

Islamic Resistance Movement

Hammas

Studies of
Thought & Experience

Editor

Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh

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Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)

Studies of Thought & Experience

حركة المقاومة الإسلامية حماس: دراسات في الفكر والتجربة

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List of Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party (<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i>)
CIDI	Information and Documentation of Israel
COGAT	Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (WB and GS) Unit
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
EGIS	Egyptian General Intelligence Services
EU	European Union
FIDA	Palestine Democratic Union
PFLP-GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command
GDDS	General Data Dissemination System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GS	Gaza Strip
IAF	Islamic Action Front
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IHH	Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (<i>İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı</i>)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INSS	Institute for National Security Studies
JMCC	Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LPDC	Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee
MB	Muslim Brothers
Mossad	Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations
MPs	Members of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCC	Palestinian Central Council
PCHR	Palestinian Center for Human Rights
PCP	Palestinian Communist Party
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PIJ	Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party (<i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan</i>)
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLF	Palestine Liberation Front
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestinian National Council
PPP	Palestinian People's Party
PPSF	Palestinian Popular Struggle Front
RPCP	Revolutionary Palestinian Communist Party
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
Shabak	Israel Security Agency—ISA
TIKA	Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UC	University of California
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNLU	Unified National Leadership of the Uprising— <i>Qawim</i>
US	United States of America
WB	West Bank
WHO	World Health Organization

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Isma'il Haniyyah

Deputy President of Hamas, he was born at Al-Shati' refugee camp in Gaza Strip in 1963. He holds a degree in Arabic Literature from the Islamic University in Gaza. He was the head of the Islamic bloc and president of the Student Council at the university. He worked in the same university, and after the release of Sheikh Ahmad Yasin in 1997, he became his chief of staff. After Hamas won the majority

of seats of the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2006, he served as prime minister of the Palestinian Authority and headed the tenth and eleventh governments. After the Palestinian internal crisis, he continued to serve as caretaker prime minister in Gaza Strip until the formation of the National Unity Government on 2/6/2014.

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He was born in the village of Silwad in Palestine in 1956, he moved with his family to Kuwait in 1967 where remained until the First Gulf War in 1990. He holds a degree in physics from Kuwait University in 1979. He led the Palestinian Islamic movement at the university under the name the "Islamic Right List," which contended in the election for the leadership of the Palestinian Student Union in Kuwait. He is one of the founders of Hamas and has been member of its politburo since its establishment. He headed the politburo of the movement since late 1995, and was reelected several times afterwards most recently in 2013.

Mohsen Mohammad Saleh

He has a doctorate degree in Modern and Contemporary History since 1993. An associate professor of Palestine studies, he has been the General Manager of al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations since 2004, the editor of the annual *Palestinian Strategic Report* (nine volumes), and the editor of annual *al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah* (Palestinian Documents) series (five volumes). Former head of Department of History and Civilization at the International Islamic University (IIUM), Malaysia, and former executive manager of Middle East Studies Centre in Amman. He is the author of 13 books, and the editor of more than 70 books; and the editor of the Strategic Assessment series. He has published many articles in refereed scholarly journals and magazines. He presented papers at innumerable academic local and international conferences and seminars.

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He has a doctorate degree in Industrial Engineering (1992) from the United States. Born at the Rafah refugee camp in Gaza, he descends from a family from the village of Yibna in Palestine.

He served as the head of Hamas's politburo since 1992 until the US authorities arrested him in 1995. Following his release in 1997, he became deputy head of

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Acknowledgement

to Prof. Ibrahim Abu Rabi'

Credit for the idea behind this book is owed to the late Prof. Ibrahim Abu Rabi', who was one of the foremost experts on contemporary Islamic movements, and a professor in US and Canadian universities. Prof. Abu Rabi', proposed writing a book on Hamas's thought and experience, one that would be academic and objective, presenting things as they are, i.e., the movement would be expressing itself by itself. Besides, contributing several other studies by specialized objective academics.

We made the first steps with Prof. Abu Rabi' in the planning of the book and contacting researchers, but he passed away in Amman on 2/7/2011, before writing the chapter he promised to write, and before co-editing any of the book's texts. His death was a huge loss, but we continued the work hoping to have finally achieved the goal we had set out to reach.

May Allah shower Prof. Ibrahim Abu Rabi' with mercy and accept him in the ranks of the good doers.

The Editor

Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh



Introduction

The Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas is one of the most prominent Palestinian resistance movements. The movement enjoyed and continues to enjoy broad popularity in the Palestinian arena. Hamas adopts Islam as a creed, way of life, and a code, and belongs to the Muslim Brothers movement, adopting moderate centrist Sunni Islam as it mentions in its literature.

