

For Mahmoud Abbas, A Last Hurrah?

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Mahmoud Abbas originally thought it was a good idea. There was a new administration in Washington, one most favorably inclined to the Palestinians. The Biden people were ready to undo what the “unfriendly” Trump Administration had done. Trump had closed the PLO office in Washington, Biden promised to open it. Trump had folded the consulate to the Palestinians in east Jerusalem into the Embassy in Jerusalem; Biden promised to reopen it. Trump had ended both direct aid to the Palestinians and American contributions to UNRWA. Biden announced that he was again turning on the spigot of aid, starting with a \$15 million contribution, then another one of \$80 million, with more – much more – to come. As for the Taylor Force Act, which prohibits American aid to the

Palestinians as long as they continued to provide subsidies to terrorists and their families, in what is grimly known as the "Pay-For-Slay" program, nothing has been said about Biden's renewal of aid constituting a clear violation of Taylor Force. Apparently it was enough that such aid was described as "humanitarian" to exempt it from the application of Taylor Force, but there is no such exemption in the language of the act. Nonetheless, no one in Congress said anything, no one insisted that such aid, even if called "humanitarian," should be halted; possibly politicians were fearful that if they did so, they would be painted as depriving the "poor Palestinians" of diapers and baby formula. But money is fungible; "humanitarian" aid money given to the Palestinians frees up other sums that can then be spent on weapons for terrorists.

These initial deliveries of aid were being given, members of the Administration let it be known, to "earn the trust" of the Palestinians. Why the Americans felt they needed to win the "trust" of the endlessly meretricious Palestinians remains unclear. But no one asked for a clarification. In any case, the largesse lavished upon the Palestinians will not win their "trust" but merely confirm their belief in the gullibility of the Americans, or at least of the Americans who have now assumed power in Washington.

It was in this promising environment, so full of possibilities, that the President-For-Life, Mahmoud Abbas, now entering the sixteenth year of his four-year term, had his Bright Idea. He would hold elections, both for the Palestinian parliament and for the Presidency, and show the Biden Administration just how deeply committed he is to democracy. He wouldn't have to endure any more of those jokes about "Abbas is now beginning the sixteenth year of his four-year term" (see just above). He would pretend to allow free and fair elections. Everyone would be impressed.

Things have, however, gotten out of hand, now that

Palestinians, including members of his own Fatah, have taken the elections seriously, and some are fielding candidates not to Abbas' liking. A report on the latest developments is here: "Palestinian Elections: Abbas faces 'revolt' over Fatah's electoral list," by Khaled Abu Toameh, [*Jihad Watch*](#).