

## The Palestinian Authority's Political Performance in Sword of Jerusalem Battle on May 2021.

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### ABSTRACT

This study, which mainly depends on the historical research method, is entitled (The Palestinian Authority's Political Performance in the Sword of Jerusalem Battle on May 2021.) The study is divided into two main parts. The first part deals with the political performance of the Palestinian Authority during the Sword of Jerusalem Battle. On the other hand, the second part deals with the political performance of the Palestinian Authority after the Sword of Jerusalem Battle. The major results of the study show that the Palestinian Authority followed a traditional approach to deal with the Sword of Jerusalem Battle, for it only focused on condemning the occupation, inviting both the great powers and the international institutions to intervene in order to protect the Palestinians, and working on the resumption of the political settlement in order to end the occupation. Although the Palestinian Authority showed verbal compassion toward the resistance in May 2021, it did not stop the security coordination and tried to end the confrontation as it does not achieve any good results for the Palestinians and their case. Moreover, the Palestinian Authority sought to own the sole right to receive the reconstruction aids in Gaza after the ceasefire. It also endeavored to urge the great countries to complete the negotiations in order to reach a political settlement that ends the Israeli occupation and set the path for a free Palestine.

### INTRODUCTION

During the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there were several battles that Palestinians have been through against the Israeli occupation. Gaza was one of the active resistance centers along with Jerusalem and the other Palestinian cities. The Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation in Palestine took different shapes such as military, peaceful, and cultural resistance. However, the Sword of Jerusalem Battle that began on May 10, 2021, had the most intense shape of all the Palestinian resistance. Since this battle made a great difference, it would be a scientific and national priority to study, analyze, and take lessons from it. Hence, the study was entitled (The Palestinian Authority's Political Performance in Sword of Jerusalem Battle.)

This study aims to answer the following question: How did the Palestinian Authority deal with the political situation during the Sword of Jerusalem Battle? This study will use the historical research method.

#### **In order to answer the prior question, the study was divided into the following aspects:**

The first aspect: The political performance of the Palestinian Authority during the Sword of Jerusalem Battle.

The second aspect: The political performance of the Palestinian Authority after the Sword of Jerusalem Battle.

#### **The first aspect: The political performance of the Palestinian Authority during the Sword of Jerusalem Battle**

Shortly before the outbreak of the Sword of Jerusalem Battle and after the escalation of the Israeli aggression in Jerusalem, especially against Al-Aqsa Mosque and the city's neighborhoods, the work of the Palestinian Authority focused on four fields represented as the following: the first field focused on inviting the League of Arab States (LAS) on May 9, 2021, to make the suitable decisions and actions for the aggression happening in Jerusalem. The second field focused on working together with Jordan where the Palestinian Foreign Minister demanded the Palestinian ambassadors to work with their Jordanian counterparts to explain what is happening in Jerusalem to the foreign ministries, decision-making centers, public opinion, and parliaments of the world. The third field was an attempt to approach the Human Rights Council where Ibrahim Khraisheh, the Palestinian Representative of the United Nations in Geneva, declared that there are different calls aiming to hold a meeting for the Human Rights Council regarding the occupation attacks in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the fourth field was represented in explaining the dangers of the Israeli occupation policies in Jerusalem where the Palestinian Authority warned the Foreign Ministry and the Palestinian expatriates on May 9, 2021 of the occupation and the settlers' efforts as they tried to gather their settlers in the streets of Jerusalem under the slogan of "Jerusalem Day". The Palestinian Authority considered these actions as a cover to hide the increased violations against the Palestinian citizens, their houses, and their holy places.<sup>2</sup>

It can be said that the Palestinian Authority's performance was weak and did not meet the demands of the battles imposed by the occupation and the settlers on the Palestinians in Jerusalem and the other Palestinian cities whether in the occupied territories of 1948 or 1967. What is happening in Jerusalem, in particular, was not just ordinary violations of Al-Aqsa Mosque's sanctity or routine transgressions on the houses and markets in Jerusalem. However, these violations aimed to achieve two malicious goals. The first one aims to create a time and place division for the prayer at Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the second one aims to separate the city's neighborhoods from each other by taking over the houses in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, and other neighborhoods.