This book attempts to adhere to two main principles: Committing to the methodologies of academic research and all this entails in terms of accuracy, objectivity, and documentation; and second, attempting to present Hamas as it is, whether through specialist researchers expert in Hamas's experience, or through leaders from Hamas itself. The latter's aim is to cover many important aspects and close several gaps to complete the picture, especially when published literature is insufficient to explain some of the points in question.

The book is divided into two parts: First, academic research on Hamas and its experience; and second, contributions by five senior Hamas leaders in answering several questions regarding various topics of interest related to the movement.

The second part comprises interviews conducted by the editor by email with Khalid Mish'al, Isma'il Haniyyah, Musa Abu Marzuq and Usamah Hamdan. These interviews are considered a contribution and participation in the book's preparation. Thus, the answers are presented in a smooth, flowing arrangement, after redacting questions or editing them into titles. A work paper on Hamas's Vision for Managing the Conflict by Sami Khatir is included in this section.

The book begins with a historical overview of the inception and development of Hamas, followed by a discussion of Hamas's political vision, perception of Zionism and Israel, its position on the peace process and the Palestinian factions, and its vision for political and social reforms. The book then discusses Hamas's Arab, Islamic, and international relations. The contributions by Hamas leaders shed additional and up-to-date light on a number of controversial issues surrounding Hamas and its experience. Noting that Usamah Hamdan's contribution was on the international relations of Hamas, since he was responsible for this file for several years, and since there is no academic study on this topic in the first section.

In the beginning, when the book was planned together with Prof. Ibrahim Abu Rabi', it was agreed that the English version would be published first, given the dire need in the English-language market for this kind of publication. However, the majority of studies we received were in Arabic, making it quicker to publish the Arabic edition first. We would also like to note that the chapters of this book were prepared over a timeline that extends for over two years (between mid-2011 and mid-2014). Perhaps this has no major effect, with regard to the intellectual aspects and the political vision, but we must be alert to this when speaking about Hamas's experience on the ground and its Palestinian, Arab, Islamic, and international relations, albeit we have attempted for the texts to be as up-to-date as possible.

On the other hand, the editor has edited the texts to emphasize a smooth flow and coherence throughout the book's sections. The general approach was intervention when necessary, especially with regard to unifying the referencing styles, sectioning, and language. Some chapters required important updates or additions, such as the chapters on the relation between Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Hamas's relations especially with Turkey. Naturally, the editor is responsible for the final form of the texts. As for the writings of and interviews with Hamas leaders, the texts were left intact with minor linguistic editing. Hence, the final Arabic version was approved by the authors.

Last but not least, we pray for Prof. Ibrahim Abu Rabi' and thank him posthumously for taking the initiative in proposing the book. We also thank the colleagues and researchers who helped prepare the book's chapters, and thank Hamas leaders who collaborated in providing contributions and answers to many queries. We also thank Al-Zaytouna's team especially Iqbal Omeish and Fatima Itani.

We pray that this book provides a qualitative and methodological addition to studies on Hamas and the Palestinian issue, welcoming any observation, remark, or constructive critique

The Editor

Mohsen Mohammad Saleh

Section One

Studies & Researches

Chapter One

*The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)
An Overview of Its Experience & History 1987–2005*

Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)*

An Overview of Its Experience & History 1987–2005

Introduction

This short study seeks to review Hamas's track record between 1987 and 2005, the period that preceded its victory in the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The study focuses on political developments and Hamas's resistance-related activities. The study also explains how the Islamic Resistance Movement positioned itself to be a major actor in the Palestinian arena and cannot be ignored in any political equation.

First: Background and Inception

The name of the Islamic Resistance Movement came to the limelight with the start of the first *Intifadah* in December 1987. From the outset, Hamas defined itself as "a wing of the Muslim Brothers (MB) movement in Palestine." Hamas is one of the forms of resistance that the Palestinian MB movement adopted as part of its long-standing history in Palestine.

Thus, Hamas did not emerge out from a vacuum. It represents a continuation of the work of the MB movement that began in the form of popular advocacy through a network of branches and offices beginning in 1945. Before the war of 1948, the MB movement had 25 branches in Palestine.

The MB movement in Palestine, since its inception, has been active in the areas of preaching, education, and Islamic advocacy, while raising awareness regarding the Zionist threat, the plans of outside powers for Palestine, and mobilizing resistance. The resolutions issued by their general assembly sessions (e.g., Jaffa,

* This study was published in: Turki al-Dakhil et al., *Harakat Hamas (The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas))*, Book Series 20 (Dubai: Al-Mesbar Studies & Research Center, 2008), pp. 53–87.

