



## Palestinian Territories

Last update:	1 January 2008
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Population:	3,761,904 (July 2005 est. – combination of Gaza and West Bank figures)
Prime minister:	Salam Fayyad
President:	Mahmoud Abbas
Governemental type:	Semi-presidential; Parliamentary Democracy
Ruling coalition:	
Last election:	Parliamentary January 25, 2006
Next election:	Subnational – Legislative 17 July 2010
Sister parties:	Fatah (full member status agreed by the SI Council, to be ratified at the next Congress), Palestinian National Initiative, PNI (observer)



Early June 2007, the violence between Hamas and Fatah started to intensify. These were the heaviest acts of violence since the Hamas and Fatah agreed to form a government in February 2007. President Abbas decided to dissolve the cabinet of National Unity and he appointed a government headed by Salam Fayyad. Hamas rejected this government stating that a new government needed to be ratified by the PCL. As a result the West Bank is ruled by President Abbas and the Fayyad government, while Hamas controls the Gaza Strip.

### INTRODUCTION

As a result of the Oslo Peace process in the nineties of the last century the Palestinian Authority was founded as a first step towards Palestinian self-rule within Gaza and the West Bank. The Oslo accords aimed at a two-state solution with the Palestinians having full sovereignty within the pre-1967 borders. Despite the momentum the Israeli-Palestinian peace process then had, unfortunately, no solution has ever come into reach.

Because of that, the main division line of the Palestinian political spectrum lies with the question how to deal with its Israeli neighbour. Some parties, like Fatah, have adopted a moderate stance favouring a two-state solution. Others like Hamas – which has been elected in government in January 2006 – do not recognise Israel and stick to the armed struggle for independence.

### ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL SITUATION

#### Current political developments

When Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in June 2007 President Abbas dissolved the cabinet of national unity and declared a state of emergency. He appointed an emergency government headed by Salam Fayyad, the previous Minister of finance, declared the military wing of Hamas and its security forces to be illegal and ordered their disarmament. Hamas rejected the Fayyad government as illegal, stating that any new government needs to be ratified by the PLC. Hamas insisted that the previous government remained the legitimate ruling body. President Abbas and the Fayyad government governed by decree, as this government was unable to win the absolute majority in the PLC that the basic law demands.



After a period of 30 days the state of emergency expired, Abbas dissolved the government and reinstated Prime Minister Fayyad at the head of an enlarged cabinet as a transition government. The President went on ruling by decree and made it clear that in the future he intends to rely on the institutions of the PLO rather than the legislative branch of the PA, the PLC. Abbas also called for a Fatah dominated PLO Central Council. This led to the current situation where the West Bank is ruled by the government under Fayyad in cooperation with Abbas, while Hamas controls the Gaza Strip.

#### Electoral system

On a national level, the Palestinians elect a head of state – the president – and a legislature – the Palestine Legislative Council (PLC), a unicameral parliament consisting of 132 members. Since the elections law of 2005 has been ratified, the Palestinian Authority has a mixed electoral system combining both a majority system (districts) and a system of proportional representation (lists). The law divides the 132 seats of the PLC equally between the majority system (66 seats) and the system of proportional representation (66 seats). The PLC is elected for a four-year term.

Based on the majority system, the Palestinian Territories are divided into 16 electoral districts (11 in the West Bank and 5 in the Gaza Strip). Each district is allocated a number of seats in the parliament according to the number of its population. Six out of the 66 seats allocated to the majority system are reserved for Christians, because it is considered the minimum quota for their representation in the council.

In the system of proportional representation, Palestine is considered as one electoral district. Following the elections law, each electoral list must include a minimum of 7 candidates and a maximum of 66 candidates. As well, each list must include at least one woman in the first three names, at least one woman in the next four names and at least one woman in each of the five names that follow in the list. Lists that receive a minimum of 2% on the basis of the proportional representation system are allocated the number of seats proportional to the total number of votes that the list receives. Its population determines the number of seats each electoral district receives.

