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The Palestinian Authority's \$315 Million Hidden Pay-for-Slay Scam

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Overview: The PA's Pay-for-Slay Deception

On Feb. 10, 2025, under intense pressure from Western countries, Palestinian Authority (PA) Chairman Mahmoud Abbas announced the cancellation of the PA Commission of Prisoners' terror rewards program known as Pay-for-Slay, saying that the payments to terrorist prisoners and so-called Martyrs' families would be moved to the *Palestinian National Economic Empowerment Institution* (PNEEI) and based on social welfare criteria.

While many Western leaders have praised the PA for promising this reform, the PA has another huge terror rewards program for **released terrorist prisoners** with more than 10,000 hidden Pay-for-Slay recipients receiving more than \$230 million a year and the PA has no intention of disclosing it or stopping it. The PA enlarged this already existing program in 2021, when it moved nearly 7,500 recipients of payments who were released prisoners from the PA Commission of Prisoners' into other frameworks. In addition, there are more than 13,500 families of Martyrs and injured outside the PA areas who are receiving over \$86 million a year. (See part 2)

The PA *Prisoners and Released Prisoners Law* requires the PA to reward terrorists who were imprisoned for more than 5-years with lifetime salaries. After Palestinian Media Watch (PMW) exposed in 2020 that there were at least 7,500 released prisoners to whom the PA was paying monthly terror reward salaries, the PA was condemned by the donor countries. As the PA explained: “Europe, the US, and Israel” did not accept that the PA paid released terrorists merely because “they killed.”

The PA acted quickly. In early 2021, Mahmoud Abbas issued a Presidential Order to “integrate” all the thousands of released terrorists receiving Pay-for-Slay salaries into government and PA Security Forces (PASF) jobs, and he changed PA pension laws to enable thousands of ineligible terrorists to receive PA pensions. The PA set up a special committee to work continuously, “even on vacation days,” to hide these recipients. By the end of 2021, all 7,500 recipients of terror salaries were erased from the Commission of Prisoners lists and, although unqualified, were granted jobs and pensions to receive their hidden Pay-for-Slay without Western scrutiny. The Western countries were happy

because 64% of Pay-for-Slay recipients were removed from the Commission of Prisoners lists, and the PA was happy because all the released terrorists were still receiving hidden Pay-for-Slay.

These recipients are so well hidden that some Western donor countries, to avoid funding Pay-for-Slay, have been designating their support specifically to pay civil servants or PASF salaries, and pensions, the very places that PA has hidden its terrorists.

With this terror reward program below the West's radar, the PA is not planning to stop these terror payouts to released terrorist prisoners. In fact, the opposite is true. This report shows the evidence that the PA is expanding the program in 2026. PMW estimates that with these two programs, at least 23,500 terrorists are receiving hidden Pay-for-Slay payments. The PA is paying terrorists and their families \$315 in hidden Pay-for-Slay.

This is how the PA put this scam into place in 2021, for the sole purpose of deceiving Western donors.

Part 1 – 2021: PA Creates Hidden Pay-for-Slay for 7,500 Released Prisoners

International condemnation of terror rewards to released prisoners

In 2020, PMW exposed that 7,000 – 8,000 released terrorist prisoners were not employed and were receiving Pay-for-Slay salaries. The US, Europe and Israel condemned the PA for paying released terrorists solely “because they killed,” and the PA immediately recognized the need for a hidden Pay-for-Slay program:

Director of Commission of Prisoners' and Released Prisoners' Affairs Qadri Abu Bakr:

“A prisoner is released from prison and receives a released prisoner’s salary, without working and without doing anything. ... We have 7,000-8,000 released prisoners who are receiving a salary like this. This is also being exploited against us in Europe, the US, and Israel – that they receive a salary because they killed and did this and that...” ...

TV host: “They will be absorbed in positions?”

Abu Bakr: “In security positions – the Security Forces, or in the governmental ministries, the institutions of the PA, and its authorities.”

