ReViews

2nd Issue: Hamas Movement following the Elections

ReViews is a product of the Re'ut Institute which gathers quotes from different sources in the context of a political issue which is of long-term strategic significance.

In this issue we have gathered statements made by Hamas officials following its electoral victory. In the previous issue of ReViews we presented statements made by Hamas officials prior to the elections. This time we wish to re-examine their positions regarding central political issues in light of the movement's newly acquired governance responsibility.

The statements presented below relate to the three conditions stipulated by Israel, the European Union, the US and Egypt for continuing funding to the PA: (1) recognition of Israel; (2) recognition and implementation of existing agreements; (3) disarmament of Hamas. In addition, this paper includes statements made regarding the following issues: (4) relations with Israel; (5) Palestinian representation; (6) PA institutional dysfunction; (7) the international community; (8) the economy of the PA.

Recognition of Israel

Hamas, loyal to the ethos of Palestinian struggle, rejects any recognition of Israel and the Jewish right to self-determination. Hamas' vehement rejection of Israel is manifested in its covenant. However, due to international pressure, some of the statements made by Hamas are not so decisive. Meanwhile, Hamas tries to promote alternatives that would allow it to avoid explicit recognition of Israel. Two such alternatives are the acceptance of the Saudi peace initiative, and the argument that Hamas and the PA are not required to recognize Israel, since the PLO had already done so.

- Moussa Abu Marzouq: "There's no doubt that there is a realistic recognition on our part of Israel, that Israel exists in the territory – and there's no signing agreements with an imaginary body but with a body that exists. Israel exists and we all acknowledge these agreements... Our problem is that there is a demand to recognize the legitimacy of the occupation – and to that we won't agree... The PLO recognized Israel, but this is an internal PLO manner and it does not obligate the PA. This would mean to distinguish between the PLO and the PA. There's no need for the PA to recognize Israel." (YNET, 2/20/06)

- Khaled Mash'al: "(Hamas) cannot oppose the unified Arab stance expressed in the resolution passed by the Arab League summit. That resolution, approved in Beirut, speaks of recognizing Israel and normalizing relations with it in exchange for a full withdrawal and a solution to the refugee problem". (Rubinstein, Ha'aretz, 2/13/06)

- Moussa Abu Marzouq: "We cannot recognize Israel, as that violates our principles and our election platform of resistance, reform and change... You don't run on a platform and then reverse it when you win". (Bahaa, Al-Ahram Weekly, 2/9/06)
• Khaled Mash'al: "Hamas will accept the Saudi initiative and consult with the council of the Muslim Brotherhood" (A-shark Al-awsat, 2/8/06) (Arabic)
• Mahmoud Zahar: "Israel is an illegal entity, and no amount of pressure can force us to recognize its right to exist..." (Waked, YNET, 2/4/06)
• Ismail Haniyeh: "Hamas will not recognize Israel...") (Waked, YNET, 2/4/06)
• Dr. Adnan Asfour: "Hamas recognizes Israel's existence as a fact, but it opposes Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land." (Al-Bawaba, 1/31/06)
• Mahmoud Zahar: "Why we are going to recognize Israel? Why? Is Israel ready to recognize the right of return for Palestinian people? Is Israel ready to recognize an independent (Palestinian) state, including Jerusalem? Israel has nothing to give for the Palestinians. All the time they were wasting our time ..." (Regular, Ha'aretz, 2/28/06)
• Moussa Abu Marzouq: "Relations with the Jewish state are inevitable as the existence of Israel is a fact, but recognizing its legal legitimacy is another thing … Hamas may recognize Israel's legitimacy, under certain conditions, such as the establishment of a Palestinian state in 67' borders in the West Bank and Gaza with Jerusalem as its capital and the return of millions of refugees to their homes in Israel". (Regular, Ha'aretz, 1/26/06) (Hebrew)

**Recognition and Implementation of Existing Agreements**

The demand that Hamas recognize existing agreements derives from the principle of continuity stipulated by international law. Recognizing existing agreements entails recognizing economic, security and civilian arrangements set by the Interim Agreements; recognizing Israel; and reuniting the PA's security apparatus, including the dismantling of Hamas' independent terror infrastructure, as required by the Roadmap.

