

A Date Is Not a Vote

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · 15 October 2026

The Palestinian Authority has set an election for 11 September 2027. It set one for 28 November 2026, too.

By Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren

On Saturday, 10 October 2026, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas issued a decree. According to WAFA, the official Palestinian news agency, it cancels the legislative election set for 28 November 2026 and calls combined presidential and legislative elections for 11 September 2027. AP, Reuters, Al Jazeera, N12 and Kan all reported it.

Start with what the decree says, in its own words. It follows a decision of the PLO Executive Committee and consultations with the factions. It cites Israeli military activity and restrictions on movement in the West Bank, Israel's withholding of tax revenues, the failure to deploy the international stabilisation force in Gaza under UN Security Council Resolution 2803, and limits on access for election staff and observers to Gaza and eastern Jerusalem.

Then the other side, also in its own words. Israel's Foreign Minister, Gideon Sa'ar, called it "yet another ridiculous lie designed to evade responsibility and accountability," and rejected the claim that Israel had blocked the vote. Two Palestinian officials told Reuters that Fatah and Hamas leaders had agreed in Cairo the previous Wednesday to postpone (single source, not yet confirmed).

Now the part neither statement disputes: the calendar.

The last Palestinian legislative election was held on 25 January 2006. Hamas won it, and within eighteen months it had seized Gaza. The last presidential election was in January 2005. A four-year term would have ended in 2009. If the new date holds, that is $2027 - 2009 = 18$ years past the end of the term. A voter had to be 18 in January 2006 to take part, so anyone born after January 1988, every Palestinian younger than about 38 today, has never cast a ballot for the Legislative Council.

It is not only Israelis who notice. Mustafa Barghouti, who leads the Palestinian National Initiative, told Al Jazeera it is "totally unacceptable" that Palestinians have been denied elections for two decades. Just weeks earlier, at the UN General Assembly on 24 September, the November timetable was reaffirmed, according to Reuters. On Sunday, 11 October, France's Foreign Minister, Jean-Noël Barrot, said France "regrets" the postponement, which "once again deprives the Palestinian people of the right to democratic expression at the ballot box," and called for elections without delay.

So, questions, not charges.

If the obstacles named in the decree are real, which of them will be gone by 11 September 2027, and who will say so in advance?

If the delay was agreed between the two largest factions, as the Reuters sources say, whose interest does the delay serve: the voters', or the factions'?

And for those abroad who have tied recognition and money to reform: is a date on a decree the reform, or only its promise?

None of this is an argument for any particular result. A free vote might produce one that frightens us. 2006 did. But a people that does not choose its leaders cannot hold them to account, and a partner who cannot be held to account by his own people is hard for anyone else to hold to anything.

This week we read Parshat Noach, and in it the promise G-d made as Noach stepped out of the ark: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease" (Bereishit 8:22). After the flood, the first gift was not a law or a king. It was a dependable calendar. A field can be planned because harvest will come.

A polity needs its seasons too. Elections are its harvest: the regular, unavoidable day when power goes back to the people it came from. Postpone the harvest long enough, and nothing gets planted.

In less than two weeks, Israelis will vote, angrily, loudly, and on time. Whatever the result, that is a gift we should not take for granted.

May G-d grant every people in this land leaders who answer to the governed, and grant us the wisdom to tell a promise from a vote.

Sources

- Official decree: Wafa, 10 Oct 2026, "President Abbas sets September 11, 2027, as date for simultaneous presidential and legislative elections": <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/175699>
- AP: <https://apnews.com/article/palestinian-election-postponed-3c0ab74a39492328a15318d7949b972c>
- Reuters, via the Straits Times (also the source for the Cairo report, two anonymous Palestinian officials, and the 24 Sep UNGA timetable): <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/middle-east/abbas-postpones-palestinian-elections-sets-presidential-poll-for-september-2027>
- Al Jazeera (including Mustafa Barghouti, "totally unacceptable"): <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/10/10/abbas-postpones-palestinian-legislative-elections-to-september-2027>
- The National: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/mena/2026/10/10/palestinian-president-mahmoud-abbas-postpones-elections-to-september-2027/>
- N12:

רשמית: אבו מאזן ביטל את הבחירות לרשות הפלסטינית שתוכננו לחודש הבא והורה לדחות אותן לספטמבר 2027 @sapirlipkin

Post on X by @N12News

- Kan:

בצו נשיאותי: אבו מאזן דחה את הבחירות לנשיאות הרשות הפלסטינית בכמעט שנה @InbarYuval

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- FM Gideon Sa'ar's post:

Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian corrupt dictator, who has not held elections in over twenty years, has once again deceived the international community. His attempt to drag Israel into this, falsely claiming that Israel imposed obstacles to holding elections, is yet another...

Post on X by @gidonsaar

- France FM Jean-Noël Barrot, 11 Oct 2026, via the Jerusalem Post: <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-911326>
- Bereishit 8:22: <https://www.sefaria.org/Genesis.8.22>

Prepared in deep partnership and cooperation with Grok and xAI

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