



December 12, 2016

## The 7th Fatah Movement Conference Again Legitimizes Popular Terrorism (The So-Called "Peaceful Popular Resistance")



Mahmoud Abbas opens the 7th Fatah Movement conference in Ramallah (Wafa, November 30, 2016).

### Overview

1. The 7<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference held in Ramallah between November 29 and December 4, 2016 dealt mostly with internal Palestinian issues, with the struggle for Mahmoud Abbas' successor in the background. It also discussed strategies for dealing with Israel on the ground and in the international arena. The speeches given by Mahmoud Abbas and statements made by senior Fatah figures indicated **the conference's decision to strengthen the concept of "popular resistance"** (decided on at the 6<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference in August 2009). The concept "popular resistance" is represented as legal, unarmed and peaceful. However, developments on the ground since the 6<sup>th</sup> conference indicate that **behind the term "peaceful popular resistance" hides support given by Mahmoud Abbas, Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA) to popular terrorism, which again erupted violently in September 2015 and has since also entered Israeli territory.**

2. What is the nature of the "popular resistance" adopted by the 6<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference and again confirmed by the 7<sup>th</sup> conference?

a. The so-called **"popular resistance"** has been the main course of Palestinian action on the ground since 2009. **It is combined with the political, economic, propaganda and legal campaign waged against Israel by the PA.** As far as Fatah and the PA are concerned, the "popular resistance" creates **constant monitored, controlled tension between Israel and the Palestinians,** used **to exert pressure on Israel** to the degree considered appropriate for the needs of the PA's political campaign against Israel. **In the internal Palestinian arena, however, the PA and Fatah use the "popular resistance" as an acceptable alternative to Hamas' concept of "armed struggle,"** which the PA and Fatah do not regard as useful at the present stage of the Palestinians' anti-Israeli struggle (although Fatah does not reject it in principle).

b. **The "popular resistance" is not a non-violent quiet protest, as claimed by the Mahmoud Abbas and the PA.**<sup>1</sup> It makes massive use of violence, especially the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails, as well as stabbing and vehicular attacks. The use of cold weapons against Israeli security forces and civilians has been the major form of anti-Israel violence in Judea and Samaria, but occasionally there are military-type attacks involving firearms (attacks which the PA also does not condemn). During the past year the "popular resistance," which Israel refers to as popular terrorism, **has caused the deaths of dozens of Israeli civilians and members of the Israeli security forces.**<sup>2</sup>

c. **The PA and Fatah publicly support attacks carried out as part of the "popular resistance" and do not consider them terrorism. They actively legitimize and aid Palestinians who carry them out by providing them with financial and media support** (as well as providing aid for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails and the families of martyrs). In the international arena as well, the PA fully legitimizes the "popular resistance," attempting to blur and minimize its extensive use of violence. **The PA does not consider "popular resistance"**

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<sup>1</sup> In October 2015, at the height of the most recent wave of popular Palestinian terrorism, Mahmoud Abbas still falsely represented the "popular resistance" as non-violent. For example, at the opening ceremony of a contracting company in Ramallah, he said that **"We do not use violence or force. We believe in peace and a "popular resistance."** It is our right and obligation to continue it as long as there is aggression. We do not attack anyone and do not want anyone to attack us... We hold the hands of our brothers who defend al-Aqsa mosque... We want peace and our hand is always extended to peace despite our suffering..." (Wafa, October 8, 2015). On October 14, 2015, he gave a speech in which he said the Palestinians would **continue their "legal popular struggle,** which focuses on the Palestinians' right to self defense **based on popular, non-violent foundations"** (Palestinian TV, October 14, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> For further information, see the October 15, 2015 bulletin, "The Fatal Results of Palestinian Popular Terrorism: Analysis of Israeli deaths during the six years of the ""popular resistance"" strategy, what the Palestinian Authority calls "peaceful resistance," at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art\\_20887/E\\_172\\_15\\_566924182.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20887/E_172_15_566924182.pdf).

attacks, even the most deadly, as terrorism, a term is reserves for Israel and the settlers. Speaking at the 7<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference, Mahmoud Abbas rejected terrorism "regardless of motive or source," including state terrorism (i.e., so-called "Israeli terrorism") and that of the Israeli settlers, claiming that "We adhere to a culture of peace and tolerance" (Palestinian TV, November 29, 2016).

