



**Concerns about
British and EU Roles in
Palestinian Authority
Human Rights Abuses in
the Occupied West Bank**

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Front cover photo: torture victim in West Bank (Source: Arab
Organization for Human Rights, London)

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Daud Abdullah

“While it may be true that what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, it is no longer true that what happens in the Middle East stays in the Middle East. And all of us on the security coordinator’s team share the conviction that the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in the national interests of our respective nations, and for that matter, of the world.”

Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, US Security Coordinator, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, Michael Stein address on US Middle East Policy, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 7 May 2009,



SUMMARY POINTS

- **Throughout the past decade the European Union and Britain have invested hundreds of millions of Euros and pounds respectively to support the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the Israeli Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.**
- **Much of these funds have been used to rebuild the PA security apparatus.**
- **Recent campaigns of arrests, detentions, torture and extra-judicial killings of political activists raise questions about the role of several international actors including the Quartet Envoy Tony Blair, the EU Police Mission in the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS) and the UK based Libra Advisory Group.**
- **The current abuses bear the hallmarks of the atrocities committed in Iraq during the early years of the US led occupation.**
- **Contrary to their claim of helping the Palestinian Authority to establish a Palestinian state, Western involvement in human rights abuse has not only delayed the process but actually undermined the very authority they support.**

BACKGROUND

The European Union (EU) is the largest international donor to the Palestinian Authority (PA). More than half of the US\$ 7.7 billion pledged at the Paris Donors' Conference in December 2007 came from the EU. Apart from funding salaries, long term investment and development programs; it finances the EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories, EUPOL COPPS. The EUPOL COPPS advises the Palestinian Civil Police which was created in 1994 with the responsibility of policing Palestinian towns in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Western officials celebrate the creation of the Palestinian Security Forces as the most significant Palestinian state-building achievement of the Oslo period. With its headquarters in Ramallah, it continues to receive generous international support and official Israeli approval.

The international community views the Palestinians' ability to handle internal security as a vital prerequisite for their independence. While European countries contributed \$5.3 million in 2008 to bolster the Palestinian security forces, the United States gave more than \$161 million since 2007.

All of this massive investment is intended to strengthen Mahmoud Abbas' Fateh against its main rivals, the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, and other opposition forces. On its part, Israel has constantly demanded that Abbas' PA crack down on opposition forces.

Apart from the EUPOL COPPS, the security operations are supported and guided by the United States Security Coordinator's Team —USSC. Despite its name, this

latter apparatus is according to its current head, Lt Gen. Keith Dayton, “really an international effort.”¹ Its officials include, Canadians, Britons and one Turkish officer.

Dayton says his team is in daily contact with the EUPOL COPPS. He explains, “We are well tied in with the efforts of the Quartet special representative, Tony Blair, and his team.”²

The restructuring and training process of the PA security apparatuses under Dayton has been partially conducted through the preparation of thousands of security personnel at the Jordan International Police training Center (JIPTC). Their effectiveness was seriously tested during the 2007 confrontation in Gaza with Hamas. Although they managed to prevent the conflict from spilling over into the West Bank, this has come at a huge price. The territory has since witnessed a dramatic increase of human rights abuses of which international actors cannot claim ignorance, if not some measure of responsibility.

GAZA AND ITS AFTERMATH

In principle, the National Security Forces (NSF) built by Dayton should be guided by broad national interests. Some Western observers have, however, drawn attention to the extent to which they have become embroiled in the political struggle between Fateh and Hamas. David Rose in his revealing article “The Gaza Bombshell” exposed the depth of involvement of Dayton and his European interlocutors in the bloody conflict in Gaza during the summer of 2007 which precipitated the Hamas takeover of the territory.³

Rose disclosed, “Vanity Fair has obtained confidential documents, since corroborated by sources in the U.S. and Palestine, which lay bare a covert initiative, approved by Bush and implemented by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Deputy National Security Adviser Elliott Abrams, to provoke a Palestinian civil war. The plan was for forces led by (Muhammad) Dahlan, and armed with new weapons supplied at America’s behest, to give Fatah the muscle it needed to remove the democratically elected Hamas-led government from power.”