[Facebook page of the PLO Commission of Prisoners' Affairs, Sept. 7, 2020]

<https://palwatch.org/page/18260>

Abbas Issues Presidential Order to Expand Eligibility

In February 2021, Mahmoud Abbas issued a Presidential Order find PA jobs in security and civil service positions, to hide all released terrorists who had been imprisoned for 5 years or more and were receiving PA salaries. PA law, which was mostly not being implemented in any case, required the PA to find jobs for prisoners who served more than 10 years. But because they had to hide all Pay-for-Slay recipients, Abbas lowered it to 5 years:

Official PA TV newsreader: “According to the Presidential Order... the Commission of Prisoners' Affairs has begun the initial steps to integrate the released prisoners into governmental positions, both security positions and civilian positions...”

Abu Bakr: “Every prisoner will fill out a form with the needed information and ask for what he wants, whether in the security or civilian framework.”

Official PA TV reporter: “The number of those benefiting from this operation will reach more than 7,000 released prisoners, **from among those who receive permanent salaries and were in the occupation’s prisons for five years or more**, including the elderly and disabled. **They will be employed based on** their academic training and **the time the prisoner spent in the occupation’s prisons.**”

[Official PA TV News, Feb. 21, 2021]

Because of the Urgency, the PA Committee was “Working Even on Vacation Days”

A month after Abbas’ Presidential Order, the PA created a committee of 60-64 people “working even on vacation days” to hide the released terrorists as quickly as possible to lower the visible Pay-for-Slay budget:

“Regarding dividing the [released] prisoners (i.e., terrorists) among the PA’s civil and military institutions ... there is a joint committee comprised of an expert team from the Commission of Prisoners’ Affairs, National Security [Forces]... which is working on this issue. Abu Bakr noted that the committee includes more than 60 employees.”

[Sada News, Palestinian news agency, March 6, 2021]

“A team of 64 employees in the commission and in other institutions **is working even on vacation days to arrange this matter**, which is sacred from our perspective.”

[alquds.com, website of the paper Al-Quds, March 11, 2021]

Pay-for-Slay Pensions to Released Terrorist Prisoners

The PA quickly realized, however, that finding jobs to hide so many terrorists in the Security Forces and the civil service was nearly impossible. It would be much easier to pay them PA pensions. However, released prisoners did not work for the PA and did not qualify for a PA pension. PA law is unambiguous that PA government pensions go only to PA and PLO employees:

1. PA “civil employees and Palestinian security officers, who earn their salaries from the General Budget, Employees of the PLO...” and a few other categories.

Mahmoud Abbas then decided to expand the PA government pension by decree. Abbas first decided that released terrorist prisoners would be eligible to receive PA government pensions, even though they never worked a day for the PA. The PA would treat their time in prison as civil service employment with full seniority rights to hide Pay-for-Slay as pensions:

“Approximately 1,500 released prisoners suffering from health problems will not be asked to come to work in the forces (to continue receiving pay - ed.), **while those aged 60 or older will be put on pension.**”

[alquds.com, March 11, 2021]

However, this still left many thousands of released terrorists under age 60 without jobs and pensions, so two months later, Abbas lowered the age of pensions for released terrorists to age 50:

“President [Abbas] signed on approximately 3,500 released prisoners over the age of 50 on pension, in addition to released prisoners with a medical disability.”

[Raya, independent Palestinian news network, May 2, 2021, <https://palwatch.org/page/31224>]

Abu Bakr announced that the program was underway and progressing:

“Abu Bakr said that **300 released prisoners have been integrated in the Security Forces.**”

[Raya, independent Palestinian news network, May 2, 2021]

64% of Prisoners Receiving Pay-for-Slay are Released Prisoners

Abu Bakr again stressed the magnitude of the payments to released terrorist prisoners, explaining the need for the scam: **64% of PA Pay-for-Slay salaries were being paid, not to imprisoned terrorists, but to 7,500 released terrorists whose payments could not be claimed to be a social need:**

Director of Commission of Prisoners’ and Released Prisoners’ Affairs Qadri Abu Bakr:

“The number of released prisoners is approximately 7,500, and the number of prisoners in the prisons is 4,200. They are receiving between 48-50 million shekels (about \$15 million) each month (approx. \$180 million a year -ed.), not including the Martyrs and the wounded.”

