



Aid to the Palestinians: Why Rand Paul is Wrong

by [Elliott Abrams](#)

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Senator Rand Paul has tried to attain some pro-Israel credentials by introducing S. 2265, the "[Stand With Israel Act of 2014](#)." The bill would cut off every cent of aid to the Palestinian Authority unless various conditions were met. As Paul put it, "Today, I introduced legislation to make all future aid to the Palestinian government conditional upon the new unity government putting itself on the record recognizing the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state and agreeing to a lasting peace." The bill covers "the Palestinian Authority, or any affiliated governing entity or leadership organization."

Why is this not smart legislation? Among other things, it is not smart because it would force a cut-off of any U.S. assistance to the Palestinian security forces.

Under Yasser Arafat, those forces, at that time thirteen in all, were disorganized, totally corrupt, and wholly politicized; the late Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon used to call them "terror-security forces." But since Arafat's death in 2004 the United States has made a major effort to professionalize those forces. American generals have led efforts to train them, at bases in Jordan, and they have worked with American security and intelligence officials.

Perhaps more significantly, this effort has paid dividends in valuable cooperation against terror between Israeli and Palestinian forces. Consider this 2010 assessment from the [International Crisis Group](#):

With certain exceptions outlined above, the General Intelligence Service (Shin Bet) provides its Palestinian counterparts with lists of wanted militants, whom Palestinians subsequently arrest. IDF and Israeli intelligence officials take the view that, in this regard, "coordination has never been as extensive", with "coordination better in all respects". Moreover, in past years Palestinian security forces were divided and internally ill-coordinated, leading Israel to work with only some of them; today, given a more centralized Palestinian apparatus, Israeli coordinates across the entire PA spectrum. A senior IDF official went so far as to describe the joint work as "beyond our expectations." [footnotes omitted]

In 2011, [al-Jazeera](#) revealed documents showing extensive Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation—whose extent indeed was revealed in an effort to embarrass Palestinian officials. A [2011 report](#) by the coordinating body for aid donors to the Palestinian Authority noted that that year, "despite the stymied political process and the tense relationship between the government and the Palestinian Authority, in 2011 some 764 joint security meetings were held, a 5% increase over the year before." In 2013, retired Gen. Shlomo [Brom](#) of the Institute for National Security Studies said "This is the best security cooperation we've had in years."

There is reason to fear that since the departure of Prime Minister Fayyad in 2013, the Palestinian security forces are declining in competence and are being politicized; moreover, there is reason to fear that if there is a unity government of any sort the security forces in the West Bank will refrain from arresting Hamas-affiliated personnel. But Paul's legislation would kill a successful project to which the United States has dedicated years of work and substantial funds, and would undermine Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation. If the Palestinian forces that we have trained stop cooperating with Israel, or start winking at Hamas terrorism, we should cut them off. Until that happens, a cut-off is foolish and possibly dangerous. Whatever the intent of Sen. Paul's legislation, it is certainly no help to Israel.