The operation backfired and instead of engineering what was effectively a Fateh coup resulted in Hamas taking full control of Gaza.

There was much acrimony within the Bush administration after the botched operation in Gaza. One month after, David Wurmser, a key neoconservative architect of the war on Iraq, resigned as chief Middle East adviser to Vice President Dick Cheney.

Wurmser accused the Bush administration of “engaging in a dirty war in an effort to provide a corrupt dictatorship

[led by Abbas] with victory.” According to his assessment, Wurmser believed Hamas had no intention of seizing control of Gaza. “It looks to me that what happened wasn’t so much a coup by Hamas but an attempted coup by Fatah that was pre-empted before it could happen,”⁴

Hamas’ military takeover of the Gaza Strip in June 2007 marked a major turning point in the conduct and priorities of the Palestinian Authority security apparatus in the West Bank. Their unexpected defeat in Gaza set alarm bells ringing not just in Ramallah but also in a number of Western capitals. For the first time since it was installed under the Oslo Agreement, the PA’s hold on the territories appeared shaky and tenuous.

It was at this critical juncture the US and EU decided to intensify their military, financial and logistical support for the Abbas regime. Inevitably, Israel also weighed in with its military muscle to reinforce Fatah’s control of the West Bank and pre-empt any possibility of Hamas taking over the territory.

THE CATALOGUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE

Since the start of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza in 1967 an estimated 750,000 Palestinians were detained and tortured. Many died in detention centers and prisons. They represent approximately 20% of the total Palestinian population in the OPT. Given the fact that the majority of those detained were male, it means that approximately 40% of the total male Palestinian population in the territories was imprisoned at one point or another in their lives.⁵

At present, there are 11,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails, among them women and children. There are an additional 1,012 political detainees in the PA jails in the West Bank, according to the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR). The overwhelming majority of these are held without charge or trial. When trials actually take place, they invariably fail to meet internationally accepted standards.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported: "In the West Bank, security forces have carried out hundreds of arrests without warrants. The forces are often masked, do not identify themselves and do not inform the person of the reason for their arrest. Families frequently have not received official information on the location of their arrested relatives."⁶

Likewise, Amnesty International's (AI) in its 2009 Report points out: "In the West Bank, PA security forces arrested hundreds of people, mostly Hamas supporters, and held them often without access to due legal process... Members of Fatah's armed groups were also held in

Apart from routine physical beatings the most common forms of torture include placement in uncomfortable sitting or standing positions for long hours. Sometimes victims are tied by their feet to a ceiling with their limbs chained and beaten.

prolonged detention without charge or trial at the request of the Israeli army.”⁷

Since the establishment of the American-backed regime in Ramallah under the supervision of the American security commissioner, Gen. Keith Dayton, as many as eight Palestinians were either unlawfully killed or tortured to death at the hands of PA security personnel. The Arab Organization for Human Rights in UK (AOHR) and Palestinian sources corroborated the accounts of former detainees which uncover a pattern of interrogation and torture in the West Bank similar to those used in Guantanamo and Abu Ghuraib.⁸

Apart from routine physical beatings the most common forms of torture include placement in uncomfortable sitting or standing positions for long hours. Sometimes victims are tied by their feet to a ceiling with their limbs chained and beaten. There are also numerous reports of psychological abuse such as taking a sister or wife of the detainee to the detention centre and threatening her with sexual assault. Women with alleged or known

“Two interrogators came with water pipes. They asked the military guy to sit on my legs and they beat me on the bottom of my feet... I pushed the military man aside and they beat me all over, with no questions.”

links with Hamas have been especially targeted. This is widely seen as unprecedented and contrary to Palestinian customs. The authorities have apparently concluded that it would be impossible to dismantle the movement without tackling the female wing of the movement, one of its most active and effective divisions. A strategic report by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (2008) explained, “Countering Hamas in the West Bank will require a comprehensive effort against not only Hamas’ military apparatus but also its extensive social service network.” The detention and interrogation of women appear to be one aspect of this strategy. A common accusation leveled against the women is that they have been involved in the transfer of money from Gaza and abroad to fund Hamas institutions and projects in the West Bank.

