

## [Palestinian Abbas-Violent Intifada Was a Mistake](#)

**OhioGuy**

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Well, is Arafats' body even cold yet? Finally some Palestinian leader has the common sense to state the Obvious truth. The elephant in the room has been exposed. For all the romanizing of the Intifada as a shining example of Jihad, the Palestinians know that they grossly miscalculated. Quick, let me move to the Palestinian territories so I can vote for this guy! Hopefully a new era of common sense and responsibility will infect the Palestinian leadership. The Palestinian people need it.

Abbas: Armed intifada was a mistake, 'has got to stop'

By Haaretz Service and the Associated Press

The use of weapons in the four-year-long intifada was a mistake and should end, Palestinian Liberation Organization leader Mahmoud Abbas said in an interview the to the London-based Arabic newspaper Asharq al-Awsat published Tuesday.

Abbas said that Palestinians should resist the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza without resorting to violence.

It is important to "keep the uprising away from arms because the uprising is a legitimate right of the people to express their rejection of the occupation by popular and social means," Abbas said.

"Using the weapons was harmful and has got to stop," Abbas said, referring to shootings and bombings by Palestinian militants that have killed hundreds of Israelis since the outbreak of fighting in September 2000.

Abbas is the front-runner to replace Yasser Arafat in January 9 elections for Palestinian Authority chairman.

A pragmatist who opposes violence, Abbas has the support of Israel and the international community.

While Arafat was still alive, Abbas told associates in closed-door meetings that he felt the uprising was a mistake, but never went public with his ideas, apparently because he did not want to challenge Arafat.

At the time, polls also indicated that Palestinian militants enjoyed broad public support. However, after Arafat's death, Abbas has been more candid about his views.

Israel has said violence must end before peace talks can resume.

On Monday, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said that if the Palestinians work to quell the violence, Israel could coordinate its planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and four West Banks settlements with the new Palestinian leadership.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon refused to negotiate with Arafat, accusing him of fomenting violence. Israel is keeping its distance from Abbas ahead of the election, not wanting to hurt his chances by portraying him as being close to the enemy.

Mofaz also said that if the Palestinians reorganize their security services Israel would be willing to give them control over large areas of Gaza and parts of the West Bank before the pullout.

But Abbas said that currently Palestinian security is in a state of chaos.

"Frankly, the Palestinian [security] apparatus needs discipline. There is security chaos, that's why were demanding and are seeking to unify the security apparatus," Abbas told Asharq al-Awsat.

Abbas also said he was in talks with the militant Islamic groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, to bring them into the framework of the PLO, an umbrella group for Palestinian parties.

Meanwhile, Hamas political leader Khaled Mashal said Tuesday that Hamas would end its attacks on Israeli targets only with Palestinian consensus.

Abbas' efforts to persuade the militants to halt attacks on Israelis in the run-up to the vote suffered a setback Sunday when Hamas and a Fatah offshoot dug a tunnel under an Israeli post on the Gaza-Egypt border, blowing it up and killing five Israeli soldiers.

Militants in Gaza have also fired repeated barrages of rockets and mortars at settlements in the last week.

Israel's response has been muted. The military apparently fears that a large-scale operation could jeopardize the Palestinian elections, with the blame laid at Israel's door.

Israel has continued targeting militants with smaller raids and military officials said Tuesday that Mofaz ordered the army to step up its targeted attacks against Palestinians responsible for digging the tunnels, which are also used to smuggle weapons into Gaza.  
<http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/spages/514306.html>

## Verizon

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It's about time that Palestinians take control of their own issues so the rest of the Ummah can get on the economic prosperity bandwagon.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/1214/p01s03-wome.html>

JERUSALEM – One month after Yasser Arafat's death, realignments on both sides of the Palestinian-Israeli divide are raising fragile hopes for a mutual retreat from four years of fighting. The changes, which are being shadowed by renewed violence, include efforts by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to forge a coalition with the Labor Party in Israel for pushing through his Gaza disengagement plan, and, in the occupied territories, the likely ascendancy of moderate Palestinian Liberation Organization chairman Mahmoud Abbas and a drop in support for militant Hamas.

