

The New Palestinian Authority Government

April 18, 2024

Overview¹

► On March 31, 2024, the 19th Palestinian government was sworn in at Mahmoud Abbas' office in Ramallah. It is headed by Dr. Muhammad Mustafa, and according to the announcement, the government ministers do not belong to any political party. Its platform emphasized that the government regards Judea, Samaria, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip as one political-geographic unit with the PLO as the source of its authority (Wafa, March 28, 2024).



Right: The new Palestinian government after the swearing and in ceremony in Ramallah. Left: Muhammad Mustafa swears allegiance at the ceremony in Ramallah (Wafa, March 31, 2024)

► On March 28, 2024, Muhammad Mustafa, the new prime minister, presented the government and its basic outlines to Mahmoud Abbas, after having received an official mandate for its establishment from Mahmoud Abbas on March 14, 2024. Mahmoud Abbas issued a decree of confidence in the 19th Palestinian government and confirmed its establishment. Among the government's objectives as presented to Mahmoud Abbas were an immediate ceasefire, a complete Israeli withdrawal-the introduction of urgent humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, security, economic and social reforms, and the reconstruction of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip (Anadolu Agency, March 29, 2024).

¹ Click <https://www.terrorismandinfo.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

►The new government was established after the previous prime minister, Muhammad Shtayyeh, resigned in early March 2024, leading to the dissolution of the government following international pressure, mainly from the United States, which demanded that Mahmoud Abbas carry out far-reaching reforms in the Palestinian Authority (PA) to restore its popularity with the Palestinian public and establish a government in the Gaza Strip the day after the war.

►**The new government is defined as "a government of technocrats" and has almost no known figures with a political past.** It plans to carry out institutional-financial reforms, strengthen the rule of law and increase transparency. Its current top priority is dealing with the humanitarian situation with an emphasis on the Gaza Strip, to which end a ministry of public support was established.

►The new government has 23 ministers, compared to 26 in the government headed by Muhammad Shtayyeh, and has representation for the Gaza Strip, Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem. Seven of the government ministers are from the Gaza Strip (currently staying in Ramallah), 14 from Judea and Samaria, and two are residents of east Jerusalem. There are four women in the government. Two ministers are Christians and the rest are Muslims. Most of the ministers are in their sixties. The vast majority have advanced degrees from universities abroad. Two of the members of the government, Prime Minister Muhammad Mustafa and Ziad Hab al-Reeh, have political experience, but while all the other ministers have an impressive record in civilian and academic fields, they lack political experience.

►The ITIC has no information about their political positions or their positions regarding Israel and the conflict, since so far they have seldom been interviewed or expressed positions on those issues. However, contrary to Mustafa's statements that the new government is manned by independent technocrats, a detailed examination revealed that at least four of the ministers are unequivocally members of Fatah and in the past ran for positions on behalf of the movement, headed by Interior Minister Ziad Hab al-Reeh. At least two of them were previously detained by Israel.



The first meeting of the Palestinian government in Ramallah, chaired by Muhammad Mustafa (Wafa, April 1, 2024)

- ▶ The challenges facing the new government are many and complex, chief among them the Gaza Strip and its reconstruction, and shoring up the PA's precarious financial situation, which suffers from a budget deficit and a decrease in international aid. It is not clear at this stage how Muhammad Mustafa, who was the chairman of the Palestinian Investment Fund and is considered an expert and highly knowledgeable economist, will succeed in overcoming the challenges facing him, and in all probability he will need massive international assistance.
- ▶ It is also unclear how popular the new government is with the Palestinian public, whether it will be accepted by all the organizations and whether it will be able to impose its authority over the Gaza Strip. In any case, the establishment of the new government was sharply criticized by Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and left-wing Palestinian groups which published a joint statement stating that making unilateral decisions such as the establishment of a government without national consensus deepens the division at a time when the Palestinians need unity, and indicates the depth of the crisis in the PA's leadership, its disconnect from reality and the great gap between it and the Palestinian people and their aspirations (al-Quds al-Arabi, March 15, 2024). (See Appendix B)

Appendix A

The New Palestinian Government

Dr. Muhammad Mustafa: Prime minister and foreign minister



Dr. Muhammad Mustafa (Yasser Arafat Foundation website, April 10, 2024)

► **Personal information:** Muhammad Abdullah Muhammad Mustafa. Born in 1954 in the village of Saffarin (southeast of Tulkarm). Married and father of two sons.