## Examples of Fatah Support for Popular Terrorism



Fatah notice calling on Palestinians to stab Israelis in Jerusalem (Twitter account of Fatah's office for recruitment and organization, October 4, 2015)



Facebook page of the Shabiba (Fatah's student faction) at al-Najah University in Nablus, November 6, 2014, after a fatal vehicular attack in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of east Jerusalem. The Arabic reads, "Resist, even with your car" (Facebook page of the Shabiba faction at al-Najah University, November 6, 2014).



Left: The death notice issued by Fatah for "heroic shaheed" Muhammad Sayid Muhammad Ali. Pictures of Mahmoud Abbas and Yasser Arafat are at the upper left and right, respectively (Fatah-affiliated Facebook page, October 10, 32015). Right: Muhammad Sayid Muhammad Ali, a Palestinian terrorist operative from the Shuafat refugee camp, stabs an Israeli Border Policeman at the Nablus Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem (Facebook page of QudsN, October 13, 2015).



The PA holds a military-type governmental funeral for Palestinian terrorist Ibrahim Samir Ibrahim Sakafi, 22, who carried out a vehicular attack near Halhul. His body is carried on the shoulders of operatives of the Palestinian national security forces (Wafa, November 5, 2013).

3. On the other hand, the PA objects to the use of firearms and to turning the "popular resistance" into a military-type intifada against Israel, as advocated by Hamas. The PA and its security forces enforce that position on Hamas and the other terrorist organizations with ongoing preventive activities and security

**cooperation with the Israeli security forces** (despite harsh criticism from Hamas). In principle, however, Fatah does not rule out the concept of "armed struggle." According to the platform of the 6<sup>th</sup> Fatah conference in August 2009, **the concept of "armed struggle" remains a possible future option, to be put into practice when the political and societal conditions of the conflict with Israel make it necessary.** That can be seen in Fatah and the PA's preservation of the legacy and symbols of the "armed struggle" against Israel by commemorating shaheeds (of all the terrorist organizations) killed while carrying out terrorist attacks against Israel.

## Preserving the Legacy of the Armed Struggle



**Left: Dedicating the Dalal al-Magribi square in al-Bireh. Al-Magribi was a member of the Fatah terrorist squad that carried out the massacre on the Coastal Road between Tel Aviv and Haifa in March 1978 (35 murdered, 13 of them children, and 71 wounded). After her death she won great admiration and became a role model for Palestinians. Holding the banner in the center and wearing a white suit is Tawfiq al-Tirawi, a senior Fatah figure (al-Quds, March 11, 2010). Right: The sign on Yahya Ayyash street in Ramallah (Photo courtesy of Israel Channel 10 TV, April 7, 2010). Yahya Ayyash, aka "the engineer," was a senior Hamas terrorist operative who was responsible for a series of deadly suicide bombing attacks throughout Israel whose objective was to sabotage the Oslo Accords. The Palestinian presidential building lies on the street named for him.**

4. In the wake of the 7<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference **Mahmoud Abbas, the PA and Fatah can be expected to continue their support of violence carried out as part of the "popular resistance."** They will continue to provide **financial support and media backup for the Palestinians who carry out popular terrorism attacks, while avowedly objecting to the military-type terrorism favored by Hamas.** At the same time, in the international arena the PA will blur and minimize its support for violence and terrorism, and continue to spout deceptive slogans about its "peaceful popular resistance" against Israel.

5. **Two appendices** follow:

- a. Statements by Mahmoud Abbas and senior Fatah figures during and after the 7<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference regarding the "popular resistance"
- b. Adopting the concept of "popular resistance" at the 6<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference and its implementation during the past seven years.