It is important to distinguish between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) on the one hand and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) on the other. The PLO was founded in 1964 aiming at liberating the Palestinian state with its 1947 borders. Until today it is the sole representative of the Palestinian Diaspora in international institutions as the United Nations (UN). The PNA on the other hand was a direct result of the 1994 Oslo Peace Process, founded as a 5-year transitional body during which final status negotiations between the Israel and the Palestinians were to take place.

#### Elections of the Palestinian Legislative Council

On 25 January 2006, the first since 1996, elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council have been held. Islamic Hamas that contested as the List of Change and Reform were victorious winning 74 seats; an absolute majority. Nationalist Fatah that had effectively been in power in the last several decades received a severe blow winning only 45 seats.

According to analysts it was Hamas' focus on clean policy and its successful attacks on widespread corruption within the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority that provided for its electoral victory. International observers considered the elections to be conducted quite fairly, showing Palestinian commitment to democratic elections, also considering the high turnout rate of around 74%. However, there were some reports of problems during Election Day itself. Voters in East Jerusalem were not provided voting privacy, and it was said that Fatah had used Palestinian Authority resources for its campaign, whereas in many mosques campaigning activities on behalf of Hamas (List of Change and Reform) have been reported.

The final results of the PLC elections were as follows:

Alliances and Parties	Seats (Proportional/District seats)
Hamas (List of Change and Reform)	74 (29/45)
Fatah	45 (28/17)



Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine	3 (3/0)
The Alternative	2 (2/0)
Independent Palestine (consisted of Palestine National Initiative and some independents)	2 (2/0)
Third Way	2 (2/0)
Independents	4 (0/4)
Total (turnout: 74.6%)	132 (66/66)

On 29 March 2006 President Mahmoud Abbas swore in – much to the displeasure of among others the EU and the United States – Hamas’ 24-member cabinet led by Prime Minister Ismail Haniya. This cabinet consists of mostly Hamas members and includes one Christian and one woman. The government’s political programme stresses the need for comprehensive reform within the Palestinian Territories, fighting corruption and enforcing the rule of law as well as democratic principles and institutions. It only considers negotiations with Israel (consequently referred to as ‘the occupation state’) if Israel completely withdraws its settlements from the Palestinian Territories. Until then, the government recognizes any form of resistance as a legitimate right of the Palestinian people to end the occupation.

Since the Hamas cabinet has been sworn in, the Palestinian Authority has been effectively withheld from international financial support. Because of that, it is practically bankrupt, further worsening the living conditions of the Palestinians.

#### Presidential Elections

The most recent Palestinian presidential elections took place on January 9 2005 in the West Bank and Gaza. In accordance with the Palestinian Basic Law these elections were to be held within 60 days of the death of former President Yasser Arafat. Seven candidates contested in the election. Three of them withdrew during the campaign. Voters elected PLO chairman Mahmoud Abbas as the new President of the Palestinian Authority. Immediately after he was chosen, Abbas called on Hamas and Islamic Jihad, who had boycotted the election, to end their armed uprising against Israeli occupation. However, despite his clear victory, Abbas up until now has not been able to end the armed struggle and to unite the Palestinians that are deeply divided between nationalists and Islamists and everything that lies in between. The outbreak of the wave of violence between Hamas and Fatah in June 2007 symbolises the deep cleavage between both camps.

Abbas won over 62% of the votes, with independent Mustafa Barghouti coming second, winning under 20% of the votes. Palestinian Legislative Council member and Fatah leader in the West Bank Marwan Barghouti – who was in prison in Israel after being convicted for a number of intifada killings – suggested that he might run. He was seen as the only candidate who could hope to seriously compete against Abbas. However, his proposed candidacy met with resistance from Fatah activists, fuelling rumours that the Fatah party was internally divided along generational lines. After successive contradictory announcements, Marwan Barghouti retired from the race because of discussions between his representatives and the Fatah leadership. With his withdrawal, Mahmoud Abbas was seen as the clear favourite, with Mustafa Barghouti in second place, according to opinion polls.

