

## A Brief History of Palestinian Prisoners Releases

**CHARLES BYBLEZER**

*Jerusalem Post*, Apr. 24, 2013

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/A-brief-history-of-Palestinian-prisoners-releases-310960>

Last Wednesday [Apr. 17], Palestinians worldwide held protests to mark “Prisoner Day,” an annual event meant to highlight the alleged plight of, and to celebrate, Palestinian criminals and terrorists imprisoned in Israel. The matter has gained notoriety over the past two years as the Palestinian Authority has made the release of prisoners a precondition for renewed peace talks with Israel.

“The Palestinian leadership gives priority to the prisoners issue and [to] ending their suffering,” PA President Mahmoud Abbas proclaimed earlier this month. “We cannot be silent about their staying behind bars.... [We] have demanded the freeing of all prisoners.”

Abbas reportedly stressed the importance of the subject both during last month’s visit to Ramallah by US President Barack Obama, and in a recent meeting with US Secretary of State John Kerry, following which a PA official reiterated that “without the release of a significant number of prisoners... there can be no talk about resuming the peace process.”

While there is nothing unique about Palestinian preconditions to negotiations - which presently also include that Israel cease construction in settlements; accept the 1967 borders as a basis for talks; and cede territory from Area C in the West Bank, under exclusive Israeli jurisdiction as per stipulations in the Oslo Accords, to

**CHARLES BYBLEZER: A Brief History of Palestinian Prisoners  
Releases**

**isranet-publications**

**Blog, April 25, 2013**

**<https://www.isranet.org/blog/charles-byblezer-brief-history-palestinian-prisoners-releases/>**

---

**Palestinian control - demanding the release of prisoners, many with “blood on their hands,” is particularly perverse and revealing.**

**Abbas predictably assumed this position not long after the October 2011 Gilad Schalit prisoner-swap deal with Hamas, in which 1,027 Palestinians - nearly 20 percent of all Palestinians either imprisoned or detained in Israel at the time - were exchanged for a single captive IDF soldier.**

**Hamas’ popularity ballooned following the deal, so Abbas felt compelled to demonstrate his own pro-terrorist bona fides in order to reinforce his standing as the “legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.”**

**Contrary to popular belief, the Schalit deal was not particularly ground-breaking.**

**In fact, Israel conducted its first prisoner deal directly with a Palestinian terror faction in 1971, when Shmuel Rosenwasser, a night watchman abducted by Fatah forces on January 1, 1970, was exchanged for Mahmoud Hijazi, jailed for his involvement in Fatah’s first terrorist attack on the Jewish state in 1965. Since then, however, the cost of redeeming an Israeli life has increased incrementally, in parallel to the government’s slide further down the proverbial “slippery slope.”**

**On March 14, 1979, IDF soldier Avraham Amram, captured by PLO terrorists the year before during clashes in southern Lebanon, was traded for 76 Palestinians jailed in Israel. On November 23, 1983, six Israeli soldiers, held by Fatah, were swapped for 65 Palestinian prisoners, in addition to some 4,700 Palestinians and Lebanese incarcerated at Ansar camp in the aftermath of the First Lebanon War.**

**In 1985, the stakes were raised even further with the largely-forgotten Jibril**

**CHARLES BYBLEZER: A Brief History of Palestinian Prisoners  
Releases**

**isranet-publications  
Blog, April 25, 2013**

**<https://www.isranet.org/blog/charles-byblezer-brief-history-palestinian-prisoners-releases/>**

---

**Agreement, conducted with the PFLP, which saw Israel exchange 1,150 Palestinian prisoners, including Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, for three IDF soldiers. Many of the Palestinians exchanged in the Jibril Agreement would later form the backbone of the first intifada, which erupted in 1988 (overall, of the 238 prisoners who returned to the Palestinian territories after their release, nearly 50% were eventually re-jailed in Israel). For his part, Yassin went on to found Hamas, which, for obvious reasons, led to his re-arrest by Israeli authorities and a sentence of life imprisonment in 1989.**

**Unbelievably, though, Yassin was exchanged for a second time in 1997 - for two Mossad agents captured in Jordan during a failed attempt to assassinate current Hamas chief Khaled Mashaal - on condition that he renounce suicide bombings against Israel. A free man, Yassin retook the reins of Hamas and immediately dispatched suicide bombers to Israel; attacks which over the course of the next several years killed dozens, if not hundreds, of Israelis and ultimately necessitated Yassin's targeted killing on March, 22, 2004.**