• Mahmoud Zahar: "We will abrogate the Oslo accords and all the agreements the PLO and the Palestinian Authority signed". (YNET, 2/14/06) (Hebrew)
• Moussa Abu Marzouq: "There is no authority that inherits another authority without abiding by the agreements already made". (Bahaa, Al-Ahram Weekly, 2/9/06)
• Khaled Mash'al: "Hamas would honor commitments made by the PA to Israel, provided that those commitments serve Palestinian interests". (Regular, Ha'aretz, 1/31/06)
• Moussa Abu Marzouq: "Hamas will deal with the results of the Oslo Accords exactly as the Arabs dealt with the borders drawn in the Middle East by British and French imperialism". (Regular, Ha'aretz, 1/31/06)
• Khaled Mash'al: "No one was carrying out the roadmap demands and the Palestinians need not do so". (Regular, Ha'aretz, 1/28/06)
• Moussa Abu Marzouq: "Hamas will recognize all the agreements the PA was obligated to prior to the elections, but any obligation that does not serve the Palestinian national interest will be legally changed or annulled". (Regular, Ha'aretz, 1/26/06) (Hebrew)

**Disarmament**

According to the Roadmap, the PA should have dismantled the terror infrastructure. However, the US had agreed to postpone this action until after the Palestinian elections. Following Hamas' victory, it seems unlikely that Abu Mazen could keep his promise. According to statements made by Hamas officials, any unification of militias will be done under the auspices of a Palestinian Army. Therefore, Israel faces a dilemma: should it waive its demand for the demilitarization of the PA in return to the unification of the independent militias?
• Mahmoud Zahar: "The [Iz al-Din al-] Qassam Brigades will continue to increase in numbers, supplies and weapons... until the liberation is completed... Anyone who thinks the calm means giving in is mistaken. The calm is in preparation for a new round of resistance and victory". (Regular, Ha'aretz, 2/14/06)

• Ismail Haniyeh: "The militias should be organized and a strong judicial system should be established... laws to control and command the national arms should be legislated". (Al-Hayat, 2/13/06) (Arabic)

• Khaled Mash'al: "We will form an army like every other country... This army will defend our people against aggression." (Regular, Ha'aretz, 1/28/06)

Relations with Israel – between Ideology and Responsible Governance

Hamas' goal is to take over the Palestinian national movement. However, until the elections, Hamas policy combined the use of terror to sabotage the political process, while avoiding responsibility for its failure and deflecting the blame onto the PA and Fatah. Therefore, Hamas' victory may have been a "strategic mishap", as it forces the movement to confront the tension between its ideology, on one hand, and its responsibility for the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, on the other hand. The contradicting statements made by Hamas officials reflect their confusion following their unpredicted victory regarding the issue of negotiations and provisional arrangements with Israel.

• Moussa Abu Marzouq: "Hamas will not be isolated and will not change its principles... Hamas' electoral victory caused confusion in the organization, but the confusion among other elements involved in the conflict is much greater". (Regular, Ha'aretz, 1/30/06) (Hebrew)

• Khaled Mash'al: "Our mission is to liberate Jerusalem and purify the al-Aqsa Mosque. Islam goes forward because its power comes from Allah and it will continue to advance in spite of its opposers... We say to our people: God and the Islamic nation are with us. Do not fear poverty and do not fear the threats. This victory is a message from the Palestinian nation that it is united behind the Jihad option." (Waked, YNET, 2/14/06)

• Mahmoud Zahar: We are entering (Parliament) to eliminate any traces of Oslo. ... Negotiations are not our goal. Negotiations are a means. If they realize the best interest of the Palestinian people, then we will find a thousand mediators...to negotiate." (AP, Jerusalem Post, 2/14/06)

• Moussa Abu Marzouq: we are dealing realistically with the current phase - an independent Palestinian state with full sovereignty over the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip... It is a temporary and phased solution. This is not the permanent solution." (In an interview for an Egyptian TV station, MEMRI, 2/13/06)

• Mahmoud Zahar: "Hamas would not change a single word of its covenant... Hamas will not turn into just a political party. Hamas plays in all fields. It plays in the field of resistance." (Krauss & Pham, National Review, 1/30/06)

