







Hamas militant stand guards as thousands of supporters gather as Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, not seen, delivers a speech during a rally in Gaza City, Dec. 15, 2006.

## Hamas is operating under the belief that eventually the West will be forced to reconcile itself to the reality of Hamas and its ability to foment regional instability that jeopardizes Western interests.

A good example of the Hamas *modus operandi* in this context is the case of Majid al-Barghouti, the Hamas activist who died in a PA prison. The official Hamas website publicized on February 26, 2008, the names of those responsible for torturing Barghouti and causing his death, and noted in a most emphatic fashion where they lived.<sup>5</sup> The Hamas publication was intended both to embarrass the Palestinian Authority, and at the same time serve as a deterrent against those in the PA who would torture Hamas members by threatening them and their families with retribution.

In another official announcement, the Izzadin al-Kassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, accused the General Intelligence apparatus and its chief, Tawfik Tirawi, of full responsibility for the “murder” of Barghouti, signifying that Tirawi’s penalty should be the same as that of any common murderer.<sup>6</sup> Mukhalis Barzak, a Hamas activist primarily involved in the ideological sphere, went even further in an article published on the Izzadin al-Kassam Brigades’ website. Barzak called Abu Mazen a “murderer” and justified exercising “divine justice” against him, relying on religious decrees that permit the killing of a Muslim who collaborates in a crime against another Muslim. Barzak also called for a volunteer to emerge from the Islamic public and carry out the “Justice of Allah” on Abu Mazen – i.e., assassinate him.<sup>7</sup>

The IDF action in the Gaza Strip of February 27–March 3, 2008 – Operation Hot Winter – was also exploited by Hamas to attack the Palestinian Authority. In an official announcement published on March 1, 2008, Hamas warned, in a clear allusion to the PA and the Fatah party, against what it referred to as “those who abandon  *Jihad* and resistance in their official orders and expect to resume their control over our people and its interests, as well as the agents who knifed the  *Jihad* fighters in the back.” As for the fate of those guilty of such crimes, the Hamas announcement was unequivocal: “the resistance will not take pity on them and the people will vomit them out from their midst and toss them into the garbage can of history.”<sup>8</sup> The Hamas leader himself, Khaled Mashaal, accused Abu Mazen of a gross betrayal by saying that he “provided a cover for the genocide [against the Palestinian people] in the Gaza Strip wittingly or unwittingly.”<sup>9</sup> Hamas’ Gaza leader, Ismail Haniyeh, also attacked Abu Mazen, saying on February 29, 2008, that the Palestinians are divided between a national group that defends the land and another group that sells out the land and expresses fealty to Israel and the United States.<sup>10</sup>

## Winning International Legitimacy

The Hamas movement is attempting to imbue its brutal control over the Gaza Strip with international legitimacy via a show of military force, coupled with a readiness, albeit dishonest, to display political pragmatism within boundaries that do not deviate from its fundamental principles. Building up a military force is vital from the Hamas perspective not only for war against Israel and subduing internal opposition, but also to make it clear to the West that Hamas rule is stable and that Hamas is the dominant power in the Palestinian territories. Hamas is operating under the belief that eventually the West will be forced to reconcile itself to the reality of Hamas and its ability to foment regional instability that jeopardizes Western interests, and the absence of a Palestinian alternative. Hamas members are encouraged by Western and Israeli voices who recommend engaging the government of Ismail Haniyeh. For Hamas, these calls constitute proof that “the path of resistance” is succeeding and that Hamas will obtain international recognition without renouncing the armed struggle against Israel. Furthermore, as Hamas sees it, such recognition will severely weaken Abu Mazen’s rule.<sup>11</sup>

Ahmed Yousuf, a top adviser to Ismail Haniyeh, is optimistic regarding the possibility of developing relations with Western countries. In an interview with the Hamas television station on February 24, 2008, Yousuf said that “the Europeans understand that



there is no other option but to engage the Hamas movement. In his opinion, "Europe is interested in freeing itself from the shackles imposed upon it by the United States because it does not want to tie itself to American policy." Yousuf added that there are contacts between European bodies and senior Hamas members, including Haniyeh, and that members of the European Parliament recently visited the Gaza Strip and were impressed by Hamas' ability to maintain law and order.<sup>12</sup> Mohammed Nazal, a member of the Political Bureau of Hamas, in an interview with *Quds Press* (February 22, 2008), congratulated the European Parliament for calling on Israel to lift its "siege" of the Gaza Strip and for calling for the opening of talks between the PA and the Hamas movement, terming this "an expression of the voice of reason and logic in the West."<sup>13</sup>