October 1946 and Jaffa, October 1947) were indicative of the groups strength, familiarity with political developments and the implications of developments for jihad/resistance.¹

The MB movement in Palestine took part in the resistance during the war of 1947/1948. However, as they came from a recently-established organization that was not yet sufficiently strong and stable meant that their participation was limited and reflected their modest capabilities. Nevertheless, the Palestinian MB movement established paramilitary units that operated in the areas of its presence in northern and central Palestine, under the command of local Arab leaders there—affiliated to *Jaysh al-Inqath* (Army of Salvation) or *al-Jihad al-Muqaddas* (the Holy Jihad Army). These units successfully raided Zionist settlements, despite their extremely poor training and equipment.² In the southern areas like Gaza and Beersheba, many of the Palestinian MB movement members joined the Free Egyptian MB forces led by Kamel al-Sharif.

One of the most active branches of the MB movement in resistance was the one based in Jaffa.³ A national committee was formed in Jaffa when the war broke out and a representative from the MB movement joined its leadership. He was Zafer Ragheb al-Dajani, the head of the MB movement chapter in the city, and he was tasked with managing the economic division of the committee, as he was also the chairman of the city's Chamber of Commerce.⁴ Yusuf 'Umairah, a member of the MB movement in Jaffa and later Fatah co-founder and leader, says that during the war the MB movement was in charge of defending areas like al-Bassah, Tal al-Rish, al-'Ajmi, and al-Nuzha in Jaffa, in addition to maintaining order within the city.⁵

¹ Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *Al-Tayyar al-Islami fi Filastin wa Atharuhu fi Harakat al-Jihad 1917–1948* (The Islamic Movement in Palestine and its Influence on the Jihad Movement 1917–1948), 2nd edition (Kuwait: Maktabat al-Falah, 1989), pp. 447–450; and Bayan al-Hout, *Al-Qiyadat wa al-Mu'assasat al-Siyasiyyah fi Filastin 1917–1948* (Political Leaders and Institutions in Palestine 1917–1948) (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1981), p. 503.

² Kamel al-Sharif, *Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn fi Harb Filastin* (The Muslim Brotherhood in the Palestine War) (Zarqaa, Jordan: Al-Manar Library, 1984), p. 464.

³ Interview by the author with Yusuf 'Umairah, Kuwait, 6/11/1985.

⁴ 'Aref al-'Aref, *Al-Nakbah: Nakbat Beit al-Maqdis wa al-Firdaws al-Mafqud 1947–1952* (The Catastrophe in Jerusalem and the Lost Paradise 1947–1952) (Sidon-Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-'Asriyyah, 1954), part 1, pp. 227–229 and 234.

⁵ Interview by the author with Yusuf 'Umairah, Kuwait, 6/11/1985.

In the Jerusalem region, the Palestinian MB participated in the fighting alongside their comrades from Arab countries and the *al-Jihad al-Muqaddas* forces. Interestingly, when the National Committee was formed in Jerusalem on 26/1/1948, to manage the city and protect it during the 1948 war, it consisted of 14 members, including five MB in Jerusalem: Sharif Sabbouh, As'ad al-Imam, Taher Barakat, Jamil Wehbeh, and 'Eid Abdine.⁶ This is a strong indication of the influence the MB movement and its members had, as well as the respect they commanded in Jerusalem, especially if we take into account the large number of movements, parties, and associations, and the confessional diversity in Jerusalem.

After the disastrous war of 1948, the MB movement became one of the most popular groups among the Palestinians, between 1949 and 1954, both in the West Bank (WB) and Gaza Strip (GS), thanks to their acclaimed role in the war of 1948, and their Islamic-national programs. The Brothers enjoyed relative freedom in Egypt until 1954, and favorable conditions in Jordan. Other movements were not able to rival the Islamists, until Gamal 'Abdul Nasser dealt a harsh blow to the MB movement, and began a crackdown on them, utilizing his powerful media apparatus to distort their image.

As a result, the MB and the Islamists in general were now on the defensive, biding their time until better circumstances emerged. One of the models of the power of the Islamists was the Palestinian Students League in Egypt, the elections to which Islamists or the candidates they backed won every year until 1957. This included Yasir 'Arafat, who was close to the MB movement.