It can be said that the citizens in Jerusalem felt this weakness in the performance of the Palestinian Authority, so they asked for help from the resistance in Gaza as they chanted (Put the sword against the sword; we are Muhammad Deif's men.) Ramallah's squares also raised some patriotic slogans such as (Come on Gaza, for God's sake.)

After the Sword of Jerusalem Battle broke out, the Palestinian Authority adopted a four-way position. The first position condemned the aggression against Gaza and Jerusalem as the Palestinian presidency strongly condemned the ugly Israeli crime implemented by the occupation against the Palestinians in Gaza on May 10, 2021, which led to the death of 20 people, nine of whom were children, and the injury of dozens as well<sup>1</sup>. On his part, Nabil Abu Rudeineh added on May 10, 2021, that the aggression of the occupation on Al-Aqsa Mosque is considered a challenge to both the international community and the US efforts<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, the Palestinian presidency condemned on May 15, 2021, the planned killings against the Palestinians in Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>

The second position was represented in turning to the effective international institutions and asking them to stop the aggression as well as asking the Security Council to stop the attacks against Gaza and Jerusalem. As a result, the Prime Minister of the Palestinian National Authority, Mohammed Shtayyeh, declared on May 11, 2021 that he asked the UN Security Council for an immediate intervention to stop the Israeli aggression against the Palestinians in Gaza, the continuing attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem, especially Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood<sup>4</sup>.

In addition, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry on May 11, 2021, asked the Security Council to provide the needed protection for the Palestinians<sup>5</sup>.

Furthermore, the Palestinian Presidency on May 15, 2021, called the United States Administration for an immediate intervention to stop the aggression so that things would not go out of control. The Security Council, the International Quartet members, and the regional and international organizations also asked for taking the responsibility to stop the attacks and maintain security and peace as stated by international law<sup>6</sup>.

Likewise, the Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister, Riyad al-Maliki, denounced the Israeli aggression against the Palestinians and their holy places in a Security Council meeting that was held on May 16, 2021. Moreover, during the Islamic Cooperation Council meeting, Riyad al-Maliki asked to form an international front to counter

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<sup>1</sup> Wafa News Agency. (9 May, 2021). *The presidency condemn the war crimes against Gaza, Jerusalem, and the occupied territories*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.us/HWQbZ>

<sup>2</sup> The previous source, p. 204.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Ayyam. (15 May, 2021). *The presidency condemn the brutal killings of the occupation*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.us/HWQbZ>

<sup>4</sup> Wafa News Agency. (11 May, 2021). *The Prime Minister demands the UNSC to intervene to stop the Israeli aggression against Gaza*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.ly/2Cd0NWE>

<sup>5</sup> Al-Ayyam. (11 May, 2021). *A broad condemnation of the brutal aggression against Al-Aqsa Mosque*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.us/HWQbZ>

<sup>6</sup> Al-Ayyam. (15 May, 2021). *The presidency condemn the occupation brutal killings*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.us/HWQbZ>

the ugly Israeli crimes and the escalation against the Palestinians by interrogating the Israeli occupation in both the Human Rights Council and the international courts and also by imposing sanctions against the occupation. He asked for providing protection for the Palestinians as well<sup>7</sup>.

In addition, Mohammed Shtayyeh declared on May 17, 2021, that the Palestinian Authority intends to issue a decree from the UN General Assembly to condemn and impose penalties against the Israeli occupation. Shtayyeh also asked the Arab countries to prevent any Israeli from entering their lands and to stop any commercial transactions or any international help, especially from Washington and Europe, to Israel<sup>8</sup>.

In order to complete the work in the same manner, Riyad Mansour, the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, sent three identical letters on May 14, 2021, to the UN Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council, and the President of the UN General Assembly. The letters tackled the dangerous Israeli aggression and the war crimes that threaten international peace<sup>9</sup>.