• Khaled Mash'al: "We will not stand against the resistance, we will not condemn any operation and will never arrest any Mujahed [holy warrior]." (Halpern, Jerusalem Post, 2/9/06)

• Khaled Mash'al: "Hamas will not consider a long term Hudna of 10-15 years (Al-Ayam, 2/9/06) (Arabic)

• Khaled Mash'al: "Hamas will accept the Saudi initiative and consult with the council of the Muslim Brotherhood" (A-shark Al-awsat, 2/8/06) (Arabic)
• Yahia El-Abadsa, number 18 on Hamas electoral list: "There is no stand in principle against negotiating with Israel. But the basis of the negotiations in recent years was `unjust and harmful to our interests, and a `national disaster’… negotiations depended on Israel's will, and Israel proved it had no peace plan… if negotiations are held on the basis that the occupying government recognizes that this is occupied land and it is willing to leave it, then we will negotiate on the moves…”.(Hass, Ha'aretz, 2/5/06)

• Mahmoud Zahar: "Hamas-led PA would be willing to hold low-level technical talks with Israel. … (However), Israel is an illegal entity, and no amount of pressure can force us to recognize its right to exist.” (Waked, YNET, 2/4/06)

• Dr. Adnan Asfour: "Hamas would not legitimize the occupation… there is no religious command that negates negotiations with Israel". (Cohen, Ma'ariv 1/31/06) (Hebrew)

• Moussa Abu Marzouq: "Hamas will not oppose Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas if the latter decides to negotiate with Israel… Abu Mazen and Yasser Arafat negotiated with Israel and Hamas opposed it without coming into conflict with them… we do not want a war with Abu Mazen. The rejection of the idea of negotiations [with Israel] was Hamas' previous stand and in my opinion we can reach an agreed-on formula with Abu Mazen regarding all the sensitive issues we disagree on." (Regular, Ha'aretz, 1/30/06)

• Mahmoud A-Zahar: "(Hamas) would be willing to offer Israel a long-range cease-fire if Israel enables the establishment of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders… (We are) not willing to commit to recognizing Israel's right to exist." (AP, Jerusalem Post, 1/30)

• Khaled Mash'al: "The Roadmap is unacceptable for Hamas, as it imposes demands too weighty for the Palestinians… We will hold on to our weapons as long as the occupation exists, for only the use of force can render results." (Regular, Ha'aretz, 1/28/06) (Hebrew)

• Mahmoud A-Zahar: "There is no political process. We will not mislead our people. … currently there is no point in renewing negotiations… (the election results) are a blow to the Americans and to the Israeli enemy, which would be forced to run to the Palestinians and offer concessions." (Regular, Rubinstein and Koren, Ha'aretz, 1/26/06) (Hebrew)

Palestinian Representation – Between the PLO and the PA

Hamas' goal is to lead the entire Palestinian national movement through taking over the PLO, thus acquiring its status as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in its entirety". Achieving this goal would require to take Fatah's place as the dominant force in both the PLO and the PA.

Following the elections, Hamas controls the PA while Fatah still controls the PLO. Hamas is facing a dilemma: to continue its victorious strike and take over the PLO; or to leave the PLO under Fatah's control, for the time being, in order to avoid the burden of negotiations with Israel and to preserve its fundamental ideology.

• Moussa Abu Marzouq: "The PLO recognized Israel, but that is an internal issue of the PLO and does not oblige the Palestinian Authority. The world needs to differentiate between the PLO and the PA. The PA does not necessarily need to recognize Israel." (Halpern, Jerusalem Post, 2/21/06)

• Moussa Abu Marzouq: "The Oslo Accords were signed between the PLO and Israel. Secondly, the Palestinian Authority is not an interested party in political dealings or in the agreements with Israel. … Our next step will be to reform the PLO, and to reorganize it on the basis of the proper principles." (In an interview for an Egyptian TV station, MEMRI, 2/13/06)
• Hamas demands reforms in the PLO as a condition for joining the organization. (Regular, Ha'aretz, 2/7/06) (Hebrew)

