

ReViews¹ - 8th Issue:

Hamas Reveals its True Colors

12.12.2006

As the debate over the formula for the establishment of a unity government in the Palestinian Authority escalates between Fatah and Hamas, it becomes evident that Hamas is reluctant to go the necessary extra mile and recognize Israel.

Hamas' vehement rejection of Israel, based on the Palestinian ethos of struggle, has never been an issue of dispute within Hamas. However, what seems to be contradicting political statements made recently by Hamas leaders (see below), raises questions as to the movement's political path and agenda.

This issue of ReViews cites a variety of quotes from Hamas leaders that demonstrate emerging trends within the movement in regards to its vision of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its position in the Resistance Network.²

Hamas chooses Iran

Since the rise of Hamas, Iran has been increasing its involvement in instigating the Resistance Network against Israel, and has been funding and assisting the Hamas-led PA government (see "[Terror is an Existential Threat](#)"). It seems that against the backdrop of Iran's increased involvement, as well as what is being viewed as America's hasty retreat from Iraq, even 'moderate' Hamas is giving up on the West and allying with Iran (see "[Battle of Control of the Resistance Network](#)").

Hamas' electoral victory (1/06) forced the movement to confront the tension between its ideology and its responsibility for the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. Its victory seemed to spark an internal debate within Hamas regarding the issue of negotiations and provisional arrangements with Israel, between the radical external wing led by Khaled Mashal and the internal more moderate stream identified with Ismail Haniyeh over the movement's direction (see: "[Cites: Hamas Movement following the Elections](#)" (2/06)).

The explicit alignment of 'moderate' Hamas with Iran reached a peak this past week with PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh's visit to Teheran:

- Speaking to thousands of students at the University of Tehran, Haniyeh stated that Iran provides the Palestinians with "strategic depth" in their fight against Israel. He added that Hamas would never recognize Israel or accept past Israeli-Palestinian agreements ([Ha'aretz](#), 12/10/06).
- Haniyeh told Khamenei that he would "continue in the path of Imam Khomeini; you have always supported the Palestinian people and I hope to meet you at al-Aqsa mosque in the near future." ([Ynet](#), 12/10/06).

¹ **ReViews** is a product of the Reut Institute which presents quotes and reports from a variety of sources, which indicate a political trend of long-term strategic significance for Israel.

² The Resistance Network is a phenomenon in which various political actors promote a radical agenda through strategic cross-boundary collaboration, the use of terror and violence and often by attempting to control the governing institutions in the territory from which they operate.

In the case of Israel, the Resistance Network constitutes a new security and political threat, since through the use of terror from Lebanon and the PA, it prevents Israel from political and military achievements

- Ismail Haniyeh announced that Iran had promised to give the PA's Hamas government \$250 million in 2007. Among other things, the money will be used to pay the salaries of employees of the labor, welfare, and culture ministries, stipends to Palestinian prisoners and their families for the next six months, building hospitals, and building a cultural center and "national" offices ([Ha'aretz](#), 12/12/06).
- Haniyeh hailed Ahmadinejad: "Your bright position confirms you truly belong to the world of Islam...All the Palestinian brothers of the Iranian President take honor in his stance" ([Moqavemat](#), 12/2/06).
- In an October 6 speech Haniya said, "We [derive our] legitimacy from the legitimacy of the Jihad. We are a government born from the womb of the resistance, from the womb of the martyrs... We are a government that comes out of resistance and Jihad, and out of the desire for resistance and jihad against the Zionist occupation." ([Memri](#), 10/6/06).
- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Mashal agreed on cooperation between Iran, Palestinian Authority and Hizbullah and Iranian financial support to Palestinians. ([Ha'aretz](#), 2/5/06).

Rejection of "pragmatic" options

Since Hamas' victory, there has been growing pressure on the movement to succumb to the "three demands" placed on it by the international community.

In the past, Hamas has debated between three "pragmatic" options to bring an end to the boycott. These included making a distinction between the Hamas movement and the PA government,³ accepting the Saudi Initiative⁴ and accepting the PLO as the official interlocutor with Israel⁵.

It seems that in recent weeks, the debate within Hamas has fallen to one side and the movement has chosen a path which includes the complete rejection of these options and strategically aligning itself with the Resistance Network.