The Palestinian Authority condemned the aggression against Gaza and declared that the occupation is completely responsible for the escalation and the crimes happening in Gaza and Jerusalem. The Authority called on the Security Council to intervene in order to provide protection for the Palestinians and to work seriously on ending the occupation. However, the Palestinian Authority did not take any action of resistance in the West Bank when Gaza was under attack, and it only sought to prevent the attack to reach the West Bank<sup>10</sup>.

As a result, it can be concluded that the Palestinian Authority is not powerful and the best things that it can do are only sending letters, asking for help, and demanding others to commit to the international laws. The Palestinian Authority avoided any political action, which can actually lead to put the international bodies under pressure or achieve the Palestinian appeals, whether regarding stopping the security coordination with the occupation, resisting the attacks, ending the battles, or even file a lawsuit in the international courts against the Israeli war crimes.

The third position focused on dealing with the calls coming from the world presidents. In this regard, the American President, Joe Biden, made a call on May 11, 2021, with the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas. Although the Palestinian News Agency, Wafa, said that the call was about the latest political developments and the relationships between the United States of America and Palestine<sup>11</sup>, the Israeli media confirmed that the US President asked the Palestinian President to try to maintain peace in the West Bank and prevent any clashes with the occupation. As a result, many believed that Mahmoud Abbas would be greatly benefited from the Sword of Jerusalem Battle, and the call would help him improve his position from the American perspective. However, as the war ended, it turned out that it was not more than a normal call dealing with the escalation happening at that time.

In addition to the United States President's call, there was also a phone call from the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, on May 13, 2021. In the call, the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, emphasized on the importance of playing a pivotal role based on the resolutions of the international legitimacy between France, the European Union, and the International Quartet members. In addition, Abbas asked for holding an international conference for peace to tackle the issues of ending the occupation and the independence of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. He also called for an international intervention to stop the aggression against Gaza adding that Jerusalem is a red line that should not be crossed<sup>12</sup>. There was another phone call between Mahmoud Abbas and Angela Merkel, the Former Chancellor of Germany. Abbas briefed her on the catastrophic results caused by the Israeli aggression in Gaza, Jerusalem, the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, and the other cities in the West Bank. In the call, Merkel emphasized the

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<sup>7</sup> Middle East Online. (16 May, 2021). *The Palestinian Prime Minister demands forming an international front to face the Israeli crimes*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.us/jDKXG>

<sup>8</sup> Arab 48. (17 May, 2021). *Asking the UN to issue a resolution to stop the attack against Gaza*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.us/TStKw>

<sup>9</sup> Al-Quds Al-Arabi. (14 May, 2021). *Israel continues its inhuman war and slaughters*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.us/8GQmK>

<sup>10</sup> Dorzi, B. (2021). *Readings in the Sword of Jerusalem Battle*. Directorate of Studies. (1<sup>st</sup> ed., Vol. 28).

<sup>11</sup> Arab 48. (11 May, 2021). *Abbas receives a written letter from Biden about the current political situation*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.ly/6Cd25pE>

<sup>12</sup> France. (14 May, 2021). *Macron stresses on the importance of peace in the Middle East*. <https://cutt.us/kybBH>

importance of ending the escalation and calling for a ceasefire to protect the civilians from the consequences of the war; she, moreover, stressed the importance of German support to achieve peace according to the EU decisions and international law<sup>13</sup>.

It can be clearly seen from the above-mentioned calls that the great countries have only one demand which is urging the Palestinian President to exert efforts to achieve peace. However, the Palestinian President focused mainly on the contribution of these countries to work on the negotiations that can regain the political compromise by ending the occupation. This can indicate that the Palestinian political performance did not try to benefit from the popular effort in the Palestinian resistance or use it to strengthen the Palestinian political performance. The prior actions can indicate that they intended to be in a vicious circle by asking for international intervention to stop the aggression and looking for international negotiations.

