Commentary...

Palestinians: If You Do Not Give Us Everything, We Cannot Trust You
By Bassam Tawil

The Palestinians are once again angry -- this time because the Trump administration does not seem to have endorsed their position regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They are also angry because they believe that the Trump administration does not want to force Israel to comply with all their demands.

Here is how the Palestinians see it: If you are not with us, then you must be against us. If you do not accept all our demands, then you must be our enemy and we cannot trust you to play the role of an "honest" broker in the conflict with Israel.

Last week, unconfirmed reports once again suggested that the Trump administration has been working on a comprehensive plan for peace in the Middle East. The full details of the plan remain unknown at this time.

However, what is certain -- according to the reports -- is that the plan does not meet the Palestinians' demands. In fact, no peace plan -- by Americans or any other party -- would be able to provide the Palestinians with everything for which they are asking.

Palestinian requirements remain as unrealistic as ever. They include, among other things, the demand that millions of Palestinian "refugees" be allowed to enter Israel. Also, the Palestinians want Israel to withdraw to indefensible borders that would bring Hamas and other groups closer to Tel Aviv.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) and its leader, 82-year-old Mahmoud Abbas, now in the twelfth year of his four-year term, continue to insist that they will accept nothing less than a sovereign and independent Palestinian state, with east Jerusalem as its capital, on the entire lands captured by Israel in the 1967 Six Day War.

Most dangerous is that even in the unlikely event that Abbas would sign a deal, another leader can come along later and legitimately say that Abbas had no authority to sign anything as his term had long since expired.

Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist terror group controlling the Gaza Strip, maintains that it will never accept the presence of Israel on "Muslim-owned" land. Hamas wants all the land Israel supposedly "took" in 1948.

Unlike the Palestinian Authority, Hamas deserves credit for being clear and consistent about its true goal. Since its establishment three decades ago -- and despite recent illusory hopes expressed by Western pundits -- Hamas has refused to change its ideology or soften its policy. It resolutely sticks to its stance that no Muslim is entitled to give up any part of Muslim-owned lands to non-Muslims (in this instance, Jews). The same held true for "cleansing" Turkey of Armenian and Greek non-Muslims.

The Janus-faced Palestinian Authority, on the other hand, continues to speak in multiple voices, sending conflicting messages both to its people and the international community. No one really knows whether the PA has a clear and unified strategy in dealing with Israel.

Mahmoud Abbas knows how to sound extremely nice, and often does so when he meets with Israelis and Western leaders. But when he speaks in Arabic to his own people, sometimes it is hard to distinguish Abbas from Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

Some of Abbas's top officials sound even more extreme than Hamas. Expect, of course, when these soft-spoken, Western-educated Palestinian officials are dispatched to talk to Westerners. Then, all of a sudden, comes the honey.

Because the Palestinian Authority leaders and their surrogates speak in more than one voice, they send conflicting messages to the world about their actual intentions, often managing to fool everyone. Too often the world believes the messages they want to hear instead of the less comfortable real ones.

The Palestinian Authority's contradictory messages have created the impression that it is both a peace partner and an enemy -- depending on what xães at the Palestinians is the strong and strategic alliance between the US and Israel.

The Palestinians have assaulted every US administration over the past four or five decades of being "biased" in favor of Israel. The Palestinians would certainly like to see the hundreds of millions of dollars in financial aid every year they receive from the US continue. Yet, no matter what the US does for the Palestinians, the Americans will always be denounced for their alleged bias in favor of Israel.

The Trump administration is about to receive a lesson in Palestinian politics. If and when the Trump administration makes public its peace plan, the Palestinians will be the first to reject it, simply because it does not meet all their demands.

Mahmoud Abbas knows that he cannot come back to his people with anything less than what he has promised his people: 100% of the land. The past few days have already given indications of the Palestinian response. Here, for instance, is what Abbas's spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudaineh, had to say when he was asked to comment on reports concerning the peace plan and the US threat to close down the PLO's diplomatic mission in Washington: "The American administration has lost its ability to play the role of mediator in the region. The US can no longer be seen as the sponsor of the peace process.