Equally, Amnesty International reported “In the West Bank, detainees complained that they had been tortured or otherwise ill-treated by the PA’s General Intelligence and Preventive Security services, apparently to make them confess involvement with Hamas’ armed wing. Methods alleged included beatings, suspension, and

forcing detainees to sit or stand for prolonged periods in painful stress positions (*shabeh*)”

HRW corroborated the use of other forms of abuse: “Methods of torture include mock executions, kicks and punches, and beatings with sticks, plastic pipes and rubber hoses. In one case from February 2008, a 36-year-old man who campaigned for Hamas in the 2006 elections was summoned to General Intelligence Service (GIS) headquarters in Ramallah. After questions about Hamas and its leaders, the beating began. He told Human Rights Watch:

“Two interrogators came with water pipes. They asked the military guy to sit on my legs and they beat me on the bottom of my feet... I pushed the military man aside and they beat me all over, with no questions.” Ten days later, the GIS released the man without filing any charges, after he signed a document in which he promised to break all ties with Hamas. He was never accused of a crime, brought before an investigative judge, or provided access to a lawyer.

The most common form of torture reported to HRW was the forcing of detainees to stand in stress positions for prolonged periods, known in Arabic as *shabah*, a practice which causes severe pain and sometimes internal injuries but leaving no physical marks. Such positions include standing for hours with feet apart and hands tied behind the back, standing with one leg and one arm raised, or sitting on the edge of a chair with hands tied to feet.

West Bank security forces have frequently violated the due process provisions guaranteed in Palestinian law. Authorities often fail to provide detainees with lawyers or bring them before a prosecutor within 24 hours. When courts ordered the release of detainees, the security forces sometimes refused to comply.”⁹

Although the PA has strongly denied these allegations of systematic abuse of political prisoners, other Palestinian sources affirm just the opposite. Khalid Amayreh, an internationally respected journalist recalls that he interviewed dozens of former detainees who testified that they were brutally tortured.¹⁰ Several journalists and writers are currently languishing in PA jails. They include Mustafa Sabri, Fareed Hamad, Qays Abu Samra and Serri Sammour.

In 2008, the most high profile death in custody was that of Shaykh Majd al-Barghouthi. Following his detention on 14th February 2008 he was subjected to acts of extreme torture which led to his death nine days later. A former detainee at the centre disclosed that Shaykh Majd died while he was still being suspended on a torture apparatus in the Intelligence Headquarters in Ramallah.¹¹ Subsequently, Abbas' intelligence operatives kidnapped a male nurse, Najeh Asi, from the Khaled Hospital in Ramallah accusing him of photographing the torture marks on the body of Sheikh Majd al-Barghouthi.¹²

The ongoing campaign against the opposition in the West Bank has been described as a virtual inquisition. In February 2009 Muhammad al Hajj died in custody. At the beginning of June 2009 a number of persons wanted by the Israelis were killed in PA raids in the northern West Bank town of Qalqilya. On 11th June 2009 the PA security agencies detained, Haitham Amr, a 32 year old resident of Beit Al Rush, a small village south west of Hebron. Two days later he was found dead in his cell in the General Intelligence Centre in Hebron. He apparently died after been subjected to extreme torture which resulted in massive internal bleeding. Although an autopsy was conducted at the Al Quds University Medical College Medical, the forensic report has not been disclosed. Since then, a prominent imam and Hamas

Between 12 June 2007 and 10 February 2008 there were 167 security raids on campuses in the West Bank. Students with expressed Islamic tendencies were rounded up in these operations.

leader, Shaykh Kamal Abu Taima died in the King Hussein Medical Center in Amman, Jordan, on 4th August 2009. He was placed on a life-supporting machine in July after several blood clots were discovered in his brain following a nine-month imprisonment by the Palestinian Preventive Security Service (PPSS) in Al Khalil. Hamas maintains the PPSS were responsible for Abu Taima's death after he was hanged by the wrists for 37 consecutive days. Subsequently, another Hamas activist, Fadi Hamadana, was found dead in the Jneid prison, Nablus, on 10th August.