## Appendix A

### Statements by Mahmoud Abbas and Senior Fatah Figures During and After the 7th Fatah Movement Conference regarding the "popular resistance"

1. Quotations from Mahmoud Abbas' speech opening the 7<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference in Ramallah, November 29, 2016 (ITIC emphasis throughout):
  - a. **"As to the peaceful popular resistance and struggle against the fence and settlements: the peaceful popular resistance is the right of our people and we will not waive it.** We support the actions of the popular resistance committees in dozens of villages and towns to protest the construction of the fence and the expansion of the settlements, the expropriation of lands, the closing and encircling of villages, and their support of the rights of farmers to reach their agricultural lands in every location. **We praise all our shaheeds who fell while defending their land,** and especially remember **Ziyad Abu Ein,**<sup>3</sup> who was a member of [Fatah's] Revolutionary Council. We state emphatically that we will continue to give the greatest possible support to all our citizens who stand firm and remain on their lands in the villages, cities and especially in Jerusalem, which bears the greatest burden of destructive acts."

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<sup>3</sup> **Ziyad Abu Ein** was a Fatah terrorist operative indicted for **killing two Israeli youths in an IED attack in the northern Israeli city of Tiberias in 1979.** In 1981 he was extradited to Israel from the United States. In 1983 he was convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was released in the so-called Jibril agreement (the 1985 prisoner exchange deal). He served as the PA minister for the struggle against the fence and the settlements. He died of a heart attack on December 10, 2014, during a confrontation with IDF soldiers at a demonstration against the Adi Ad outpost (northeast of Ramallah). The Palestinians accused Israel of killing him, but the autopsy showed he died of a heart attack. Since then he has become a Fatah symbol of the "popular resistance."

في مجال المقاومة الشعبية السلمية، ومواجهة الجدار والاستيطان:  
 إن المقاومة الشعبية السلمية هي حق لشعبنا ولن نتنازل عنه، وفي هذا الإطار ندعم ما تقوم به لجان المقاومة الشعبية في عشرات القرى والبلدات للتصدي لبناء الجدار والتوسع الاستعماري ومصادرة الأراضي وإغلاق ومحاصرة القرى والدفاع عن حق المواطنين في الوصول لأراضيهم الزراعية في كل مكان.  
 ونحيي أرواح جميع شهدائنا الذين سقطوا في مسيرة الدفاع عن أرضهم، ونخص بالذكر عضو المجلس الثوري زياد أبو عين.  
 إننا نؤكد مواصلة تقديم المساعدة بما يمكن مواطنينا من الصمود والبقاء على أراضيهم وفي قراهم ومدنهم وفي مقدمتها مدينة القدس التي تحملت العبء الأكبر في عمليات الهدم.

**Text of part of Mahmoud Abbas' speech opening the 7th Fatah Movement conference dealing with the so-called "peaceful" popular resistance" (Wafa, November 30, 2016).**

b. Mahmoud Abbas ended his speech with the fundamentals of his national program, which is Fatah's program for completing the construction of national institutions and achieving independence. Paragraph 3 reads "**Establishing and strengthening the peaceful popular resistance and developing all its aspects**. Reinforcing the firm stance of our people on its land, especially Jerusalem, Area C, and boycotting the various aspects of the [Israeli] settlement apparatus" (Wafa, November 30, 2016).

3- ترسيخ وتعزيز المقاومة الشعبية السلمية وتطويرها في المجالات كافة.  
 وتعزيز صمود شعبنا على الأرض وخاصة في القدس والأغوار والمناطق  
 المسماة "ج"، ومقاطعة منظومة الاستيطان بكل إفرزاتها.

**Paragraph 3 of Fatah's national program, noting the "establishing and strengthening the peaceful popular resistance" (Wafa, November 30, 2016).**

2. **Mahmoud Abu al-Hija, spokesman for the conference, summing up the conference, called the "popular resistance" "legitimate resistance."** He said, "The conference stressed the importance of a national construction

program focusing on a number of fundamental issues that confirm **the right of the Palestinian people to legitimate resistance** to end the occupation, to self determination and for sovereignty over the land of an independent state of Palestine, with east Jerusalem as its capital..." (Website of Fatah's information commission, December 4, 2016).