Abu Rudaineh's remarks were rather more restrained than comments concerning the Trump administration made by other Palestinian officials and factions.

The PLO's chief negotiator, Saeb Erekat, went as far as threatening that the Palestinians would suspend all communication with the US if the PLO's diplomatic mission is shuttered.

Of course, no one seems to see Erekat's threat seriously. Suspending contacts with the US is tantamount to suicide for the Palestinians. Without US financial and political support, the Palestinian Authority and Erekat would disappear from the scene within days. At this stage, it remains unclear whether Erekat's talk about suspending contacts with the Americans includes the refusal to accept US financial aid.

Yet, Erekat's threats should be seen in the context of growing Palestinian rage and hostility toward the Trump administration. This anger is now being translated into a rhetorical onslaught against Trump and his administration. Palestinians are now accusing the current administration of working and conspiring towards "liquidating" the Palestinian cause with the help of some Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

The Palestinians have made up their mind: the Trump peace plan is bad for us and we will not accept it. The plan is bad because it does not force Israel to give the Palestinians everything. For the Palestinians, the plan is bad because it is viewed as part of a conspiracy concocted by Jared Kushner and Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman. The Palestinians have convinced themselves that Trump wants to "liquidate" their cause, not solve it.

Trump is about to go through the same process that President Bill Clinton experienced at Camp David 17 years ago. Then, much to the astonishment of Clinton, Yasser Arafat turned down flat an astoundingly generous offer by then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak. Trump will soon learn that for Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinians, 99% is just not enough. (Gates Institute 1/5)

The writer, a Muslim, is based in the Middle East.

On Feminism and Terrorism

By Lital Shemesi

Last week, Glamour magazine held its 2017 Women of the Year award ceremony, and among the recipients were the organizers of January's Women's March, the massive demonstration in Washington to protest President Donald Trump's inauguration.

The protesters included many women who could not quite figure out why their candidate, Hillary Clinton, had failed to win the election the previous November. One of the leaders of the march was Linda Sarsour, a Palestinian-American who was until recently the director of the Arab American Association of New York. She is perhaps the most vocal...
Palestinian-American in the United States.

Sarsour has been tweeting nonstop against Zionism and Israel and has often boasted that some of her relatives are imprisoned in Israeli jails for terrorism. In one of her interviews, she said that a person cannot be both Zionist and feminist and that she supports the organizations that want to boycott Israel’s occupation.

This pro-women, liberal advocate also tried to insert some of the anti-Israel agenda into her fiery speech at the march in Washington, telling the crowd that her generation would create a Palestinian state and that her dream was to see a liberated and free Palestine.

The same feminism that had Sarsour lead the Women’s March also had her push for a hijab and speak in favor of Shariah law. Awarding a prize that celebrates feminism to someone who fights for Israel’s annihilation and is accused of supporting female genital mutilation is mind-boggling.

This is what the hypocrisy in America’s progressive circles looks like today. The enlightened masses, who hold romantic views about liberalism, can easily be drawn to a hijab-wearing woman who is a member of an ethnic minority and who makes endless noise about human rights – how beautiful and endearing.

It is just too bad that human rights and feminism have nothing in common with Sarsour, despite progressives doing all they can to identify with her. Liberals in American have gone out of their way to turn Sarsour into their token Middle Eastern, Muslim, fundamentalist woman who can also go to Starbucks like everyone else.

In America, a nation of immigrants, there is room for everyone regardless of the color of their skin or their political or religious outlooks. There are countless examples of feminist Muslim women who have tried to promote tolerance in America’s feminist discourse. Sarsour is not one of them.

The desire to embrace anything Middle Eastern so long as it is painted as pro-human rights is fundamentally flawed. The liberal discourse on coexistence, tolerance, egalitarianism, and women’s empowerment can no longer differentiate between good and evil.