[Raya, independent Palestinian news network, May 2, 2021]

Yet another problem arose. Released prisoners in government positions could receive the same high terror salaries they had been receiving in prison, but PA government pensions were either 64% of wages for civil service workers or 90% of wages for the security sector.

	Average contributory wage	Average of new old age pensions	Average of all old age pensions	Pension-to-wage ratios (all pensions)
Civil Service (II+I)*	3,850	2,413	2,453	64%
Security Sector (II+III)*	3,615	4,329	3,241	90%

[The World Bank, The Palestinian Pension System (2023)]

Abbas wanted terrorists to receive their full Pay-for-Slay salaries as pensions, so he made another presidential decision to raise their pensions to 100%:

“The supreme [PA] Presidential Quintuple Committee appointed to take care of the released prisoners’ affairs explained... that paying the pension salary of the released prisoners at a rate of 100% was proposed by the quintuple committee and approved by President Mahmoud Abbas.”

[Official PA daily *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, June 11, 2021]

Additionally, as a bonus and incentive for continued terror by the young pensioners, the president’s committee decided that if a released terrorist receiving a pension returned to terror and was again imprisoned and subsequently released, the additional time incarcerated would increase his pension seniority:

“The committee said that any additional period of imprisonment will be added to the released prisoner’s years of pension.”

[Official PA daily *Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, June 11, 2021]

Instead of penalizing repeat terror offenders or taking away their pensions, the PA encouraged and rewarded them with higher pensions.

In One Year, PA Hides all Released Prisoners

By October 2021, the PA announced that it had successfully hidden all 7,000-8,000 released terrorists who were receiving salaries from the Commission of Prisoners’ Affairs, into salaried positions or pensions. The PA repeated that **“the decision to integrate is intended to evade”** scrutiny:

“Director of Commission of Prisoners’ Affairs Qadri Abu Bakr said that ... the [PA] government has completed the process of integrating the prisoners into... government offices and the Security Forces. He also said that a pension salary has been achieved for the elderly prisoners. **President Mahmoud Abbas issued a decree on Jan. 19, 2021 determining that every released prisoner with a valid financial record with the Commission of Prisoners’ Affairs (i.e., receiving a Pay-for-Slay salary) [would be integrated]... The decision to integrate them is intended to evade the pressures that the occupation (i.e., Israel) is exerting on the PA due to the issue of the prisoners, as the occupation deducts an amount equal to the prisoners’ allowances from the tax money every month (i.e., Israel’s anti “Pay-for-Slay” law that deducts the amount of PA terror salaries).**”

[Safa, independent Palestinian news agency, Oct. 5, 2021]

The expansion of Pay-for-Slay to include full pensions for released terrorist prisoners as young as 50—at 100% of their previous terror salary—demonstrates both the extent to which the PA will go to disguise these payments and how deeply ingrained the PA’s policy of rewarding terrorists is. The PA has no program for non-terrorist ex-convicts. A car thief released from prison is left to fend for himself—with no government job, no pension, and no guaranteed income. This entire system is not social welfare, nor is it based on need. It is a deliberate effort to hide Pay-for-Slay from international scrutiny.

Hidden Pay-for-Slay Examples

1. Released Terrorist Prisoner, Major General Alaa Al-Din Al-Bazian

On February 26, 2025, Palestinian terrorist Alaa Al-Din Al-Bazian, who had been serving a life sentence for murdering Zehava Ben-Ovadia, an Israeli woman, was released from Israeli prison together with 602 other terrorists in exchange for six Israeli hostages. This was his third release from prison.



Major General Al-Bazian

During his previous release after 30 years in prison, official PA TV broadcast a story about him, showing a photo of him as a major general in the PA Security Forces. Following recent expulsion to Egypt, an Egyptian magazine wrote about him, referring repeatedly to “Major General Al-Bazian” [Rose al-Yusuf, April 13, 2025]. It is still his position today.

His position as Major General is not based on military service, but is PA law (see table below). Terrorists released after 30 years in prison receive the status and pay of a government minister or a “major general with seniority.”