In order to project the right image in the West, Hamas is investing prodigious resources in the area of communications. It mounted a series of media campaigns emphasizing the human suffering caused by the siege on Gaza, the most prominent of which was the electricity blackout of the Gaza Strip in January 2008 following the publication of Israel's intention to cut back on the supply of electricity as a response to Hamas' rocket campaign. Hamas government ministries published data about the damages incurred due to the "siege," including the number of sick people who died presumably because they were unable to be transferred out of the Strip for treatment. It should be added that Hamas is deceiving the human rights organizations on this matter – organizations that, when it comes to Palestinian groups, frequently seem eager to be deceived – as there is nothing to prevent Hamas from sending patients for treatment abroad via Egypt, as the organization did when senior members of its military wing were wounded, or in the same manner that it dispatches thousands of fighters for military training abroad.

To wage the propaganda battle, "The Popular Committee for Struggle against the Siege" was established by parliament member Jamal al-Hudeiri in order to document and disseminate information about the repercussions of the economic siege and to organize demonstrations – with extensive media coverage – calling for a lifting of the siege and condemning Israel.<sup>14</sup> Al-Hudeiri is a parliament member supported openly and directly by the Hamas movement, and for many years he served as chairman of the Islamic University in Gaza, which is controlled by Hamas and serves to advance Hamas' ideology. Al-Hudeiri's name came up in the past as a possible candidate agreeable to Hamas to head a unity government with Fatah.<sup>15</sup>

## The Hamas movement is prepared for a temporary cease-fire with Israel, defined in Hamas terminology as a *tahdiya*, a period of quiet that is used in order to prepare for the next stage of the conflict with Israel.

Hamas' strategy vis-à-vis the human rights organizations is also achieving success. Amnesty International does not define Hamas as a "terror organization" and does not demand placing its leadership on trial for committing war crimes. On the contrary, the organization views Hamas as a legitimate governing body, despite Hamas' dedication to terrorism and genocide. A number of human rights organizations, including CARE UK, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Medecins du Monde UK, Oxfam, Save The Children International UK, and the Irish Trocaire, called upon the European Union and Israel, in a special report published on the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip in March 2008 to recognize Hamas rule as legitimate.<sup>16</sup> Additional human rights organizations convey a similar approach, including the Israeli B'tselem organization.

Hamas adeptly exploits such statements from human rights organizations for its propaganda purposes and in order to whitewash the fact that it remains a terror organization with no regard whatsoever for Western human rights, and which strives for the violent conquest of all of Israel. Surreally, Hamas, which is responsible for hundreds of terrorism murders of Israeli citizens, turned to human rights organizations for relief from Israeli retaliatory attack after the launching of rockets against Israeli civilians. In an announcement to the press on March 3, 2008, a Hamas spokesperson denounced the delayed response by human rights organizations to the Israeli military action. He emphasized that human rights groups have an obligation to condemn "Zionist war crimes" and warned that if they refrained they would be complicit in "these crimes."<sup>17</sup>

## The Gaza Strip: An Iranian Satellite and a Stronghold of Islamic Terror Organizations

Hamas is basing its strategy against Israel on a war of attrition and a continuous attempt to recruit the Arab masses to its cause, in order to alter the balance of power. The Gaza Strip under Hamas rule



A group called "Jaysh al-Ummah" - Army of the Nation, Jerusalem - is yet another global jihad offshoot in the Gaza Strip. Since the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, there has been an increase in the propaganda and terrorist activities carried out by radical Islamic groups associated with al-Qaeda and the global jihad. In this picture: some of the group's masked, armed, and uniformed operatives at a press conference in Khan Yunis.

has thus become a flourishing refuge for Islamist terror organizations who view Western Christianity as the primary enemy of Islam in the twenty-first century and the struggle against Israel as part of the larger battle for establishing an Islamic caliphate that will pursue the decisive battle against Christianity. Under the protection of the Hamas government, various terror organizations enjoy a free hand to pursue terror attacks against Israel and launch missiles at Israeli communities. The Hamas government has reiterated that the armed struggle against Israel is legitimate and that no measures will therefore be taken against those who participate in that fight.<sup>18</sup>

