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# Festive Displays and Harsh Reality: The Palestinian Authority's Image Campaign and the Crisis Facing Christians

In the lead-up to Christmas and the New Year, the Palestinian Authority made a visible effort to recast its image (<https://thejewishedition.com/opinions/analysis/2025/12/25/christian-persecution-under-the-palestinian-authority-what-the-world-is-ignoring/>), before the international community, with particular focus on Christian audiences abroad. Publicized Christmas events, including festive ceremonies in Bethlehem, were presented as proof of tolerance and coexistence. This sudden display follows two consecutive years in which Christmas celebrations were heavily restricted across Palestinian Authority-controlled areas, leaving many local Christians unable to mark their most important holiday. The contrast between public messaging and daily reality raises serious doubts about the credibility of this campaign and exposes a deeper crisis confronting Christian communities living under Palestinian Authority rule.

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## Key Takeaways

- The Palestinian Authority promoted Christmas events to present itself as moderate and pluralistic.
- These displays follow years of restrictions on Christian religious life.
- Recent attacks and threats against Christian sites and individuals contradict official messaging.
- Christians face intimidation, violence, and property seizures with little protection from authorities.
- Christian population levels have sharply declined under Palestinian Authority governance.
- International action is needed to address the ongoing erosion of religious freedom.

## A Public Relations Campaign Aimed Abroad

The renewed emphasis on Christmas symbolism comes at a politically sensitive moment. As international discussions continue regarding postwar governance in Gaza, the Palestinian Authority has sought to position itself as a responsible and moderate alternative to Hamas. Outreach to the Christian world has become a central part of this effort.

Festive images from Bethlehem, long regarded as a symbol of Christianity in the Holy Land, are meant to reassure foreign governments and churches that the Palestinian Authority supports pluralism and rejects extremism. These gestures were carefully staged for international consumption and do not reflect the daily experiences of Christians living under its control.

# Events on the Ground Tell a Different Story

Within days of these public displays, a series of incidents revealed a far darker reality. In the city of Jenin, a Christmas tree was set on fire outside a church (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2025-12/west-bank-jenin-christmas-tree-fire-attack-peace-joy.html>), sending a clear message of intimidation. In Nablus, threats against a local church forced its leadership to cancel the Christmas tree lighting ceremony entirely. The church released a statement citing "solidarity with Gaza," though the decision followed direct pressure and warnings.

These incidents were not isolated. They occurred within a single week and only days before Christmas, underscoring the hostile environment Christians face even during their most sacred season.

## Violence Against Individuals and Property

The situation escalated beyond symbolic attacks. In Beit Jala, a young Christian man was violently assaulted after defending his land, which had been forcibly seized by a Muslim family. Three attackers broke into his home and beat him with clubs and iron rods. He was later evacuated for medical treatment at Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in Israel.

This assault highlights a pattern familiar to many Christian families. Property disputes often turn violent, and victims rarely receive protection or justice. Fear, silence, and departure have become common responses.

## A Climate of Intimidation and Lawlessness

Christians living under Palestinian Authority governance report ongoing harassment, psychological pressure, and threats aimed at forcing them to abandon their homes. Extremist families influenced by rigid Salafi ideology frequently act with confidence that they will face no consequences. Financial and moral backing from external actors, including Turkey and Qatar, has strengthened these networks.

The Palestinian Authority appears either unwilling or unable to impose the rule of law in defense of its Christian minority. In practice, this failure has encouraged further abuses and deepened insecurity.

# A Steep Demographic Decline

The consequences of this environment are measurable. Over the past thirty years, the Christian population in Palestinian Authority–controlled areas has fallen sharply. Nowhere is this more visible than in Bethlehem. Before the Oslo Accords in 1993, Christians made up roughly 78 percent of the city’s population. Today, they account for no more than 12 percent (<https://tps.co.il/articles/bethlehems-last-christians-face-persecution-violence-and-erasure/>).

What was once described as individual migration for economic reasons has turned into a collective departure driven by fear, instability, and lack of religious freedom. Following the October 7 massacre carried out by Hamas against Israeli civilians, more than 142 Christian families left the Bethlehem district alone, unwilling to gamble on an uncertain future.

# A Call for International Responsibility

These realities demand more than symbolic concern. The international community, especially Christian-majority countries, bears a moral responsibility to act. This includes holding the Palestinian Authority accountable for failing to protect Christians, establishing international safeguards for Christian communities and holy sites, and ending policies that accelerate Christian emigration.

Support must also shift away from cosmetic representation toward genuine participation by independent Christian leaders. Token figures tied to existing power structures cannot address a crisis of this scale.