Years in prison	Public servant rank	Military rank
From 5 – 6 years	Head of department	Lieutenant
From 6 – 8 years	C class manager	Captain
From 8 – 10 years	B class manager	Major
From 10 – 15 years	A class manager	Lieutenant Colonel + seniority
From 15 – 20 years	Class A4 Director General	Colonel + seniority
From 20 – 25 years	Class A2 Assistant to Deputy Minister	Brigadier-General + seniority
From 25 – 30 years	Deputy Minister	Major General
30 years and more	Minister	Major General + seniority

[Appendix to Clause 8, sub-clause 1, Government Decision No. 15 of 2013 –
Regulation for Ensuring Jobs for Released Prisoners]

Ministers receive \$5,000 a month, as AP reported on June 4, 2019:

“The monthly salaries for [PA] Cabinet ministers spiked [in 2017] from \$3,000 to \$5,000, while the prime minister's salary was raised to \$6,000. The raises were kept secret from the public and approved by President Mahmoud Abbas... The pay raise was made retroactive to 2014.”

[<https://spectrumlocalnews.com/tx/austin/ap-top-news/2019/06/04/a-secret-pay-raise-by-cabinet-angers-palestinian-public>]

It was not publicized whether PASF officers received the same secret raise. Either way, Al-Bazian's Pay-for-Slay salary is between \$3,000-\$5,000 a month. While in jail, he received his **prisoner's Pay-for-Slay** salary, and now he is receiving his **released prisoner's hidden Pay-for-Slay**.

2. Released Terrorist Prisoner, Colonel Naji Arar

Terrorist Naji Arar was a First Lieutenant in the PA Security Forces when he was arrested for terrorism in 2007. After his first 12 years in prison, he had already risen to the rank of lieutenant colonel:

“The sick prisoner: Naji Arar... **Member of the PASF with the rank of lieutenant colonel**

[Website of “Rescue Services Connections,” May 22, 2019]

When he was released in 2025, he was immediately welcomed back into the PASF, his uniform now adorned with the rank of colonel:



His family published “wishes and congratulations to their son, released prisoner Naji Jamal Arar **on his promotion to the rank of colonel in the PA Preventive Security Force.**”

[“Arar Family Council,” Facebook page, July 23, 2025]

Integrating **unrepentant** terrorists into the PA Security Forces, whose purpose is to fight Palestinian terror, is certainly a twisted policy that invites more terror. In addition, the high ranks and PASF salaries are not due to qualifications or military seniority but are a direct reward for terror and a central part of the PA's hidden Pay-for-Slay.

Part 2 - 2026: Hidden Pay-for-Slay for 23,500 Released Prisoners and Martyrs families - \$315 million a year

10,000 + released prisoners

The PA conceals the exact number of released terrorists receiving Pay-for-Slay funds, in civil service and PASF salaries and pensions. As cited above, nearly 8,000 released terrorist prisoners were integrated into PA institutions during 2021 alone. In addition, many terrorists like Major General Al-Bazian had already been integrated into the PASF and civil service positions before 2020. Since 2021, thousands of additional terrorists have been released from prison, with 800 alone having served 5 years or more being released in the recent terrorist exchange deals and many more with the completion of the many 20-year sentences given to terrorists during the PA-led 2000-2005 terror campaign (second Intifada). The total of Pay-for-Slay recipients hidden in government positions and pensions now probably exceeds 10,000.

\$315 million a year in hidden Pay-for-Slay

The PA can conceal from the donors the cost of its hidden Pay-for-Slay, by rewarding the terrorists through the budgets of the PASF, the civil services, and pensions. However, it is possible to calculate a likely minimum figure.

These were the salaries of the terrorists released in the recent exchange with Hamas for Israeli hostages, based on how long each had been imprisoned:

Number of released prisoners	Years in Prison	Prison Salary (shekels/month)
128	5-10 years	4,000
132	10-20 years,	6,000
399	20-25 years	8,000
18	25-30 years	8,000
13	30+ years	12,000

Abbas also decreed that released terrorists would receive 100% of their salaries as pensions.