Sarsour has the luxury of living in the land of opportunity and promoting the ideas of evil regimes she would never be willing to live under.

The prize she received is a badge of shame for American society; such “progressive” ideas turn the clock back a generation. (Israel Hayom Nov 22)

The Left has Lost Its Way By Eitan Orkibi

Since embedding itself in the opposition, Israeli Left has sunk into a deep internal process of soul-searching. Journalistic debates and impassioned symposiums have been dedicated to the question “where did we go wrong?” Why have left-wing parties failed to win over the hearts and minds of voters and bring about a political change?

One popular argument says the Left must venture outside the Tel Aviv “bubble”; that the time has come to stop condescending to the public and foster dialogue instead, especially with the traditional Mizrahi sector that lives in the periphery.

Since Avi Gabbay was elected Labor leader in July, he has begun courting right-wing voters by relaxing Labor’s left-wing core positions. Ostensibly this signals that a new Left is upon us and that the new left-wing leadership is rethinking its way forward, veering slightly to the right and underscoring its Jewish identity. Apparently, this is one of the results of the party’s soul-searching.

But this is perplexing to someone trying to understand it from the outside. Either the soul-searching has led the Left to the Right or the process is nothing more than a ploy to lure votes away from the moderate Right by pretending to be more like Likud.

The Right, by the way, suspects forgery. It is not the first time that the Left has remembered that it draws its power from the public and that its humanitarian principles are rooted in Jewish tradition. This happens whenever the Left gets a whiff of election season.

Let’s assume that Gabbay is indeed heading a brilliant political maneuver, and let’s even imagine that he can carry his party to victory. Would it really be the ideological Left itself – the sum of all its principles, pokeys and world-views – that would win? Every rational left-wing voter must answer “no” for a very simple reason: Over its years in the opposition, the Left has avoided genuine soul-searching.

With all due respect to the overlap between political principles and religious identity or ethnicity, the political rift in the Israeli public runs deep over one major dilemma: a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the future of Judea and Samaria. On this, the Left has failed to recalibrate its course, rendering it irrelevant. Other than saying it “still supports” the two-state solution and criticizing the policies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, the Left has not provided any truly concrete or current statement on the peace process it claims to champion.

We have not heard, certainly not from the Zionist Union, what lessons it learned from the 2005 disengagement from the Gaza Strip, and how to implement a similar move in the future without replicating its dismal results with regard to central Israel. We have yet to understand what guarantees we have that we will not wake up to find ourselves sharing a border with a terrorist Hamas state the day after implementing a peace plan, nor do we know how exactly the Zionist Left intends to contend with the Palestinian demand for the right of return.

How will they be able to guarantee that after Israel withdraws back to the 1967 lines, the Palestinians will indeed declare the end of the conflict? The most we heard from the Left so far is that Netanyahu refuses true peace; that the Right’s contention that “there is no partner” for peace is an Israeli bluff meant to close every window of opportunity, and that unless Israel changes its tune, it will drown under a diplomatic tsunami.

In the absence of an updated discourse, one must wonder whether the Left has squandered its years in the opposition on cultivating hatred against Netanyahu, without offering a single new positive argument for the peace process. What is the meaning of this neglect if not a lost decade and an ideological failure? All that is left to say is that, in its “anything but Bibi” delirium, the Left has lost sight of what it means to be left-wing.

The writer is a senior sociology and anthropology lecturer at Ariel University. (Israel Hayom Nov 22)

A French Awakening By Eldad Beck

Chiclly, a suburb in the northwest of Paris, has in recent weeks become a battleground in the war of France’s secular republican character.

It began when a Muslim organization decided to protest against a municipal decision to relocate one of its prayer venues from a central location to a less central site, one that members claim is too small and unsafe. Protesters without the necessary permits held mass prayers on the main street near city hall, angering non-Muslim residents.