# Conclusion

The gap between the Palestinian Authority’s public image campaign and the lived reality of Christians under its rule is widening. Festive ceremonies and public statements cannot conceal intimidation, violence, and demographic collapse. Continued indifference risks erasing one of the oldest Christian communities in the world and undermines the principles of religious freedom and minority rights. Without accountability and meaningful action, the Christian presence in the Holy Land faces a future defined not by celebration, but by disappearance.

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# Why Handing Gaza to the Palestinian Authority Risks Renewed Terror

As the United States launches the second phase of its [20 point peace plan for the Gaza Strip](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c70155nked7o) (<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c70155nked7o>), one proposal stands out as especially dangerous: placing Gaza under the control of the Palestinian Authority and its security forces. While presented as a pragmatic solution, this approach ignores years of documented evidence showing that the PA and its security apparatus have played an active role in terrorism. Far from stabilizing Gaza, empowering these forces risks replacing Hamas rule with another armed movement that openly celebrates violence. The record is clear, and the warnings are coming not only from Israel but from the PA's own officials.

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## Key Takeaways

- The PA Security Forces have openly claimed involvement in terrorist activity
- Fatah leaders publicly reject claims that the movement abandoned armed struggle

- Egypt and the EU are training thousands of PA security personnel for Gaza
- Replacing Hamas with PA forces risks continued violence rather than stability
- Israel has stated clearly it will not accept Hamas or the PA ruling Gaza

## **The US Plan and the Gaza Question**

The United States peace initiative seeks to create post war governance for Gaza that prevents a return of Hamas. That objective is widely shared. Where concern arises is the assumption that the Palestinian Authority offers a credible alternative.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has stated unambiguously that Israel will not accept either Hamas or the PA ruling Gaza. This position reflects long-standing Israeli intelligence assessments and years of PA behavior that contradict claims of moderation.

## **The PA and Terror by Its Own Admission**

Research by Palestinian Media Watch (<https://palwatch.org/page/41844>) has documented repeated statements by PA, Fatah, and PA Security Forces officials boasting about their involvement in terror attacks. These are not allegations made by Israel alone but admissions delivered proudly in Arabic media.

Very recently, senior Fatah leader Abbas Zaki dismissed claims that Fatah had abandoned violence. He pointed to the number of Fatah prisoners in Israeli jails and praised security commanders who carried out attacks and died while doing so. His remarks framed terrorism as proof of legitimacy rather than a problem to be addressed.

This rhetoric matters because it reflects institutional culture. When leaders describe terrorism as a badge of honor, there is no basis to believe their forces will act differently once placed in charge of Gaza.

## **Training PA Forces for Gaza**

Despite these statements, preparations are underway to deploy PA forces into Gaza after the war. According to the official PA daily Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, Egypt is training up to 5,000 PA police officers from Gaza for future security roles. These officers will receive salaries from the PA and operate under its authority.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty publicly confirmed the training program. Reports indicate that hundreds of officers have already completed courses in Cairo, with more training ongoing since late 2025. The program operates in coordination with PA President Mahmoud Abbas and the PA Ministry of Interior.

# European Involvement Raises More Questions

The European Union has also announced plans to train approximately 3,000 PA police officers from Gaza outside the territory. Since 2006, the EU has funded PA police training in the West Bank with tens of millions of dollars. That experience offers little reassurance. PA security forces trained with Western support have repeatedly participated in or praised attacks on Israelis.

Statements on official PA television reinforce these concerns. PA official Ramzi Oudeh openly discussed thousands of PA Security Forces members training abroad to later "restore control" over Gaza. His comments made clear that these forces would form the core of any stabilization effort, with outside actors playing secondary roles.

## Why This Is Not a Solution

Placing PA Security Forces in Gaza would not dismantle terror networks. It would shift control from Hamas to Fatah, a movement whose leaders continue to glorify violence and whose forces have a long record of involvement in attacks. This reality undermines the core goal of the US peace plan.

A short-term appearance of order may follow such a move, but it would rest on armed groups that reject coexistence with Israel. That outcome would almost guarantee renewed violence, further instability, and another cycle of conflict.

## Conclusion

If the United States seeks a genuine end to terrorism from Gaza, empowering the PA Security Forces is not the answer. The PA's own leaders openly acknowledge their role in violence, and their actions match their words. Replacing Hamas with another armed faction committed to the same goals would not bring peace, only a rebranded threat. A terror free Gaza requires new thinking, not the recycling of forces that have already shown they cannot be trusted with security or governance.

