

On the Record:

Iran and the Middle East Peace Process

Jan 20, 1999



Brief Analysis

US. View: Iranian Moderation? "In past years, Iran's opposition to the Middle East peace process and to those willing to negotiate with Israel has been vitriolic and violent. The Islamic Republic still refuses to recognize Israel, and its leaders continue to denounce Israel in inflammatory and unacceptable terms. But last December, Iranian officials welcomed Chairman Arafat to the Islamic Summit in Tehran and said that, although they did not agree with the logic of the peace process, they would not seek to impose their views and would accept what the Palestinians could accept. In January, President Khatami publicly denounced terrorism and condemned the killing of innocent Israelis. . . . We are ready to explore further ways to build mutual confidence and avoid misunderstandings. . . . As the wall of mistrust comes down, we can develop with the Islamic Republic, when it is ready, a road map leading to normal relations. . . . It is time to test the possibilities for bridging the gap." --Remarks by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to the Asia Society in New York, June 17, 1998.

"Arafat informed the White House last week that Khatami privately told him that Tehran has little faith that the current process will result in a lasting peace but that his government is prepared to accept terms Arafat agrees to; Iran will not actively oppose or undermine a final peace accord." --Robin Wright, Los Angeles Times, p. A6, January 30, 1998.

"We have some real differences with some Iranian policies, but I believe these are not insurmountable. I hope that we have more exchanges between our people and that the day will soon come when we can enjoy once again good relations with Iran." --President Clinton in remarks at the end of the month of Ramadan. Washington Post, p. 28, January 30, 1998.

Iran's Reaction to Wye "We believe that whatever has been put forward as the recent agreement has not brought the region closer to peace, but that it is harmful to independent Arab countries, the interests of which are threatened by the Zionist enemy With its actions the Zionist enemy has shown that it thinks of nothing but the complete domination of Palestine and the lands of the godly people. As the supporters of nations which strive for their own and the Palestinians' independence and rights, we shall not let those rights be trampled on." --President Khatami, in a meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shara. (BBC, October 27, 1998).

"Like previous agreements, the signing of the recent agreement in Maryland will not restore the undeniable right of the oppressed Palestinian nation. In fact, it will provide Israel with facilities to take action aimed at suppressing the Palestinians completely through the use of Palestinians for that task. Israel will also be the greatest beneficiary of the rift created among Palestinian militants as a result of the signing of the agreement. --President Khatami, November 29, 1998 (BBC, December 1, 1998).

"The next issue that I want to address is the shameful agreement that was recently signed between the Zionists and those who regard themselves as the representatives of the Palestinian people The people should be informed of this very ugly and dangerous affair. The [Israelis and Palestinians] have still not been able to implement the

agreements they reached about two years ago, now they have reached another agreement which is 100 per cent against the people of Palestine, the country of Palestine, the oppressed nation of Palestine, the Arab world and the world of Islam . . . [T]hey signed an agreement with a person who claims to be representative of the Palestinian people. He [Arafat] is an abject, treacherous person, a person who is deeply immersed in the filth of selfishness and worldliness, who is not worthy of being considered a part of the Palestine resistance movement let alone claim to be the leader of the movement. . . He made the job of the enemy easy. He created problems and headaches for Palestinian revolutionaries. He increased the inappropriate, interfering and domineering presence of America . . . what I have to say is that the Palestinian nation is an enemy of the Zionists and is strongly hostile to the servants of the Zionists even if this servant happens to be Yasir Arafat. --Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i in a sermon marking the 1,000 Friday prayer sermons, at Tehran University, October 30, 1998. (BBC, November 2, 1998 from Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran).

"Come out openly, like Iran, and say you don't accept such a country as Israel on the world map. Have courage. We can make good use of our weapons, military equipment and all our forces. Say this land belongs to the Palestinians. The thieves and occupiers must leave so that its real owners can return. Solving the Palestinian question must become a sacred ideal for the Arab and Moslem world, like it is for us. I have told our Palestinian brothers that even if they give up the Palestinian ideal, Iranians will not." --Majlis Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri, in a speech at Tehran University marking International Qods Day, Agence France Press, January 15, 1999.

The Palestinian Authority on Iran "The Iranian faction within HAMAS receives money and training from Iran and is acting on instructions from Iran aimed at destabilizing Palestinian society and preventing Israeli withdrawals from Palestinian land." --Palestinian Authority secretary-general Tayeb Abdel Rahim, Agence France Press, November 2, 1998.

"Palestinian security forces have in recent months foiled Iranian-backed attempts by Islamic militants to assassinate Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat and senior members of his government, a senior Arafat aide said yesterday. Iran is training and funding a secret cell within Hamas to carry out the assassinations and suicide bombings in Israel, said PA secretary-general Tayeb Abdel Rahim. 'We arrested several of these people who had plans detailing the assassinations,' he said. The most recent arrest came in October, when Palestinian intelligence agents arrested Hamas activist Jamal Natshe in Hebron. Natshe was given orders by Iran to kill Arafat, Abdel Rahim said, but did not provide details." --The Jerusalem Post, November 4, 1998, "PA official: Iran funds and trains militants trying to kill Arafat," pg. 2.

Compiled by Adam Frey.

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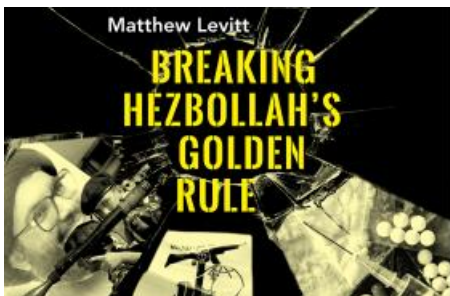
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