► **Education:** Until the age of 15 he attended schools in Tulkarm. When he was 15 his family moved to Kuwait, where he finished high school. Between 1972 and 1976 he studied at Baghdad University, where he received a BA in electrical-electronic engineering. He returned to Kuwait to specialize in his field. In 1983, he began studying for an MA in management at George Washington University in Washington, DC. In 1988 he received a PhD in business administration and economics. In 1991, he began teaching at George Washington University as a visiting lecturer.

► **Professional background:** In Kuwait he worked as an engineer in a joint Kuwaiti and British construction company. Between 1991 and 2005 he held various positions at the World Bank headquarters in Washington and participated in the development of global communication companies in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, Africa, Russia and Bulgaria. He served as an economic consultant for the Kuwaiti government and at the Saudi Investment Fund. In 2005, he was appointed by Mahmoud Abbas to serve as an economic advisor for his office. Between 2013 and 2014, he served as the deputy prime minister for economic affairs. Between 2014 and 2015, **he was the PA minister of economy and deputy prime minister.** In 2014, after Operation Protective Edge, he chaired the Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza at the conference of the donor countries in Cairo. In 2015 he was appointed by Mahmoud Abbas as

chairman of the Palestinian Investment Fund. In 2022, he was appointed a member of the PLO's Executive Committee and head of its Economic Committee. He is also a member of the board of directors of the Yasser Arafat Foundation in Ramallah, which is responsible for perpetuating his legacy (aljazeera.net, March 16, 2024). Mustafa is considered a senior Palestinian economist with many years of experience, and a close ally of Mahmoud Abbas (al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 14, 2024).

Ziyad Hab al-Reeh: Minister of the interior



Ziad Hab al-Reeh (Aman 24 website, April 10, 2024)

- ▶ **Personal information:** Ziad Mahmoud Muhammad Hab al-Reeh. Born in 1960 in Jenin.
- ▶ **Education:** BA in communications and policy from al-Najah University in Nablus, and an MA in Israeli studies from al-Quds Open University.
- ▶ **Professional background:** He has been PA minister of the interior since January 2022. He began his career in the PA security apparatus, where he held a variety of positions, including chief of security in Nablus. Between 2004 and 2022, **he commanded the PA preventive security forces** with the [local] rank of Lieutenant General (equivalent to Major General). He is considered a senior Fatah figure and is a member of the movement's Revolutionary Council. During the first intifada he was detained and spent several years in Israeli prisons because of his activities in Fatah (Wikipedia, Palestinian government website, April 10, 2024). He often meets with district governors and the heads of the Palestinian security forces, and is uncompromising in the fight against anarchy in the PA territories (Radio al-Hayat FM, July 8, 2023). He has close ties with Majed Faraj, the head of Palestinian general intelligence, and senior Fatah officer Jibril Rajoub. He is hated by Hamas and the Palestinian left-wing organizations because of his activities against the Palestinian "resistance members" [terrorist operatives]. He was quoted in 2014 telling preventive security operatives not to rejoice over

the victory of Hamas in Gaza since it could affect them in the PA territories (al-Aqsa Radio X account, August 15, 2021).

Sharhabeel al-Zaeem: Minister of justice



Sharhabil al-Zaeem (Sharhabil and Co. Law Offices., April 10, 2024)

► **Personal information:** Sharhabeel Yusuf Saad al-Din al-Zaeem. Born in 1959 in Gaza. Married and father of four children.

► **Education:** BA in law from al-Azhar University in Gaza, MA degree in political science from al-Quds University.

► **Professional background:** Lawyer, jurist and academic. Considered an expert in commercial law, property and dispute resolution. Member of the Palestinian Bar Association and the American Bar Association. Between 1982 and 1985 he worked at a life insurance company in Abu Dhabi. Between 1985 and 1987 he worked at a life insurance company in San'aa, Yemen. In 1987 he returned to the Gaza Strip and established a law firm. He also worked with Palestinian insurance companies and lectured at the Islamic University and al-Azhar University in Gaza. In 2000 he was chosen as the best lawyer in the Gaza Strip. In 2015, two IEDs exploded at the entrance to his house in the al-Rimal neighborhood in Gaza. In 2020, he car was shot at as he drove to his office in Gaza City (Wikipedia in Arabic, Name and Co. Law Offices, April 10, 2024).

Omar al-Bitar: Minister of the treasury



Omar al-Bitar (bnews.ps website, March 28, 2024)

- ▶ **Personal information:** Amr Akram Imran al-Bitar. Born in 1963. Apparently lives in Ramallah.
- ▶ **Education:** BA in financial sciences from the University of Missouri, St. Louis, Missouri, where he studied between 1980 and 1984. In 1989 he graduated with a degree in accounting.
- ▶ **Professional background:** Financial expert and economist with over 40 years of experience in the field of investments and financial management. Was a member of the board of directors of the Jordanian al-Mal Bank and of the Capital Bank in Jordan. Was also a member of the board of directors of the Palestine Development and Investment Company (PADICO) (owned by the Palestinian businessman Munib al-Masri). He is also a member of the management of al-Amal Financial Investments in Jordan. During his stay in the United States he worked for several companies in accounting and auditing (bnews.ps website, March 28, 2024).