"Sharon wants to take a breather and the Palestinians want to take a breather so they will head to negotiations," says Khader Abu Abarra, an analyst based in Beit Jala in the West Bank. "The two sides have exhaustion in common."

He says the fatigue and leadership changes will be enough for a resumption of talks and a period of calm of up to two years, although the two sides, he predicts, will prove unable to tackle the core issues of the conflict.

Mr. Sharon refused to negotiate with Mr. Arafat, alleging he was involved in terrorism. But Sharon's approach toward the Palestinians can be expected to largely resemble that of the moderate Labor Party, with which he is currently trying to form a coalition, says Hebrew University political scientist Menachem Hofnung. "If the Palestinian side comes forward, I believe Sharon can be a partner in a revised peace process, though how fast and how far it will go, I am not sure."

"Sharon understands there will be a Palestinian state and that Israel cannot hold the territories forever. His considerations include preserving Israel's Jewish majority and good relations with the US," he adds.

The hope that peace talks will resume soon is widely shared by public opinion on both sides. A joint poll released last week by the Hebrew University's Truman Institute and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research showed 76 percent of Israelis and 83 percent of Palestinians expect negotiations to resume compared with 63 percent of Israelis and 72 percent of Palestinians surveyed in June.

But hope for change comes against the backdrop of a fresh escalation in the Gaza Strip, which is taking a toll on civilians and fueling doubts about whether a reconciliation can get off the ground.

Monday, Israeli helicopters fired missiles at targets in Gaza City, without causing casualties, in an initial response to the killing of five soldiers and wounding of five others at a Gaza-Egypt border position Sunday night when Hamas and the Fatah Hawks blew up 1.5 tons of explosives. It was the deadliest attack since Arafat's death in November. In Israel's first assassination attempt since Arafat's passing, Israeli helicopters last week wounded a senior Gaza militia commander, Jamal Abu Samhadana.

Israel wants to advance towards peace, but "at the moment we do not see any change on the Palestinian side," Sharon said Monday, in his first public criticism of the new Palestinian leadership, according to the Y-net news agency.

But surveys released last week point toward ferment in Palestinian public opinion after Arafat's death.

About 52 percent of Palestinians oppose bombings against Israeli targets and consider them harmful to Palestinian interests, compared with 26.9 percent in June, according to a poll by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center. The same poll showed that 40 percent of Palestinians consider Mr. Abbas's Fatah movement to be the most trusted faction, up from 26.4 percent in June.

Hamas was trusted by 18.6 percent, compared to 21.7 percent in June. With the withdrawal from the presidential race Sunday of jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, an advocate of the armed intifada, there will be no real political expression for militancy in the election.

In Mr. Abu Abarra's view: "The people on the ground need a change and feel that Abbas will make a change and be helped by the Americans, Israelis, and Arab countries. And Hamas's attitude of boycotting the elections has cost it popularity."

While Palestinians want change and tranquility, the fighting has, if anything, hardened their opinions on the core issues that need to be negotiated with Israel such as Jerusalem and refugees, according to Hisham Ahmed, a political scientist at Bir Zeit University. "People do not want all the losses to be in vain."

Since the start of fighting in September 2000, 3,361 people have died on the Palestinian side, and 1,013 on the Israeli side, according to the Associated Press.

Mr. Ahmed does not view the surveys, which point to a weakening of Hamas, as indications that it faces a sustained decline in popularity and says the movement could profit from Barghouti's withdrawal from the election race. "There are verbal overtures on both sides, but in practice we've seen no change on the ground," he says. "The occupation, the checkpoints, the killings, and the clashes are still there."

On the Israeli side, Labor Party leaders say they want the Gaza withdrawal followed up by a return to the international peace blueprint known as "the road map," which calls for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel.

But a senior adviser to Sharon, Dov Weisglass, said two months ago that the withdrawal was aimed at "freezing" the peace process, thereby enabling Israel to expand its presence in the West Bank.

Mr. Hofnung, the Hebrew University professor, cautions that the path toward renewed negotiations remains perilous.

"If there are one, two, or three more successful attacks like [the one in Gaza Sunday night] it could make a difference. Israel will have to retaliate and we may go back to square one," he says.