In GS, the MB movement established a secret military organization,⁷ which carried out a number of operations in collaboration with Bedouins in the Negev. They benefited from the presence of the MB-affiliated officer in the Egyptian army 'Abdul Mun'im 'Abdul Ra'uf in GS following the success of the Egyptian revolution, as 'Abdul Ra'uf facilitated military training for them. The "Bus" attack of 17/3/1954 was one of the most famous incidents, with evidence existing that the

⁶ See Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, "Factual Lights on the Muslim Brotherhood in Jerusalem in 1946," in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, vol. 15, issue 58, p. 71 (in Arabic); and see the names of the members of the National Committee in Jerusalem in: Bayan al-Hout, *op. cit.*, p. 906.

⁷ The researcher (Mohsen Mohammad Saleh) conducted an English-language study on this organization, and was accepted for publication by the *Journal of Palestine Studies* under the title "The Military Activities of The Palestinian's Muslim Brothers In Gaza Strip 1949–1954."

Bedouins had carried it out in coordination with the MB, killing 11 Israelis near Beersheba, close to the Ma'ale Akrabim settlement.⁸

In that period, restrictions on, and persecution of, the Islamic movement, especially in Egypt and GS, raised questions among the enthusiastic young members of the Palestinian MB movement, about the possible modes of action for the liberation of Palestine. The general trend in their ranks was to seek to be prudent, and focus on educational and faith-related aspects, but another trend was to seek organized militant action, which does not take open Islamic forms, but adopts national frameworks that can appeal to a wider range of young people, protecting it from hostility and crackdowns on the part of the regimes. The experience of the Algerian revolution in that period was one of the important motivations for this mode of action. These were the first seeds of the Fatah movement (the Liberation of Palestine Movement, and later the Palestinian National Liberation movement) in 1957 in Kuwait, led by Yasir 'Arafat, which originated from the MB movement and, more specifically, the inhabitants of the GS.

Khalil al-Wazir (aka Abu Jihad), who was a member of the MB, and who became the number two man in Fatah for 30 years, had suggested the move to the MB leadership in GS, but to no avail. However, this did not stop a considerable number of prominent and respected members of the MB from joining Fatah upon its foundation, such as Sa'id al-Muzayyan, Ghalib al-Wazir, Salim al-Za'nun, Salah Khalaf, As'ad al-Saftawi, Muhammad Yusuf al-Najjar, Kamal 'Adwan, Rafiq al-Natshah, 'Abdul Fatah Hammoud, and Yusuf 'Umairah. They all assumed senior leadership positions in the movement. In addition, Yasir 'Arafat himself was close to the MB movement. However, Fatah, which focused its recruitment efforts on MB members until 1962, opened up to various movements and segments of the population, especially after the leadership of the MB in GS compelled members to choose between membership of Fatah or the MB movement.⁹ Fatah began to take on a nationalist-secular form that went on to shape its identity to this day.

⁸ See Public Record Office (The National Archives), Kew Gardens, London, Files: Foreign Office (F.O.) 371/111077, 111098–111100.

⁹ See 'Abdullah Abu 'Izzah, *Ma' al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Duwal al-'Arabiyyah* (With the Islamic Movement in Arab Countries) (Kuwait: Dar al-Qalam, 1986), pp. 71–96; also see letter from Suleiman Hamad, Kuwait, to the author, 17/7/1994. Note: Suleiman Hamad examined a draft of what the author wrote about the inception of Fatah and its relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, and added information and amendments in the letter in question.

The MB movement would be exaggerating if it claimed Fatah as an offshoot of their movement, but Fatah must also not deny its roots and early beginnings. If the MB movement is the incubator that inspired the idea and its early beginnings, Fatah was not created by its decision or according to its plan, in addition, Fatah's project did not carry the MB ideology nor its guidelines (that guaranteed it would serve the MB movements goals).

When Jordan annexed the WB after the 1948 war, the MB movement there united with the movement in Jordan. For their part, those in GS had their own administrative office, led by Sheikh 'Umar Sawwan until 1954. After that, they continued their work in secret in light of the Gamal 'Abdul Nasser regime's crackdown and persecution of the MB. However, the Brothers soon regrouped and formed the Palestinian Organization, to which the Palestinian MB in the Arab Gulf countries was affiliated, electing Hani Bsiso as their Comptroller General in the summer of 1962.¹⁰

After the disastrous war of 1967 and the Israeli capture of the rest of Palestine as well as the Sinai and the Golan Heights, the Islamic movement began to regain its vitality among Palestinians. There was a growing Islamic revival, after the masses saw the failure of nationalist, secularist, and leftist ideologies in resolving the Palestinian question.

