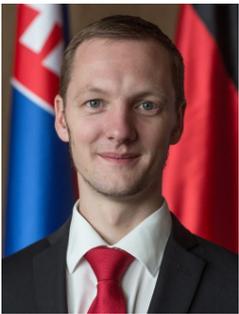




from Josias Terschüren  
April 2018



Josias Terschüren

## Review

The first quarter of 2018 saw the leader of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas (hard-pressed and increasingly isolated of late), seeking support and political backing in the European Union's capital. His move comes at a time in which the Trump administration is following through with its new approach to the Middle East conflict, in particular regarding the issue of Jerusalem. Years of Abbas' evasive tactics and threats undercutting direct peace talks, as well as his unilateral actions in the UN undermined not only the possibility for peace, but took their toll on Mahmoud Abbas' credibility as a partner for peace – at least in the eyes of the Americans.

After the United States had proclaimed their recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and their intent to move their embassy accordingly, Abbas shifted gears. His fury led him to verbally assault various US-leaders including the President, going as far as calling US-Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman "Son of a dog".<sup>i</sup>

The culmination of his undiplomatic rant against the U.S. was the cancellation of his planned meeting with American Vice-President, Mike Pence, in Ramallah this January. And while Pence was visiting Israel undeterred, proclaiming the U.S. Embassy move this May already as a timely present for Israel's 70th birthday, Abbas travelled to Brussels to counterbalance this move by seeking recognition of the State of Palestine by the European Union.

Abbas' usual primary go-to-destination to get himself political support, the Arab League, showed unusual signs of weariness towards the Palestinian cause, probably due to its own fight for survival vis-à-vis the perceived existential Iranian threat.<sup>ii</sup>

The European Union meanwhile was still looking to grant Abbas a meeting with the Foreign Ministers as a trade-off for Benjamin Netanyahu's first visit to Brussels in December and got a prime-time slot to do so during Pence's visit. There were four main points on the agenda: First, Trump's decision regarding Jerusalem, which the Europeans unanimously criticized and second, the EU stepping in to offset the US-funding cut for UNRWA, the UN agency responsible for Palestinian refugees, on this issue no decision was taken. Third, the official recognition of the state of Palestine by the EU, which won little support. And finally, there was a fourth agenda item on the table which comes close to a semi-formal recognition of the state of Palestine: An EU association agreement with Palestine – this proposal was raised by and pushed for by France, but Germany had some reservations. Under EU rules, the agreements have to be made with sovereign states. France argues that the EU has an association agreement with Kosovo, whose independence is not recognized by all countries, including EU member Spain. Palestine is recognized as a state by some, but not all EU members. An association agreement would thereby de facto recognize the "State of Palestine" as a sovereign state, but many experts argue that Palestine doesn't meet the criteria for statehood as outlined in the 1933 Montevideo Convention. Thus, prematurely recognizing a "State of Palestine" would contradict the EU's own policy of recognizing Palestinian statehood only as part and result of a peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians.

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Abbas-accuses-Hamas-of-bombing-Palestinian-Authority-PMs-motorcade-545502>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.timesofisrael.com/arabs-advising-abbas-to-accept-trump-peace-plan-or-risk-losing-out-report/>



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## Preview

### Gaza

There is a crisis currently unfolding at Israel's border with Gaza. Hamas, designated by the EU as a terrorist organization, has invested at least 10 million dollars to mobilize its civilian population to walk toward and protest the border fence. This fence was built to protect Israeli citizens from terror infiltrations and attacks. Hamas was offering free drinks and WiFi at the border fence and also encouraged families with kids to participate in the marches – they furthermore forced Palestinian bus companies to drive people to the border for free.

Hidden behind the tens of thousands of organized civil protestors, Hamas operatives and terrorists have been trying to infiltrate Israeli territory by bombing, burning or cutting the border fence, some were even undertaking shooting attacks against the IDF. Instead of taking a principled stand, differentiating between cause and effect and therefore blaming the Palestinians, and them alone, the European Union has called for "restraint on both sides"... Expect more of the same moral indifference during this weeks' meetings in the AFET – Foreign Affairs Committee as well as in the EP-plenary. There are probably a few statements decisions or laws already in the making!

### Yom Az'Maut – Israeli Independence Day, on May 14

This year's festivities celebrating the 70th anniversary of the declaration of the State of Israel by David Ben Gurion on May 14 in 1948 will not go unnoticed in Brussels. There are several celebrations, festivities and events – some smaller, some larger – planned by local Jewish organizations and individuals, as well as by the Israeli Embassy in Brussels.

But especially the move of the U.S.-Embassy to Jerusalem around that time will most likely draw more ire from the Europeans.

Upcoming Events

### Delegation for Relations with Israel

May 17, 2018 | 14:00-15:00  
 European Parliament



*„Exchange of views on the unacceptable remarks by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas concerning the origins of the Holocaust and Israel's legitimacy“*

The Israeli Ambassador H.E. Aharon Leshno-Yaar will be speaking on a panel with Mr. Neal Mac Call from the European External Action Service.

Further information: [www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/EU-calls-Abbas-Holocaust-remarks-unacceptable-553315](http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/EU-calls-Abbas-Holocaust-remarks-unacceptable-553315)

### Combating Antisemitism

May 23, 2018 | 12:00-15:30  
 European Parliament



*„Football unites, racism divides“  
 No to Racism, No to Xenophobia, No to Antisemitism*

The European Parliament Working Group on Antisemitism, four party groups of the Parliament, several NGOs, as well as UEFA and soccer clubs Borussia Dortmund and FC Chelsea will join forces to discuss and combat Antisemitism in Football.

Further information: [www.globalprayercall.org/content/Football-Unites-Racism-Divides.pdf](http://www.globalprayercall.org/content/Football-Unites-Racism-Divides.pdf)

Upcoming Events