• Yahia Al-Abadsa: "The Palestinian Authority, which holds the diplomatic portfolio, recognized Israel. We are part of the PA. Why are we being required to recognize Israel? I don’t tell you 'recognize Hamas." (Hass, Ha'aretz, 2/5/06)

• Khaled Mash'al: "As for the PLO, as I have said, for some time we have been striving to rebuild the organization. We will move faster, reach understandings with our brothers in the PLO. We are all convinced of the need to reform and revive the PLO, so it can become a Palestinian home for all, and a source of authority, in and out of [the Palestinian territories]." (In an interview for Al-Jazeera TV, MEMRI, 1/29/06)

**Institutional Dysfunction**

The PA's constitutional structure may lead to a political crisis following Hamas' victory. The role of Palestinian Prime Minister, created in 2003, is one of the main reasons for such a crisis. The role was originally created in order to bypass Yaser Arafat and limit his powers and authorities. However, now that Hamas is in power, the structure of premiership undermines the authority of Abu-Mazen as the president of the PA. The struggle over the division of powers and authorities is evident in the context of control over the security forces and last minute legislation passed under the previous Fatah-controlled PLC.

• Hamas spokesman: "(The last-minute legislation ceding legislative power to the president) is a white coup d'etat". (PMC, Al-Jazeera, 2/14/06)

• Hamas: "We refuse to accept the preliminary measures taken in order to drain the government of its authorities regarding security, policy and media. These measures create a government of no substance, a government which has nothing to do but carry the burden left by previous governments. (Regular, Ha'aretz, 2/5/06) (Hebrew)

• Ismail Haniyeh: "Hamas will oppose any attempt to transfer authority over the Palestinian security services from the government to Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas… We don't think Abbas will reverse his previous position, which was that the security services should be subject to the government and the interior minister. If he does reverse himself, we will remind him of his previous stance when he was prime minister... What is important to us is how the security services function, not who its members are. We want the security services to operate with a Palestinian outlook, not to intervene in people's affairs and in the citizenry's daily lives. We intend to reform these organizations, but nobody will lose his salary or his position." (Hass, Ha'aretz, 2/1/06)

• Moussa Abu Marzouq: "Hamas is currently discussing the formation and premiership of the government… Being that the Palestinian system of government is a presidential regime, Abu Mazen is in charge of the formation of the government but he power invested in him, and the Hamas is in charge of the appointment of Cabinet members and the performance of the government… Hamas will seek national unity." (Regular, Ha'aretz, 1/30/06) (Hebrew)
International Community's relations with the PA

It is in Hamas' interest to gain international and Arab support for its future government, in order to ensure the continuation of transfer of funds to the PA. Yet Hamas officials still wish to present their voters with a non-compromising attitude towards the west. It seems that Hamas sees Russia and China as the "weaker links" in the international community.

- Designated PLC speaker, Dr. Abdel Aziz Duaiik: "It's all from Allah … and just as pharaoh was strong, and God humiliated him and made him surrender, so too does God do the same to the Israeli government, to Bush, and Solana – who are the pharaoh of our days. Like his honor President Putin said, the elections in the PA and our victory, are really a slap in the face to the West, to Bush, to Israel, and to Solana. It's all in the hands and authority of Allah – the one who supports his believers." (Waked, YNET, 2/16/06)

- Khaled Mash'al: “this support is a message to the West; they will see the Muslims’ support from all over the world and stop the threats and manipulations … After 58 years, it is clear that Israel is panicking, asking the victim to recognize it and is willing to send negotiators all over the world so those who were raped and banished from their homes will recognize Israel.” (Waked, YNET, 2/14/06)

- Farhat Asaad, a new PLC member from Salfit: "We hope it isn't US policy. Because those who isolate us will be isolated in the region… Hamas will move on two parallel fronts: the first, to reform Palestinian political life, and the second, to break the isolation of our government… I thank the United States that they have given us this weapon of democracy. But there is no way to retreat now. It's not possible for the US and the world to turn its back on an elected democracy." (Erlanger, The New-York Times, 2/14/06)

- Ismail Haniyeh (in response to Putin's invitation): "Once an official invitation arrives, we will fly to Moscow". (Regular, Ha'aretz, 2/10/06) (Hebrew)