The participation of the MB in Palestinian resistance, 1968–1970, through what was known as the “Sheikhs’ Camps” in Jordan in collaboration with Fatah, was one of the early indications of this revival. Fatah provided cover to these camps, and committed to providing supplies, arms, and ammunition, in addition to the expenses of the volunteers. The commando operations took place in coordination with Fatah, while the MB retained their full freedom in managing their training and recruitment, and their internal affairs.¹¹ Around 300 men were trained and posted to seven commando bases.

Despite their limited resources and participation, the MB gave exceptional examples in strong operations like the Green Belt Operation on 31/8/1969 and

¹⁰ Based on a number of interviews conducted by the researcher, noting that some said that this happened in 1963 rather than 1962.

¹¹ Interview by the author with 'Abdul 'Aziz 'Ali, Kuwait, 27/9/1985; and see 'Abdullah Abu 'Izzah, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–144.

Deir Yassin on 14/9/1969, where 13 of them were killed.¹² It should be noted that while the MB in Jordan and MB branches in the Arab countries endorsed the idea of the “Sheikhs’ Camps,” the leadership of the Palestinian chapter did not, believing that the time had not yet come for military action. Nevertheless, it backed it financially, and did not prevent its members from participating of their own personal initiative.¹³

In general, the MB, who began to regain their popularity (with the Islamic awakening) in the second half of the 1970s, had armed resistance in mind, but they decided to wait until they had completed their preparations and created a military formation that was impossible to uproot. Hamas thus emerged in a mature form as a natural result of long-term efforts, and a calculated shift for an organization that is deeply rooted in Palestinian society.

The MB (and then Hamas) benefited in its rapid ascent from the long-standing history of the Palestinian MB movement. Indeed, it is the oldest Palestinian activist movement that has retained its presence in the arena. The MB also benefited from the impressive global intellectual, religious, and educational legacy of the MB movement produced by the Hasan al-Banna School and its thinkers throughout the world since the 1930s, and from the support of MB branches around the world.

The MB did not focus exclusively on the project for armed resistance, but also formed an advocacy movement for reform, an educational edifice, and a social-charitable organization. Through their activities, they penetrated the population and recruited members, making any attempt to uproot the organization nearly impossible. In addition to this, the MB movement was proud of its resistance-jihad past, part of its identity since 1948.

Just like Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and other organizations which established civilian, educational, healthcare, social, and economic institutions, the MB too established similar institutions. They built mosques in Palestine, in which they used to spread their calling, with the number of such

¹² Mohammad al-Hasan, *Mawqif al-Islamiyyin min Qadiyyat Filastin* (The Islamists’ Stance on the Question of Palestine) (Qatar: Al-Fateh Library and al-Ghazali Library, 1995), p. 139.

¹³ Interview by the author with ‘Abdullah Abu ‘Izzah, Abu Dhabi, 29/6/1998; and interview by the author with Suleiman Hamad, Kuwait, 28/11/1999.

mosques rising from 200 in 1967 to 600 in 1987. The MB movement built many charitable and social institutions, led by the Islamic Complex and the Islamic Association in GS, and a number of Zakat (alms) committees and charities in the WB. Frameworks and institutions that support the Palestinian people were established inside Palestine and abroad, in addition to several Islamic-oriented student groupings in Kuwait, Britain, Germany, and North America. The Islamic Justice List was the strongest alliance in the elections for the General Union of Palestinian Students at the University of Kuwait in the academic years 1977/1978 and 1978/1979, led in its first year by Khalid Mish'al, who would later on become the head of Hamas's political bureau. For this reason, Hamas did not start out from the bottom of the long list of Palestinian resistance factions, but leapt directly to become the archrival of Fatah, the backbone of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in university and trade union elections.¹⁴

In 1978, the Palestinian MB movement merged with the MB in Jordan in one organization called the *Bilad al-Sham* organization, following which a subordinate body was formed, "Palestine Division." In 1983, an internal conference was held stressing that working for the Palestinian issue and liberation did not conflict with the establishment of the Islamic state. This resolved the debate that had lasted for many years regarding the dialectic of the Islamic state and resistance; that is, whether the MB should wait for the establishment of the Islamic state before beginning the project for liberation or not. The resolution was that the projects of the Islamic state and resistance against the Zionist enemy were two parallel, complementary lines that should proceed without conflicting with one another. The later emergence of Hamas is the practical application of this understanding.