The final results of the presidential elections were as follows:

Candidate Party (Party)	Percentage of votes
Mahmoud Abbas (Fatah)	62.52
Mustafa Barghouti (Independent)	19.48
Taysir Khald (Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine)	3.35
Abdel Halim al-Ashqar (Independent)	2.76
Bassam al-Salhi (Palestinian People's Party)	2.67
Sayyid Barakah (Independent)	1.30



Abdel Karim Shubeir (Independent)	0.71
Invalid Ballots	3.82
Blank Ballots	3.39
Total	100

The election campaign faced some problems – Mustafa Barghouti was arrested by Israeli forces when he was on his way to hold an election speech in East Jerusalem; other candidates were denied access to East Jerusalem as well – due to the widespread blockade of the Palestinian territories by Israel. Also on Election Day a number of incidents were reported. Voting was controversially extended for two hours, apparently at the request of Fatah, which led to the subsequent resignation of the head of the Central Elections Commission. Despite all this, international observers considered the elections to have been conducted fairly. The turnout rate was around 48% according to the Palestinian Election Commission.

#### Local elections

Also during 2005, local elections, the first since 1976, were being held in four different rounds throughout 509 local authorities, mostly either ‘municipalities’ or ‘village districts’. On the whole, observers considered the elections to be quite successful despite some disturbing incidents. Averaging across the four rounds, Hamas dominated these elections with Fatah coming second. Analysts said that it was Hamas’ focus on clean governance that made it this successful in these elections. According to these analyses, Palestinians civilians had grown tired of the widespread corruption blaming it on Fatah that had been in power for quite some time.

The results of the four rounds were as follows:

Round	Parties	Turnout
First Round		
First stage on 23 December 2004 (26 councils in the West Bank)	Fatah (12) Hamas (8) Independent (6)	81%
Second stage on 27 January 2005 (10 councils in the Gaza Strip)	Hamas (7)	85%
Second Round		
5 May 2005 (76 councils in the West Bank, 8 councils in the Gaza Strip)	Fatah (50) Hamas (30)	
Third Round		
29 September 2005 (104 councils in the West Bank and Gaza)	Fatah (51) Hamas (13)	81%
Fourth Round		
15 December 2005 (107 councils)	In the major cities Nablus, al-Bireh, Ramallah and Jenin: Hamas (74%) Fatah (13%) In surrounding cities: Hamas(26%) Fatah (35%)	

## IMPORTANT POLITICAL ISSUES

#### Fatah versus Hamas

In the last decades it has been Fatah that was in power in the Palestinian Territories, leading to a dangerous



symbiosis between Fatah and the state. Dangerous in the sense that corruption was widespread among Fatah officials. Some Fatah organs only survived because of PA financial support and many positions in the bureaucracy were awarded to party activists. Fatah leaders also served – and still do – as the backbone of the security services. From its foundation in 1987, Hamas on the other hand did not recognize the PLO and the later Palestinian Authority. Because of that, Hamas politically sidelined itself despite the fact that during the nineties it became increasingly popular with the Palestinians.

With the astonishing victory of Hamas in the last local and parliamentary elections – focusing on ending corruption in the Palestinian Authority as well as on social and political reforms – this Fatah power base has been severely contested. The Palestinian Territories now seem to be divided between Fatah and Hamas supporters. Main point of struggle is the recognition of the state of Israel. Where Fatah has recognized this Israeli right, Hamas fervently excludes it.

The sharpness of this division became evident in the months following the political victory of Hamas. Supporters of both Hamas and Fatah were involved in frequent violent conflicts that cost the lives of many (civilians). The armed branches of both Hamas and Fatah paraded in the streets to underline their military power. This has led some analysts to conclude that the Palestinians were on the break of a civil war. President Abbas tried to regain presidential legitimacy against the Hamas-led government by issuing a referendum in July 2006 on the so-called prisoner's document – a manifesto written by Palestinian prisoners from different parties (including Hamas) that implicitly recognises the Israeli right for an independent state. However, because of the invasion of the Israeli army in Gaza in July 2006, this referendum has not become reality yet.

