



Published on *The American Task Force on Palestine* (<http://www.americantaskforce.org>)

[Home](#) > [Printer-friendly PDF](#) > [Printer-friendly PDF](#)

---

## Popular Palestinian PM "not running for anything"

Douglas Hamilton

Reuters

April 7, 2009 - 12:00am

<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE5364JE20090407> <sup>[1]</sup>

April 9, 2009

**Article Author(s):** Douglas Hamilton

**Media Outlet:** Reuters

**Date:** April 7, 2009

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE5364JE20090407> <sup>[1]</sup>

West Bank villagers killed a fattened calf Tuesday to welcome Salam Fayyad, the affable, and supposedly outgoing, prime minister who may currently be the most popular leader among the Palestinians.

They added boiled mutton from two sheep to dozens of trays piled high with spiced rice and drenched with yoghurt, for the traditional welcoming dish of mansaf. There was also 30 kg of honey-dripping sweets from Nazareth as dessert.

The whole village of Bardale turned out to welcome Fayyad, who toured five hamlets in a northern triangle of the West Bank where Palestinian territory meets Israel and Jordan.

The former World Bank economist, 57, submitted his resignation to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in early March but it was rejected and he is saying on until a new government is formed.

When that will be, nobody knows. In the meantime Fayyad, in office for just under two years, is using his time doing what few Palestinian leaders make a point of -- meeting the people in the countryside, where his popularity is high.

"I'm not running for anything," Fayyad insisted in the middle of what looked like an election campaign turnout. But the Palestinian political factions are currently nowhere close to agreeing on new elections. Before closing the subject Fayyad joked that maybe he was too popular to be a candidate.

Opinion poll evidence is scanty. But compared with the distant Abbas, who works hard to keep the Palestinian cause alive in the conscience of sympathetic foreign governments,

Fayyad is gaining a modest reputation at home for making a difference to daily life by offering practical economic aid.

"There've been 13 Palestinian governments and we've never seen a single minister here until Fayyad. And he's been here twice in six months," said Bardale mayor Imad Abdallah.

## PRACTICAL STEPS

"He made sure we got compensation for frost damage to our crops last winter -- which we've never had before. It was 23 million shekels (\$6 million)," he said. Less enthusiastic reviewers label Fayyad an "American stooge," a Western-backed technocrat who has little popular standing on the Palestinian street. But the man himself is not letting that stop him meeting the people.

Tuesday, Fayyad visited a Bedouin village and delivered solar cells, water tanks and tents. In Bardale's packed town hall he refused a special seat and sat down to lunch on a plastic chair just like the rest.

"The people trust Fayyad and his government because they see practical results from him," said the mayor. "If Abbas does not run for re-election we see in Fayyad a real leader."

Bardale's freshly-metalled main street testified to the fact that "he carries out his promises" said Abdallah.

Aides to Abbas say the prime minister could be persuaded to remain in the post. But Fayyad waves off any idea that he is interested in the leadership. Nevertheless, it is talked about on the street and often favorably.

Palestinian groups -- mainly Abbas's dominant Fatah faction and its arch-rival, the Islamist Hamas group which seized control of the Gaza Strip in mid-2007 -- had been due to resume talks on a possible unity government on April 1 in Cairo. They adjourned an inconclusive round of talks on March 19. But the talks were postponed once again, until April 26, and prospects of the groups' reconciliation do not look strong.

Diplomats say Fayyad, whose small Third Way group is dwarfed in parliament by Hamas and Fatah, is frustrated by Fatah opposition to his control over the Palestinian Authority's purse strings. Fatah in turn, mistrusts Fayyad's rise to prominence.

Abbas was in Moscow Tuesday, ahead of a trip to Cairo on Wednesday. West Bank newspapers pictured him shaking hands with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.

But Fayyad, who was busy shaking hands with farmers, could find himself in charge of the caretaker government "for several weeks or even months" to come, said one Palestinian official.

---

TAGS: [Hamis/Fatah Reconciliation](#) <sup>[2]</sup>[Palestinian Elections](#) <sup>[3]</sup>[Elections](#) <sup>[4]</sup>[Palestinian Unity](#) <sup>[5]</sup>

**Source URL (retrieved on Apr 8 2020 - 10:09pm):**

[http://www.americantaskforce.org/daily\\_news\\_article/2009/04/07/1239076800\\_15](http://www.americantaskforce.org/daily_news_article/2009/04/07/1239076800_15)

**Links:**

- [1] <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE5364JE20090407>
- [2] [http://www.americantaskforce.org/palestinian\\_unity/hamas/fatah\\_reconciliation](http://www.americantaskforce.org/palestinian_unity/hamas/fatah_reconciliation)
- [3] [http://www.americantaskforce.org/palestinian\\_elections](http://www.americantaskforce.org/palestinian_elections)
- [4] <http://www.americantaskforce.org/elections>
- [5] [http://www.americantaskforce.org/palestinian\\_unity](http://www.americantaskforce.org/palestinian_unity)