The first precursors of the establishment of the military wing appeared in 1980 when the leadership sent some of its cadres abroad for military training. Sheikh Ahmad Yasin established the military wing in GS, led in the beginning by 'Abdul-Rahman Tamraz and then Salah Shehadeh. However, the military wing was exposed by a suspicious arms dealer, leading to a crackdown against it between 25/2–1/7/1984. The Israeli authorities arrested Sheikh Ahmad Yasin for belonging to an organization hostile to Israel and possession of arms, and sentenced him

¹⁴ See Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *Dirasat Manhajiyyah fi al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah* (Methodical Studies on the Palestinian Issue) (Cairo: Markaz al-'lam al-'Arabi, 2003), pp. 408–409.

to 13 years in prison. Yasin was released in a prisoner swap between Palestinian resistance forces and Israel on 20/5/1985.¹⁵

The military wing was rebuilt and re-launched in 1986 under the name “Palestinian Mujahidun,” beginning operations before the 1987 *Intifadah*, especially in gathering arms and training fighters. The MB’s security apparatus in GS (MAJD) was founded in 1981, as part of resistance activities, and was rebuilt and expanded in 1985.

In the summer of 1985, two years before the start of the *Intifadah*, the MB leadership decided to take advantage of any incident to launch its confrontation with the occupation. Two members of the MB were killed in clashes at Birzeit University in 1986. It seems that the leadership based abroad gave the cadres at home the authority to select the right time to operate.¹⁶

Second: The Stage of the Blessed Intifadah 1987–1993

The first *Intifadah* was known as “*al-Intifadah al-Mubarakah*” (The Blessed *Intifadah*) and the uprising of the “Children of the Stones.” Although this was not quite the first uprising, it was a landmark event in Palestinian history. For it is through this uprising that the focus of resistance shifted from outside Palestine to inside Palestine. The *Intifadah* was comprehensive as broad segments, factions, and age groups of the Palestinian people participated. It was also characterized by the emergence of the religious factor and the role of the Islamic movement in mobilizing the resistance.

The administrative bureau of the MB movement in the WB and GS had resolved to launch its role in fighting the occupation, in parallel with the launch of the Islamic Resistance Movement—Hamis at a meeting held in the home of the late Hasan al-Qiq in Dora in the Hebron district, on 23/10/1987. The meeting was

¹⁵ Rub’i al-Madhun, “The Islamic Movement in Palestine 1928–1987,” in *Shu’un Filastiniyyah* magazine, Markaz al-Abhath, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), issue 187, October 1988, p. 27. (in Arabic)

¹⁶ See Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *Dirasat Manhajiyah fi al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah*, pp. 408–409. See also Muhib al-Nawati, *Hamis min al-Dakhil* (Hamis from Within) (GS-Palestine: Dar al-Shorok, 2002), pp. 49–57 and 67–72; and see on the background of the emergence of Hamis: Azzam Tamimi, *Hamis: Unwritten Chapters* (London: Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd., 2007), pp. 10–51.

attended, in addition to al-Qiq, by ‘Abdul Fattah Dukhan, Hammad al-Hasanat, Ibrahim al-Yazouri, ‘Adnan Maswady, M.M., and F.S. Absent from the meeting was the late Sa‘id Bilal. The attendees decided to give each city the choice to take action in the manner it deemed appropriate.¹⁷

When four Palestinian workers were crushed to death on 8/12/1987, the MB leadership in GS met that night (in the presence of Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, Ibrahim al-Yazouri, ‘Abdul ‘Aziz al-Rantisi, ‘Abdul Fattah Dukhan, Muhammad Sham‘ah, Salah Shehadeh, and ‘Issa al-Nashshar), to discuss the developments, and decided to escalate the confrontations in various parts of GS. This indeed happened following the dawn prayer on 9/12/1987, with the protests emerging from the Jabalia refugee camp. Two members of the MB, Hatim Abu Sis and Ra‘ed Shehadeh, were the first killed and whose deaths signaled the beginning of the *Intifadah* in Palestine.¹⁸ On 14/12/1987, Hamas issued its first communiqué, giving an overview of its policies and attitudes.¹⁹

For the MB movement, what was new about Hamas was that:

1. It resolved the “intermittency” in the military efforts of the MB movement, turning them into a permanent continual effort.
2. It provided a resistance framework for the MB movement, characterized by administrative, political, and military institutions, with a public political leadership.
3. There was a quantum leap in the internal status of the Palestinian MB movement, where organizational, educational, and tactical work served jihad-related efforts and the resistance strategy.

Hamas believed that it was the one to carry the burden of launching this *Intifadah* in its early days, as its decision to get on the ground and step up all events took

¹⁷ Bilal Mohammad (ed.), *Ila al-Muwajahah... Dhikrayat Dr. ‘Adnan Maswady ‘an al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi al-Daffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Ta’sis Hamas* (Towards Confrontation: Memoirs of Dr. Adnan Maswady Regarding the Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank & the Founding of Hamas) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2013), p. 98.