In response, around 100 elected officials stood on the side of the street wearing tricolor ribbons and singing the national anthem. The Muslim protesters filed a complaint with police over “violent behavior” and “incitement to racial hatred.” Last Friday, local police decided to ban the mass prayers.

It seems that large portions of the French public have begun to understand that the problem with Islam extends beyond the recent terror attacks and that the religion in fact threatens the country’s existing way of life. The protest staged by elected officials is proof that politicians have also come to understand that the policy of burying their heads in the sand has contributed to the ongoing erosion of France’s secular character.

After years of denying the existence of the phenomenon, there is now significant public debate on Muslim anti-Semitism in France. The French establishment’s scandalous handling of the murder of Sarah Halimi, insisting that the murder was not an act of anti-Semitism, challenged the conspiracy of silence.

The desecration of a monument honoring Ilan Halimi, a young Jewish man coincidentally with the same surname as the later victim, who was kidnapped and brutally murdered by Muslims over a decade ago, led French Democrats to publically challenge the current French attitude towards Muslim anti-Semitism. However, the article insisted on differentiating between old anti-Semitic stereotypes and modern Judeophobia, meaning a fear of Jews that feeds the usual anti-Semitism, mainly on social media, and so exemplified the French left-wing elite’s difficulty in calling the problem by its name.

Sexual assault allegations against Europe’s most senior representative of “moderate Islam,” Tariq Ramadan, the grandson of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, have served to undermine the blind support usually offered by the Left. Ramadan’s attorneys face an uphill battle, not just in the face of growing accusations against their client, but in light of the anti-Semitic claims by many of Ramadan’s followers. The criminal scandal is just another expression of the Left’s anti-Semitism.

Is this but a temporary awakening? It could be, if the French and European Left do not engage in some serious soul-searching and identify the reasons they previously chose to ignore Muslim anti-Semitism and blindly follow these radicals disguised as moderates. One of the reasons, it should be noted, is the anti-Semitism so prevalent among many in today’s Left. (Israel Hayom Nov 20)

Exonerated, to his Chaparin By Asher Maoz

Such a surrealistic phenomenon is seldom seen in these parts. Police investigators, looking into allegations of serious misconduct on the part of a soldier, discover that the incident in question never happened. The prosecution decides to close the case due to lack of guilt, but instead of the defendant celebrating, he and his friends lament the exoneration.

The incident began when Breaking the Silence disseminated a video of Lt. (res.) Dean Issacharoff confessing to abusing a Palestinian who had resisted being handcuffed. For those wondering why Issacharoff would condemn himself in this fashion, it has emerged that when he doesn’t get his way, Issacharoff confesses to abusing a plaintiff who had resisted being handcuffed.

Exonerated, to his Chaparin

The writer is a senior sociology and anthropology lecturer at Ariel University. (Israel Hayom Nov 22)
nongovernmental organization. The organization is vilified for spreading anonymous "testimony," which makes it impossible to investigate and prosecute soldiers who transgressed or to disprove the charges. Indeed, the organization opens the video by saying it contains "chilling testimony of an IDF officer who served in Hebron, who attests to viciously assaulting a Palestinian man without any reason;" and the defendant was not even on duty.

The purpose behind publishing this "difficult and painful testimony" becomes apparent during the video's epilogue. "Has Dean been investigated for his actions?" the organization asks, "Is he a danger to the public, as claimed by the prosecutor in the trial of IDF soldier Ezer Azaria?" And Breaking the Silence vowed: "More to follow..." Arguably, the following could have been added: the attorney general ordered an investigation, leading to the subsequent plot twist. Instead of rejecting that the video prompted an investigation, Breaking the Silence's Executive Director Avner Gvaryahu objected to the "political investigation" and promised that "hundreds of former soldiers who have broken the silence would be happy to come and testify and expose what [Justice Minister Ayman] Shaked and his friends are trying to hide."