Last year, organizations identified with al-Qaeda, including the Army of Islam, the Army of the *Umma*, and Fatah al-Islam, have joined the bevy of mostly Iranian-backed terror organizations that are operating in the Gaza Strip (Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Resistance Committees, the Al-Aqsa Brigades, etc.). Ahmed Abed al-Rahman, Abu Mazen's close adviser and spokesman for the Fatah movement, accused the Hamas government on December 26, 2006, of giving a permit to the "Fatah al-Islam" organization to consolidate itself in the Gaza Strip.<sup>19</sup> Abu Mazen reiterated in an interview with the newspaper *al-Hayat* (February, 26 2008) that al-Qaeda continues to expand its organizational infrastructure in the Gaza Strip in collaboration with Hamas." He said, "I believe that al-Qaeda is present in the Palestinian territories of Gaza. It is the Hamas movement that brought al-Qaeda in and it abets the entry and exit [of militants] with familiar measures....I believe that they [Hamas and al-Qaeda] are allies."<sup>20</sup>

Hamas has denied these claims,<sup>21</sup> denials which have become routine in the wake of such reports. This was Hamas' behavior after the General Security

Service arrested a Hamas militant from Jebalia who was recruited to al-Qaeda in August 2000, and after the publication of announcements and videos documenting the activity of al-Qaeda offshoots in the Gaza Strip – the Army of Islam and the Islamic *Umma*. Hamas has attempted to minimize the significance of al-Qaeda's presence in the Gaza Strip even after senior members of the Army of Islam openly admitted to receiving directives and funds from senior members of al-Qaeda.<sup>22</sup>

**The Muslim Brotherhood movement expresses open support for jihad, in all its forms and expressions, as waged by Hamas and other terror organizations in all the theaters of combat against the "contemporary crusaders" in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan.**

Fatah al-Islam does not conceal its activity in the Gaza Strip. The organization published in November 2007 an official announcement in which it heralded the transfer of its activity from Lebanon to the area of Palestine, "near the Al-Aqsa Mosque" by its definition, after it had been defeated by the Lebanese army in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp. The organization turned to the other Palestinian organizations and summoned them to collaborate in a *jihad* against Israel in order to accomplish the "slaughter of the Jews" by the "cutting sword of *jihad*." Video clips published by the organization show the launch of two rockets toward Sderot on November 25, 2007, and one rocket launch on December 23rd.<sup>23</sup> The Army of Islam continues to publish announcements claiming responsibility for launching missiles at Israel on websites identified with al-Qaeda.<sup>24</sup>

The further the Hamas government consolidates its rule, the more Gaza acquires the character of a refuge for terror organizations and operatives the world over. A senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood conceded that the organization recently transferred some \$90 million to Hamas that was primarily earmarked to fund terror actions against Israel.<sup>25</sup>



## The *Tahdiya* and the War of Attrition

The Hamas movement is prepared for a temporary cease-fire with Israel, defined in Hamas terminology as a *tahdiya*, a period of quiet that is used in order to prepare for the next stage of the conflict with Israel. Mashaal's deputy in the Hamas leadership, Mousa abu-Marzouk (along with other senior members), presented in an interview on the Hamas website on March 8, 2008, the fundamentals of the *tahdiya* according to Hamas: the *tahdiya* must be general, mutual, and simultaneous, as Hamas will not agree to stop its "resistance" while Israel at the same time continues what Hamas defines as "terror activities" in the West Bank and Gaza. In short, Hamas will not grant a *tahdiya* gratis; rather, Israel will have to pay for it.<sup>26</sup>

Hamas, therefore, is not prepared for a Gaza-only cease-fire. The price that it is attempting to exact from Israel is exorbitant, and is intended to achieve a halt in Israeli security operations in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem. In other words, Hamas demands a stoppage of essentially all Israeli security activities in the Palestinian territories, including the cessation of terror arrests, a cessation in the construction of the separation fence, and other measures.

From the Hamas perspective, a violation of these essential conditions, including the destruction of illegally built Palestinian houses, constitutes a substantive violation of the temporary cease-fire and legitimizes Palestinian retaliation. In practice, Hamas is trying to change the balance of power. Hamas proceeds under the assumption that Israel has no military option in Gaza and that continuing terror can break the spirit of Israeli society and compel Israel in the final result to agree to a *tahdiya* on Hamas' terms.

