

Shattering the Palestinians' Hope of Defeating Israel

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 19.10.2026

As long as Palestinians believe they can subdue Israel through armed struggle, political pressure, or a combination of both, any agreement will inevitably lead us back to an "Oslo 2." A sustainable resolution requires what I term a cognitive defeat: a deep and lasting change in the enemy's perception. They must be brought to understand that they cannot achieve their goals by force, and that any attempt to do so will cost them far more than it is worth.

The evidence of this persistent Palestinian hope is well-documented. In May 2025, roughly half of Palestinians surveyed by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research supported Hamas's decision to launch the October 7 attack. By August 2026, 72 percent maintained that Hamas should not disarm prior to a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Furthermore, over the course of 32 years, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has never prosecuted a single Palestinian for terrorism against Israel. Instead, it pays terrorists and their families approximately NIS 1.47 billion annually, teaches the October 7 massacre as a model in its schools, and has expanded its security forces from a 30,000-man police force into an estimated 70,000 armed troops. On September 16, 2026, the U.S. State Department confirmed that the PLO and the PA had "once again" failed to meet their commitments. Meanwhile, Hamas openly celebrates the 157 international recognitions of a Palestinian state as "one of the fruits of the October 7 attack."

Yet, I also see the first signs that a cognitive defeat is within reach. A senior Gaza cleric recently ruled that Hamas violated Islamic law on October 7. Hassan Nasrallah acknowledged an "unprecedented" blow just days before Israel eliminated him. Today, Egyptian, Lebanese, and Palestinian commentators are writing that the concept of "unity of the arenas" was an illusion, and that the military option against Israel has collapsed.

To seize this moment, my paper sets out eight key policy directives for Israel:

Gaza First: Disarm Hamas, demilitarize the Strip, and keep security control firmly in Israeli hands. Outlaw Hamas within the PA as well, and permit voluntary emigration for Gazans wishing to leave. We must utilize the maneuvering room

left by U.N. Security Council Resolution 2803 to ensure the Board of Peace framework does not slide into an “Oslo 2.0.”

Oppose Palestinian Elections Now: Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas canceled the vote scheduled for November 28, 2026, on October 10, deferring general elections to September 11, 2027. Holding elections now would merely grant international legitimacy to an unchanged entity whose sole consensus demand on Jerusalem would be to hand over the keys to Gaza.

Redivide Powers of Control: Transfer municipal administration to the Palestinians while retaining security strictly in Israeli hands, marking a gradual exit from the Oslo framework.

End the Free Pass: Stop tolerating the PA’s persistent violations.

Exclude Turkey and Qatar: Cut Turkish and Qatari involvement, keeping both actors out of any Gaza task force or stabilization mechanism.

Remove UNRWA: Eliminate UNRWA from the Palestinian arena, as it serves as the primary mechanism preserving the “right of return” and, with it, the Palestinian hope of defeating Israel.

Sustain Settlement Momentum: Expand settlement momentum in Judea and Samaria, as establishing facts on the ground fundamentally alters enemy consciousness.

Deepen Internal Separation: Strengthen the separation between the PA and Israeli Arab citizens, beginning with strict policies on family unification, illegal residence, and PA-trained teachers in Israeli schools.

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