PA spends more on terrorists' stipends than on welfare benefits, report finds

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The payments made by the Palestinian Authority to jailed terrorists and to terrorists' families are much higher than the welfare payments it provides to Palestinians in need, a new report by the Middle East Media Research Institute revealed Wednesday.

The Palestinian Authority spends millions of dollars annually on these stipends, which in 2016 [amounted](http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_article.php?id=42769) to 1.15 billion shekels ($319 million) -- 7% of the PA's total budget for salaries and about 20% of the foreign aid it received.

The Palestinian Authority's extensive support for prisoners and terrorists' families prompted the United States to [halt](http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_article.php?id=39871)the transfer of $221 million to Ramallah earlier this year. The Palestinians claimed that the so-called "martyr" payments -- monthly stipends paid to terrorists and terrorists' families -- were equal to the welfare benefits provided to needy families, arguing that in both cases, the family had lost its primary breadwinner.

But according to the MEMRI report, stipends to prisoners and terrorists' families, appearing in the PA 2017 budget book under a section titled "The Plan for Protection and Care for the Prisoners and Their Families and Support and Training for Released Prisoners," are defined as a "monthly salary" while the welfare payments are only made once every three months (quarterly). A review of the figures showed that the terrorist stipends are sometimes 20 times higher than the welfare benefits provided to needy families.

Most welfare benefits, paid out by the Palestinian Social Development Ministry, reach some NIS 600 ($170) per family, while the maximum monthly stipend paid to prisoners and terrorists' families exceeds NIS 12,000 ($3,300).

According to the report, "Monthly salaries and most of the benefits for both incarcerated and released prisoners are designated almost exclusively for the individuals themselves; the economic status of their families is not a factor, and the payment of the salaries is not conditional upon the family benefiting from them. ... Monthly salaries are also paid to unmarried prisoners who have no families to support and who cannot show that they have dependents [and] … are paid out regardless of the recipient's socio-economic situation."

The review of the Palestinian Authority's stipend policy further revealed that Palestinian prisoners and released prisoners receive a monthly allowance for themselves alone, not for their families, the sum of which increases in direct proportion to the length of their sentence.

Israeli Arab prisoners and former prisoners, who are not residents of the Palestinian Authority, receive a monthly salary from the PA that is approximately NIS 500 ($140) higher than the salaries of prisoners who are PA residents, the report said.