Wa'el Zaqout: Minister of planning and international cooperation



Wa'el Zaqout (World Bank website in Arabic, April 10, 2024)

- ▶ **Personal information:** Wa'el Muhammad Mahmoud Zaqout. Born in 1962 in Gaza. Currently lives in Ramallah.

►**Education:** Studied civil engineering at Birzeit University. Received a PhD at the University of Wisconsin and Madison in civil engineering and environmental quality.

►**Professional background:** In 1994 he began working at the World Bank, where he was involved in land and property management in more than 30 countries. Between 2007 and 2011 he managed the World Bank's division of water sector and preparation for hazards in countries of Europe and Central Asia. In 2015 he was director of the World Bank in Yemen (World Bank website in Arabic, Wikipedia in Arabic, April 10, 2024).

Sami Hijjawi: Minister of local authority



Sami Hijjawi (Nablus municipality website, April 10, 2024)

►**Personal information:** Sami Ahmed 'Aref Hijjawi. Born in 1959 in Nablus.

►**Education:** PhD in civil engineering in the former Soviet Union, 1987, specializing in soil quality.

►**Professional background:** Civil engineer. Between the years 2022 and 2024 he was mayor of Nablus. Previously worked as an engineer in a number of companies in the PA, in Jordan and Yemen. In the PA he established the Hijjawi Laboratories to survey land and soil. Untenured lecturer at al-Najah University in Nablus and Birzeit University teaching construction materials and soil. Member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Association of Palestinian Engineers. Registered consulting engineer and an expert in his field (Nablus municipality website, April 10, 2024). In September 2023, it was revealed that he did not keep the promise made before the Nablus municipal elections not to receive a salary for his position. It was discovered that he had received five consecutive salaries, paid by check, each for NIS 13,212 (about \$3,500). He claimed that he "had to take a salary because of sudden, urgent obligations" (al-Shahed, September 18, 2023).

Majed Abu Ramadan: Minister of public health



Dr. Majed Abu Ramadan (website bnews.ps, April 8, 2024)

► **Personal information:** Majed Awni Muhammad Abu Ramadan. Born in 1955 in Gaza. His father, Awni Abu Ramadan was a businessman and a member of the Gaza City Council. His brother, Muhammad Abu Ramadan, was minister of planning affairs in the PA government between 2012 and 2014. His sister, Hanaa Abu Ramadan, is the PA's consul general in Istanbul.

► **Education:** Ophthalmologist. Studied ophthalmology at the Royal College of Ophthalmologists in the UK.

► **Professional background:** A senior ophthalmologist famous in the Gaza Strip for his expertise in laser surgery. Between the years 1981 and 1987 he was an ophthalmologist at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. Between the years 1987 and 1991 he served as an ophthalmologist at a hospital in Lincoln County in the UK. **Between 2005 and 2008 he was the mayor of Gaza.** Between the years 2006 and 2012, he was the chairman of the association of local authorities in the PA. He was previously the Palestinian assistant minister of health for ophthalmology, and also the director general of international cooperation and the director general of the ministry's hospitals. Was a member of the boards of directors of St. John Ophthalmology Hospital in Jerusalem, al-Azhar and al-Aqsa universities in Gaza, al-Quds Bank and more. At a ministerial exchange ceremony held in Ramallah, he said that he would work to restore the health system in the Gaza Strip, "after Israel damaged it in violation of international laws" (website bnews.ps, 8 in April 2024).

Amjad Barham: Minister of education and higher education



Amjad Barham (vision-pd website, April 11, 2024)

► **Personal information:** Amjad Saad Suleiman Barham. Born in 1966 in Tubas. Married and father of four children.

► **Education:** Graduated from high school in Tubas in 1985. In 1991 he received a BA mathematics and physics from Lucknow University in India. In 1994 he received an MA in applied mathematics from the University of Rajasthan in India and in 1998 received a PhD in applied mathematics.

► **Professional background:** Palestinian academic. Between 2021 and 2024 he served as president of the Polytechnic University in Hebron. Between 2006 and 2021 he was the chairman of the PA Association of University Lecturers and Employees. In addition, between 2000 and 2021 he was the chairman of the Hebron Polytechnic employees' association. In 1998, he joined Hebron Polytechnic as an employee and held various management and academic positions in the field of mathematics. Regards education as a means to defend the Palestinian issue and convey its message to the world (vision-pd website in Arabic, April 11, 2024).