Left: Mahmoud Abbas, third from the left on stage during the reading of the conference summary.  
Right: Mahmoud Abu al-Hija, spokesman for the 7th Fatah Movement conference, reads a statement summing up the conference (Facebook page of Mahmoud Abbas, December 4, 2016).

وشدد المؤتمر على أهمية إنجاز برنامج البناء الوطني المرتكز على مجموعة من المبادئ الأساسية التي تؤكد على حق الشعب الفلسطيني في المقاومة المشروعة من أجل إنهاء الاحتلال، وتقرير مصيره وممارسة سيادته على أرضه في دولة فلسطين المستقلة وعاصمتها القدس الشرقية. وناقش المؤتمر مختلف القضايا ذات الصلة ببرنامج البناء الوطني.

Remarks of Mahmoud Abu al-Hija relating to "legal resistance" (Website of Fatah's information commission, December 4, 2016).

- Below is a paragraph from an interview with Ahmed Hilles, a senior Fatah figure in the Gaza Strip and a new member of Central Committee (as of

**December 7, 2016).**<sup>4</sup> He said the 7<sup>th</sup> conference had voted for **the need to extend the "popular resistance against the [Israeli] occupation."** He said he hoped the so-called Jerusalem intifada (a term coined by Hamas) **would expand and include other regions in Judea and Samaria, in response to the expansion of the settlements.** He also demanded the formulation of a comprehensive national Palestinian program that would **adopt the intifada and the "popular resistance,"** through which the Palestinians would make political gains. He said Fatah would turn to the option of "armed struggle" the moment there was overall Palestinian agreement for it. He added that there was overall Palestinian agreement that the Palestinian people had the right to use any type of resistance against the occupation (See Appendix B, the political platform of the 6<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference). However, he added, there was no Palestinian agreement about the timing for using the option (al-Istaqlal, the PIJ organ, December 7, 2016).



**Ahmed Hilles, a senior Fatah figure and a newly elected member of Fatah's Revolutionary Council, discusses expanding the "popular resistance" against Israel (al-Istaqlal, the PIJ organ, December 7, 2016).**

<sup>4</sup> **Ahmed Hilles, aka Abu Maher,** is a senior Fatah figure in the Gaza Strip. He was born in 1951 and lives in Sajaiya in the central Gaza Strip. He belongs to the Hilles clan, one of the prominent Fatah-affiliated clans in the Gaza Strip. He was detained by Israel a number of times in the past. In the 1970s he was a member of a Fatah terrorist network, along with Ahmed al-Jaabari (formerly commander of Hamas' military-terrorist wing), who began his terrorist career in Fatah and turned to Hamas while in an Israeli jail.

## Remarks by Jibril Rajoub after the Conference

4. **Jibril Rajoub, whose status in Fatah rose as a result of the conference, granted an interview to the Israeli daily newspaper Haaretz.<sup>5</sup> He said, "A clear policy of popular struggle will be formulated in the Palestinian arena. It will be supported by most Palestinians, and it will have international support. Do not expect us to raise a white flag and say to the Israelis, do whatever you like." Asked what he meant by a "popular struggle" and how it would be conducted on the ground, he said, "We will formulate a clear policy of all the factions...It will not be just a Fatah decision. To wage a popular struggle is a strategic decision and all the Palestinian factions should be a part of it." He claimed he meant a non-violent struggle that would be conducted through demonstrations, marches and other activities whose objective would be to resist the occupation.**
  