The fourth position of the Palestinian Authority is represented in claiming that there is a great conspiracy theory against the Palestinian Authority or the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Although there are not enough statements about this issue, Jibril Rajoub confirmed it in his declaration on May 15, 2021. In the statement, he stated that none of the Arab leaders called Mahmoud Abbas during the aggression, and he accused some Arab parties and countries, without naming them, of conspiring with Netanyahu to widen the Palestinian division. He also added that there are three main risks facing the Palestinians which are widening the division, trying to change the political system, and giving them no chance to speak. In the end, Rajoub stressed that it is definitely impossible to let this happen<sup>14</sup>.

The prior statement reflects two different issues. The first issue is related to the Palestinian Authority's concern about what is happening, for it is not strong enough to put both the occupation and its supporters under pressure. Consequently, the Palestinian Authority believes that what is going on is a try to reduce the Palestinian leaders' role. The second issue is represented in the Palestinian leadership's endeavors to restrain the consequences of the battle and to encourage the Palestinian leadership's supporters to defend it against all the plots.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Palestinian Authority was not able to see the new changes in what is happening. For that reason, it used the same old means to call for ending the aggression and condemning it. The Authority also believed that the whole crisis occurred mainly because they stopped asking for a compromise. As a result, the Authority started asking for it once again.

#### **The second aspect: The parties dealing with the ceasefire agreement**

Once the ceasefire and reconstruction agreement was signed, there was a question of whom should be in charge of the agreement and the financial allocations. As a result, Cairo suggested forming an international body under the responsibility of Egypt on May 26, 2021. Moreover, the Palestinian Authority should play a vital role in this international body. At the same time, this international body must assure Hamas of achieving its demands and try to seek coordination between Egypt and Qatar regarding the reconstruction issues<sup>15</sup>.

After the end of the battle, "Israel" sought eeeeeeeee the following: a permanent truce, illegal confiscation of the Palestinian houses in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, delivering aid to Gaza only under Israeli conditions, and giving permission to rebuild the buildings in Gaza only after knowing what the Palestinian resistance did to the Israeli soldiers or their bodies<sup>16</sup>.

On the other hand, the Palestinian Authority worked on different dimensions after the end of the battle. The first dimension was seeking the exclusive right to receive reconstruction funds. In this regard, Mohammad Shtayyeh was content with the international efforts that were led by Egypt to end the aggression against Gaza, and he

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<sup>13</sup> Wafa News Agency. (20 May, 2021). *The president receives a call from the German Chancellor and briefs her with the Israeli crime against the Palestinians*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.ly/mCd3pl2>

<sup>14</sup> Al-Jazeera. (15 May, 2021). *None of the Arab leaders called Abbas and Arab countries impose a political and economic blockade*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.us/SgXpP>

<sup>15</sup> Wafa News Agency (2021). *The Palestinian, Israeli, Arabic, and international repercussions of the Sword of Jerusalem Battle*. *Al-Zaytouna Center*, 28, 277. Retrieved from <https://www.alzaytouna.net/product/>

<sup>16</sup> Abdulahi, W. (2021). *The future consequences of the Sword of Jerusalem Battle*. *Al-Zaytona Center*, 15. Retrieved from <https://cutt.us/rjdPf>

confirmed that the Palestinian Government will sue the Israeli crimes against women and children in the International Criminal Court<sup>17</sup>.

On May 23, 2021, the Council of Ministers asked the reconstruction team to submit a comprehensive report about the destruction and the needed financial requirements and to connect the reconstruction donors with the relevant governmental agencies. The Palestinian Council of Ministers decided that the Red Crescent should be responsible for receiving the relief and financial aid and sending them to Gaza using a guaranteed technique to alleviate the suffering of those affected by the aggression<sup>18</sup>. The Palestinian Council of Ministers also emphasized on knowing the agencies in charge of the fundraising for the ones affected by the aggression. Mohammad Shtayyeh decided to visit the Gulf countries looking for political and financial support and focusing on solving the Palestinian question that started again to gain the whole world's attention<sup>19</sup>.