Enas Dahadha (Atari): Minister of labor



Enas Dahadha (Atari) (bnews.ps website, March 28, 2024)

► **Personal information:** Enas Hassani Abd al-Ghani Dahadha (Atari). Born in 1981 in Kuwait. Grew up in the village of Atara, north of Ramallah.

► **Education:** MA in business administration from Birzeit University and an MA in international marketing from the University of Sussex in the UK. PhD in international marketing and trade relations from York St. John University in the UK.

► **Professional background:** Palestinian academic. A marketing and management expert and an expert in the development of training methods. Worked as a lecturer at Birzeit University and held a variety of consulting and training positions in the United States, Great Britain, UAE and Jordan. Since 2023, a member of the board of directors of the Palestinian Monetary Authority (bnews.ps website, March 28, 2024).

Muhammad Najm: Minister of religious endowment and religious affairs



Muhammad Najm (Muhammad Najm's Facebook page, September 2, 2023)

► **Personal information:** Muhammad Mustafa Muhammad Najm (Madhi) (Hani Madhi's Facebook page, March 29, 2024). Born in 1960 in Gaza (PA government portal, Wikipedia in Arabic).

► **Education:** BA in the da'wah from the Islamic University in al-Madinah, MA and PhD in Islamic law from the University of Khartoum (PA government portal, Wikipedia in Arabic).

► **Professional background:** Lecturer at al-Azhar University in Gaza. He was previously the Dean of the faculty of Islamic Law at the university, and in September 2023 was appointed dean of the Faculty of Education (Amad, September 2, 2023). He was previously the PA deputy mufti (PA government portal).

Arafat Asfour: Minister of industry



Arafat Asfour (Palestinian Monetary Authority website)

► **Personal information:** Arafat Hussein Suleiman Asfour Abu Sneina, aka Abu Khaled (Facebook page of Anwar Abu Hussein, March 29, 2024). Lives in Hebron. Born in 1961 (Wikipedia in Arabic).

► **Education:** MA in international studies and a BA in economics from Birzeit University (Palestinian Monetary Authority website).

► **Professional background:** Leading Palestinian businessman. Member of the board of directors of the Palestinian Monetary Authority and chairman of the board of directors of the Palestinian Trade Center (PalTrade) since 2017.² Partner and member of the board of directors of the al-Carmel Hotel in Ramallah, and was previously a partner and member of the board of directors of the Saraya Real Estate Development Company (2011 to 2017). He was also previously a partner and CEO of the Omani marble company in the Nassar Group (2003 to 2017). Before that he served as a member of the board of directors of the Ma'an Development Center (1993 to 2002), and as a member of the board of the Palestinian Food Industries Association (1996 to 2003) (Palestinian Currency Authority website).

² Paltrade represents itself as a non-profit organization whose goal is to encourage Palestinian exports. According to the organization's Facebook page, Asfour was chairman of the board of directors until October 2021, and in the 2021-2023 term of the board of directors he served as the organization's treasurer.

Muhammad al-'Amour: Minister of the national economy



Muhammad al-'Amour (Right: Facebook page of the al-'Amour concern, February 14, 2021. Left: PA national economy ministry website, April 4, 2024)

► **Personal information:** Muhammad Yusuf Muhammad al-'Amour, aka Abu Yusuf (Facebook page of Muhammad al-'Amour). From the town of Bidia in the Salfit district; 67 years old (bnews.ps website, March 30, 2024).

► **Education:** Has a BA in civil engineering from the Jordanian University. Graduated in 1981 (bnews,ps website, March 30, 2024).

► **Professional background:** Al-'Amour is the chairman of the board of directors of al-'Amour Industrial and Trading Co.³ (Muhammad al-'Amour's Facebook page). He was elected chairman of the Association of Palestinian Businessmen in Jerusalem in 2021, and chairman of the Association of Palestinian Businessmen's in 2022. Chairman of the board of directors of the al-Takaful Insurance Company; member of the board of directors of al-Quds Company for Medical Preparations; member of the board of directors of the Association of Friends of Birzeit University; vice president of the Palestinian and Canadian Friendship Association; board member of the Supreme Council for Creativity and Excellence, board member of the Solidarity Fund (al-Takaful) in Salfit district. He previously served as a member of the board of directors of the Palestinian Authority for the promotion of investments; member of the board of directors of the PA Standards Institute; and the vice chairman of the Palestinian Contractors Union (Palestinian bnews website, March 30, 2024).