5. Jibril Rajoub was careful in his choice of words and represented the "popular resistance" as non-violent, but throughout the years of popular terrorism he has made much stronger statements. On January 2, 2014, as a guest on a Palestinian TV program, he described Fatah's strategy for 2014. In addition to national unity and a struggle in the international arena, he called for **an escalation of the "popular resistance."** In response to Hamas' desire to abduct Israeli soldiers, he said **"Let them abduct soldiers, they should go ahead and do it.** If [the Israelis] don't want to release the prisoners and they want the prisoners to serve life sentences and they return to us like ghosts and skeletons, I think **the Israelis need to understand that abduction is an obvious example, it is language they understand. So we [Fatah] encourage them [Hamas] and when they abducted [Gilad] Shalit we praised them; and when the Shalit [prisoner exchange] deal was completed, despite a number of reservations we had, we also praised them."**<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Interview conducted by Jacky Houry, December 9, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> On another occasion, interviewed by al-Mayadeen, Hezbollah's TV channel in Lebanon, he said, **"We don't yet have nuclear [weapons], [but] I swear, if we had nuclear weapons we would use them [starting] tomorrow morning"** (al-Mayadeen, May 1, 2013).



**Jibril Rajoub interviewed on Palestinian TV supports Hamas' call to abduct Israeli soldiers  
(Facebook page of Jibril Rajoub, January 2, 2014).**

## Appendix B

### Adopting the Concept of "popular resistance" at the 6th Fatah Movement Conference and Its Implementation during the Past Seven Years<sup>7</sup>

1. The "popular resistance" in Judea and Samaria **began as an authentic local protest whose objective was to change the route of the Israeli border security fence Israel began building during the second intifada (to prevent deadly suicide bombing attacks)**. It was conducted between 20023 and 2003 at the height of the second intifada, but did not resonate politically or in the media because it was overshadowed by the institutionalized military-terrorist activity of the terrorist organizations. Only later, when the second intifada ended, and after the death of Yasser Arafat, **was the concept brought to the center of the political stage as the strategy for the struggle, preferable to armed attacks. It was formally and publicly adopted by the 6<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference and by the PA.**
2. **The 6<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference**, which began on August 4, 2009, **discussed the place of "armed resistance"** as part of the Palestinian struggle against Israel. The issue was sensitive and problematic for the PA and Fatah because **in principle**, most of the conference participants were of the opinion that the "armed struggle" should not be abandoned (Fatah had adhered to the concept since its establishment and in principle never abandoned it). At the same time, **in practice**, Mahmoud Abbas and the other Fatah heads were aware that **the societal and political conditions in Judea and Samaria at the time and the political circumstances in the international arena were not appropriate for waging an "armed struggle" at that stage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.**
3. The solution they found was to adopt **the concept of "popular resistance," represented as an unarmed protest**. At the opening session of the 6<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference Mahmoud Abbas expressed support for **continuing negotiations with Israel** despite the difficulties, and **stressed the Palestinian people's adherence to the option of peace**. However, he noted, **the**

<sup>7</sup> For further information, see the May 20, 2013 bulletin "The Palestinian ""popular resistance"" and Its Built-In Violence," at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art\\_20515/E\\_015\\_13b.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/Data/articles/Art_20515/E_015_13b.pdf)

**Palestinian people reserved the right to "legitimate resistance," as anchored in international law** (for example the weekly demonstrations at the Palestinian village of Bila'in). He explained at length what he meant by "legitimate resistance," using the term *muqawama jamahiriya* ("resistance of the masses"), a term he coined at the opening of the 6<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference.

4. Speaking during and after the 6<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference, **Mahmoud Abbas used the term "unarmed popular resistance."**<sup>8</sup> Calling the "popular resistance" "unarmed" and "peaceful" **became routine for Mahmoud Abbas** and other Palestinian spokesmen. He used the term again at the 7<sup>th</sup> conference. However, in reality, during the seven years since the 6<sup>th</sup> conference, the "popular resistance" has time and again proved itself as **systematically employing violence and terrorism, including vehicular and stabbing attacks**. Mahmoud Abbas, the PA and Fatah have consistently supported Palestinian operatives who carry out popular terrorism attacks, including during the wave of terrorist attacks that erupted in September 2015 and peaked in October.