The catalogue of human rights abuse is not confined to the arrest and torture of Islamists. Hundreds of ordinary civil servants, including teachers, have been dismissed from their jobs. Others, who were fortunate enough not to lose their jobs, have been placed on partial salaries for their alleged sympathy for Hamas. According to Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights the worst affected public sector workers came from the health and higher education ministries. The centre confirmed the names of 3,615 workers whose salaries were stopped. They included 1,549 health sector workers among them; nurses, doctors and administrators as well as 693 employees in the ministry of higher education.

On top of this, the PA security agencies seized hundreds of educational, health, sport, and charitable institutions previously run by Islamic organizations. Between June 2006 and June 2008 the PA agencies carried out more than 964 operations in the West Bank. In the one year between July 2007 and June 2008 there were 20 raids on mosques in the territory. These often resulted in the arrest of worshipers and imams. With respect to the universities, they have borne the brunt of the abuses. Between 12 June 2007 and 10 February 2008 there were 167 security raids on campuses in the West Bank. Students with expressed Islamic tendencies were rounded up in these operations.¹³

BLAIR AND THE BRITISH CONNECTION

Hours after he stepped down as Britain's Prime Minister in June 2007, Tony Blair was appointed as envoy for the International Quartet to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). He succeeded James Wolfensohn who resigned in April. The former head of the World Bank had accused Israel of acting in bad faith by maintaining its blockade of Gaza's borders and obstructing the free movement of goods and persons into the territory. In a letter to the Quartet's members in October 2005 he wrote, "The government of Israel, with its important security concerns, is loath to relinquish control, almost acting as though there has been no withdrawal..."¹⁴

Predictably, Blair's appointment was welcomed in Israel. The BBC Middle East editor Jeremy Bowen noted Israelis like him because they believe he is on their side.¹⁵ In addition to his specific mandate to mobilize assistance and promote economic development, Blair's brief included reform of the PA security apparatus.

In October 2007 he proposed the creation of a tripartite committee that would oversee the reform of the Palestinian security agencies. The committee was expected to monitor the implementation of security commitments made by both sides in the West Bank. While Israel was supposed to ease restrictions on Palestinian movement, the PA, among other things, was required to take strong action against Hamas and Islamic Jihad.¹⁶

To make Abbas's security agencies more effective in their war against Palestinian resistance movements, the plan further recommended increased powers to the judiciary and the Office of the Public Attorney in the West Bank

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that would allow them to try members and leaders of the resistance.

On another level, the Blair plan proposed the formation of a new PA administration for the supervision of prisons that includes European oversight in order to guarantee that members of the resistance who have been tried are not released. Playing such a supervisory role clearly implicates those officials in the abuses that would ensue. It is astonishing that the European officials should claim ignorance of such wide-spread activities under their watch.

In Israel, the president of the right-wing Israeli National Union Party, Rabbi Benny Elon, told a local radio station that Blair agrees with them on two primary issues. "These are uprooting the Palestinian terrorist organizations and solving the problem of the refugees without holding Israel any responsibility for it."¹⁷

Realistically, Palestinians had no illusions about Blair's agenda for "reform" of PA institutions. His record of collaboration with the Bush administration was enough to forewarn an imminent tightening of the screws on the Palestinian resistance movements. And, as expected, his plan made no specific provisions to reduce the attacks on Palestinians by Israel's occupation army and settlers.

Ultimately, the Blair plan linked the future of a settlement of the conflict to the ability of PA agencies to prosecute their campaign against Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

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From the outset, the composition of Blair's tripartite committee was a cause of unease and misgiving. Since its *raison detre* was Palestinian reform it seemed strange that its membership included Ehud Barak, the Israeli Defence Minister. Many Palestinians were appalled by the Quartet envoy's recommendation to include the Israeli Defence Minister as a member of a committee that pertained to their internal affairs.

Back in London, the Department for International Development (DFID), the Government department responsible for promoting development and reduction of poverty gave its full backing to the Blair plan. In its strategic plan for the territories published in March 2008 the department confirmed the secondment of four of its officials to the Blair team and provisions for office and financial assistance. Altogether, the DFID commitment seemed in full accord with the strategy of maintaining a united stance against Hamas.