- Moussa Abu Marzouq: "I believe that this [ceasefire] would placate everybody if they understand Hamas's stand and talk to Hamas on these grounds. I believe that this is one of the options which we could propose in the future to co-operate with the international community to bring about peace and tranquility to this region." (Al-Jazeera, 2/1/06)

- Moussa Abu Marzouq: "America's long-standing tradition of supporting the oppressed's rights to self-determination should not waver. The United States, the European Union and the rest of the world should welcome the unfolding of the democratic process, and the commitment to aid should not falter." (Washington Post, 1/31/06)

- Moussa Abu Marzouq: "The victory brought about an internal contradiction between the US principles and its interests. But we are a movement that focuses on resisting the occupation and we have no interest in other regions. Hamas will not take any measures or stances that may undermine the American interests in the region." (Regular, Ha'aretz, 1/30/06) (Hebrew)

- Khaled Mash'al: "The world raised the slogan of democracy and now it should respect the results of democracy. If you want to punish the Palestinian people for practicing democracy then the American administration should punish Americans for choosing President Bush." (YNET, 1/28/06)

The Economy of the Palestinain Authority

Following Hamas' victory, it seemed that the international community was united in conditioning the transfer of funds to the PA upon Hamas' recognition of Israel, acceptance of existing agreements and dismantling of terror infrastructure. Alongside moderate statements
aimed at the international community, Hamas also utilizes the "Iranian option" in order to diminsh the pressure exerted on it.

Furthermore, Israel's refusal to transfer taxes and customs collected on behalf of the PA is but the first step towards a fundamental change in the economic arrangements between Israel and the PA, in which Erez and Karni crossings will become international border crossings and the Customs Envelope regime will be dismantled.

- Ismail Haniyeh (in response to GOI's decision to suspend tax revenue payments): "These sanctions... were meant to force the Palestinians down to their knees... we've handled challenges in the past and we will be able to stand up to future challenges as well... The Arab countries and Muslim nations as well as several members of the international community have said they want hold ties with the next Palestinian government." (Benn, Ha'aretz, 2/19/06)

- Abdel Aziz Duaiik: "I say that the occupier has, according to treaties, obligations to the occupied. I also say that the money the Israelis say they don't want to transfer is not Israeli money, it is Palestinian money that Israel collects from the Palestinians, and which it is obligated to give to the Authority. If Israel preserves this stance, then the law will have to decide between us over this issue. This plan is another Israeli attempt to harm the democratic process and its outcomes, a process that was free, transparent, and which took place before the whole world's eyes. This is an attempt to harm us, but we are lions, not ants. It's not easy to harm us." (Waked, YNET, 2/16/06)

- Hamas website: "Hizbullah funded us." (Waked, YNET, 2/15/06)

- Mahmoud Zahar: "Those who built their structure on the basis of the Quran... cannot budge because of promises from America or a dollar from Europe, ... I wish America would cut off its aid. We do not need this satanic money." (AP, Jerusalem Post, 2/14/06)

- Mahmoud Zahar: "Gradually, we want to separate our economy from the Israeli economy in agriculture, industry, health, and environmental issues. ... The Palestinian economy is closely linked to and very dependent on Israel's economy, and separating the two would be very difficult for the Palestinians. The currency Palestinians use is Israeli and much of the agricultural produce and manufactured goods made in the Palestinian Territories are sold to Israel. Exports to other countries is limited. Industry is limited, which is why many Palestinians once worked as laborers in Israel." (Halpern, Jerusalem Post, 2/9/06)

- Mahmoud Zahar: "The western nations can take their aid and get lost, ... The Palestinian economy could be sustained by trade and investment with other Arab nations." (Martin, Washington Times, 2/4/06)

- Ismail Haniyeh: "Cutting aid will complicate matters and may lead to regional instability. We will not let our people starve. We have alternatives. Through wise financial management we can provide all we need ... we have alternatives. There are elements in the Arab and Muslim world, businessmen and political parties who have contacted us and declared they were willing to assist us." (Hess, Ha'aretz, 2/1/06) (Hebrew)