In December 2006, President Abbas called for early elections to put an end to the deadlock between the two rival parties. Hamas did not agree with this and the President's statement triggered heavy gunfights in Gaza. Early June 2007, violence between Hamas and Fatah started to intensify in mostly the Gaza Strip. These were the heaviest acts of violence since the Hamas and Fatah in February 2007 agreed to form a government.

#### Economic Breakdown

With the beginning of the second intifada in September 2000 – the first intifada started in 1987 and lasted until the signing of the Oslo accords in 1993 – economic conditions have started to seriously deteriorate in the Palestinian Territories. Not only did the international community reduce its amount of financial aid, but the Palestinians working in Israel also lost their jobs because it became impossible for them to cross the border with Israel. At the same time, tourism, once an important economic pillar, almost completely disappeared. In addition, a great number of Palestinians saw their houses being pulled down by Israeli bulldozers. According to the most recent figures of the World Bank, the GDP growth of the Palestinian Territories has declined by 23% since 1999. Around 47% of the Palestinians now live below the poverty line and 1 out of 4 Palestinians is unemployed. Underpinning the problems of the Palestinian Territory is its status as a non-sovereign entity. Export, customs and imports are all regulated by Israel. The Palestinian Authority (PA) cannot borrow from international markets, issue bonds or print money. Palestinian exports, most of which are low-value products, and its migrant labour, mostly go to Israel.

The recent victory of Hamas in the parliamentary elections further worsened this economic downfall. Both the United States and the European Union consider Hamas to be a terrorist organisation and have summoned other countries to freeze their financial aid to the Palestinian Territories. This abrupt breakdown of international help has practically bankrupted the Palestinian Authority (PA). Because of that, a number as large as 160,000 civil servants did not receive any salary at all in the first months of 2006. Therefore the international community agreed to find a new form of aid, a mechanism that could make payments outside the government. The European Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, proposed establishing a Temporary International Mechanism. The Council of Ministers approved the mechanism on 16 June, and it was endorsed by the Quartet (see the Israeli-Palestinian peace process) on 17 June.

#### Human Rights

In 2002 – under internal and external pressure to make progress on social reforms – late Yasser Arafat signed the Basic Law, which was already ratified by the Palestinian Legislative Council in 1997. The Basic Law contains some constitutional law describing the separation of powers in the PA as well as a Bill of Rights on the citizen's political, social, economic and cultural rights. It for instance prohibits torture, force against detainees and illegal arrests. However, there have been numerous reports of cases of torture and ill treatment in PA detention centres, as it was



reported in a working paper of the European Commission. Also, the Basic Law guarantees freedom of expression. In practice however, it is highly restricted. When it comes to political rights and civil liberties, Freedom House, a NGO supporting liberty across the world, assigns the Palestinian Territories a '4' for political rights and a '6' for civil liberties (with a '1' representing the 'most free' rating and a '7' representing the 'least free' rating).

As well, there is no free press in the Palestinian Territories. Most media are privately owned. This started with the second intifada with the PA fearing that Israel might one day close down or attack its broadcasting stations. International human rights organizations have reported about small Palestinian media outlets being pressured to provide favourable coverage of the PA and journalists being physically abused. In their most recent report, Reporters Without Borders ranks the Palestinian Territories 158 out of 169 on its freedom of the media scale – Freedom House ranks the PA 184 out of 194.

#### Gender issues

Palestinian women have always been politically active, the first intifada had a important role in the development of the political consciousness of the women. The new election law of 2005 states that political parties must have at least one woman among the first three on the list, at least one woman among the next four, and one woman among every five for the rest of the list. This guarantees about 20 percent women among the candidates.

Women's participation in the latest Palestinian legislative elections in 2006 was high. The quota system outlined in the electoral law contributed to the success of 17 women in these elections, who are now members of the PLC. Women constitute 12 percent of the total number of PLC members. Women's representation in the PLC is higher than that seen in other Arab parliaments.

Despite the fact that Palestinian women are politically active they are underrepresented in most professions and encounter discrimination in employment. Yet they do have full access to universities and to many professions. The Personal Status law puts women at a disadvantage in matters of marriage, divorce and inheritance. Rape, domestic abuse and honour killings are common.