With Israeli checkpoints and roadblocks choking the life out of the Palestinian economy in the West Bank, DFID's

multi-million aid packages seem at best to be an exercise of throwing good money after bad governance. When Tony Blair assumed office in 2007 DFID acknowledged that there were 580 Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank in violation of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access. Two years after Blair's assumption of duties (June 2009) the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA - OPT) confirmed there were 613 closure obstacles in the West Bank, 68 are permanently staffed checkpoints. Not included in this 613 figure, but equally important are 84 obstacles blocking Palestinian access and movement within the Israeli controlled area of Hebron, 63 crossing points along the Separation Wall and an average of 70 random ("flying") checkpoints deployed every week since the beginning of 2009.¹⁸

Not even Mahmud Abbas has been exempted from these obstacles and restrictions of movement. During the Israeli war on Gaza he told Sheikh Hamad Bin Jaseem Bin Jaber Al-Thani, the Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs that he could not attend the emergency summit in Doha because of difficulty in obtaining permission from the Israelis to leave Ramallah.¹⁹

While it may seem unimportant to the Quartet envoy, younger members of Fateh bitterly deplore the fact that since his election as chairman of the movement in 2005, Abbas has never visited Hebron, Jenin, Qalqilya or Tulkarm. Given the extent of his disconnection from his own party one can only imagine how politically estranged Abbas is from the general populace. As a consequence, he has become totally dependent on Israeli, American and European security services.

WHAT HAS GEN DAYTON DONE TO STOP THE ABUSES?

According to a study done by the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces in 2006, the Palestinian territories have the world's highest ratio of security-service personnel to civilians.²⁰ Much of this apparatus was built by Yasser Arafat. From their inception, both Israel and the US demanded that Arafat use these forces to disarm Hamas and other opponents of the peace process with Israel.

Immediately after his demise in November 2004, America decided to play a more direct role in the running of the PA security forces. In her first mission to the region as secretary of state Dr Condoleezza Rice announced the appointment of Lt. Gen. William Ward as U.S. security adviser to the PA. His tenure was however short-lived, frustrated by the notorious ill-discipline of the Fateh forces. In a briefing to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on June 30, 2005, he accused them of being dysfunctional and corrupt with as many as 38,000 men on the payrolls not showing up for work.

On their part, Palestinians in the territories always had a profound distrust of American involvement with the Palestinian Authority security forces. A European-funded poll conducted in May 2006 found that only 16% of the 1,800 Palestinians surveyed in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip trusted U.S. and Canadian assistance in security matters.²¹

Toward the end of 2005 the US appointed Lt Gen Keith Dayton to succeed Ward. As security coordinator between Israel and the PA, Dayton was charged with the

responsibility of training the Palestinian security forces and financing equipment used by Abbas' Presidential Guard.

In his address at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Dayton gave his own view of his mission, 'The idea in forming the USSC was to create an entity to coordinate various international donors under one plan of action that would eliminate duplication of effort. It was to mobilize additional resources and to allay Israeli fears about the nature and capabilities of the Palestinian security forces.'

More tellingly, he explained that an American was chosen for the post because he would be trusted and respected by the Israelis. "We don't provide anything to the Palestinians unless it has been thoroughly coordinated with the state of Israel and they agree to it." In an interview given to Israel's Channel 10 on 11th November 2008 a Palestinian security officer, Ramadan Awad, revealed the extent to which Abbas' forces were expected to serve Israeli interests at the expense of the Palestinian people. He explained that according to the new national security doctrine Palestinians should not under any circumstances challenge or open fire upon Israeli soldiers and settlers, even if they breached existing agreements and occupied parts of Area A, designated to the Palestinians in the West Bank. As such, the real enemy is not the occupation but instead the Palestinian opposition forces.

In this context, Dayton emphasized that the forces whose training he oversees are trained to deal strictly with internal Palestinian law-and-order issues and will in no way jeopardize Israeli security interests, and that his security efforts go hand-in-hand with Quartet envoy Tony Blair's program for strengthening the West Bank economy.

