

Palestinian Authority, ‘boiling frog’ theory

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OPINION

On July 23, the Israeli Knesset voted to impose Sovereignty over the West Bank. This vote also re-emphasized its rejection of any form of Palestinian political entity between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. This marks the first time since the 1993 Oslo Accords that the Israeli Knesset has taken legal steps to annex West Bank territories. This effectively re-confirms the formal, not just practical, disregard for the Oslo Agreement. This move is not isolated. It's part of a long-standing policy to alter the reality on the ground in the West Bank. The pace of these measures has significantly increased with the current fascist cabinet in Tel Aviv, composed of right-wing and far-right elements, taking power. What demands attention is the behavior of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) — both leadership and institutions — towards the reality imposed by the occupation.

'Boiling frog'

This behavior brings to mind the popular “boiling frog” theory. A frog in a pot of water fails to recognize, or tries to deny, the gradual change in the water's temperature. It continues to adapt until the water reaches the boiling point, which it cannot tolerate, leading to its death from an inability to jump out due to collapsed strength. Had it sensed the danger of rising temperature from the start, it might have jumped out and saved itself. What the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah calls “the policy of removing pretexts” is merely self-delusion. They believe survival is possible by adapting to continuous change. The series of measures taken by successive Israeli cabinets will inevitably undermine not only a political solution and the two-state solution but also eliminate the PA and the Palestinian political institutions. Some believe these institutions died long ago, killed by the occupation, but are kept from burial to distract Palestinians and parts of the international community, perpetuating self-deception. The Palestinian political leadership, at various levels, suffers from a set of issues that have led to overall weakness in its role and performance. This has also facilitated the occupation cabinet's implementation of extreme policies and the imposition of facts on the ground. Aging is a primary characteristic of the political establishment; Most of its political leaders are in their twilight years. Institutions have not renewed their legitimacy or composition for decades. In some cases, political leaders, faction cadres, and even the Palestinian people are unaware of the number or identities of their members. Any leadership changes or creation of new positions within the “political system” are often driven by external demands or the hope of attracting financial support, rather than genuine development or change. The extent of external dictates has been evident in several recent changes.



President of the Palestinian Authority (PA) Mahmoud Abbas
● THOMAS LEVINSON/THE DAILY BEAST

This institutional and leadership aging has led to an inability to perform even minimal administrative and functional duties, let alone political and national ones. This includes an inability to pay employee salaries and a reduction of working hours in PA institutions to a minimum. There is general confusion in the performance of national and private sector institutions, bringing the Palestinian administrative and institutional situation to the brink of complete collapse. Perhaps the most dangerous outcome of this leadership state is the profound inability to engage with major and pressing national issues. One rarely sees a serious stance or presence of the political leadership regarding the genocide, destruction, and starvation in the Gaza Strip. The practices of the occupation and settlers in the West Bank confirm the political and field absence of the PA and its various institutions. This performance has likely contributed to the increasing regional and international political marginalization of the Palestinian leadership, even on issues related to the Palestinian cause and its developments. It has become common for the Palestinian file to be discussed in regional and international meetings without Palestinian involvement.

'Clinical death'

This “clinical death” and all indicators of incapacitation and weakness come to a boiling point for all aspects and files of the Palestinian cause. The PA's behavior once again recalls the frog settling in boiling water. How can the PA and its leadership fail to grasp the lethal nature of the occupation's policies and actions on the ground? Many facts should have raised the temperature of the Palestinian political environment, triggered a red light, and called for fundamental and strategic solutions to the existing reality, rather than waiting until action becomes impossible under the guise of removing pretexts and dealing with the status quo: **1. Settlement expansion:** Settlement activity has swelled, with approximately 180 settlements and 215 outposts (candidates for conversion into settlements) recently. Tens of thousands of new housing units are under construction, and large areas of

land continue to be confiscated for various roads. Cabinet plans aim to double the number of settlers in the West Bank, with the current cabinet working to settle an additional one million, potentially raising the total to two million within years. This means the number of Zionist settlers and Palestinian citizens in the West Bank could become nearly equal. **2. Legal and administrative measures:** Tel Aviv has enacted a series of legal and administrative measures to consolidate its legal control over the West Bank. These include abolishing the Civil Administration's authority over settlements, canceling the classification of Area B, and transferring administrative and security powers to the occupation authorities. The powers of the “Coordinator” have been expanded, making him the de facto ruler of the West Bank, allowing citizens to deal directly with him on all matters. All land survey and classification (Tabu) procedures carried out by the PA have been canceled, with responsibility transferred to the occupation cabinet. Many other measures reinforce the occupation's direct presence and undermine the PA's limited functions. **3. Two-state solution abandonment:** The internal Zionist