The second dimension focused on achieving the greatest political and diplomatic gains by talking with the great powers about the post-ceasefire stage. In this regard, the Palestinian presidency welcomed the ceasefire in its statement on May 21, 2021. It also commended the efforts of Egypt, Qatar, Jordan, the US Administration, the European Union, and the United Nations for achieving that. Furthermore, the Palestinian presidency asked the international community to put a permanent limit on the occupation, launch a political process aiming to end the Israeli occupation and find a political solution based on the resolutions of the international legitimacy. The presidential statement confirmed that the ongoing incidents proved that the Palestinian question holds the key to peace and security and that Jerusalem is the center of the conflict and the path of peace and war<sup>20</sup>.

Furthermore, the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, received the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sameh Shoukry, on May 23, 2021. Abbas said that he is willing to continue the dialogue in order to form a national consensus government based on the laws of international legitimacy; He, moreover, added that there must be a political move toward a political path under the supervision of the International Quartet after confirming the ceasefire. This political path should aim to end the occupation and lead to the independence of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital based on international legitimacy resolutions<sup>21</sup>.

On May 25, 2021, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas met U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken following the Israel-Gaza ceasefire. In his remarks to the press, President Abbas thanked President Biden and the U.S. administration for their efforts to achieve the ceasefire, stressing the need to end Israeli settler violence in Jerusalem, especially against Palestinian residents of Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, and al-Aqsa, as a crucial step towards a comprehensive ceasefire that will hold. He also welcomed the U.S. administration's decision to reopen the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem and thanked it for the resumption of its assistance to the Palestinian people and to the UNRWA. Further, he noted that the cessation of the Israeli aggression on Gaza along with this ceasefire herald the start of a diplomatic and political effort headed by the Quartet to end the Israeli occupation of the land of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital according to international legitimacy resolutions. The President also affirmed the readiness of his government to establish an all-inclusive national unity government where all parties abide by international legitimacy resolutions and serve the needs of the Palestinian people<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Amad. (21 May, 2021). *Shatyeh commends the international success led by Egypt to stop the Israeli aggression*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.ly/xCd3Vr4>

<sup>18</sup> Wafa News Agency. (24 May, 2021). *The government asks the reconstruction team to submit a Comprehensive report about the destruction and the needed financial aids*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.ly/zCd87h7>

<sup>19</sup> Middle East Online (2021). *The Sword of Jerusalem Battle and its Palestinian, Israeli, Arabic, and international consequences*. *Al-zaytouna Center*, 28, 219. Retrieved from <https://www.alzaytouna.net/product/>

<sup>20</sup> Wafa News Agency (2021). *The Sword of Jerusalem Battle and its Palestinian, Israeli, Arabic, and international consequences*. *Al-zaytouna Center*, 28, 214. Retrieved from <https://www.alzaytouna.net/product/>

<sup>21</sup> Wafa News Agency. (24 May, 2021). *The president welcomes the Egyptian Foreign Minister*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.ly/yCd4gBm>

<sup>22</sup> Wafa News Agency. (25 May, 2021). *The president welcomes the US Secretary of State*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.ly/yCd4XPR>

Similarly, on the same day, President Abbas met UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and briefed him on the latest developments, reiterating the need to start a diplomatic effort under the supervision of the International Quartet to end the Israeli occupation according to international legitimacy resolutions<sup>23</sup>.

In a news article on the following day, the Middle East Online referred to Palestinian-Egyptian-Jordanian coordination to launch a new political process in the region that enjoys Arab and US support. The tripartite effort intends to advance direct negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, through which a comprehensive truce is reached in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, including plans to reconstruct the latest<sup>24</sup>.