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# Why Including Erdoğan on Trump's Peace Board Is a Strategic Error

In January 2026, the [announcement that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan would be included on President Donald Trump's newly announced Peace Board](https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-883624) (<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-883624>), raised serious concerns among analysts of Middle East politics. While the stated purpose of the board is to promote stability and conflict resolution, Erdoğan's ideological alignment, public record, and consistent hostility toward Israel sharply undermine that goal. His long-standing ties to Islamist movements, open support for Hamas, and repeated calls attacking Zionism and Israel make his inclusion not only counterproductive but damaging to the credibility of any peace initiative involving Israel.

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## Key Takeaways

- Recep Tayyip Erdoğan maintains ideological and political ties to the global Muslim Brotherhood network.
- Hamas, a U.S.-designated terrorist organization, is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood and receives consistent political backing from Erdoğan.
- Erdoğan has repeatedly used rhetoric calling for the destruction of Zionism and has questioned Israel's legitimacy.
- Turkey under Erdoğan has shifted from a former Israeli partner to one of Israel's most aggressive regional critics.

- Including Erdoğan on a peace body undermines trust, rewards extremism, and

weakens U.S. credibility with allies

# Erdoğan and the Muslim Brotherhood Network

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Recep-Tayyip-Erdogan>) has long identified himself with political Islam rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood tradition. His political movement grew out of Islamist parties in Turkey that openly admired Brotherhood ideology, which promotes governance based on Islamist doctrine rather than pluralistic democracy.

The Muslim Brotherhood is not a marginal actor in Middle East politics. It has served as the ideological foundation for numerous Islamist groups across the region. One of its most violent offshoots is Hamas, which openly defines itself as part of the Brotherhood's global movement and is committed to Israel's destruction.

## Erdoğan's Open Support for Hamas

Erdoğan's support for Hamas is not speculative or indirect (<https://www.fdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/10-things-to-know-about-hamas-and-turkey.pdf>). He has repeatedly hosted Hamas leaders in Turkey, granted them political legitimacy, and defended the group publicly. He has rejected the international consensus that classifies Hamas as a terrorist organization, instead portraying it as a resistance movement.

This support continued even after Hamas's October 7, 2023 massacre of Israeli civilians, the deadliest single attack on Jews since the Holocaust. Rather than condemning the atrocities, Erdoğan intensified his attacks on Israel, blamed Israeli policy for the violence, and accused Israel of war crimes while remaining silent on Hamas's actions.

A peace process that includes an advocate for an organization committed to Israel's destruction cannot be taken seriously by Israeli leaders or the Israeli public.

## Escalating Hostility Toward Israel

Erdoğan's rhetoric toward Israel has grown steadily more extreme. In recent years, he has accused Israel of genocide, compared Israeli leaders to historical mass murderers, and called for the dismantling of Zionism. He has framed Zionism as a global threat, language that echoes classic antisemitic conspiracy narratives.

Such statements go beyond criticism of Israeli policy. They challenge Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. Calls to destroy Zionism are, in practice, calls to eliminate Israel itself. This places Erdoğan far outside the bounds of a neutral mediator.

# From Strategic Partner to Adversary

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Turkey was once one of Israel's closest regional partners. Military cooperation, intelligence sharing, and trade flourished in the 1990s. That relationship deteriorated sharply under Erdoğan's rule. Diplomatic crises, hostile speeches, and alignment with Israel's most radical enemies replaced cooperation.

Today, [Erdoğan positions Turkey as a champion of Islamist causes across the region](https://www.populismstudies.org/erdogans-political-journey-from-victimised-muslim-democrat-to-authoritarian-islamist-populist/) (<https://www.populismstudies.org/erdogans-political-journey-from-victimised-muslim-democrat-to-authoritarian-islamist-populist/>), often in direct opposition to U.S. allies. His government supports Islamist factions in Gaza, hosts Muslim Brotherhood figures wanted by other states, and aligns rhetorically with Iran on opposition to Israel, even while competing with Tehran for regional influence.

## Implications for U.S. Policy and Credibility

President Donald Trump built his earlier Middle East policy on clarity. His administration recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, brokered the Abraham Accords, and rejected moral equivalence between democracies and terrorist groups. Including Erdoğan on a peace board departs sharply from that record.

The decision risks signaling that overt hostility toward Israel carries no diplomatic cost. It also weakens trust among U.S. allies who view Erdoğan as an instigator rather than a stabilizing force.

## Conclusion

Peace efforts require participants committed to coexistence, legitimacy, and restraint. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan meets none of those standards when it comes to Israel. His ideological alignment with the Muslim Brotherhood, active support for Hamas, and repeated calls attacking Zionism and Israel place him fundamentally at odds with any genuine peace initiative. Including him on Trump's Peace Board does not advance peace. It rewards extremism, undermines Israel's security concerns, and damages the credibility of American leadership at a moment when clarity and consistency matter most.