debate on the two-state solution and the idea of establishing any Palestinian political entity has been settled. This was achieved through two Knesset votes: One, by an overwhelming majority, rejected the establishment of a Palestinian state on the borders of June 4. The second affirmed “the right of the entity” to impose its sovereignty over all Palestinian territory, including the West Bank, and called on the cabinet to take necessary measures to impose sovereignty. This signifies the complete end of the Oslo political approach and the non-existence of any significant Israeli party that could be a partner in a political process or settlement. **4. Economic strangulation:** The occupation practices economic strangulation against the PA, pushing it into economic deficit. This prevents it from paying employee salaries or undertaking any economic or developmental projects. Israel currently withholds the equivalent of \$2.7 billion of PA funds and floods the market with Shekels without allowing exchange for foreign currencies, causing multifaceted economic crises. **5. Erosion of national image:** The PA's national image is being shattered by its forced compliance with steps considered

unpatriotic and rejected by the vast majority of the Palestinian people. These include halting salaries for prisoners and martyrs' families, accepting changes to Palestinian curricula that contain national constants and concepts rejected by the occupation, and intensifying “security coordination” and pursuing resistance fighters in the West, even extending to joint field operations as seen in Jenin and Tulkarm.

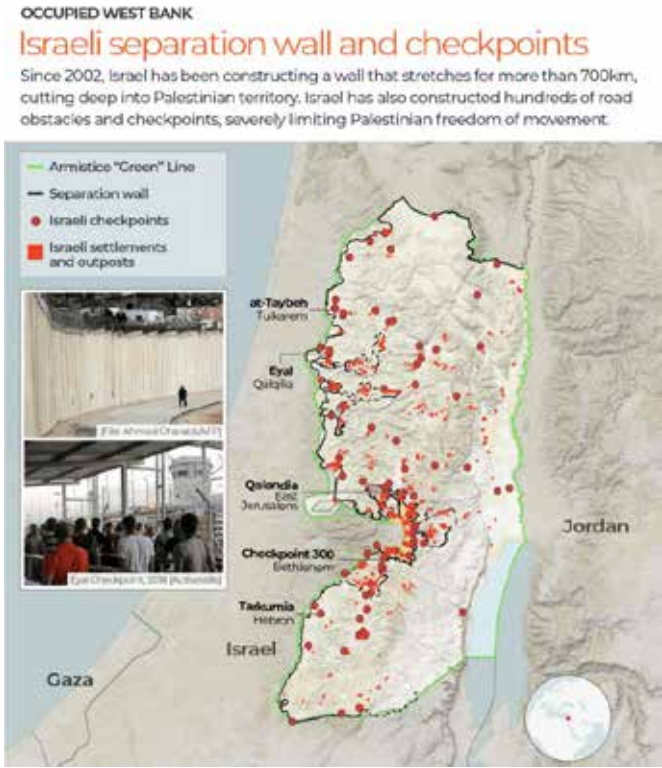
6. Assault on sanctities and values: The occupation has deeply shed Palestinian blood, committing an ongoing genocide for the past two years. Tens of thousands have been brutalized in prisons using unprecedented methods of repression and torture. It has also overstepped all boundaries in dealing with holy sites, especially Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Ibrahimi Mosque.

7. Undermining UN role: Efforts are underway to undermine the UN's role in the Palestinian issue, particularly in the occupied territories. The occupation waged a real war on the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), restricting its activities in the West Bank and Gaza. It attempted to damage its professional reputation in an effort, with US support, to end the agency's role as a UN tool witnessing one of the most critical Palestinian issues and a symbol of its justice: the refugee issue. In the same context, it systematically destroyed refugee camps and attempted to empty them of their residents, citing resistance as a pretext. This led to the destruction of Jenin and Tulkarm camps and the displacement of many of their inhabitants.

Call for unity, action

All these measures, among others, are taking place before the eyes of the world without anyone taking action. Crucially, they are happening under the gaze of the PA. This leads observers to believe that the Palestinian political leadership and the PA are either deceiving themselves, hoping for safety based on removing pretexts and coexisting with reality, no matter how bad, or they are unaware of the reality and what is happening around them, in which case the disaster is even greater. It is imperative to sense the temperature of the surrounding environment and deal seriously with the complex and challenging reality, especially after the war of extermination in Gaza. There must be an immediate move towards the various Palestinian components, both political and societal, to formulate a responsible and serious national plan to confront this reality and open an opportunity for the Palestinian people to face these challenges united. The Palestinian people are experienced and resilient, needing only a believing and capable leadership. This will help galvanize remaining allies and friends of the Palestinian people to stand with them against this arrogant and fascist enemy because waiting will benefit no one and only serve the occupation and its policies.

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