► **Additional information:** al-'Amour was interviewed on the sidelines of an economic forum held in Paris at the end of August 2023, in which he called the Paris Protocol [the agreement that regulates the economic relationship between the PA and Israel] as "unfair," and praised of the projects of the Palestinian private sector, which he described as a mechanism to free

³ Also appears as al-Amour Investments Concern on its Facebook page.

the PA from the "occupation" and to establish the Palestinian presence in the territory (Radio Monte Carlo website, September 1, 2023).

Abd al-Razeq al-Natsheh: Minister of communications and digital economy



Abd al-Razeq al-Natsheh. Left: With outgoing Minister of Communications, Ishaq Sidr (Right: al-Najah University English website. Left: Facebook page of the PA ministry of communications and IT, April 1, 2024

► **Personal information:** Abd al-Razeq Maher Abd al-Razeq al-Natsheh. Born in 1982. Holds British citizenship.

► **Education:** BA in computer engineering from al-Najah University (2000 to 2005). PhD in computer engineering from Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) in 2011 (his CV on the al-Najah University English website).

► **Professional background:** Lecturer in Great Britain, and then at al-Najah University. From 2006 to 2009, teaching assistant in the computer science department at the University of Kent in Canterbury. From 2009 to 2011, full-time lecturer in the department of Engineering and Technology at MMU. At MMU he taught undergraduate and graduate courses related to IT and worked on various types of research projects, such as artificial intelligence, image processing, medical imaging, etc. Since 2011 has been an assistant professor in the department of Computer Information Systems at al-Najah University. Since 2012, he has been deputy director of the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching at al-Najah University. Since 2014 he has been a member of the board of directors of the Ibdaa company for the support of IT entrepreneurial programs (his CV on the Arabic website of al-Najah University).

Ahed Bseiso: Minister of public works and housing



Right: Ahed Bseiso (right) replacing the outgoing minister of public works and housing (the ministry's Facebook page, April 1, 2024). Left: A visit to the Temple Mount (Ahed Bseiso's Facebook page, April 20, 2023)

► **Personal information:** Ahed Fayek Atef Bseiso, aka Abu Fayek. Born in 1955. Gaza (Wikipedia in Arabic). His brother, Atef Bseiso, was a senior PLO operative and planned of the murder of the 11 athletes in the Munich Olympics, and was eliminated in Paris in 1992. Ahed Bseiso commemorates his death every year.

► **Education:** Graduated from the Faculty of Engineering at Cairo University (Ahed Bseiso's Facebook page).

► **Professional background:** Owner and CEO of Home Engineering Unltd. Member of the Yasser Arafat Foundation's achievement award committee. According to the Foundation's website he is a member of the board of directors of the al-Quds Bank; a member board of directors of the Palestinian Banking Institution;⁴ member of the advisory committee of the American AMIDEAST Foundation;⁵ member of the general assembly of the Palestinian Investment Fund; member of the board of directors of the Greek-Palestinian Friendship Association (Yasser Arafat Foundation website); member of the board of trustees of the al-Quds Open University. Its website states that he was previously as chairman of the Association of Palestinian Businessmen in Gaza; chairman of the Palestinian Housing Council in Gaza; and chairman of the board of directors of the Palestinian Development Fund⁶ (al-Quds Open University website). He is also a member of the board of directors of the Ahlia Insurance Company (al-Ahlia Company website).

⁴ Today called Rawad, it is a private company providing financing solutions.

⁵ An American NGO whose full name is America-Mideast Educational-Training Services

⁶ A non-profit Palestinian institution established in 1996 to promote the effective growth of small and medium-sized Palestinian enterprises.

Samah Hamed: Minister of social development



Samah Abu Aoun Hamed (Facebook page of the PA ministry of social development, April 3, 2024)

► **Personal information:** Samah Abd al-Rahim Hussein Hamed⁷ Born in 1976 in Lebanon, and moved among more than 15 countries with her parents following her father, who worked in the PLO. She first arrived in the PA territories in 1998 (Wikipedia in Arabic; Raya, March 15, 2021). Lives in Kfar Naama in the Ramallah-al-Bireh District (Facebook page of the Kafr Naama Council, March 31, 2024).

► **Education:** BA in chemical engineering at the Iraq University of Technology, 1988; MA in business administration from the University of Liverpool; PhD in business administration from the University of Northampton, with a focus on technology entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa and assessment of venture capital investors for the human capital factors of start-ups (Raya, March 15, 2021; al-Hura TV website, April 1, 2024; Arab-American University website) .