The overlap between Blair's developmental and security

The former British PM explained that although the PA had already taken measures to improve its security capabilities, there were additional plans for security sector reform and for wider justice reform including prisons, courts and judiciary to be carried out with the help of the EU and USAID

roles was underscored in a policy paper titled '*Towards a Palestinian State*' which he launched on 13th May 2008. The former British PM explained that although the PA had already taken measures to improve its security capabilities, there were additional plans for security sector reform and for wider justice reform including prisons, courts and judiciary to be carried out with the help of the EU and USAID "in conjunction with General Dayton" and the EUPOL COPPs. At the time, the EUPOL COPPs was headed by Colin Smith, the former Chief UK Police Advisor for Iraq. In January 2009 Smith was succeeded by Paul Robert Kernaghan, another Briton who led the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) of England Wales and Northern Ireland missions to Iraq and Afghanistan during the period 2000-2008.

With regard to the office of the USSC, Dayton has among his staff a number of Americans, Britons and Canadians. Most of his British contingent—eight people according to Dayton—live in Ramallah. They included until May

The influential role played by Libra in the recruiting process confirms, if nothing else, the arrival of a new breed of actors in Palestine - the private security companies.

2009 Brigadier John Deverell (rt) whose mission was "to help professionalise and transform the Palestinian Authority Security Forces." He has long experience in the Middle East and is regarded as a leading expert in counter-terrorism. Since then he has been brought into the Geneva Initiative team which seeks to make the concept of a non-militarized Palestinian state a reality. Crucially, this entails the delicate task of allowing the PA to build a force that would be effective enough to perform their internal security missions and at the same time ensure that these troops would not be able to constitute a conventional military threat to Israel even if Israel attack.

According to Dayton the Canadians and Brits are his 'eyes and ears'. They accompany him on meetings with Israeli and Palestinian security officials. That being the case, the question arises, how much did they know about the torture of detainees and if so, what did they do to stop it? Since taking up office, Dayton trained units of the Palestinian National Security Forces now deployed in Jenin and Nablus in the northern West Bank and Hebron in the south, with smaller units in other Palestinian towns.

ENTER LIBRA FROM IRAQ

Apart from the Palestinian Security Forces, Dayton's brief includes close collaboration with British and European Union security personnel who train the Palestinian police. As in the case of Iraq where many private security companies collaborated with the occupation, a similar pattern has developed in the OPT. Under Dayton there appears to be a convergence of interests with security companies operating in Iraq. A notable actor is the Libra Advisory Group, a UK based international consultancy that provides advisory and implementation services.²² This outfit operates in Iraq on behalf of the UK government and the Iraqi Ministry of Interior providing "policy analysis and strategic planning for stabilization in Iraq."²³ The former presidential candidate and renowned Palestinian academic of Al Najah National University, Professor Abdus Sattar Qassim, described the Libra Group as one made up of "mercenaries more like the security companies working in Iraq".²⁴

Following the invasion of Iraq, Dayton served as a member of the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) which was sent by the multinational force to find the alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Since moving to the West Bank he has sought the services of the Libra Advisory Group who now officially serve as "Stabilisation Adviser to the US Security Coordinator."²⁵

In October 2008 Libra published an advert for a post of police reform advisor in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The job entailed supporting the Security Sector Reform (SSR) Project Team Leader in developing long-term structures for security in Gaza and the West Bank and working with both the Office of the United States

Security Coordinator (USSC) and the Head of Mission of the European Union Police Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS). Prospective candidates were instructed to forward their CVs to Libra's Director, Peter Wilson. He has been an Intelligence and Security Adviser to the UK Government's Security Sector Development Advisory Team (SSDAT) since 2004. The influential role played by Libra in the recruiting process confirms, if nothing else, the arrival of a new breed of actors in Palestine - the private security companies. During the past decade these companies which sell security services have moved from the periphery of global politics into the corporate boardroom, becoming a normal fixture of the military sector.²⁶

While the exact number of personnel involved is unknown, the Libra Group concedes it provides support to the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF) integrated under the auspices of the US Security Coordinator (USSC). It is also engaged in the design and delivery of the Palestine Senior Leaders' Course. Again the question arises, did this included the design and implementation of torture techniques in the West Bank?

Significantly, it is widely believed that the pattern of torture and deaths in Palestinian Authority prisons is strikingly similar to what obtained in Iraq just after the invasion. In November 2005 a group of leading Sunni politicians in Iraq demanded an international inquiry after the discovery of 173 people held captive and tortured in an interior ministry bunker in Baghdad. Their call for an independent inquiry was supported by Manfred Nowak the United Nations' special investigator on torture.