Thus, coupled with Hamas' decision to position itself within the Iranian camp, is Hamas' de-facto rejection of the more "pragmatic" options for dealing with the international boycott.

PA Government and the Hamas Movement: from Distinction to Integration

In the past, Hamas attempted to differentiate between the 'moderate' Hamas-led PA and the radical Hamas Movement. In this context, the Hamas movement announced that PA ministers would cease their activities within the Hamas movement and government representatives requested that the new government be referred to as the PA Government and not the Hamas Government (See: [Is Hamas Preparing the Ground for Compromise?](#); and [Who is Required to Recognize Israel?](#)).

Recently, however, the intensifying involvement of the external wing of Hamas in the PA's internal affairs, are blurring the distinction between the two, as members of the movement abroad, that do not have an official position, are making comments on behalf of the PA.

- In a press conference held in Damascus, Mashal, declared that his organization insisted on conditioning the release of the kidnapped soldier ("prisoner of war") Gilad Shalit, on a comprehensive prisoner's exchange agreement with Israel. Hamas senior representative in Lebanon, Osama Hamdan, said that Mashal's statement represents "the Palestinian People in its entirety" ([Al-Jazeera](#), 11/7/06).
- Khaled Mashal issued an ultimatum that if progress was not made within a political framework towards the establishment of a Palestinian state along 1967 borders within six months, the

³ See: [Is Hamas Preparing the Ground for Compromise?](#)

⁴ See: [Is the Saudi Initiative Sufficient?](#)

⁵ See: [Revival of the PLO - A Venus Flytrap?](#)

consequence will be the collapse of the PA and the outbreak of a third Intifada ([New York Times](#), 11/26/06).

Rejection of the Saudi Initiative

In the past, Hamas has considered accepting the Saudi Initiative (see: [Arab Peace Initiative](#)) as a way to avoid the demand to explicitly recognize Israel (see: [Cites: Hamas and the Arab peace Initiative](#); and [Is the Saudi Initiative Sufficient?](#)).

However, recent Hamas statements show that Hamas has decided to reject the Saudi Peace Initiative arguing that it is simply a method to cause Hamas to accept the policy of the three demands:

- Hamas Political Bureau Head Musa Abu Marzouq said: "Hamas has serious reservations about the [Arab] initiative since it involves acceptance of two states, Palestine and Israel. Hamas rejects this because it means recognition of Israel" ([Al-Ayyam](#), 9/18/06, [Memri](#)).
- Khaled Mashal also rejected the Saudi Initiative referring to the same topic: "In the past, we were told that the [Arab] initiative is only a step [towards a goal]. Then, some of the Arab and Palestinian parties told us, officially, that accepting the Arab initiative is an important step in convincing the international community that [the Palestinians] accept the Quartet's terms. So they are not interested in the initiative itself but in its end result. That is, [they are interested in the initiative] as a step on the way to accepting the Quartet's terms ([Al-Hayat](#), 10/12/06, [Memri](#)).

De-legitimization of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians

In the aftermath of its victory in the PA, Hamas claimed that the PA is not required to recognize Israel, contending that this demand should be addressed to the PLO which is the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people".⁶

Recently, however, Hamas is refusing to allow the PLO, in its current make-up, to function as the official representative of the Palestinian people. Hamas contends that the PLO is illegitimate because it is dominated by Fatah and does not include Hamas representation.

- Palestinian Minister of Refugees' Affairs, Dr. Atef Adwan called the PLO Executive Committee "a group of old men, who represent nobody but themselves, and whose main goal is to correspond to American policies even if that comes at the expense of the Palestinian people" ([Ma'an](#), 12/03/06).
- Hamas official Ahmed Yousef condemned the PLO's Executive Committee recommendation to hold early presidential and legislative elections in the PA claiming that Abu Mazen and the PLO had no authority to call new elections and that "the PLO Executive Committee represent only themselves and their agenda." He also added, "we will respect the decisions of the PLO once it is repaired and reshaped to represent the whole of the Palestinian people" ([Ha'aretz](#), 12/10/06; and [Ma'an](#), 12/9/06).
- The deputy head of the Hamas bloc in the Palestinian Legislative Council, Yahya Moussa, said that "many of the PLO executive committee members do not represent anybody, even their factions, saying that this means that [their] decisions hold no value and will not solve the problems" ([Ma'an](#), 12/11/06).