This is an odd claim to be sure, as among those "hundreds of soldiers" only Issacharoff has come forward. Gvaryahu’s gripe was supported by leftist groups, who said the goal of the investigation was to "intimidate and frighten critics of the occupation from using their voices."

At the same time, it was leaked that the investigation "wouldn't lead anywhere" because "it was unreasonable" to expect the police to locate the allegedly abused Palestinian detainee — and that without a complaint there could be no conviction.

The Azaria trial should have taught Breaking the Silence that when a crime against a Palestinian is exposed — and not by B'Tselem, either — the authorities investigate it thoroughly without waiting for a formal complaint. In the case of Azaria specifically, the defendant was tried and punished. Breach of the Silence, however, underestimated the investigative acumen of the police.

Investigators found the Palestinian, who confirmed he was indeed detained and handcuffed after he and his friends threw rocks at IDF soldiers, but was not beaten, was not injured, did not bleed and did not pass out. His version was substantiated by testimonies from Issacharoff’s comrades, who were with him at the time of the alleged incident. It appears these horrific acts never occurred. It is uncommon to find such compatibility between the IDF’s version and that of the Palestinian "victim."

Under these circumstances, as stated, the case was closed due to a lack of guilt. Rather than revel at dodging the same fate as Azaria, Issacharoff’s attorney, Gaby Lasky, demonstrated: "We want to go to trial, where it will be possible to discuss the evidence possessed by all the sides, in an open and public manner and prove [Issacharoff’s] claims."

How strange. When police investigators concluded, based on the gathered testimonies, that Issacharoff did not commit the alleged crime, the prosecution should have put him on trial anyway just so the court could "prove his claims!" And how would such a trial go? Would the prosecution argue that Issacharoff is innocent while his defense attorneys try proving his guilt?

Lasky is too experienced an attorney to pursue such a trial. Anyone studying for the bar exam, not to mention any first-year law student, knows it is a terrible idea. She knows she cannot bring the matter before the court.

Issacharoff’s subordinates and commanders released a video in which they denied his allegations and called him a liar. Issacharoff will sue them for defamation of character and let the court discuss the matter "openly and publicly," and determine if he indeed transgressed. Perhaps Issacharoff should also sue the Palestinian he allegedly abused for essentially calling him a liar as well. (Israel Hayom Nov 19)

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Belief in Palestinian Openness to Two-State Solution Amounts to Insanity  By Efraim Karsh

I never thought I would concur with anything written by veteran Israeli "peace" activist Uri Avnery, but I find myself in full agreement with his recent proposition that "sheer stupidity plays a major role in the history of nations," and that the longstanding rejection of the two-state solution has been nothing short of grand idiocy.

But it is here that our consensus ends. For rather than look at the historical record of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and draw the self-evident conclusions, Avnery retreats into the counterfactual fantasyland in which he has been living for decades. "When I pointed this out [i.e., the two-state solution, right after the Second World War," he writes, "I was more or less alone. Now this is a worldwide consensus, everywhere except in Israel."

Ignoring the vainglorious (mis)appropriation of the two-state solution by the then 25-year-old Avnery, this assertion is not only unfounded but the inverse of the truth. Far from being averse to the idea, the Zionist leadership accepted the two-state solution as early as 1937 when it was first raised by a British commission of inquiry headed by Lord Peel.

And while this acceptance was somewhat half-hearted given that the proposed Jewish state occupied a mere 15% of the mandate territory west of the Jordan river, it was the Zionist leadership that 10 years later spearheaded the international campaign for the two-state solution that culminated in the UN partition resolution of November 1947.