As mentioned, the Hamas war of attrition and the *tahdiya* are necessary stages in the strategy to weaken Israel economically, politically, and in morale. The buildup process is predicated on continued weapons smuggling from Egypt and the dispatch of Hamas operatives for military training in Iran and Syria. In an interview with the *Sunday Times* (UK), a senior Hamas figure related that, since Israel's disengagement from Gaza in August 2005, hundreds of fighters have been sent to Iran for military training, including 210 fighters trained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, 150 more who were trained for up to six months, and 650 additional fighters who were sent to Syria. He further divulged that the military wing of Hamas, numbering 15,000 fighters, was building itself on the Hizbullah model and was receiving intelligence and guidance from Iran and Hizbullah.<sup>27</sup>

## Hamas and the Moderate Arab Regimes

The Hamas movement, aware of the limits of its military strength and of adversarial geopolitical conditions, is actively aspiring to change the equation of forces by dragging Arab countries into the fight against Israel and by creating a tangible threat to Western and American interests that will weaken Western support for Israel. The "Arab street" is the detonator at which Hamas is targeting its efforts. Time after time, in every round of conflict with Israel, and on other crises that Hamas foments (such as false accusations that Israel intends to destroy the Al Aqsa mosque), Hamas turns directly to the Muslim masses and summons them to rise up and rebel against the authorities, engage in mass demonstrations in support of the Palestinians, and compel the Arab regimes to alter their policy.

**Statements of willingness to pursue a political partnership with Fatah are conceived by Hamas as tools for completing the overthrow of the Palestinian Authority.**

During the IDF offensive in the Gaza Strip, on March 1, 2008, Khaled Mashaal called upon the masses in the Arab and Muslim world to "go out and stage protest demonstrations and pressure the rulers to act against Israel." Mashaal explained that the balance of forces would change in favor of the "Palestinian resistance" if the masses in the Arab world would galvanize against their rulers. Mashaal addressed the Israeli people with the following message: "you are living in a given historic moment when you are exploiting American support and Arab weakness. But this will not continue for a long time. The umbilical cord between yourselves and the United States won't last forever and the Arab weakness will not exist interminably as well."<sup>28</sup>

Mashaal's concept dovetails with the program of the Muslim Brotherhood, the progenitor of Hamas, whose leaders continuously summon Muslims in the Arab and Islamic world to follow the path of resistance and *jihad*, and disregard the position of their governments until it is possible to realize the vision of the Islamic caliphate that will unify all the Muslim countries under one rule. The Muslim Brotherhood movement expresses open support for *jihad*, in all its forms and expressions, as waged by Hamas and other terror organizations in all the theaters of combat against the "contemporary



crusaders” in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Together with the calls to Muslim communities throughout the world to aid the *jihad* in every way possible, the Brotherhood sets its own example by organizing rallies to raise money for Hamas.<sup>29</sup>

## The Major Lessons

The major lessons that can be derived from this assessment are as follows:

The question of who represents the Palestinian people has produced a frontal and fateful clash between the representatives of the Palestinian national movement, headed by Fatah, and the Islamist forces, headed by Hamas and deriving inspiration and support from the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran. Not only will Hamas not agree to forgo its rule over Gaza, it views Gaza as a base for exporting its Islamic revolution to the West Bank. Furthermore, statements of willingness to pursue a political partnership with Fatah are conceived by Hamas as tools for completing the overthrow of the Palestinian Authority.

Contending with the threats posed by the Hamas regime is not only a local matter contained within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hamas and its sponsors pose a severe threat to Western interests in the Middle East: they are systematically seeking to overthrow the Palestinian Authority of Abu Mazen in order to thwart any possibility of a diplomatic process, and wish to undermine the stability of moderate Arab regimes.

## The Hamas government has become one of the long tentacles of Iran, similar in kind, if not in degree, to Hizbullah.

The Hamas government has become one of the long tentacles of Iran, similar in kind, if not in degree, to Hizbullah. With active support from Iran, Syria, and Hizbullah, the Gaza Strip has become home to an amalgam of terror organizations. Hamas is in the midst of a military buildup that seeks to create a balance of terror with Israel primarily in the form of medium-range missiles of great destructive power. For the past four years, King Abdullah II of Jordan has constantly warned against the growing regional influence of Iran, its takeover of the Palestinian agenda, and its threats to regional stability and the peace process.

Hamas is playing a double game: It is attempting to portray itself as a responsible regime capable

of representing the Palestinian people and as the only group capable of delivering peace, while simultaneously persisting in terrorism. In order to contend with international pressure, it is attempting to create a false separation to credulous Western audiences – journalists, Europeans, and “human rights” organizations – between the political and military wings of Hamas.

