

PA - Palestine
Elections

(1)

DFID Department for
International
Development

Minute

To: Private Secretary

Reference

From:

Date:

CC:

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27 January 2006

INFORMATION NOTE: PALESTINIAN ELECTIONS

Summary

1. Hamas' victory means they are faced by the responsibility of power. The first challenge will be the fiscal crisis. Their outlook will first be towards the Islamic world, but Hamas and Israel will need to find a way to work together. Fateh's humiliation and their dominance of the security forces present a risk of conflict. International reactions have recognised the democratic outcome, but made clear that Hamas needs to renounce violence and recognise Israel. The onus is on Hamas to respond, but they will find this difficult given their platform of resistance. FCO agree that a considered assessment on our approach is needed, but we should do this quickly. Press lines. Current support and some possible future DFID work.

Issue

2. Aftermath of the Hamas victory in the Palestinian Elections. Next steps.

Information

3. The 25 January elections to the Palestinian Legislative Congress (PLC) went well on the day, with 78% turnout and over a million Palestinian voters. Reports from elections monitors (including DFID staff) indicates that the vote was free and fair. The scale of the victory, and Hamas' absolute majority, seems to have surprised everyone, including the street and Hamas itself

But Hamas also won because their resistance has support on a street frustrated with the failure of negotiations. Giving up this policy of rejection will not be straightforward.

5. Hamas have said they will work with President Abbas (Fateh turned down the offer of joining the cabinet) and hope to translate their success in running municipalities to the national stage. Inexperience in government, they face a number of challenges, starting with an immediate funding crisis, precipitated by salary increases in the run-up to the elections. Without measures to correct it, the deficit amounts to \$65 million a month. The PA needs Israeli tax clearances and international help to pay January's wages, import fuel and (Israeli) electricity, and deliver basic services. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Other challenges include how to deal with Israel, as they must (and already do at a municipal level). And they will have to deal with Fateh and their supporters, including in the bloated security forces. There is a risk of conflict.

6. Israel has a dilemma as occupying power. It has appealed to the international community not to deal with Hamas unless it changes policy. [REDACTED]

7. The US has praised the democratic process and indicated a wait and see approach, including on financial support (much US assistance does not go direct to the PA). President Bush welcomed the "fair" electoral process but said the US would not deal with Hamas unless it renounced its call to destroy Israel. Secretary of State Rice said that "you cannot have one foot in politics and the other in terror. Our position on Hamas has therefore not changed" [REDACTED]

8. [REDACTED] In a statement yesterday, the Presidency said that the EU "stands ready to continue to support Palestinian economic development and democratic state-building." But they made it clear that "there is no place in a political process for groups or individuals who advocate violence". [REDACTED]

Information not for pro-active disclosure

10. The key question is whether Hamas will renounce its commitment to the destruction of Israel and its support for terrorism. (This is unlikely in the short term, not least because this was an unstated part of its elections platform. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Ultimately, participation in the realities of political responsibility might bring about Hamas' transformation to a political, rather than terrorist, organisation.)