► **Professional background:** Member of the board of trustees of the Arab-American University. According to the university's website, since 2008 she has managed the Paltel Institute for Social Development. Developed and implemented many influential programs, such as Code for Palestine, which aims to empower young Palestinians in coding and design thinking in collaboration with students from Stanford University in California. She was responsible for the establishment of Paltel's innovation center (Fikra), the Gaza Hope Fund, Paltel's scholarship program and many others. Worked as manager of the Fund for Development and Loans to Local Authorities. Was an advisor to the minister of local government between 2003 and 2008, and assisted in the implementation of the first elections for local authorities. A

⁷ Called Samah Abu Aoun Hamed on her personal Facebook page and on the Facebook page of the PA ministry of social development.

member of the board of directors of the Amaar Group, the investment arm of the Palestinian Investment Fund; member of the board of directors of Masader Company, a company of the Palestinian Investment Fund; and a member of the board of trustees of the Rawabi English Academy⁸ and the BIT Academy (website of the Arab-American University). Chairman of the board of directors of the Palestinian Business Women's Forum (Forum Facebook page, April 2, 2024).

Rizq Salimia: Minister of agriculture



Rizq Salimia (Right: sulimiha.1's Facebook page , April 1, 2024; Left: Murad al-Batran's Facebook page, March 29, 2024)

► **Personal information:** Rizq Abd al-Rahman Salem Salimia, aka Abu Jihad (Facebook page of Saud Nimr Salimia, March 28, 2024). From the town of Idhna in the Hebron District (Instagram account of moltaqaiddna2020, March 28, 2024). Born in 1969 (Wikipedia in Arabic).

► **Education:** BA in gardening science and technology from Aden University (1990 to 1994); MA in protected agriculture and post-harvest biology from the Mediterranean Agricultural Institute (CIHEAM) in the city of Chania in Greece (1996 to 1997); PhD in agricultural engineering from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (2000 to 2004) (Salimia Facebook page, March 30, 2024; Faeq Alsuleimy's Facebook page, March 29, 2024).

► **Professional background:** President of Nablus University for Vocational-Technical Education from its establishment in 2021 until December 2023 (University website, March 11, 2024). Before that was vice president of Hebron University (2018 to 2020); vice president for academic affairs at Palestine Technical University-Khadourie (July 2014 to August 2015); chairman of the Palestinian National Committee for the SESAME Particle Accelerator Project⁹

⁸ A private school for primary and secondary school-age children, a Cambridge International School.

⁹ The Mediterranean particle accelerator project, inaugurated in Jordan in May 2017, as part of scientific and political cooperation between Iran, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Pakistan, Cyprus, the PA and Israel.

(2019 to 2022); dean of the Faculty of Agriculture at Hebron University (2007 to 2011); head of the Agricultural Education Department at the Ministry of the Environment (1998 to 2000); member of the Palestinian National Committee for the Accreditation of Higher Diplomas/Natural Sciences (2015 to 2022). Worked as a visiting scientist and researcher in many countries as well as the Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency (Facebook page of Faeq Alsuleimy, March 29, 2024).

Hani al-Hayek: Minister of tourism and antiquities



Hani al-Hayek (Facebook page of Mahmoud Rabia Abu Amer, April 1, 2024)

► **Personal information:** Hani Naji Attallah Abd al-Masih al-Hayek, aka Abu Khaled (Facebook page of Mahmoud Rabia Abu Amer, April 1, 2024). A Christian, he lives in Beit Sahour (Palestine Trade Center Facebook page, May 13, 2019).

► **Education:** Studied at al-Mustansiriyah University in Baghdad, and at the Collège des Frères Christian High School in the Bab al-Louq neighborhood in Cairo (Hani al-Hayek's Facebook page).

► **Professional background:** Since 2005 has served non-consecutive terms as the mayor of Beit Sahour (Radio Moel website, April 4, 2022; milhilard website; Hani al-Hayek's Facebook page). He was previously treasurer of the board of directors of the Palestine Trade Center (Paltrade) (Palestine Trade Center Facebook page, May 13, 2019). Headed the chairman of the board of the Craftsmen and chairman of the board of directors of the Palestinian Textile Industries Association (PA government portal).

► **Additional information:** Fatah activist and ran in the municipal elections on the Fatah ticket (Dunia al-Watan, November 6, 2012; al-Mahed TV Facebook page, March 24, 2022).