5. Moreover, the final platform of the 6<sup>th</sup> Fatah Movement conference specifically **notes Fatah has not abandoned "armed resistance," a central principle the movement never abandoned**. Paragraph 4, entitled "The confrontation with the settlement occupation and the continuing struggle for liberation and independence," said that as far as **"the right to resistance"** [*mukawama*] was concerned, "the Fatah Movement adheres to the right of the Palestinian people **to resist the occupation in every legitimate way, including the right to wage an armed struggle**, as is anchored in international law, as long as the occupation, the settlements and the denial of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people continue" ([www.fatehconf.ps](http://www.fatehconf.ps)).

**4. الحق في المقاومة:** تتمسك حركة فتح بحق الشعب الفلسطيني في مقاومة الاحتلال، بكافة الوسائل المشروعة بما فيها حقه في ممارسة الكفاح المسلح الذي يكفله القانون الدولي، طالما استمر الاحتلال، والاستيطان، وحرمان الشعب الفلسطيني من حقوقه الثابتة. **[Note: ITIC emphasis]**

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

## Implementing the Concept of "Popular Resistance" and Its Perceived Advantages for the PA

6. Fatah and the PA represent the "popular resistance" as **"non-violent civil resistance," "unarmed resistance" and "legal resistance."** However, it is incorrect to represent it as non-violent and the antithesis of armed resistance. **Since 2009 the "popular resistance" has made extensive use of stones, Molotov cocktails, knives and cars, which have often proved deadly. Moreover, the PA and Fatah have not only legitimized stone- and Molotov cocktail-throwing, but the more serious vehicular and stabbing attacks, which were the main methods used in the wave of terrorism that erupted in September 2015 and waned during 2016.**
  
7. The concept of the **"popular resistance,"** which was reconfirmed by the 7<sup>th</sup> **Fatah Movement conference, has become a cornerstone of the PA's policy toward Israel.** It enables Mahmoud Abbas and the PA to try to promote the Palestinian campaign against Israel in the following arenas:
  - a. **On the ground, the "popular resistance" challenges Israel, keeps the IDF constantly busy in Judea and Samaria, provides a response to the various burning issues occupying the Palestinian man-in-the-street (the Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, the activities of the Israeli settlers). It also allows the Palestinians to release their frustrations on designated memorial and solidarity days taken from the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflict (Prisoners' Day, Nakba Day, Naksa Day, Land Day, etc.). On the other hand, it is in the PA's interest to contain "popular resistance" activities and keep them from triggering a deterioration in the situation with the IDF. Therefore, the PA has continued its security cooperation with Israel throughout the years of "popular resistance,"** even during the most recent wave of terrorist attacks, resisting the attempts of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad to encourage a **third intifada** in Judea and Samaria.
  
  - b. **In the international arena,** as far as the PA is concerned, the "popular resistance" is an important factor in the political campaign being waged in the UN, the United States and Europe. It is represented as non-violent, has won advocates in Western countries which reject armed military-type attacks but tolerate and occasionally also show sympathy for the "popular resistance" (which is wrapped in the false terminology of "a peaceful, unarmed resistance"). The

"popular resistance" is also used to attract radical, leftists and liberals from anti-Israel organizations (especially in Western Europe and the United States) and to employ them for anti-Israel activities in Judea and Samaria and for defaming Israel around the globe.

c. **As far as Hamas is concerned**, the concept of "popular resistance," which is acceptable to most of the Palestinian public, has allowed the PA and Fatah **to represent their own alternative to Hamas' concept of armed resistance**. Thus it allows them to preserve a belligerent image and repel Hamas' calls to end negotiations, move the armed struggle to Judea and Samaria and end security cooperation with Israel. The PA also used the concept of "popular resistance" as the alternative it wanted in its reconciliation negotiations with Hamas. Its adoption would have enabled the internal Palestinian reconciliation, the continued participation of the PA in the peace process and been acceptable to the international community.