Abbas says Jews’ behavior, not anti-Semitism, caused the Holocaust

May 1, 2018

The Times of Israel

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/abbas-says-jews-behavior-not-anti-semitism-caused-the-holocaust/>

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on Monday said that the Holocaust was not caused by anti-Semitism, but by the “social behavior” of the Jews, including money-lending.

In a long and rambling at speech in Ramallah at a rare session of the Palestinian National Council, Abbas touched on a number of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories during what he called a “history lesson,” as he sought to prove the 3,000 year-old Jewish connection to the Land of Israel is false.

Abbas said his narrative was backed by three points made by Jewish writers and historians, the first being the theory oft-criticized as anti-Semitic that Ashkenazi Jews are not the descendants of the ancient Israelites.

Pointing to Arthur Kessler’s book “The Thirteenth Tribe,” which asserts Ashkenazi Jews are descended from Khazars, Abbas said European Jews therefore had “no historical ties” to the Land of Israel.

He went on to claim that the Holocaust was not the result of anti-Semitism but rather of the Jews “social behavior,  [charging] interest, and financial matters.”

Abbas also claimed Israel was a European project from the start, saying that European leaders such as the United Kingdom’s Lord Arthur Balfour restricted the immigration of Jews to their countries while simultaneously promoting the immigration of Jews to the Land of Israel.

The 1917 Balfour Declaration endorsed the idea of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel.

“Those who sought a Jewish state weren’t Jews,” he said, [repeating a claim he made in January](https://www.timesofisrael.com/rewriting-history-abbas-calls-israel-a-colonial-project-unrelated-to-judaism/) when he said that the State of Israel was formed as “a colonial project that has nothing to do with Judaism” to safeguard European interests.

In that January speech, he said that European Jews during the Holocaust chose to undergo “murder and slaughter” over emigration to British-held Palestine.

However, on Monday, Abbas claimed that Adolf Hitler, whose Nazi regime was response for the murder of 6,000,000 Jews in the Holocaust, facilitated the immigration of Jews to Israel by reaching a deal with the Anglo-Palestine Bank (today Bank Leumi) under which Jews who moved to the British Mandate of Palestine could transfer all their assets there through the bank.

The Palestinian leader has a long history of Holocaust denial. His 1982 doctoral dissertation was titled “The Other Side: the Secret Relationship Between Nazism and Zionism,” and he has in the past been accused of denying the scope of the Holocaust. The dissertation reportedly claimed that the six million figure of Holocaust victims was hugely exaggerated and that Zionist leaders cooperated with the Nazis.

Abbas, in his Monday address, made no mention of the Jews’ historic presence and periods of sovereignty in the holy land. Israel is the only place where the Jews have ever been sovereign or sought sovereignty.

### We will not accept the US

Abbas also spoke at length about the failed peace process, saying that the corruption investigation that felled former prime minister Ehud Olmert was meant to prevent him from reaching a peace deal. [Olmert has made similar accusations](https://www.timesofisrael.com/ehud-olmert-when-peace-was-within-arms-reach-i-was-politically-assassinated/).

Abbas [previously said](https://www.timesofisrael.com/abbas-admits-he-rejected-2008-peace-offer-from-olmert/) he rejected Olmert’s peace offer a decade ago. The Olmert proposal provided for a near-total Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, and would have placed the Old City — home to Jerusalem’s most sensitive holy sites — under international control.

Abbas also again preemptively rejected the peace plan that the Trump administration is working on, amid an ongoing and deep rift with the US.

Abbas told the PNC that he plans to take unspecified “tough steps” soon against Israel and the United States.

Abbas told the hundreds of delegates that he was sticking to his rejection of any US proposals for an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal following the Trump administration’s recognition in December of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and a decision to move the US Embassy there in mid-May.

“This is completely unacceptable,” he said, during the opening of a four-day meeting in the West Bank. “We will not accept this deal, and we will not accept the US as the sole broker.”

Abbas appeared to dismiss media reports quoting [Saudi Arabia’s powerful crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman](https://www.timesofisrael.com/palestinians-must-make-peace-or-shut-up-saudi-crown-prince-said-to-tell-us-jews/), as saying the Palestinians should stop complaining and accept what they are being offered by the Trump administration.

Abbas did not refer to those reports specifically, but said he has been assured that Saudi Arabia remains supportive of the Palestinian positions. “We hear lots of rumors,” he told the delegates. “Don’t believe them.”

The 82-year-old Abbas warned that he might “take tough steps in the near future in our relationship with our neighbors (Israel) and the Americans.” He did not elaborate, but said they would be important and far-reaching.

### Hamas and Gaza

The meeting of the Palestinian National Council comes at a time of deep divisions between Abbas and his domestic rival, the Hamas terror group that controls the Gaza Strip.

Hamas has raised its profile in recent weeks by organizing mass protests on the Gaza border with Israel. In the weekly marches, thousands of Palestinians gather near the border fence, with smaller groups approaching the barrier, throwing stones or firebombs and burning tires.

More than 40 protesters have been killed and more than 1,700 wounded by Israeli army fire over the past month, according to the Hamas-run health ministry in Gaza. Israel, which has come under mounting international criticism for the use of lethal force against the protesters, says it has the right to defend its border. It accuses Hamas of using the protests as cover for attacks and has shown groups trying to breach the fence. Hamas has acknowledged that five of those killed on the first Friday of the riots were its members, and has since been silent on whether fatalities were its members.

Israel says the 6,000 residents of nearby Israeli communities would be in mortal peril if the Hamas-led Palestinians breached the fence.

Abbas praised the “brothers in Hamas” for belatedly adopting what he called peaceful resistance. “Thank God, they (Hamas) finally agreed and this is effective,” he said, while urging organizers to keep their children from protests along the border between Israel and Gaza, warning of a “handicapped” generation.

“Keep the young men from the border, move the children away, we do not want to become handicapped people,” he said.

Hamas leaders have declared that the protests aim to erase the border and liberate Palestine, and some have suggested there would be an eventual mass breach of the border.

Despite the rare praise for his rivals, Abbas posed tough conditions for ending the internal rift that broke open in 2007, when Hamas drove Abbas-loyal forces from Gaza a year after winning Palestinian parliament elections. Since the Hamas takeover, Israel and Egypt have enforced a border blockade on Gaza, aimed at stopping the inflow of rockets and weapons.

Egyptian mediators have proposed that Abbas assume government responsibilities in Gaza as a way of ending the blockade. Abbas said Monday that he will do so only if Hamas hands over all authority — an unlikely prospect since the terror group refuses to give up control over its weapons.

“Either they give us everything or they take everything,” Abbas said of Hamas.

### A new leadership

Later this week, the Palestinian National Council is to elect a new PLO Executive Committee, an 18-member leadership group that has served in recent years to rubberstamp any decisions by Abbas.

The elections, tightly controlled by Abbas, are expected to install a new group of loyalists in the committee.