Likewise, since the onset of the Oslo process in September 1993, five successive Israeli prime ministers — Shimon Peres, Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon, Ehud Olmert and Benjamin Netanyahu — have openly and unequivocally endorsed the two-state solution. Paradoxically it was Yitzhak Rabin, posthumously glorified as a tireless "soldier of peace," who envisaged a Palestinian "entity short of a state that will independently rule its people" and agreed to the establishment of a Palestinian state provided it recognized Israel’s Jewish nature, PLO chief peace negotiator Saeb Erekat immediately endorsed the idea, while President Clinton and designated Arab League representative” of the Palestinian people, more receptive to the idea. Its hallowed founding document, the Palestinian Covenant, adopted upon its formation and revised four years later to reflect the organization’s growing militancy, has far less to say about Palestinian statehood than about the need to destroy Israel.

In June 1974, the PLO diversified the means used to this end by adopting the "phased strategy," which authorized it to seize whatever territory Israel was prepared or compelled to cede and use it as a springboard for further territorial gains until achieving, in its phrase, the "complete liberation of Palestine." Five years later, when president Carter attempted to bring the Palestinians into the Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations, he ran into the brick wall of rejectionism.

"This is a lousy deal," PLO chairman Yasser Arafat told the American Edward Said, who had passed him the administration’s offer.

We want Palestine. We’re not interested in bits of Palestine. We don’t want to negotiate with the Israelis. We’re going to fight." Even as he shook time minister Rabin’s hand on the White House lawn on September 13, 1993, Arafat was assuring the Palestinians in a pre-recorded Arabic-language message that the agreement was merely an implementation of the PLO’s phased strategy.

During the next 11 years, until his death in November 2004, Arafat played an intricate game of Jekyll and Hyde, speaking the language of peace to Israeli and Western audiences while depicting the Oslo accords to his fellow Palestinians as a scam engineered by the international community. He never stopped the terror campaign, even after his own son died in an assassination attempt by his enemies. He made constant allusions to the phased strategy and the Treaty of Hudaibiya — signed by Muhammad with the people of Mecca in 628 CE, only to be disavowed a couple of years later when the situation shifted in the prophet’s favor.

He insisted on the "right of return," the standard Palestinian/Arab euphemism for Israel’s destruction through demographic subversion; he failed to abolish the numerous clauses in the Palestinian Covenant that promulgated Israel’s destruction; and he indoctrinated his Palestinian subjects with virulent hatred toward their “peace partners” and their claim to statehood through a sustained campaign of racial and political incitement unparalleled in scope and intensity since Nazi Germany.

He didn’t stop the incitement, either — he built an extensive terrorist infrastructure in the territories under his control and, eventually, resorted to outright mass violence, first in September 1996 to discredit the newly elected Netanyahu and then in September 2000, shortly after being offered Palestinian statehood by Netanyahu’s successor, Ehud Barak, with the launch of his terror war (euphemized as the “al-Aksa Intifada”) — the bloodiest and most destructive confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians since 1948.

This rejectionist approach was fully sustained by Arafat’s successor, Mahmoud Abbas, who has had no qualms about reiterating the vilest antisemitic canard and has vowed time and again never to accept the idea of Jewish statehood. At the November 2007 US-sponsored Annapolis peace conference he rejected prime minister Olmert’s proposal for the creation of a Palestinian state in all of the territories west of the Jordan River and between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River — a territorial formula that would recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

When in June 2009 Netanyahu broke with Likud’s ideological precept and agreed to the establishment of a Palestinian state, it was recognized Israel’s Jewish nature, PLO chief peace negotiator Saeb Erekat warned that "not in a thousand years will Netanyahu find a single Palestinian who would agree to the conditions stipulated in his speech," and warned...
while Fatah, the PLO’s largest constituent organization and Abbas’s alma mater, reaffirmed its longstanding commitment to the “armed struggle” as a strategy, not tactic, “...until the Zionist entity is eliminated and Palestine is liberated.”

As late as November 2017 Abbas demanded that the British government apologize for the 1917 Balfour Declaration – the first great-power public acceptance of the Jewish right to national self-determination. Can this 80-year-long recalcitrance be considered outright, unadulterated idiocy? It most certainly can. Had the Palestinians accepted the two-state solution in the 1990s or 1940s, they would have had their independent state over a substantial part of mandate Palestine by 1948, if not before. Instead, and would have been spared the traumatic experience of dispersal and exile.

