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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA)**, Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing:
“Financially Rewarding Terrorism in the West Bank”
July 6, 2016

(As prepared for delivery)

This hearing will come to order. Last week, a 13-year old Israeli-American girl was stabbed to death by a Palestinian terrorist while she slept in her bed. Sadly, Hallel Ariel’s murder is only the latest brutal attack in Israel. Since October, there have been some 250 instances of Israelis being chased-down, shot or stabbed. Forty have died – including former U.S. Army officer Taylor Force, who was stabbed in March along an oceanfront boardwalk.

While this spree of attacks continues, international diplomats continue to meet for a probable push at the United Nations this fall to impose the “parameters” of peace on Israel and the Palestinian Authority. But what on earth suggests that Israel has a willing partner in peace?

Last fall, this Committee held a hearing to expose the Palestinian Authority’s complicity in inciting violence. Israel is contending with a deep-seated hatred, nurtured by Palestinian leaders over many years in mosques, schools, newspapers, and on TV. As one witness told the Committee, “‘Incitement’ is the term we usually use, but hatred is what we mean....teaching generations of Palestinians to hate Jews by demonizing and dehumanizing them.”

Take the funeral for the killer of American Taylor Force, the former West Point graduate, Army officer and Vanderbilt student. Official PA TV glorified the terrorist, calling him “the Martyr” 11 times in one broadcast. A reporter explained that his funeral was “a large national wedding befitting of Martyrs.”

But Palestinians are lured to terrorism with more than just words. Since 2003, it has been Palestinian law to reward Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails with a monthly paycheck – legislation which creates jihad. The Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization use a so-called “martyrs’ fund” to pay the families of Palestinian prisoners and suicide bombers. One prominent Palestinian says these inducements have become “sacred in Palestinian politics.”

Perversely, the PA uses a sliding scale: the longer the jail sentence, the greater the reward. The highest payments go to those serving life sentences – to those who prove most brutal. As we will hear today, the PA allots nearly \$140 million of its budget for this purpose. The monthly salary ranges from \$364 a month for three years imprisonment to over \$3,000 a month for 30 years or more. And whoever was imprisoned for five years or more is entitled to permanent employment in a PA institution. Again, for those who wage the most brutal attacks. If a Palestinian state was established, it’s hard to see how this “pay to slay” policy wouldn’t put them on the state sponsor of terrorism list.

With about one-third of the Palestinian Authority’s budget financed through foreign aid, the U.S. and our European allies can – and must – help stop the bloodshed. So far, the international community has

failed to effectively use its leverage. European donors admit they provide funding in a way that is impossible to track. They have nothing in their laws like the U.S. requirement – which the Israeli government is now starting to embrace – that funding to the PA be cut by the amount the PA pays out for acts of terrorism. This must change. And if the PA's irresponsible behavior continues, the whole premise for funding the PA needs to be reconsidered.

The U.S. needs to do better at bringing the parties together while holding the parties responsible for their actions. This has traditionally been our role. Unfortunately, in recent years, the Obama administration has been hesitant to hold the PA accountable - yet has consistently pressured Israel.

It's no wonder the Palestinians believe they can go straight to the United Nations this fall, bypassing Israel and bilateral negotiations. Indeed, the Obama Administration has pointedly not ruled-out allowing the UN Security Council to dictate the terms of peace negotiations. The United States should make it abundantly clear that we oppose such actions which are not based on direct negotiations between the parties and will use its veto and keep divisive, counterproductive resolutions from passing.

We have to face reality if we're going to move peace forward. And we have to be honest about each actor's readiness to make peace. The sad truth is the Palestinian Authority has not prepared its citizens for peace with Israel. Tragically, there will be no peace until that changes.

I now turn to the Ranking Member for any opening comments he may have.