



September 4, 2011

The Meir Amit Intelligence and
Terrorism Information Center

Initial Palestinian Responses to the Palmer Report

Overview

1. Palestinian Authority and Hamas spokesmen rushed to denounce the Palmer Panel of Inquiry Report. They specifically **focused** on the finding that **Israel's naval blockade of the Gaza Strip was compatible with international law and Israel's right to defend itself** (See Appendix). Fatah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad spokesmen praised the Turkish government for "expelling the [Israeli] ambassador" and called for additional sanctions against Israel.

2. The Palestinians interpreted the report as **providing Israel with justification to continue its naval blockade of the Gaza Strip** and as hurting the convoy and flotilla project.¹ Hamas spokesmen called on the International Criminal Court in the Hague to repair the "serious UN error," praised the Turkish effort to bring Israel to trial in international courts and called for more convoys to the Gaza Strip. The **PLO** announced it would coordinate with the Turkish government to appeal to the International Criminal Court in the Hague to overturn the Palmer Commission Report.

Initial Palestinian Responses

3. **Salam Fayyad**, prime minister of the Palestinian Authority, **expressed worry that the UN regarded the "blockade" as legal**. He said the report would encourage Israel to continue violating the Palestinians' human rights, especially in the Gaza Strip. He said the

¹ Justification for the flotilla project has already suffered a blow in the international arena. The United States and other Western countries expressed reservations about the last flotilla and warned their citizens against participating in it. A spokesman for the United States State Department said that the flotilla was liable to be "provocative" and "dangerous," adding that there were effective ways to support the Gaza Strip and that there was no need for a flotilla. She added that Israel had the right to defend itself against the smuggling of weapons into the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian Authority would **work through international institutions to end the suffering of the residents of the Gaza Strip** and appealed to the international community to take action to lift the "siege" (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, September 4, 2011).

4. **Tawfiq al-Tirawi**, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, referring to the Turkish response to reduce diplomatic relations to second secretary level, said that it was **the minimum a country could do** whose citizens opposed killing those who had "left on a humanitarian mission of solidarity to lift the siege of the Gaza Strip." He said that it was a "fitting blow" to the Israeli government and punishment for "the crimes it commits against humanity" and for its refusal to apologize (Wafa News Agency, September 2, 2011).

PLO Response

5. The PLO's Executive Committee stated that the Palmer Report contradicted international laws and principles. It emphasized that it would coordinate with the Turkish government to appeal to the ICC in the Hague to overturn the report, which considers the siege justified and legal. (German news agency DPA, quoted by the Qudsnews website in Ramallah, September 4, 2011).

Hamas Responses

6. **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, high-ranking Hamas figure in the Gaza Strip, said that the Palmer Report was not objective because it regarded the "siege" of the Gaza Strip as legal. He said that by calling the blockade legal **it in effect justified Israel's actions against any party seeking to lift it**. He said the report was clearly biased against Turkey and the Palestinians, and was the product of Israeli-American pressure. He appealed to Turkey to impose additional sanctions on Israel (Hamas' Palestine-info website, September 4, 2011).



Mahmoud al-Zahar (Hamas' Palestine-info website, September 4, 2011).

7. **Sami Abu Zuhri**, Hamas spokesman, said that **the report was unjust and unbalanced, and enabled Israel to avoid responsibility** (Agence France-Presse, September 1, 2011).

8. **Hamas issued a statement** calling for a boycott of Israel and an end to the "blockade" of the Gaza Strip. It also said that Hamas admired the Turkish effort "to the Zionist entity [i.e., Israel] to trial in international courts (Hamas' Palestine-info website, September 2, 2011).

9. **Ismail Radwan**, high-ranking Hamas figure, held a press conference where he claimed that the Palmer Report contradicted all the international reports dealing with human rights. **He called it "cruel and illogical," saying it legitimized the "siege"** and encouraged Israel to commit crimes against the Palestinian people and all humanity. **He appealed to the International Criminal Court in the Hague to correct the "UN's serious error"** (Hamas' Al-Aqsa TV, September 3, 2011).



Ismail Radwan (Hamas' Palestine-info website, September 4, 2011).

10. Ismail Radwan also expressed support for Turkey's decision to expel the Israeli ambassador and called on the Arab states **to respond to the report in a practical fashion by sending aid convoys to the Gaza Strip** (Hamas' Al-Aqsa TV, September 3, 2011).

11. Other Hamas spokesman also expressed support for the steps taken by Turkey:

1) **Sami Abu Zuhri** supported Turkey by saying that the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador was the "natural response" to the "crimes" Israel committed against the flotilla and to Israel's refusal to take responsibility for them (Agence France-Presse, September 2, 2011).

2) **Taher al-Nunu** said that the Turkish decision was the beginning of making Israeli accountable (Al-Quds website, September 2, 2011).

Palestinian Islamic Jihad Response

12. **Nafez Azzam**, a member of the PIJ's political bureau, said that the Turkish decision to expel the Israeli ambassador was a good one and stressed the importance of the Palestinian people to Turkey. He added that such an action proved that the political measures being taken by the Arab-Muslim countries in the region had recently changed (The PIJ's Paltoday website, September 2, 2011).

Appendix

From the Findings of the Palmer Panel of Inquiry Report

(Page 2, Paragraph ii)

- ii. The fundamental principle of the freedom of navigation on the high seas is subject to only certain limited exceptions under international law. Israel faces a real threat to its security from militant groups in Gaza. The naval blockade was imposed as a legitimate security measure in order to prevent weapons from entering Gaza by sea and its implementation complied with the requirements of international law.