



# ISRAEL MATTERS!

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## US Secretary of State Kerry Frustrated by Palestinians' Refusal to Recognize 'Jewish' Israel

### Arafat Death Investigation: Palestinian Leader Did Not Die From Radioactive Poisoning

A Russian probe into the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has found no trace of radioactive poisoning, the chief of the government agency that conducted the study said. Vladimir Uiba, the head of the Federal Medical and Biological Agency, said the agency had no plans to conduct further tests. "It was a natural death; there was no impact of radiation," he said.

Teams of scientists from France, Switzerland, and Russia were asked to determine whether polonium, a rare and extremely lethal substance, played a role in Arafat's death in a French military hospital in 2004. Palestinians have long suspected Israel of poisoning him, which Israel denies. Russia, meanwhile, has had close ties with Palestinian authorities since Soviet times.

After a 2012 Swiss report which said traces of radioactive polonium were found on Arafat's clothing and that the timeframe of his illness and death was consistent with poisoning from ingesting polonium, his widow Suha Arafat filed a legal complaint in France seeking an investigation into whether he was murdered. As part of that probe, French investigators had Arafat's remains exhumed and ordered a series of tests on them.

Suha Arafat said that the experts found traces of polonium but came to different conclusions than the Swiss, finding that it was "of natural environmental origin."

[Huffington Post]



Demands that the Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state have become a major stumbling block in Secretary of State John Kerry's [photo, at left] search for a settlement to the Middle East's most enduring conflict.

As Secretary Kerry continued a frantic diplomatic quest that some have dubbed "mission impossible", Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Palestinians' refusal to formally acknowledge the country's Jewish character had become the key topic in his discussions with Mr. Kerry.

Palestinian officials admitted that Mr. Kerry has pressed the issue with Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority president, who has so far refused to bend. "The Americans have made it very clear that [recognition of Israel as a Jewish state] is their position," said one Palestinian official. "They talk about it in meetings with our side and make an issue out of it. We have made it very clear that we are not going to sign any agreement that recognizes Israel as a Jewish state." The Palestinian leader believes the rights of Israel's approximately 1.5 million Arab citizens would be undermined if he concedes the point. It would also weaken the claims of around 5 million refugees and their descendants claiming a "right of return" to homes that are now in Israel, Palestinians argue.

Yasser Arafat, the late Palestinian leader, officially recognized Israel before signing the Oslo accords in 1993 in a letter to Yitzhak Rabin, the then Israeli prime minister, but did not mention its status as a Jewish state. Mr. Kerry met with representatives of Jordan and Saudi Arabia, where he was thought to be seeking support for possible Palestinian concessions. Mr. Abbas is believed to be unlikely to give way on key issues without wider Arab support.

Mr. Netanyahu, who was reported to have launched an angry tirade of complaints to Mr. Kerry when the pair met recently, linked the issue to what he said was a campaign of Palestinian incitement against Israel.

"The Palestinians are continuing their campaign of inciting hatred, as we have seen in the last few days with their refusal to recognize Israel as a state for the Jewish people," he said at a cabinet meeting. "This is the main issue that we're discussing with [Mr. Kerry]. We are not foreigners in Jerusalem, Beit El, or Hebron. I reiterate that, in my view, this is the root of both the conflict and the incitement - the non-recognition of this basic fact." [The Daily Telegraph]

## Israeli Officials Point to ‘Incitement’ by Palestinians

Adolf Hitler is quoted on the Facebook pages of Palestinian Authority schools. A young girl appears on Palestinian television, describing Jews as “barbaric monkeys, wretched pigs” and the



“murderers of Muhammad,” the Islamic prophet. Maps on the Facebook page of the Palestinian presidential guards do not show Israel. President Mahmoud Abbas himself embraced as “heroes” released Palestinian prisoners who killed Israelis.

These are among dozens of examples highlighted by Israeli officials in a new presentation documenting negative statements about Israel and Jews in official Palestinian Authority media and textbooks. As Secretary of State John Kerry left the area after a recent, intense four-day push for a framework agreement outlining prospects for a peace deal, Israeli leaders said that such statements had not abated since negotiations began this summer.

“The general phenomenon is very clear: They are poisoning Palestinian children with deep hatred of Israel and the Jewish people,” Yuval Steinitz, Israel’s minister of strategic affairs, said as he showed the presentation to international reporters. “At the end of the day, let’s assume we’ll be able to resolve all the technical issues, which are extremely complicated. Are we going to get genuine peace, or just a piece of paper?”

The presentation, which Mr. Steinitz delivered at an Israeli cabinet meeting, is part of an intensifying campaign in which he, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and others have emphasized what they call “incitement” as a prime obstacle to peace. It underpins their increasing demand for Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, which they argue is the only way they will be assured that an agreement will end the conflict.

Palestinian leaders dismiss the renewed focus on incitement as a ruse to distract from disagreements over issues including borders, the future of Jerusalem, and the rights of refugees.

Majdi Khaldi, a diplomatic adviser to Mr. Abbas said the problems go both ways. He pointed out that Israel’s foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, has repeatedly accused Mr. Abbas of “diplomatic terrorism,” and said he also saw Israel’s continued construction in West Bank settlements and military raids on Palestinian cities as forms of incitement.

Xavier Abu Eid, a spokesman for the Palestine Liberation

Organization, noted that weather maps in Israeli newspapers do not demarcate Palestinian territory, just as maps cited in Mr. Steinitz’s report do not show the land divided.

Incitement is an issue as old as the conflict itself. An unusually comprehensive recent study of Israeli and Palestinian Authority textbooks found that each presented the other side as the enemy, but that the Palestinian books contained more negative characterizations. David Pollock, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy who in September published a 172-page study of the issue, said that while incitement had decreased markedly since the second intifada, or Palestinian uprising, a decade ago, it persists. “There are ups and downs, there are exceptions,” Mr. Pollock said in an interview, “but unfortunately I think it is true that the official Palestinian media continue to incite against Israel and to claim that all of Palestine belongs to the Palestinians. There’s almost no positive discussion of peace, two peoples, any of that sort of favorable or even just moderate messages about Israel.” On the Israeli side, Mr. Pollock said, “what you have are unofficial, extremist fringe individuals” whose statements are “disowned and discouraged, for the most part,” by government leaders.

Mr. Steinitz’s ministry has four people working full time tracking incitement, and since 2009 it has issued quarterly reports trying to quantify it. Mr. Steinitz said that numbers for the fall of 2013 were not yet available, but that “amazingly, surprisingly, since the resumption of the negotiations we see even more incidents.”

On the Nov. 2 anniversary of the Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which Britain endorsed the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, the website of Mr. Abbas’s presidential guards posted a headline, “Palestine Is Not to Be Divided,” with a map that did not show Israel. The presentation also included a picture of a Nazi flag hung in the West Bank village of Beit Ummar. And there was a video on a website of Mr. Abbas’s Fatah faction in which masked members of its military wing threatened to kidnap Israeli soldiers and showed off weapons, singing, “With these rockets we will liberate Jerusalem, with these rockets we will crush the Zionist enemy.”

Mr. Steinitz said that Mr. Netanyahu had shown Mr. Kerry some of these examples during a recent meeting in Rome. The prime minister also complained about incitement in an August letter to Mr. Kerry, and has frequently raised the issue in his public statements since the negotiations began.

“This Palestinian government incitement is rampant,” Mr. Netanyahu said at a joint appearance with Mr. Kerry when he arrived in Israel recently. “Instead of preparing Palestinians for peace, Palestinian leaders are teaching them to hate Israel.” [NY Times]