The activities of the Iraqi interior ministry police in mid-2004 were based on similar tactics used by the US in its counterinsurgency operations in Central America during the 1980s which came to be known as the "Salvador

option”, after the appointment of John Negroponte (the head of the US embassy in Honduras in the 1980s) as ambassador to Iraq in April 2004.²⁷

CONCLUSION

The ongoing operations against the opposition forces in the Occupied West Bank are evidently linked to the foreign aid provided to Mahmud Abbas. They would continue for as long as the Palestinian Authority remains dependent on foreign support to exercise control over the territory. Abbas justifies the policy with claims that he is obliged under the terms of the May 2003 Road Map. That agreement reads in part, "Palestinians declare an unequivocal end to violence and terrorism and undertake visible efforts on the ground to arrest, disrupt, and restrain individuals and groups conducting and planning violent attacks on Israelis anywhere."

According to this logic, Israel will enjoy peace and security when Palestinians fight each other. Hence, any reconciliation will lead to an end of the flow of funds to the PA. Britain has pledged £63.6 million to the PA for the financial year 2008-2009.²⁸ While western officials claim that their funds to the PA is a prelude to the establishment of a state, human rights observers note that the only product that could possibly emanate from the current policies is a police state.

After his June 2009 Cairo address to the Muslim world, young Palestinians rightly expect the Obama the administration to make respect for human rights a precondition for financing the PA. If what obtains in the West Bank is anything to go by, this may be a tall ask. Curiously, Western democracies and Britain in particular remain silent about the abuses.

On their part, Israeli officials are, understandably, delighted with the way Gen. Dayton has turned around

the situation in the West Bank. After the defeat of Fateh in Gaza in 2006 they called for his summary dismissal. He was only given a second chance with the understanding that he would take a tough stance against opposition forces. He has distinctly lived up to their expectations.

The security situation in the West Bank would in all probability lead to an increase in resistance activity by nationalist forces, including the growing disgruntled elements within Fateh. The 'Salvador option' implemented in the West Bank may have given the Israelis some time and space to accelerate their settler activity. Eventually, the Palestinian people will view these losses as the bitter fruits of negotiations with Israel and thus hold Abbas responsible.

In the long term, the current spate of human rights abuses in the West Bank would alienate and weaken the authority of those who perpetrate them. Both the EU and Britain must explicitly disassociate themselves from these practices. Moreover, the enormity of abuses warrants a full debate in both the British and EU parliaments that would lead to an inquiry to establish accountability. Finally, both the EU and British government must undertake to make future funding subject to the observance of internationally recognized human rights standards.

ENDNOTES

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3 . See D. Rose, “*Democracy in Action – the Gaza Bombshell*”, *Vanity Fair*, April, 2008

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5 . *Palestine Monitor*, www.palestinemonitor.org

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18 . *Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)*, *West Bank Movement and Access*

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19 . *State of Qatar*, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, *press conference by Sheikh Hamad Hamad Bin Jasem Bin Jabr Al-Thani*, *Prime*

Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs at the end of Gaza emergency summit, Doha, 16 January 2009

20 . . C. Simpson & N. King Jr. "US gives \$86 million to Abbas' forces", *Wall Street Journal*, 12 January 2007,

21 . *Ibid.* For an insight into the relationship between Blair's developmental and security roles see his policy statement "Towards a Palestinian State", 13 May 2008. The former PM notes while measures were taken by the PA to improve their security capability, there are still plans for security sector reform to be done in conjunction with Gen. Dayton, for civil police reform in collaboration with the EUPOL COPPs and for wider justice reforms in prisons, courts and the judiciary with the help of EU and USAID

22 . A. Qasim, Dayton..Za'eem Filasteen, *Al Jazeera*, 1st July 2009

23 . See www.libraadvisorygroup.com The company's Director Andrew Rathmell is currently on leave of absence, serving as a Deputy Director of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) Directorate of Strategy, Policy Planning and Analysis.

