strengthen Netanyahu's political standing in Israel so that when the time came for Israel to concede, there would be a strong

coalition able to lead in negotiations. All Mahmoud Abbas had to do was put aside the childlike nature of demanding immediate results and develop the political awareness necessary to understand the process of making durable peace.

The question now becomes, did Mahmoud Abbas fail to see? Or did he purposefully withdraw consideration of this route because it would have led to an actual peace? A peace that maybe the Palestinian leadership is still unable to imagine, despite the suffering of the Palestinian people.

In any case, the conflict continues to unfold. The indoctrination of hate against Israel persists in throughout the disputed territories; false historical paradigms continue to raise the hope of millions that a “right” of return exists, and a youth encouraged by desperation to confront soldiers in the hopes receiving financial compensation from Hamas.

With his deteriorating health and his current standing in the international community, it is time for Mahmoud Abbas to step down. The Palestinian leadership is in need of a clear vision of peace and stability. One which seeks integration of its diverse population into a common social structure and earns for reconciliation with its neighbors. At a time where the international community has taken decisive steps to advocate for changes in regimes throughout the world, such as Venezuela and Syria, the time has come to promote such changes within the Palestinian Authority.

This is not an intractable conflict and a two-state solution is certainly viable. As the United States began to take of concessions from the negotiating table in favor of Israel, the Palestinians will receive their fair share as well. The concern now becomes, will these be received?