

Why Is the Armed Struggle Still Part of Fatah's Bylaws?

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Articles & Testimony

In his July 31, 2009, column in the Palestinian Authority (PA) daily al-Ayyam, Washington Institute Lafer international fellow Mohammad Yaghi expressed reservations about Fatah's bylaws and political plan, both of which are to be presented at the movement's sixth conference opening today in Bethlehem.

The following are excerpts from Yaghi's column, as translated and paraphrased from the original Arabic by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI).

[Read the original \(http://www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=SD247209\)](http://www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=SD247209) in Arabic.

Yaghi argues that it is necessary to reexamine 28 articles in the first section of the Fatah bylaws, titled "Principles, Aims, and Method." He says that it is doubtful whether such an examination would leave things as they are, stating: "Is Fatah's aim [still] 'the complete liberation of Palestine and the elimination of the Zionist occupying state -- economically, politically, militarily, and culturally?' Is [it still true that] 'Fatah's path of popular armed revolution is the only, and inevitable, way to liberate Palestine?' Is the armed struggle still 'a strategy, not a tactic?' And how does the opposition to all the political solutions proposed to date as alternatives to the elimination of the Zionist entity occupying Palestine sit with [today's] call to the world [by the Palestinians] to implement the U.N. resolutions relevant to the conflict with Israel?"

"How are all these things different from the Hamas covenant? And what is the whole struggle with Hamas about, if its goals and means overlap [those of Fatah]? How does all this fit with [Fatah's] acceptance of the two-state solution, with the Arab peace initiative, and with the whole negotiation [process]?"

Yaghi also criticizes the fact that other sections of the bylaws have not been changed, such as sections calling to tighten relations with countries opposing the Zionists and imperialism, to reject the U.N. resolutions, and to eliminate Israel via popular armed revolution. He notes that Fatah has already passed that stage, writing: "Leaving these sections as they are does not correspond with Fatah's belief or with its day-to-day political activity in the field.

"Several days ago, the 'imperialism' mentioned in the bylaws [i.e., the U.S.] gave the Palestinian Authority \$200 million so it could pay the salaries of the [Palestinian] 'fighters' who are supposed to eliminate '[America's] striking arm in the region,' [i.e., Israel] -- and [the Palestinians] even thanked the U.S. for it. This 'imperialism' is the one overseeing the training of the [Palestinian] security apparatuses that are to 'wage the long-term popular war' . . . Fatah must abandon the cycle of farce and self-deception, and focus on its political belief as it is declared and implemented every day.

"Fatah today believes in an independent state with full sovereignty on the territory that Israel occupied in 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital -- [a state] that lives in peace and security alongside Israel. [It also believes] in a just settlement of the refugee problem based on the U.N. resolutions.

"With regard to means, the armed struggle is not the most suitable or important [means], and also not the most supreme. In actuality, Fatah conceded the armed struggle in the exchange of letters of reciprocal recognition with Israel on behalf of the PLO at Oslo, and undertook to fight whoever carried out [armed struggle]. The conference is

entitled to examine whether or not this served Fatah and the Palestinian people and brought them closer to their goals . . ."

He continued, "Fatah must leave the option of conflict open, and must not restrict itself to a single means. When Fatah dons garb that is not its own solely for the purpose of boasting [that it is more fanatical and patriotic than Hamas], it does itself more harm than good."

With regard to Fatah's political plan, Yaghi stated: "Half of [Fatah's] plan [sounds] like a chronicle of partial historical tales about political or organizational events. Instead of giving answers, it presents dozens of questions -- and this does not belong in a political plan.

"The plan must include sections connected to the long- and short-term goals that Fatah is working daily to implement . . . The plan must [also] include future strategic options, and Fatah's perception regarding negotiations, timeframe, conditions, mechanism, and what it is and is not willing to accept." ❖

Al-Ayyam

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