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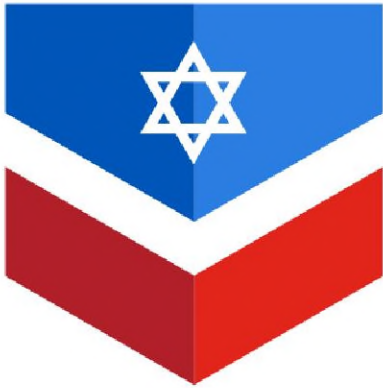
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# ALLYVIA

Policy and Updates on the US and Israel Alliance

## U.S.–Israel Partnership on Artificial Intelligence and Critical Technologies

January 18, 2026 • Allyvia

The [United States and Israel announced a new phase in their bilateral cooperation on January 16 focused on artificial intelligence, scientific research, and key technology sectors](#). The joint statement signals a clear intent to formalize work that has developed over decades between American and Israeli institutions. This step reflects shared interests in economic growth, national security, and technological leadership. It also places research cooperation within a structured governmental setting with defined oversight.

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## Key Takeaways

- The United States and Israel agreed to formalize cooperation in artificial intelligence, research, and critical technologies.
- Joint work will cover AI, semiconductors, space, robotics, materials research, and energy systems.
- Protection of sensitive research and trusted collaboration stands at the center of the initiative.
- The effort seeks to support economic growth, job creation, and long-term security for both nations.
- Oversight will be handled through an existing bilateral economic body, with no binding legal or financial obligations.

## A New Phase in U.S.–Israel Technology Cooperation

The joint statement affirms that both governments view technology cooperation as a long-term national priority. The announcement builds on a history of collaboration between American and Israeli universities, companies, and defense establishments. This new arrangement aims to bring those efforts under clearer coordination at the national level.

Both governments describe the partnership as a pillar of what they call the Pax Silica concept, a term used to describe cooperation among trusted nations in critical technology fields. The stated goal centers on safeguarding future technological leadership while supporting shared democratic and security interests.

## Focus on Research and Development

Research and development stand at the core of the partnership. The two countries intend to expand joint projects in artificial intelligence, energy systems, advanced computing, space science, and semiconductor research. These areas reflect sectors that play a direct role in national security and economic competitiveness.

Artificial intelligence receives particular attention. Planned cooperation includes machine learning applications for healthcare, cybersecurity, and autonomous systems. The statement also highlights the importance of training programs and skills development to prepare the next generation of researchers and engineers in both countries.

## Protection of Sensitive Technologies

A central element of the partnership involves safeguarding sensitive research. Both governments recognize the risks associated with technology theft, academic espionage, and misuse of dual-use research. As a result, the initiative places strong emphasis on research security and trusted collaboration.

This focus aligns with broader American and Israeli efforts to ensure that open scientific cooperation does not expose critical knowledge to hostile actors. Shared standards for research protection aim to create an environment where collaboration can proceed with confidence.

## Expanding Cooperation Across Key Sectors

Beyond artificial intelligence, the partnership outlines cooperation in several additional sectors. Space collaboration will continue through existing international agreements, with attention to scientific research and exploration. Semiconductor research will involve companies and research institutions from both nations, supporting supply chain resilience.

Robotics development will focus on automation and industrial resilience. Materials research will target next-generation substances needed for high-tech manufacturing. Energy research will cover battery storage, power grid management, and efficient energy systems suited for modern economies.

The statement also describes the integration of Israel's research community into the Pax Silica concept as a trusted node. This reflects recognition of Israel's role as a major contributor to research and development in high-technology fields.

## Oversight and Legal Boundaries

Implementation of the partnership will be guided by the [Joint Economic Development Group](#), which will provide direction and coordination. This structure allows both governments to align priorities without creating new bureaucratic bodies.

The statement makes clear that the partnership expresses intent rather than legal obligation. No binding rights or duties are created under domestic or international law. Any activities will follow existing laws and international commitments, and no funding commitments are implied. Legislative steps, if required, will proceed through normal domestic processes.

## Conclusion

The January 2026 announcement marks a significant moment in U.S.–Israel relations, placing technology cooperation at the center of the bilateral relationship. By focusing on artificial intelligence, research security, and critical technology sectors, both nations signal shared priorities for economic strength and national defense. The partnership reflects confidence built over decades of cooperation and sets a clear direction for future collaboration. For policymakers, researchers, and industry leaders, the next step lies in translating this intent into practical joint projects that serve the interests of both countries.

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