



contact@al-shabaka.org

www.al-shabaka.org

al-shabaka executive summary

AFTER GAZA, WHAT PRICE PALESTINE'S SECURITY SECTOR?

[Click here to read or download the full paper by Sabrien Amrov and Alaa Tartir.](#)

October 2014

The Palestinian Authority's (PA) security sector has grown faster than any other part of the government in the West Bank. As of 2013, it accounted for almost \$1 billion (26%) of the budget. The appointment of security personnel to leading positions in municipalities, governorates, and politically sensitive positions means greater control over all aspects of West Bank life. The rapidly mushrooming sector has served as an instrument of Israeli control and pacification of the Palestinian population. With such a system in place in the West Bank, the expected move of the unity government into Gaza begs the question: How can Palestinian rights be protected?

Understanding the current security situation in the West Bank is key to progress moving forward. The groundwork for the security sector was laid during the Oslo Accords in 1993. Security became a central issue during the 2nd Intifada, and peace talks became centered on the need for the PA to create the "security" that Israel would need if its occupation ended. Indeed, security was enshrined in the 2003 Road Map plan. Using the new rhetoric of security, the PA serves Israeli and American interests. The security sector also serves Palestinian elites since it is used to protect personal assets.

Emphasis on security has reinforced PA authoritarianism to an unprecedented degree. The repression of Palestinians by PA police and security forces has been clearly documented, the broader aim of which seems to be the criminalization of resistance. "Palestine" seems to be on a fast track to becoming a police state.

The success of the Israel- and United States-framed, PA-implemented Security Sector Reform depends on the way Palestinian security forces are conditioned to condition themselves. This self-conditioning is visible at different levels, beginning with top government officials and extending right down into children's education programs. The paradigm makes policing simpler and teaches the Palestinian population in the West Bank that resistance – in all its forms – is futile.

The Palestinian leadership believed that carrying out American, Israeli, and donor agendas would in the end result in statehood. This has not been the case, and the latest Gaza onslaught has shown it more plainly than ever. The security sector is now so entrenched that determined action by Palestinian civil society worldwide with the help of its international supporters is imperative in order to challenge its very foundations.



contact@al-shabaka.org

www.al-shabaka.org

Recommendations

1. Palestinian civil society organizations and their supporters must use the media, public forums, and other outreach to change the current discourse that says resistance against the occupation should be criminalized. People living under occupation have the right to resist, whether it is through demonstrations, through speech and writing, or to defend against armed attacks. Indeed, criminalizing resistance to the occupation is the crime itself.
2. Civil society needs to find ways to institute checks and balances even in the absence of a functioning parliament, an independent ombudsman office, or effective recourse to the judiciary.
3. Investment needs to be found for alternative economic opportunities to enable people to survive as well as to continue the struggle against the multiple layers of oppression without being forced to work in the bloated and repressive security sector.
4. The boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement has given many Palestinians and their supporters renewed hope in the effectiveness of non-violent tools of resisting oppression and securing rights. Some of its organizing principles and practices can be applied in the collective effort to lift the yoke of the security state.

Al-Shabaka, The Palestinian Policy Network is an independent, non-partisan, and non-profit organization whose mission is to educate and foster public debate on Palestinian human rights and self-determination within the framework of international law. Al-Shabaka policy briefs may be reproduced with due attribution to Al-Shabaka, The Palestinian Policy Network. For more information visit www.al-shabaka.org or contact us by email: contact@al-shabaka.org.

The opinion of individual members of Al-Shabaka's policy network do not necessarily reflect the views of the organization as a whole.