Had Arafat set the PLO on the path to peace and reconciliation instead of turning it into one of the most murderous and corrupt terrorist organizations in modern times, a Palestinian state could have been established in the late 1960s or the early 1970s; in 1979, as a corollary to the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, as a peace agreement by a moderate and principled Palestinian leader rather than with the leviathan of the occupation.

In 2010, then-president Barack Obama upgraded the mission’s status to the level of “Delegation General.” The move was seen as a signal that the Obama administration supported moves by the PLO to initiate recognition of a Palestinian state, with Abbas and PA Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah.

In 2016, Schanzer informed Congress that the PLO consulate in Chicago is a major funder of the BDS campus group Students for Justice in Palestine. The chairman of the US Coalition to Boycott Israel, which among other things funds BDS, is Ghasan Barakat, an official at the PLO’s Chicago consulate. His colleague, Senan Shaqdeh, is a member of the coalition. Shaqdeh also claims to be the founder of Students for Justice in Palestine, the antisemitic BDS group that operates on campuses throughout the US.

As Schanzer noted, in 2014 Shaqdeh traveled to Ramallah to meet with Abbas and PA Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah.

Aside from the fact that the US has refused to hold the PLO accountable for its actions for a quarter century, the PLO has another good reason to be shocked by Tillerons’s letter: the US consulate in Jerusalem operates as almost a mirror to the PLO mission in Washington.

The US consulate in Jerusalem has the same status as an embassy. Like the US ambassador in Tel Aviv, the US consul general in Jerusalem reports directly to the State Department. He is not accredited to Israel. His area of operations includes all of Jerusalem and the West Bank. In other words, the US consulate in Jerusalem represents American foreign policy in the entire historic city of Jerusalem.

Consul General Donald Blome similarly directs all of his efforts toward reaching out to the Palestinians, ignoring as a regular practice the millions of Jews who live in his area of responsibility.

The consulate also openly rejects the notion that Israel and Jews have ties to its area of operations. For instance, Blome went on a hike around Judea and Samaria in July where he effectively erased the Jewish heritage sites on the way. The US consul general added a new version of the history of the land of Israel in a press release that celebrated his walk along the “Masar Ibrahim Al-Khalil” trail in celebration of “the connection of the people with the land.” Jews were not mentioned in the press release. And the historical name of the route he took is “Abraham’s path.”

Scholarships to study in the US and jobs listed on the website are open to “Palestinian residents of Jerusalem and the West Bank.” In other words, while the PLO missions are pushing the BDS agenda in the US, the US consulate in Jerusalem is implementing it on the ground in Israel.

Tillerons’s letter to the PLO mission on Friday came two weeks before Trump will have to decide whether or not to sign a related waiver. On 14 September, the Trump administration may either allow the 1995 Jerusalem Embassy Act to come into force or he will sign a waiver postponing the embassy move for yet another six months.

In a congressional hearing on the issue of moving the embassy to Jerusalem on November 8, Rep. Ron DeSantis said that transfer of the embassy may be delayed due to the Trump administration’s “efforts to pursue a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs.”

DeSantis added that until the Trump administration should take “incremental steps” that move it toward the goal. Among the steps he advocated, DeSantis said “the American consulates in Jerusalem should report to the American embassy in Israel, not directly to the State Department.”

Tillerons’s letter to Zomlot was shocking because it represented the first time since 1991 the PLO has been held accountable for its actions. The time has come for the State Department, too, to be held accountable for its behavior. And the best way to start this process is to follow DeSantis’s advice, subordinate the US consulates in Jerusalem to the US ambassador and end their boycott of Jews – US citizens and non-citizens – who live in the Jerusalem area, in Judea and Samaria. (Jerusalem Post Nov 20)