**Then-prime minister Ariel Sharon best described Yassin's legacy: "Mastermind of Palestinian terror."**

**Seemingly undeterred by the experience, Israel released at least 650 additional Palestinian prisoners between the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and 2000; in accordance with various agreements such as the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (1995) and The Wye River Memorandum (1998), or simply as a "goodwill gesture" to the Palestinian leadership.**

**This policy continued into the millennium, with, for example, the exchange in 2004 of nearly 400 Palestinian and 30 Lebanese prisoners for Elhanan Tannenbaum and the bodies of three other IDF soldiers. (Although this deal was conducted with Hezbollah, the majority of prisoners released were Palestinian, of whom 364 returned to the Palestinian territories and 30% were ultimately rearrested for**

**CHARLES BYBLEZER: A Brief History of Palestinian Prisoners  
Releases**

**isranet-publications  
Blog, April 25, 2013**

**<https://www.isranet.org/blog/charles-byblezer-brief-history-palestinian-prisoners-releases/>**

---

**involvement in terror. In 2011, then-Mossad chief Meir Dagan claimed that “231 Israelis were slaughtered by those freed in the Tannenbaum exchange.”) In 2005, Israel also released 500 Palestinian prisoners following a summit in Sharm e-Sheikh.**

**Notably, after Abbas emerged as leader of the PA, Israel twice attempted to entice him back to the negotiating table, as well as to prop up his new regime, by freeing 422 Palestinian prisoners in two installments, in August and December 2008 respectively.**

**But Abbas refused to talk, instead increasing the scope of his demands, and has since gone so far as to threaten Israel with the prospect of a third, albeit “peaceful,” intifada - likely to be spearheaded by Palestinians exchanged in the Schalit deal, many of whom have already returned to terror - unless his conditions are met.**

**To summarize, then, in four decades, Israel’s policy with respect to Palestinian prisoners has progressed (?) from exchanging one captive Israeli for one jailed Palestinian, to a few dozen, then a few hundred and, most recently, more than a thousand, to releasing Palestinians as part of supposedly reciprocal agreements, to unilaterally and unconditionally freeing Palestinians in hope of coaxing the Palestinian leadership into honoring its obligations. Finally, the blackmail has become simple extortion, with the PA demanding that Israel free Palestinians “or else.”**

**This descent into irrationality was inevitable, as the Palestinians’ decadeslong obsession with prisoners has never been predicated on the quest for justice, but rather is a manifestation of the consecration, and resultant pursuit, of terror which to this day pervades every aspect of Palestinian society. For Hamas, this is understood by most observers; but it no less true of the Abbas-led PA.**

**CHARLES BYBLEZER: A Brief History of Palestinian Prisoners  
Releases**

**isranet-publications**

**Blog, April 25, 2013**

**<https://www.isranet.org/blog/charles-byblezer-brief-history-palestinian-prisoners-releases/>**

---

**The so-called “moderate” Palestinian faction habitually names monuments, parks, and public squares - even day camps - after “martyrs” (i.e. terrorists), in addition to conducting ceremonies in their honor and broadcasting programs in its official media lionizing these Palestinian “heroes.” Naturally, the PA annually commemorates Martyrs’ Day.**

**Despite its perpetual financial crisis, the PA allocates more than NIS 200 million each year to paying salaries to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and to the families of suicide bombers. Most despicably, the longer the prisoner’s sentence, which invariably is correlated to the severity of their crimes, the higher the salary received.**

**Incredibly, these dispensations, codified in Palestinian law in 2003, were increased by 300% in 2011 by none other than the West’s darling, former PA prime minister Salaam Fayyad. The PA also maintains a Ministry for Prisoner Affairs, headed by Issa Qaraqi, who in his ministerial capacity has repeatedly accused Israel of torturing Palestinian prisoners and even of stealing their organs.**

**This glorification of criminality is, quite simply, mind boggling, and precludes the possibility of any talk of “peace,” as any meaningful Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation is impossible under such circumstances.**

**It also instills significant doubt with regard to the genuineness of Palestinian national aspirations, which are so readily sacrificed to an Israeli agreement to free convicted criminals and terrorists.**

**The peace process itself is equally impugned when the international community entertains, or at least fails to condemn, such a grotesque Palestinian precondition to negotiations.**

**CHARLES BYBLEZER: A Brief History of Palestinian Prisoners  
Releases  
isranet-publications  
Blog, April 25, 2013  
[https://www.isranet.org/blog/charles-byblezer-brief-history-pa  
lestinian-prisoners-releases/](https://www.isranet.org/blog/charles-byblezer-brief-history-palestinian-prisoners-releases/)**

---

**Lastly, it confirms, incontrovertibly, that in the absence of fundamental change on the part of the Palestinian leadership, Israel cannot benefit in any way by succumbing to the vile demand to release its enemies.**