Hani al-Hayek during the 2022 election campaign, interviewed with a Fatah poster in Beit Sahour. The caption under his name reads, "Hani al-Hayek, head of Fatah's United Lists (al-Mahed TV Facebook page, March 24, 2022)

Ashraf al- A'war: Minister of Jerusalem affairs



Ashraf al-A'war (Facebook page of the al- A'war Family Council, March 31, 2024)

- **Personal information:** Ashraf Haasan Abbas al-A'war aka Abu Hassan (Ashraf al- A'war Facebook page, September 27, 2023). Born in 1973 in Jerusalem (Wikipedia in Arabic).
- **Education:** Lawyer and jurist. PhD in administrative law from the Institute for Arab Studies in Cairo in 2013; MA in public law from al-Quds University; BA from al-Quds University (al-Quds University website).
- **Professional background:** Assistant professor of Administrative Law at the Faculty of Law at al-Quds University. Joined the faculty in 2010 (al-Quds University website). A member and consultant in many legal-community institutions in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (PA government portal). Was secretary of the General Association of Workers' Unions in the PA until his appointment as minister (Facebook page of the Jerusalem branch of the General Association of Workers' Unions in Palestine, October 12, 2023; Facebook page of the Workers' Union in the Electric Company in the Northern West Bank in Nablus, April 1, 2024). Previously served as the chairman of the Silwan Sports Club (Silwan Sports Club Facebook page, March

28, 2024). Previously chairman of the board of the ACT Conflict Resolution Association in Jerusalem (Association Facebook page, March 30, 2024).

► **Additional information:** Served as a member of the Palestinian National Council and a member of the Jerusalem Committee (PA government portal). Fatah activist and was a candidate for the Jerusalem district on Fatah's list in the Legislative Council elections in 2021, elections which were finally canceled (Fatah X (Twitter) account, April 17, 2021). Detained by the Israeli security forces at least twice, in 2021 (Dunia al-Watan, April 17, 2021; Watan Agency, May 9, 2021).



Right: al-A'war in his photo as a Fatah candidate in the Legislative Council elections, part of a tweet about his detention on April 17, 2021 (Fatah Twitter account, April 17, 2021). **Left:** al-A'war from the extension of his detention on May 8, 2021 (Watan Agency, May 9, 2021)

Imad Hamdan: Minister of culture



Imad al-Din Hamdan

(Facebook page of the Hebron office of the PA's ministry of culture, April 1, 2024)

► **Personal information:** Imad al-Din Abdullah Salim Hamdan, aka Abu Diyaa (Facebook page of Imad al-Din Hamdan). Born in 1967 in Ramallah (cairo24 website, April 2, 2024).

► **Education:** MA in sustainable development and institution building, BA from the Faculty of Business Administration at al-Yarmouk University in Jordan (Wafa, April 1, 2024).

► **Professional background:** CEO of the Hebron Reconstruction Committee since 2009, and the director of the program for the revitalization of historic towns with the Belgian cooperation agency BTC. Also worked as a lecturer at several local universities, and as a public relations lecturer and trainer at many forums and institutions. Member of the board of directors of the ICOMOS Association¹⁰ Palestine; member of the board of directors of the International Youth Association¹¹; chairman of the board of the al-Zeitoun suburb, and chairman of the Ariaf Heritage Association (Wafa, April 1, 2024).

Tareq Zourob: Minister of transportation



Tareq Zourob (Facebook page of Hanin Zourob, March 29, 2024)

► **Personal information:** Tareq Husni Salem Zourob, aka Abu al-Majd. Mahan Younes (Facebook page dewan.zo3rob, March 16, 2021). Born in 1962 (Wikipedia in Arabic).

► **Education:** Has a master's degree in business administration from Northern Virginia University in the USA; a master's degree in accounting and information systems from Palestine University; and a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Kuwait University (PA government portal).

► **Professional background:** Member of the board of trustees of al-Azhar University, and of Project Management International in Canada (PMI). Was previously CEO of PADICO (Palestine Development and Investment Company), the industrial zone in Gaza (PA government portal).

► **Additional information:** Zourob is a Fatah activist and was a candidate from the Khan Yunis district on Fatah's list for the Legislative Council elections in 2021, elections which were canceled (Ma'an, April 1, 2021).

¹⁰ The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).

¹¹ Possibly a reference to the International Palestinian Youth League, whose offices are in Hebron.

Mona al-Khalili: Minister of women's affairs



Right: Mona al-Khalili (left) replaces the previous minister of women's affairs (the ministry's Facebook page, April 1, 2024). Left: At a conference in Madrid representing the General Union of Palestinian Women (Mona al-Khalili's Facebook page, November 9, 2023)

► **Personal information:** Mona Muhammad Mahmoud al-Khalili. Born in Beirut in 1964 (Yasser Arafat Foundation website).