¹⁸ See Ghassan Hamdan, *Al-Intifadah al-Mubarakah: Waqa’i‘ wa Ab‘ad* (The Blessed *Intifadah*: Facts and Dimensions) (Kuwait: Maktabat al-Falah, 1989), pp. 36–38.

¹⁹ See the text of the statement in: Hamas Media Office, *Watha’iq Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah* (The Documents of the Islamic Resistance Movement), the Movement’s statements collection (n.p.: Hamas’s Press Office, n.d.), pp. 17–18. See document no. 1 in the appendix of this book, p. 549.

place in parallel with the first moments of the *Intifadah*. Meanwhile, the PLO and its factions did not participate clearly until after two weeks, when they called to a general strike on 21/12/1987. The factions that form part of the PLO then created the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising—*Qawim* (UNLU), issuing its first statement on 8/1/1988.

After the meeting of the MB's administrative bureau in the WB and GS, on 10/1/1988 in Jerusalem, at the home of Hasan al-Qiq in the Industrial School at the Arab Orphan's Home, a decision was made to sustain the *Intifadah*, and expand action into all parts of the WB, using the same methods and tactics seen in GS. As for the decision to abbreviate the Islamic Resistance Movement as Hamas, this was agreed by the administrative bureau at the home of Hasan al-Qiq, who had made the proposal. He would put, in the groups first statements, the letters H, M, S [*Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah*], to which the letter A was added later, becoming Hamas (lit. Enthusiasm).²⁰

Hamas was not a known faction in the Palestinian arena. For many months, the media ignored its statements and activities. Furthermore, Hamas had not yet produced political or media figures that could speak in its name, helping the PLO and its factions to come to the limelight during the *Intifadah* instead. However, Hamas's ability to organize broad-based events on the ground, lead protests, and stage wide-ranging strikes gave it a lot of credibility, sparking curiosity about the movement and its leaders.

Hamas-organized events spread rapidly into the WB. Many leaders soon emerged from the ranks of Hamas, such as Sheikh Hamed al-Bitawi, Muhammad al-Hajj, Bassam Jarrar, Jamal Salim, Jamal Mansur, Hasan Yusuf, and Jamal al-Natshah. Younger leaders assumed the secret management of Hamas's activities, such as Muhammad Sawalha. Hamas in the WB was subjected to many campaigns of liquidation, arrest, and harassment.

Two different factions competed over leadership of the *Intifadah*, the Islamist camp (Hamas and the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine—PIJ), and the PLO, which had different strategies and goals, but pursued similar resistance activities and tactics, with the Palestinian masses responding positively to both. This division infuriated the PLO leadership, which found in the rise of the Islamic movement a major challenge.

²⁰ Bilal Mohammad, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

Indeed, the Islamists did not want to accede to the PLO, and had fundamental objections to its political program and the conduct of its leaders and institutions, as well as the domination of Fatah on the PLO. The Islamic movement believed that the PLO did not represent the size and range of political and popular forces on the ground.

Since that time, divisions over politics and resistance have marked Palestinian national action. To be sure, Hamas was unwilling to commit to the PLO program, decisions, and commitments, nor was the leadership of the PLO prepared to carry out structural reform to become more democratic, more able to accommodate the various Palestinian segments and factions, and more expressive of a comprehensive national vision that all parties would adhere to.

1. The Hamas Charter

Hamas published its Charter on 17/8/1988. According to ‘Adnan Maswady, it was ‘Abdul Fattah Dukhan (Abu Usama) who drafted the Charter, before it was endorsed by the general administrative bureau of the MB in the WB and GS, and after reading it twice at the home of Hasan al-Qiq.²¹ It was distributed before the movement’s *Shura* Councils at home and abroad officially endorsed it. However, everyone dealt with it practically as the movement’s Charter. It was distributed widely in the same year in Kuwait and Jordan, in addition to Palestine.

In the Charter, Hamas declared itself to be a wing of the MB movement in Palestine and one of its extensions, stating that “The Movement’s program is Islam. From it, it draws its ideas, ways of thinking and understanding of the universe, life and man. It resorts to it for judgement in all its conduct, and it is inspired by it for guidance of its steps.”²² Hamas’s objectives were described as: “fighting against the false, defeating it and vanquishing it so that justice could prevail, homelands be

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

²² The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement, 18/8/1988, Article 1, the Avalon Project, Lillian Goldman Law Library, Yale Law School, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp; and Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), August 1988, Article 1. The Charter was translated by Muhammad Maqdsi for the Islamic Association for Palestine, Dallas, Texas, in 1990, and was published in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS), Beirut, vol. XXII, no. 4, Summer 1993, pp. 122–134, <http://www.palestine-studies.org/sites/default/files/jps-articles/1734.pdf>
Hereafter, we will refer to this reference as: *Charter of Hamas*.