24 . Qassim, *op.cit.*,

25 . See www.libraadvisorygroup.com

26 . F. Mathieu & N. Dearden, *Corporate Mercenaries: the threat of private military and security companies*, *War on Want*, London 2006, p.2

27 . The *Salvador Option* was a term quoted in a January 8, 2005 article by Michael Hirsh and John Barry. "The Salvador Option". <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6802629/site/newsweek/>. This phrase was used to refer to options then being intensely debated in Pentagon and Iraqi government circles for dealing with the rapidly growing insurgency movement in Iraq, drawing an explicit analogy to the U.S. military involvement in El Salvador, in which quasi-official death squads were instrumental in bringing a decade-long war against FMLN to a close. The article quoted anonymous military insiders, and did not specify the precise origin of the phrase "Salvador Option", or explicitly say that those words were actually used by Pentagon sources. See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvador_Option

28 . . www.publications.parliament.uk 2 April 2008

APPENDIX

Since the first publication of our report in July 2009 new revelations have come to light about torture in prisons operated by the Palestinian Authority. On 23rd August 2009 Al Jazeera net published an article under the title, "European intervention to stop torture in the West Bank". It referred to a meeting between the Swiss Ambassador for Middle East Affairs and General Keith Dayton in which the latter denied any responsibility for the torture taking place in the Preventative Security and Intelligence prisons because his remit does not include these two agencies. They are supervised by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), he revealed. See full translation of article below.

European intervention to stop torture in the West Bank

Al Jazeera Net (exclusive: 23/8/2009)

Al Jazeera has learnt from credible sources that a European country intervened recently with the US and Palestinian Authority (PA) to end the spate of torture in the prisons of the West Bank.

A senior official in Hamas said a European diplomat met with two parliamentarians from the movement in the West Bank recently. They had extended discussions with him about the issue of torture in the West Bank and European and American responsibility for what is happening in the territory.

The Palestinian official confirmed that a number of human rights organizations have begun to address the issue of political detention and that the Egyptian security delegation which visited the Palestinian territories last week were informed of these developments.

He mentioned a report published by a human rights organization

in Britain which confirmed its intention to take legal action against the British government for its support of the Authority which conducts this torture.

Legal accountability

The source said the parliamentarians from the movement handed former President Jimmy Carter a letter to be delivered to President Obama during his recent visit to Ramallah. The letter focussed on the practice of torture in the Palestinian prisons. They added that Washington will be called to account in future for what is happening in the Occupied Territories, especially with the presence of the American General Keith Dayton who leads the United States Security Coordinator's Team in the PA territories.

He added that the Swiss ambassador for Middle Eastern affairs met with two Hamas parliamentarians in Ramallah in early July. The ambassador informed them that he had met with General Dayton and they discussed the subject of torture.

The ambassador said that Dayton told him he was not responsible for the torture which takes place in the Preventative Security and Intelligence prisons because his remit does not include these two agencies. They are supervised by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), he revealed. He explained his role is confined only to training the Presidential Guard, National Security Forces and Police.

The source further reported from the Swiss ambassador that Dayton told him during his last visit to the States he requested from the president that he should be given charge of the Preventative Security Agency and Intelligence. Then he would be responsible for preventing torture in these prisons.

Prohibition of torture

The Palestinian News Agency (WAFA) quoted Adnan al Damiri, the spokesperson for the Palestinian Security Agency that the prime minister in the caretaker government Salam Fayad ordered them to stop the torture during his recent meeting with leaders of the Security agencies.

He added that Fayad told the leaders of the agencies that "the

use of torture is prohibited and that power comes from good character and not the stick and that anyone whose involvement in torture is proved, whether they officers or individuals, would be tried in an open court.”

Al Damiri conceded that mistakes were made but added, “they were committed in isolated cases and does not reflect a systemic practice.” He admitted it was possible for the security agencies commit errors. At the same time, he mentioned that the security forces lost 14 cases for procedural errors in Palestinian courts.

Al Damiri also pointed out that 91 persons were expelled after a total of 483 officers and individuals who were brought before disciplinary courts last year for breaches of legal codes and professional ethics by members of the security forces.

Source: <http://aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/2B1130B8-E814-44C1-BFF7-EAFAA0245528.htm>