► **Education:** Graduated from high school at Saint Severius College in 1983. Has a degree in communication from the Tunisian Media Institute and a degree in management and computer science from the al-Quds Open University (Yasser Arafat Foundation website).

► **Professional background:** Member of the Yasser Arafat Foundation's Achievement Award Committee. According to the foundation website, she is the secretary of the General Union of Palestinian Women. She was responsible for the relationship with the Arab Women's Organization (2006 to 2010); director of the office in Tunisia of the General Secretariat of the General Union of Palestinian Women (1985 to 1993); director of the Department of National-International Relations (1994 to 1996); director of the General Secretariat of the General Union of Palestinian Women (1996 to 2008) (Yasser Arafat Foundation website).

► **Additional information:** Member of the Palestinian National Council and the PLO's Central Council. Member of the Arab Parliament (PA government portal).

Varsen Aghabekian: State minister for foreign minister affairs and Palestinian Expatriates



Varsen Aghabekian (Dar al-Kalma University website)

► **Personal information:** Varsen Aghabekian (Shahin) (PA foreign ministry website. Armenian Christian. Born in 1958 in Jordan and raised in the Armenian quarter of Jerusalem (milhilard website, March 29, 2024).

► **Education:** MA from Purdue University in Indiana, 1983; PhD in educational management and policy studies from the University of Pittsburgh, 1988 (milhilard website, March 29, 2024).

► **Professional background:** Was an associate professor at al-Quds University (1988 to 2008); dean of the Faculty of Health Professions (1995 to 1998); and dean of graduate studies (1998 to 2000) at the same university. Led the sectoral research project in Jerusalem/Orient House and the European Union. Coordinator of the human resources development unit at the Palestinian Health Council and managed the human resources development project in the health sector in "Palestine;" manager of the institutional structure project in the PA chairman's office; CEO of Jerusalem-the capital of Arab culture, in 2009; director of research and planning at the Welfare Association – Taawon; was general commissioner of the Independent Authority for Human Rights (2016 to 2018). Has worked in the Negotiations Support Project from 2010 until the present. Elected as to the committee that formulated the strategic plan for maintaining the Christian presence in "Palestine." Founding and active member of the Presidential Committee for the Restoration of the Church of the Nativity, and the Presidential Committee for Church Affairs. Elected to the board of trustees of Dar al-Kalima University in 2006; works as an associate professor in the Faculty of Advanced Studies and Scientific Research at Dar al-Kalima University in Bethlehem and has served as the university's vice president for strategic affairs since 2021 (Dar al-Kalima University website).

Published many studies and reports, such as the migration of Christians from "Palestine;" reform and women's rights and the planning challenges in Jerusalem. Published A Palestinian Armenian: The Intertwine between the Social-the Political (2021), and Armenians in Palestine under the British Mandate (2023) (milhilard website, March 29, 2024).

Basel al-Kafarnah: State minister for matters of support



Basel al-Kafarnah (Ra'ia Center for Political Development website, July 22, 2022)

- ▶ **Personal information:** Bassel Abd al-Rahman Hassan Nasser al-Kafarnah. Born in 1966 in the Jebalya refugee camp (Ra'ia Center for Political Development website, July 22, 2022).
- ▶ **Education:** Studied at the joint elementary school for refugees and the boys division in Beit Hanoun and at the agricultural high school. Graduated from al-Fallujah High School in 1984. BA in business administration from the Islamic University in Gaza, 1990; MA in the management and implementation of development programs from the University of Manchester, 1993 (Ra'ia Center for Political Development website, July 22, 2022).
- ▶ **Professional background:** Project manager in the Gaza Mental Health Program (1994 to 1995); project consultant at AMIDEAST (1995 to 1996); technical coordinator of the first development plan prepared by the PA (1996 to 1998); responsible for project management in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (1998 to 2015); director of the UNDP office in the Gaza Strip (2015 to 2019). Owns Turnstone Company for Management and Development Solutions, and Turnstone Company for Trade, Export and Import.
- ▶ Was a member of the board of directors of the al-Ahli Club in Beit Hanoun and of the Gaza Sports Club; member of the founding body of the Association of Palestinian Directors in 1995; member of the Association of Palestinian Economists; member of the board of directors of the University of al-Israa; member of the board of trustees of the International Authority for the Reconstruction of "Palestine" (Ra'ia Center for Political Development website, July 22, 2022).

►**Additional information:** His father was wanted in the 1960s, he himself was in preventive detention for several days during the first intifada, and his family home was attacked during Operation Protective Edge (2014) (Ra'ia Center for Political Development website, July 22, 2022).