The 10,000 released terrorists are from all the above categories having received between 4,000 and 12,000 per month. In the interest of being cautious, PMW took the low monthly salary of 6,000 shekels/month as a minimum average of released terrorists' salaries, and multiplied it by 10,000 released prisoners. **In total, PMW estimates that the PA pays terrorists approximately 60 million shekels a month, 720 million shekels a year, or over \$230 million a year in hidden Pay-for-Slay.** Even if all the released terrorists were receiving only 4,000 shekels a month, the lowest payment – which is not a possible scenario – the PA would still be paying over **\$160 million a year**. Pay-for-Slay continues to be a huge Palestinian Authority terror rewards program.

13,500 recipients in “diaspora”

Another category of hidden payments is to terrorists’ families in what the PA calls the Palestinian “diaspora.” In January 2026, families of terrorist “Martyrs” in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt all received their terror reward payments as usual via PLO offices in their countries. Already in 2017, the PA budget listed 13,500 recipients in the “diaspora.”

هدف	أهداف و مخرجات البرنامج	مخرج
مخرج 1: تقديم خدمة مالية لأسر الشهداء والجرحى	تقديم الموسسة مصرف مخصصات شهرية لأسر الشهداء والجرحى من خلال اشتقطهم خلال العام	هدف 1: تقديم خدمة مالية لأسر الشهداء والجرحى
مخرج 2: تقديم الموسسة مصرف مخصصات شهرية لأسر الشهداء والجرحى من خلال قروع الموسسة في الخارج	تقديم الموسسة مصرف مخصصات شهرية لأسر الشهداء والجرحى داخل الوطن	الموسيسة مصرف مخصصات شهرية لأسر الشهداء والجرحى داخل الوطن وخارجها وتقدم مساعدات أخرى وخدمة التأمين الصحي لهم
مخرج 3: تقديم الموسسة مساعدات مالية لأسر الشهداء والجرحى من خلال تقطيع خاص	تقديم الموسسة مساعدات مالية لأسر الشهداء والجرحى من خلال تقطيع خاص	

The amount that the PA transferred to the PLO in 2025 as “transfer expenses,” which is the term for payments to terrorists and Martyrs’ families, was 269,434,600 shekels, **or more than \$86 million**.

These two programs alone reach approximately **\$315 million** hidden Pay-for-Slay a year.

Hidden Pay-for-Slay Continues

In early 2025, when Abbas announced that he was ending Pay-for-Slay, he said it would be replaced by a social welfare system called the *Palestinian National Economic Empowerment Institution* (PNEEI). Recently, a released terrorist and Pay-for-Slay recipient asked whether released prisoners who had been given a military rank in the Security Forces had to register with PNEEI along with current prisoners and “Martyrs” families as part of the PA’s declared ending of Pay-for-Slay. This was the response:

“I called the Commission of Prisoners and Released Prisoners about this... they told me that the situation regarding released prisoners has returned to how it was before. According to the old system. That is, what is called the PNEEI – is canceled. That's what they told me. I contacted them a little while ago.”

[Telegram, Sept. 20, 2025]

This makes perfect sense. The PA was asked by the international donors, as part of the PA “reform,” to stop payments to recipients of Pay-for-Slay of which they were aware. The PA is not voluntarily disclosing that 10,000 terror reward recipients are hidden in the civil service, the PASF, and as 50-year-old PA pensioners.

6,000 new hidden “pensioners” in 2026

In 2026, the PA is continuing to hide additional Pay-for-Slay recipients. In February 2026, PMW was privy to the following conversation among recipients of Pay-for-Slay discussing the PA’s hiding 6,000 additional recipients as pensioners:

“Has anyone received a call from any government office and been asked to provide a bank account number in the last two weeks?”

[There was no response.]

“How many times have we told you: demand, demand, demand [your payments]. And what happened? The whole matter was reduced to **only 6,000 cases** that were passed on to [government] offices, and now they’re verifying their names, calling them, and asking for active account numbers to deposit their salaries.”