Hamas' position vis-à-vis the ceasefire on May 27, 2021, can be interpreted through the remarks of senior Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar to Anadolu Agency describing the ceasefire as "fragile". In addition to failing to solve the root causes of the problem, the ceasefire will be broken if Israel continues to attack Al-Aqsa Mosque and Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah<sup>25</sup>, Jerusalem, he warned. According to this statement, Hamas prioritizes the protection of the Palestinian people and the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and shows no interest in controlling the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism or receiving funds to this end.

An Egyptian security delegation visited Gaza three times between 20 – 28 May 2021 on a mission to ensure that the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire sustains. The visits came in the wake of Israel's failure to commit to a series of measures, namely easing its blockade on Gaza, opening the crossings, rebuilding Gaza following the recent escalation, and possibly implementing a prisoner exchange deal with Hamas<sup>26</sup>. It should be noted that the May 21 ceasefire did not involve any conditions and that these visits aimed to establish some<sup>27</sup>.

Without being subject to any conditions, the ceasefire was truly fragile, and apparently, Hamas only accepted it because it believed that the public and military attitude on the ground conveyed the right message to all the parties involved, revealing that the continuation of the status quo throughout the Palestinian territories was not possible, and influenced Israeli supreme court's decision to postpone the hearing on the expulsion of Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah. It also affected Israel's behavior regarding settler violence in Al-Aqsa Mosque. Egypt's public promises to facilitate the reconstruction of Gaza could have also encouraged Hamas to accept the ceasefire as is.

On the other hand, Israel ended its aggression knowing that military force could not achieve political gains, especially with its allies' patience running out. Further, the unconditional ceasefire allowed Israel to claim that no concessions were made on its side. Meanwhile, Israel continued to hinder the opening of the Israel-Gaza crossings and the entry of certain essential goods to the Gaza Strip. It also deprived Hamas of any political gains so as to discourage it from initiating ceasefires in the future.

After the truce was achieved, the Palestinian Authority worked on commending the Egyptian efforts for ending the aggression. It also asked for completing the negotiation in order to reach a political solution. Furthermore, it sought to own the sole right in receiving the reconstruction money and aids, for it is the only official leadership for the Palestinians.

**The main results of the study can be summarized as the following:**

First, the Palestinian Authority followed a traditional approach to deal with the Sword of Jerusalem Battle, for it only focused on condemning the occupation, inviting both the great powers and the international institutions to

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<sup>23</sup> Wafa News Agency. (25 May, 2021). *The president welcomes the British Foreign Secretary*. Retrieved from <https://cutt.ly/qCfIrfc>

<sup>24</sup> Middle East Online (2021). The Sword of Jerusalem Battle and its Palestinian, Israeli, Arabic, and international consequences. *Al-zaytouna Center*, 28, 219. Retrieved from <https://www.alzaytouna.net/product/>

<sup>25</sup> Wafa News Agency (2021). The Sword of Jerusalem Battle and its Palestinian, Israeli, Arabic, and international consequences. *Al-zaytouna Center*, 28, 214. Retrieved from <https://www.alzaytouna.net/product/>

<sup>26</sup> Wafa News Agency (2021). The Sword of Jerusalem Battle and its Palestinian, Israeli, Arabic, and international consequences. *Al-zaytouna Center*, 28, 121. Retrieved from <https://www.alzaytouna.net/product/>

<sup>27</sup> Wafa News Agency (2021). The Sword of Jerusalem Battle and its Palestinian, Israeli, Arabic, and international consequences. *Al-zaytouna Center*, 28, 219. Retrieved from <https://www.alzaytouna.net/product/>

intervene to protect the Palestinians, and working on the resumption of the political compromise in order to end the occupation.

Second, although the Palestinian Authority showed verbal compassion toward the resistance in May 2021, it did not stop the security coordination and tried to end the confrontation as it does not achieve any good results for the Palestinians and their case.

Third, the Palestinian Authority sought to own the sole right to receive the reconstruction aids in Gaza after the ceasefire. It also endeavored to urge the great countries to complete the negotiations in order to reach a political compromise that ends the occupation and make Palestine independent.

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