Hamas is interested in forcing Israel to accept its terms for a general *tahdiya* because it would constitute a de facto recognition of its authority in the Gaza Strip and could constitute a severe blow to Abu Mazen. Such a measure could accelerate the empowerment of Hamas in the West Bank to the point that it could challenge the rule of the Palestinian Authority and attempt to overthrow it, similar to its successful coup in the Gaza Strip.

Israel’s vacillations, and the possibility of its abandonment of a military option, may work to afford Hamas time to consolidate its rule in Gaza and prepare for the next round of conflict, which, of course, would commence at a time and in a manner of Hamas’ choosing. It will then operate under better conditions and enjoy the capability of inflicting more severe damage on Israel.





## Notes

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# About the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

Websites: English: [www.jcpa.org](http://www.jcpa.org) | Hebrew: [www.jcpa.org.il](http://www.jcpa.org.il)

The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs is a leading independent research institute specializing in public diplomacy and foreign policy. Founded in 1976, the Center has produced hundreds of studies and initiatives by leading experts on a wide range of strategic topics. Dr. Dore Gold, Israel's former ambassador to the UN, has headed the Jerusalem Center since 2000.

## Jerusalem Center Programs:

**Iran and the New Threats to the West** – Preparation of a legal document jointly with leading Israeli and international scholars and public personalities on the initiation of legal proceedings against Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for incitement to commit genocide and participate in genocide. This program also features major policy studies by security and academic experts on Iran's use of terror proxies and allies in the regime's war against the West and its race for regional supremacy.

**Defensible Borders Initiative** – A major security and public diplomacy initiative that analyzes current terror threats and Israel's corresponding territorial requirements, particularly in the strategically vital West Bank, that Israel must maintain to fulfill its existential security and defense needs.

**Global Terrorism** – Using previously unpublished documents, Jerusalem Center President Dore Gold explored the influence of Saudi Wahhabism on 9/11 in the *New York Times* bestseller *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* (Regnery, 2003).

**Institute for Contemporary Affairs (ICA)** – A diplomacy program, founded in 2002 jointly with the Wechsler Family Foundation, that presents Israel's case on current issues through high level briefings by government and military leaders to the foreign diplomatic corps and foreign press, as well as production and dissemination of information materials. The program's Arabic language website provides information and articles on Israel and the region for Arabic speakers living in and out of the Middle East ([www.infoelarab.org](http://www.infoelarab.org)).

**International Law Forum** – A ground-breaking program directed by international law professor Abraham Bell that undertakes studies and advances policy initiatives to protect Israel's legal rights in its conflict with the Palestinians, the Arab world, and radical Islam.

**Anti-Semitism After the Holocaust** – Initiated and directed by Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld, this program includes conferences, seminars, and publications discussing restitution, the academic boycott, Holocaust denial, and anti-Semitism in the Arab world, European countries, and the post-Soviet states.

**Jerusalem in International Diplomacy** – Dr. Dore Gold analyzes the legal and historic rights of Israel in Jerusalem and exposes the dangers of compromise that will unleash a new *jihadi* momentum in his book *The Fight for Jerusalem: Radical Islam, the West, and the Future of the Holy City* (Regnery, 2007). Justus Reid Weiner looks at *Illegal Construction in Jerusalem: A Variation on an Alarming Global Phenomenon* (2003). Prominent journalist Nadav Shragai assesses the imminent security threats to Israel's capital resulting from its potential division, and offers alternative strategies for managing Jerusalem's demographic challenge in his monograph *The Dangers of Dividing Jerusalem* (2008).

**New Models for Economic Growth in Israel** – This comprehensive, 10-year project has studied the application and impact of privatization policy and other financial innovations in Israel. Sponsored by the Milken Institute, the project includes nine published volumes in Hebrew and English.

## Jerusalem Center Serial Publications:

**Jerusalem Viewpoints** – providing in-depth analysis on changing events in Israel and the Middle East since 1977.

**Jerusalem Issue Briefs** – insider briefings by top-level Israeli government officials, military experts, and academics, as part of the Center's Institute for Contemporary Affairs.

**Daily Alert** – a daily digest of hyperlinked news and commentary on Israel and the Middle East from the world and Hebrew press.

**G-Alert** – a weekly roundup in Hebrew of news and commentary from the world press on the Internet.

**Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism** – a monthly publication examining anti-Semitism after the Holocaust.

**Jewish Political Studies Review** – a scholarly journal founded in 1989.

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