Member A: "Who told you?"

Member B: "Who is this about?"

Member C: "On what basis did they choose the 6,000?"

Member B: "No one knows."

"This is the issue: The wounded and prisoners – 6,000 of them [had their files] transferred to pensions in different offices, and they are now registered there, and they are calling them one by one, asking them for bank account numbers to confirm them as pensioners."

There was great frustration that no one in this group of Pay-for-Slay recipients had been notified as yet, that they were among the 6,000 new members.

As thousands of imprisoned terrorists will be released from prison in the coming years, they will be shuttled into government jobs and early pensions, and the hidden Pay-for-Slay will continue to grow, hidden from international donors.

Part 3: Western Funding for Salaries and Pensions

After PMW exposed the PA's Pay-for-Slay terror rewards in 2011, most Western donor countries stopped funding the PA's general budget, which directly fueled Pay-for-Slay. Ironically, most of the donor countries had hoped that by paying salaries directly to civil servants, Security Forces, and PA pensions, they could avoid the Pay-for-Slay trap and not directly fund terror. The US passed the Taylor Force Act, which cut off most funding, excluding that for the PA Security Forces. The following are recent announcements:

EU: "... contributions to the PA through the PEGASE mechanism... including **salaries of public workers... and pensions for civil servants.**"

Germany pledged \$35 million in direct payment to the PA **to pay the salaries of healthcare and education workers.**

France directly donates €18 million, **especially for salaries and pensions of civil service workers**

The *Wall Street Journal* reported on July 13, 2025, that the US State Dept reported that the **US still provides funding to the PA Security Forces.**

It is ironic that the Western donors who chose to pay PA salaries and pensions to avoid paying salaries to terrorists were funding the very frameworks where the PA was hiding its terror rewards.

Jan. 31, 2026 article confirming that PMW's findings in this report are well known to Palestinians

On Jan. 31, 2026, an article in the Hamas-affiliated Shehab news agency confirmed that Palestinians know about the PA's hidden Pay-for-Slay. As a Hamas member, the writer condemns the PA for hiding it – saying they should openly pay the terror salaries and "confront" and not try to hide them. In the article, he confirms that Palestinians are all aware of the PA's schemes to hide the salaries.

Excerpt of an op-ed by Amin Al-Haj:

"In recent years, intensive work has been done [by the PA] on the issue of the prisoners' salaries to circumvent [the US, Israel and donors] rather than to confront, and the prisoners have been rebranded. Some of them became employees in various entities, whether

governmental institutions or PLO institutions. The rest were included under the pension fund. In both cases, the years in captivity (i.e., prison) were counted as years of experience or as additional benefits. This circumvention [of payments] was thought to protect the base of the [Fatah] Movement from sanctions that the occupation state (i.e., Israel) might impose, behind which are Washington and the international donors. However, this was not politically wise... According to information going around, in the future, American pressure will be applied that will be directed against the salaries of the released prisoners who are [hidden as] part of the PA or PLO institutions' staff, or the pensioners who received ranks and allowances just because they were prisoners. This group, of which Fatah members are the vast majority, thought for a long time that it was safe from harm, after the mission was completed perfectly."

[Shehab news agency website (Hamas affiliated), Jan. 31, 2026]

Afterword – Abbas: “Prisoners and Martyrs... are more precious than all of us.”

The PA's greatest depravity is not the hundreds of millions of dollars it spends rewarding terrorists through its Pay-for-Slay programs. The PA's policy of rewarding terror is merely a symptom, however repugnant, of its deep and fundamental turpitude —its portrayal of terrorism and the killing of Jews as the highest acts, done in the name of Palestinians and Allah. The PA elevates murderers of Israelis to the apex of Palestinian society, presenting them as the ultimate Palestinian heroes, and thus honors and rewards them. That was Abbas' explicit message when he explained that “the prisoners and Martyrs... must receive everything as it was in the past,” and he added the reason: “They are more precious than all of us” [Feb. 21, 2025].

The West must recognize: The PA will continue to reward terror whenever it believes it can get away with it because the PA has always been, and remains, a terror-supporting organization.