



EXPLAINER: PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY REFORM

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What is meant by Palestinian Authority (PA) reform, and why is it necessary?

- **Political accountability:** A principal concern for Palestinians has been the absence of regular elections, which has left political leaders largely unaccountable. PA President Mahmoud Abbas was elected in 2005 to a four-year term, yet is now in his twentieth year in office. The last parliamentary elections took place in 2006, when Hamas won 44 percent of the popular vote, compared to Fatah's 41 percent, and secured a strong majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). However, the PLC's activities were suspended in 2007, following the Hamas-Fatah split, legislative elections have not taken place since (despite being scheduled in 2021 and then postponed), and Abbas has since governed via executive decrees.
- **Corruption:** A second focus shared by both Palestinians and the international community is the need to tackle the blatant corruption of senior PA and Fatah officials. The corruption allegations pose a direct challenge to President Abbas and neither Palestinian nor international reformers have been able to transform this demand into a feasible set of actions.
- **Governance:** Recommended reforms that address the PA's weak governance capabilities include the strengthening of institutions and the implementation of sound regulatory policies.
- **Prisoner payment program:** Reforms focus on the PA's prisoner payment program, which provides stipends for families of Palestinian prisoners and martyrs. The United States long emphasized the problematic nature of the program, including through the Taylor Force Act [adopted](#) by Congress in 2018, which withheld assistance that directly benefits the PA until the PA terminates the program. In February 2025, Abbas [revoked](#) the program, announcing instead that stipends to prisoners and their families would be based solely on financial needs, as is the case for all other Palestinians. France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot has [certified](#) that the Palestinian Authority formally ended the program on August 1, 2025, and the Palestinian Authority has [invited](#) the US State Department to verify its termination.
- **Incitement in education:** The US, Israel and the European Union have also long emphasized reforming the Palestinian education system to remove what they [allege](#) is incitement and antisemitic content from the curriculum.

What has the recent discussion regarding PA reform been?

The mantra of Palestinian Authority reform forms the backbone of recent discussions regarding a future Palestinian state, "day after" governance in Gaza, and the survivability of the principal Palestinian institution that emerged from the Oslo Accords. Most notably:

- France, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand [publicly linked](#) their decisions to recognize a Palestinian state to reform commitments made by Abbas.
- The [New York Declaration](#), adopted following the July 2025 meeting hosted by France and Saudi Arabia at the United Nations, emphasized the need for institutional PA reform, with international support, on sustainable governance, corruption, and incitement.

Is this the first time the issue of PA reform has been on the political agenda?

No. PA reform has been on the agenda of Palestinian activists and international donors since soon after the Oslo Accords were signed. Concerns focused on the concentration of authority in the hands of then-PA President Yasser Arafat, his mismanagement of public funds and a weak system of institutional accountability. Between 2002 and 2004, Arafat ratified a Basic Law that created the position of Prime Minister and appointed an independent Finance Minister and Chair of the Central Election Commission.

During Salam Fayyad's Prime Ministership (2007-2013), he oversaw a second round of PA reforms that focused on transparent management of public funds, the establishment of the institutions essential for governing an independent state and the empowerment of effective monitoring agencies. Since Fayyad's departure from government, however, President Abbas has suspended or neutered these reforms and governed through the issuance of executive decrees, thereby allowing corruption to fester.

How has the PA demonstrated that it is undertaking necessary reforms?

In March 2024, Abbas [appointed](#) Mohammad Mustafa as prime minister and installed a new technocratic-oriented cabinet in response to international demands for reform. The international community, including the [Biden Administration](#), welcomed this step and committed to working with the new group of ministers to deliver on credible reforms.

In a March 2025 [report](#) on the subject of PA reform, the Israel Policy Forum concluded that the Mustafa government is making progress in addressing several core pillars of governance, although it has been stymied by withholding of revenues, the unfavorable security environment, and the absence of a political horizon. Progress has nevertheless been limited, which has been driving international community demands for reform.

Regarding future commitments, Abbas' June 9 letter to French President Emmanuel Macron and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman addressed several key demands that the international community has been making, including:

- Condemning Hamas' actions on October 7 and stating that the Palestinian Security Forces will oversee its disarmament.
- Reiterating his support for a two-state solution.
- Committing to the continued implementation of comprehensive reforms and the holding of internationally supervised presidential and parliamentary elections within one year.

Furthermore, in August, Abbas created a Constitutional Committee that will draft an interim constitution. Its success will depend on the extent to which it clarifies the relationship between the PLO, which remains the official representative of the Palestinian people, and the PA, which is viewed by the international community as the proto-government for a future Palestinian state.

What are the key next steps for PA reform?

France and Saudi Arabia will host a UN conference to promote the two-state solution on September 22. Drawing upon [past experiences](#), the participating countries will likely create a mechanism for benchmarking the reforms undertaken and for allocating resources to support specific initiatives.

Following that conference, France, alongside the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Belgium, will recognize Palestine at the UN General Assembly and their leaders will undoubtedly use this opportunity to highlight Abbas' commitments to reforms.