#### The Israeli–Palestinian peace process

As a result of the 1967 Six Day War, Israel gained control over Gaza and the West Bank – ignoring the so-called Green Line that was agreed upon in the 1948 Armistice. This Green Line since then has become a central aspect of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process. In 1993, the Oslo Accords were signed. In essence, these accords called for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from parts of the Gaza Strip and West Bank and affirmed the Palestinian right to self-government within those areas through the creation of the Palestinian Authority.

However, since then there has been hardly any progress in the relations between Israel and the Palestinians. On the contrary, since the Camp David negotiations in July 2000 – that aimed at reaching a 'final status settlement' to the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict – and the start of the second intifada – following the first intifada of 1987 – in September that same year, things have dramatically worsened. This has lead Israel to build a widely disputed – the International Court of Justice even rejected it judicially – protection wall protecting its border with the West Bank. However, not a day passes on which there are no innocent people killed. It is estimated by Human Rights Watch that between 2000 and 2005 the Second Intifada has cost the lives of nearly three thousand Palestinians – including six hundred children – and around nine hundred Israelis. Most of these people were civilians.

In 2005 – after the death of President Yasser Arafat and the subsequent election of moderate Mahmoud Abbas as President – both Israel and the Palestines declared on a summit at Sharm el-Sheikh their intentions of ending any bloodshed and revitalizing the Quartet Road Map programme – a 3-phase peace programme initiated by the United States, Russia the EU and the UN in 2002 that proved to be unsuccessful. As a result, Israel withdrew its settlements from Gaza in autumn that year and the peace process seemed to be on the political agenda again. But with the democratic victory of Hamas in the last parliamentary elections and the military invasion of Israel in Gaza in July 2006, peace seems further away than ever.

On 27 November 2007 a peace conference was held in Annapolis, United States, on the initiative of President Bush. During this conference PM Ehud Olmert and President Abbas decided to enhance the peace negotiations and aimed for the conclusion of a peace treaty at the end of 2008. It was also decided that from this date on that every other week a meeting will take place between the two leaders, the first meeting is set for 12 December. About fifty leaders



and representatives of other countries and organisations, including Saudi Arabia and Syria, attended the conference. Hamas, which was not invited, called the conference 'a waste of time' and more than ten thousand of Hamas followers demonstrated in Gaza against the peace conference.

#### Israeli West Bank barrier

Since 2002, the Israeli West Bank barrier between Israel and the West Bank is one of the most controversial issues in the relationship between Israel and the Palestinian Territories. The 703 km. barrier contains of a fence (90% of the total length) and a 8 meters high concrete wall (10% of the total length) which separates Israel and the Palestinian Territories mostly along the so-called "Green Line" from 1949.

Supporters of the barrier state that it is build to stop the acts of Palestinian terrorism, predominantly bus-bombings, on Israeli soil during the al-Aqsa Intifada. Opponents of the barrier argue that Israel tries to annex Palestinian land illegally under the guise of security. The idea for the barrier was initially from Yitzhak Rabin in 1992. However, it lasted until 2002 before Israel, under prime-minister Ariel Sharon, started to built the barrier.

The route of the barrier has changed several times over the last few years. After a number of suicide-bombings in Tel Aviv 2006, the Israeli government decided to leave less Palestinian and West Bank territory on the other side of the barrier. This means that a great number of Israeli settlements are now on the Israeli side of the border, in stead of on the Palestinian side. The barrier deviates from Green Line between 200 meters and 20 kilometres. The reason why the barrier is not build perfectly along the Green Line, is because supporters of the barrier state that along the Green Line there are some hills and tall buildings. When the barrier would be close to these hills and buildings, this would harm the anti-terrorism function of the barrier.

Supporters state that the barrier has caused a serious decline in the level of terrorist attacks on Israeli soil during the last few years. They state that the barrier has thus had serious positive effects. Opponents state that the barrier has led to a serious loss of freedoms for the Palestinian people, but also to economic decline and a great loss of land.

## SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES

Fatah (Palestinian National Liberation Movement)

Number of Seats: 45

Leader: Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen)

Website: [www.fateh.net](http://www.fateh.net)

Fatah has an observer status in the Socialist International. It was founded by Yasser Arafat in 1959 – and became dominant in the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian Authority – aiming at the establishment of a Palestinian state. Since the Oslo Accords of 1993 Fatah has moderated its stance towards Israel favouring a two-state-solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Fatah also maintain close ties with the militant Al Aqsa Martyr's Brigades, but the exact nature of this relation has never come fully to the forefront.

After decennia of political dominance within the PLO and the PA, things recently have changed dramatically for Fatah. In the 2006 parliamentary elections Hamas defeated Fatah blaming Fatah of mismanagement, political corruption and autocratic leadership. Fatah now is the main opposition party with 45 seats in parliament. Also on a local level, it has lost to Hamas.

Internally, Fatah has faced some important difficulties as well. In the run-up to the most recent parliamentary elections, Fatah has been beset by internal strife with younger and more popular figures like Mohammed Dahlan and Marwan Barghouti levelling allegations of corruption against the Fatah leadership – Mahmoud Abbas and its



protégés – and even submitting a list dubbed Al-Mustaqbal (The Future), headed by Barghouti. Barghouti and his supporters wanted to reform the party ending the conservative momentum within it, to reform Fatah's gerontocracy. However, the leadership of the two factions managed to agree upon submitting a single list, headed by Barghouti, mainly because of the electoral threat Hamas posed. Despite this, the two groups are by no means fully reconciled, and how cohesive Fatah's parliamentary bloc will be, remains to be seen.

## OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES

List of Change and Reform ( Hamas) Number of Seats: 74  
Leader: Khaled Meshaal

The major political party in the Palestinian Legislative Council is Hamas, acronym of Harakat al Muqawamah al Islamiyya (Islamic Resistance Movement). Sheikh Ahmed Yassin of the Gaza wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, who was assassinated by Israeli forces in 2004, founded Hamas in 1987 at the beginning of the First Intifada against Israel. It is an Islamist party with a military wing (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades) that is notorious for its suicide bombings, which have taken the lives of a great number of Israeli civilians. But at the same time, Hamas organises clinics and schools, which serve the Palestinians who feel entirely let down by a corrupt PA. These are funded by, according to the US State Department the Shiite regime in Iran together with Saudi Arabia and Palestinian expatriates.

Hamas is opposed to the existence of Israel and to the Oslo accords and its stated goal is to establish an Islamic state in the area that is currently Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. It also refuses to surrender the option of armed resistance claiming that it is an unalienable political right of the Palestinians. However, in 2004 it did offer a 10-year truce (hudna) in return for a complete withdrawal by Israel from the West Bank and Gaza and the establishment of a Palestinian State.

Since its founding, the contacts between Hamas and the PLO plus Fatah have been far from warm. Hamas did not recognize PLO's monopoly on Palestinian representation and decision-making and Fatah, being nationalistic rather than Islamic, tried to exclude Hamas from the political platform. With the start of the second intifada the relations between the two main political powerbases have temporarily improved. But since the parliamentary elections of 25 January 2006, in which Hamas took part as the List of Change and Reform, they are diametrically opposed to each other again. In the first months of 2006 the Palestinians looked to be on the verge of a civil war with Hamas' and Fatah partisans fighting out a violent struggle that took the lives of many.

The reality of a Palestinian Authority dominated by Hamas has alarmed Western governments, which almost universally consider it to be a terrorist group, and which provide foreign aid that makes up almost half of the PA's budget. As said, this has further deteriorated economic conditions in the Palestinian Territories.

Palestine National Initiative (PNI)  
Number of Seats: 2 (as a part of the Independent Palestine list)  
Leader: Mustafa Barghouti  
Website: <http://www.almubadara.org/>

Mustafa Barghouti, who came second in the presidential elections of 2005 and is a distant relative of Marwan Barghouti, heads this list that was founded in 2002. The PNI (Al Mubadara al Wataniyya al Filistiniyya) strives for an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza within the 1967 borders. The list describes itself as a 'democratic third force' that opposes the dichotomy of 'the corruption of Fatah' or 'the fundamentalism of Hamas'.