Hamas' Political Agenda

Hamas has never changed its fundamental loyalty to the ethos of struggle as manifested in the [Hamas Covenant](#), and completely rejects the recognition of a Jewish right to self-determination.

However, although Hamas' ideology is very clear, its political tactics seem to fluctuate between two ends of a spectrum. On one end is the desire to continue an all-out, uncompromising, resistance

⁶ See for example Moussa Abu Marzouq statement: "The PLO recognized Israel, but that ... does not oblige the PA" ([Jerusalem Post](#), 2/21/06).

against Israel, which is today ultimately displayed by calls to dissolve the PA. On the other end is an approach based on the PLO's "Phased Plan" whereby the Palestinians would govern all parts of Palestine that become liberated, with the aim of continuing the armed struggle against Israel.

As stated, in both cases, Hamas' political agenda falls within the ethos of struggle principle, with the ultimate goal of creating one Palestinian/Arab/Islamic state in place of Israel.

"Phased Plan" Tactic

The Phased Plan aims for the destruction of the State of Israel through armed struggle in several phases. The Phased Plan "allows" for the establishment of a Palestinian state on part of Mandatory Palestine, from which the armed struggle against Israel can continue at an undefined future time, until all of Mandatory Palestine is under Palestinian control.

Signs of this tactic can be seen through the following citations:

- Khaled Mashal, has been quoted as calling for a 10-year cease-fire between Hamas and Israel. In an interview with the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*, Mashal stated that "all the Palestinian factions agree to a return of Israel's borders to pre-1967 designations. We accept the need for two countries to exist, but Israel has no legitimacy so long as the occupation continues" ([Ha'aretz](#), 12/11/06).
- Khaled Mashal, said that "if Israel and the U.S. want to end the bloodshed in the region, they must accede to the Palestinians' demands." Specifically, he said, Israel must withdraw to the pre-1967 armistice lines, release all Palestinian prisoners, accept a "right of return" for Palestinian refugees and dismantle all settlements ([Ha'aretz](#), 12/10/06).
- Mashal also stated that "[Hamas'] long-term goal is the liberation of Palestine. Israel and the US are deluding themselves if they think that we are not capable of doing this" ([Ha'aretz](#), 12/10/06). He cautioned that Hamas can direct an Intifada even if it sits in power, and added that that the *hudna* (calm), like violence, was a Palestinian tactic in the conflict with Israel ([Jerusalem Post](#), 12/9/06).

"One Man - One Vote" Tactic

The "one man – one vote" tactic asserts that Hamas should wage constant and continuous hostilities against Israel while striving to undermine any provisional solutions such as the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel (Phased Plan). This tactic is based on the rationale that due to demographic trends, over time, Israel will not be able to maintain its character as a Jewish and democratic state (see: One-State Threat).

The manifestation of this tactic can be seen by the threats made by Hamas leaders to dissolve the PA, the cornerstone of a future Palestinian state, and thus prevent Israel from maintaining a sustainable separation between itself and the Palestinians (see: [Dismantling the PA – an Emerging Trend](#)):

- Khaled Mashal, head of Hamas political bureau, declared that Hamas would not hesitate to dismantle the PA if it sees that it "cannot protect the Palestinian people." He added that Hamas won't hesitate to announce the dismantling of the PA and return to the starting point: people under occupation ([Ha'aretz](#), 3/19/06).
- Members of high and mid ranks in the Hamas movement called the leadership of the movement to resign from the government, return to the armed struggle and dismantle the PA ([Al-Hayat](#), 6/27/06).
- Representatives of [Hamas](#) and the Popular Front in the PLC have decided to convene to discuss the future of the PA and the possibility of dissolving it ([Al-Ayyam](#), 8/7/06 and [Al-Jazeera](#), 8/7/06).
- Speaking to the PLC, [Palestinian Prime Minister](#) Ismail Haniyeh called Palestinian factions to sincerely discuss the future of the PA and the possibility of its dissolution. Chairman of the "Third

Way" party and former finance minister, Sallam faid as well as other representatives in the PLC supported Haniyeh's position. (**Al-Hayat**, 8/10/06).

End.