

# PLO Penetrates Homeland Security

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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## Articles & Testimony

Over the past two years of the war on terror, the United States has significantly toughened its procedures for obtaining visas to enter the US, including requiring more face-to-face interviews and eliminating a transit-visa program officials feared terrorists were planning to use to sneak into the country.

Despite these efforts, however, individuals with established ties to terrorists or who openly support terrorism continue to gain entry.

The most recent example is that of Farouk Kadoumi, head of the PLO political office in Damascus. Two weeks ago, the Palestinian Authority accused the US of failing to providing a visa for Kadoumi in time for him to lead the PA delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

PA officials quickly decried the incident as "unfriendly to the Palestinian side" and a "serious violation" of American obligations as the UNs host country.

The PAs decision to have Kadoumi lead their UN observer delegation was shocking enough, given that Kadoumi is a virulent opponent of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks who, while staunchly anti-American, is a close confidant of leaders of terrorist groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Even more shocking, however, is the fact that Kadoumi -- an official of the PLO, not the PA whose UN observer mission Kadoumi was to lead at the General Assembly -- was then quickly issued a visa to the US. As a senior PLO official, Kadoumi is barred by law from entering the US without a special waiver issued by the Department of State and approved by the Department of Homeland Security, which he promptly received.

The real issue, however, is not whether the PLOs Kadoumi should be eligible to represent the PA in diplomatic missions. Far more serious is whether a person such as Kadoumi should be eligible for a visa to the US -- let alone a special waiver from a standing exclusion order -- in the first place.

In January, Kadoumi attended a meeting of Palestinian terrorist groups opposed to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Making a mockery of the peace option, Kadoumi argued Palestinian terrorist attacks and peace talks should not be mutually exclusive. "We are ready to carry the olive branch in one hand and hold a gun in the other . . . to resist and negotiate at the same time," he said.

Kadoumi and his Hamas colleague Imad Alami concurred that agreement was reached at the meeting "that national unity should be based on the continuation of the uprising." Talal Naji, assistant secretary-general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, agreed, saying the meeting "focused on the need to continue suicide operations and all other kinds of struggle."

After another meeting in late March, Kadoumi and Hamas leader Khaled Mishal issued a joint statement condemning Americas "criminal aggression" in Iraq. The following day, after a meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Sharaa, Kadoumi proudly announced that the United States had failed to achieve its objective of "dominating" the Middle East.

Kadoumi again displayed his scathing anti-Americanism in the early days of the war in Iraq. On the same day in late March that thousands of Lebanese children chanted "Death to America" at a rally organized by Hizbullah, Kadoumi told reporters in Damascus that the battle against America in Iraq was a battle for Arab national security.

"Everything depends on us," he said. "An Iraqi victory is a must and would save the region from American plans."

Kadoumis statement would be echoed just three days later by his friend Sharaa, who asserted quite plainly that "Syrias interest is to see the invaders defeated in Iraq." Sharaa added, "The resistance of the Iraqis is extremely important. It is a heroic resistance to the US-British occupation of their country."

Such statements are indicative not only of Kadoumis distaste for America, but of his affinity for Saddam Hussein. Indeed, Kadoumi was the Palestinian official dispatched to Iraq in March 2001 to solicit increased Iraqi funding for Palestinian terrorism. Following Kadoumis visit, Tarik Aziz, Saddams foreign minister, announced Saddam would raise the amount of money to be donated to the families of Palestinians wounded or killed in attacks on Israelis from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

In August, following Hamas suicide attacks that ended the short-lived cease-fire, Kadoumi published an open letter to US President George W. Bush, the European Union, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and UN Security Council members. He wrote that resistance to the Israeli government was the "only option" left open to the Palestinian people.

Kadoumi is nothing if not consistent: as Egyptian officials hosted cease-fire talks with Palestinian terrorist groups in December 2002, Kadoumi insisted that the talks goal was not to end the anti-Israel attacks, but were aimed at "augmenting resistance."

In light of his publicly stated support for Palestinian terror, Kadoumis involvement in coordinating and facilitating terrorist attacks by Fatah members aligned with Hizbullah and Irans Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) should not surprise.

Calling themselves the Return Brigades, Hizbullahs West Bank recruits consist of renegade PA officials and Fatah activists. According to the October 2002 Shin Bet interrogation report of Ghaleb Abdel Hafiz Abdel Kader Ikbariya, a PA activist from a village near Tulkarm arrested for his role in a suicide bombing attack, Kadoumi played a central role in this renegade Fatah terrorist network financed by, and operating at the command of, Hizbullah and Iran.

According to Ikbariya, his handlers -- Bassem Soudki Ahmad Yassin and Fouad Bilbeisi, both senior Fatah leaders living in Amman -- reported not only to the IRGC but also to Fatah Central Committee member Mohammad Amouri and his boss, Kadoumi.

From the outset, Kadoumi should never have been eligible for a US visa, let alone a special waiver.

Indeed, under the USA Patriot Act, America can exclude people who use their "prominence to endorse terrorist activity" or have "been associated with a terrorist organization" from entering the country.

If Kadoumi can gain entry to the US, despite publicly available information directly linking him to terrorist leaders

and documenting his vocal support for terror, one has to wonder what would stop other more subtle and perhaps more dangerous individuals from doing the same. ❖

Jerusalem Post

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