The PNI aims at improving democratization and rule of law within the Palestinian Territories and therefore promises to fight corruption and nepotism and to demand the dismantling of the Israeli West Bank barrier. The PNI also stresses the importance of a viable civil society – which forms an important pool of supporters of the PNI. Mustafa Barghouti campaigned on a platform of democratization as the PNI's candidate in the January 2005 Palestinian presidential elections and gained 19.48% of the vote – with Hamas boycotting these elections. The PNI made minor



gains in the first phase of the Palestinian local elections, in January 2005. Together with some like-minded independents it took part in the 2006 PLC elections as Independent Palestine, winning a total number of 2 seats. Until now, it thus has not become the third force it wants to be.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa)  
Number of Seats: 3  
Leader: Ali Kased

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was founded in 1967 as a Marxist–Leninist, nationalist resistance movement with its roots in the older Arab National Movement. During the seventies it became the second largest member of the PLO, after Fatah. However, growing more and more disillusioned with the PLO's practices, the PFLP changed its focus to the more ideologically related Soviet Union. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of Islamism in the early nineties, the PFLP lost momentum to Islamic Hamas and Islamic Jihad. It had and still has difficulties establishing itself as a political force within the Palestinian Territories. However, within the PLO it still plays an important role.

Considering the relations with Israel PFLP originally favoured a hard–line stance, not recognizing the Israeli right for an independent state. However, in the late nineties it has become more moderate as it tried to gain acceptance with the Palestinians.

During the last presidential elections the PFLP supported the independent candidate Mustafa Barghouti, after it had unsuccessfully tried to present a left–wing alternative together with the Palestinian People's Party. In the 2006 parliamentary elections PFLP took part as the Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa list, named after Abu Ali Mustafa, the General Secretary of the PFLP who was assassinated by Israeli forces in 2001. It won 3 seats of the popular vote. It gained only one seat in the municipal elections of 2004–2005.

Because of the numerous deadly attacks on Israeli civilians – and on the Israeli Minister for Tourism Rehavam Zeevi in 2001 – by its armed wing, the Abu Ali Mustapha Brigades, both the US and the EU consider the PFLP to be a terrorist organisation. In the early seventies the PLFP was the first organisation to openly use terrorist attacks as a means of establishing a Palestinian state.

The PFLP–GC (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command) as well as the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) originate from the PFLP.

The Third Way  
Number of Seats: 2  
Leader: Salam Fayyad and Hanan Ashrawi

Former Finance Minister Dr Salam Fayyad and former PA Minister of Higher Education and Research Hanan Ashrawi head this list that was founded before the parliamentary elections of 2006. The Third Way is a moderate, elitist party and more or less pragmatic party. Its most recent list was mainly comprised of academics and businessman. Both Fayyad and Ashrawi had been active for Fatah for years – even as Ministers of the Palestinian Authority – but grew tired of the corrupt practices within the party.

The Third Way focuses on reform of the security forces and democratic improvements as well as socioeconomic progress and the implementation of the rule of law. Concerning Israel, it follows the official stance of the PLO, striving for a two–state solution within the pre–1967 borders and an agreement on the right for Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

The Third Way won two seats in the 2006 parliamentary elections. In the run up to the elections, Fatah accused The Third Way of receiving funds from the CIA.

The Alternative (Al–Badeel)  
Number of Seats: 2  
Leader: Abou Leila



**European Forum**  
*for Democracy and Solidarity*

This list is a coalition of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Palestinian People's Party (Hizb Al Sha'ab), the Palestine Democratic Union (Fida), and various independents. The list is headed by Qais Abd al-Karim (Abou Leila) from the DFLP.

As for the presidential elections of 2005, the PPP candidate, Bassam al-Salhi, received 2.67% of the vote. In the list vote, its best vote was 6.6% in Bethlehem, followed by 4.5% in Ramallah and al-Bireh and 4.0% in Nablus.