It should be noted that Yale Law School version was used in chapters 1 and 7 of this book, and *Journal of Palestine Studies* version was used in chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9.

retrieved and from its mosques would the voice of the mu'azen emerge declaring the establishment of the state of Islam, so that people and things would return each to their right places.”²³ Further the Charter states: “The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgement Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered: it, or any part of it, should not be given up.” Hamas believes that “there is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad,” and that the “liberation of Palestine is then an individual duty for every Muslim wherever he may be.”²⁴

In its Charter, Hamas expressed its keenness on educating Muslim generations, and gave Muslim women a role no less important than that of men in the battle for liberation.²⁵ Hamas “views other Islamic movements with respect and appreciation” and respects Palestinian nationalist movements including the PLO; however, Hamas at the same time rejected the idea of secularism, declaring that it cannot lead to liberation.²⁶ Hamas emphasized itself as a humanistic movement. “It takes care of human rights and is guided by Islamic tolerance when dealing with the followers of other religions. It does not antagonize anyone of them except if it is antagonized by it or stands in its way to hamper its moves and waste its efforts.”²⁷

Significantly, Hamas dealt with the Charter as being an historical document that expressed the vision of broad segments of the MB at that time, and not necessarily as a binding and governing constitution-like reference. There were internal criticisms concerning some terms and political phrases used in the Charter, especially those related to Jews. At the same time, Hamas leaders were keen on using a political discourse that kept away from the possibility of being accused of anti-Semitism, or of fighting Jews for being Jews.

It should be noted that the opponents of Hamas quote the Charter much more than Hamas members and leaders themselves do. So much so that it appeared within Hamas’s ranks as though the group’s members have forgotten it. However, Hamas’s increased global presence, and increasing accusations of anti-Semitism

²³ *Ibid.*, Article 9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Articles 11 and 13–14.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Article 16–17.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Articles 23 and 25–27.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 31.

and inflexibility against Hamas, by quoting items of the Charter, reinforced the sentiment within Hamas during *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, especially between 2003 and 2005, that it was time to reformulate it. However, Hamas’s victory in the general election on 25/1/2006, and subsequent blockade and pressure, put the project on hold, lest it be thought that Hamas had amended its Charter in response to external pressures.²⁸

2. Hamas and Military Action²⁹

Hamas’s *Intifadah*-focused activities evolved from strikes, demonstrations, and throwing stones, to a progressive development of military activities, such as knife attacks, gun attacks, kidnapping of soldiers, execution of collaborators, and then car bombs and what is called by Hamas “martyrdom operations.”³⁰

The military wing became an integral part of the structure of Hamas. Despite the crackdown against this wing in 1988, 1989, and 1990, due to its military activities, Hamas would rebuild it anew. Despite the ups and downs, the military wing remained present, active, and crucial.

On 21/3/1988, Group 101 in Hamas’s military arm, “the Palestinian Mujahidun” led by Sheikh Salah Shehadeh, attempted to kidnap an Israeli engineer and contractor in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood of GS. However, the operation faced hurdles, and the group ultimately shot and wounded the man in question instead. This was followed by the detonation of explosive devices in Beit Hanoun in May 1988; on ‘Eid al-Adha on 25/7/1988; and Hijra anniversary 14/8/1988. The group killed an Israeli settler on 18/8/1988 near Beit Lahia in northern GS. The group also succeeded in kidnapping and killing Israeli Sergeant Avi Sasportas

²⁸ See Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*, pp. 150–156.

²⁹ Regarding Hamas’s operations between 1989 and 1993, see Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *Al-Tariq ila al-Quds* (The Road to Jerusalem) (Cairo: Markaz al-I‘lam al-‘Arabi, 2003), pp. 189–205; Ghassan Duuar, *Maw‘ad ma‘ al-Shabak: Dirasah fi al-Nashat al-‘Askari li Harakat Hamas wa Kata’ib Ezzedeen al-Qassam Khilal ‘Am 1993* (A Date With the Shabak: A Study on the Military Activities of Hamas and the Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades in 1993) (London: Filisteen Almuslima, 1995); Ghassan Duuar, *‘Imad ‘Aql* (Imad Aql) (Amman: Filisteen Almuslima, 1995); Ghassan Duuar, *Harb al-Ayyam al-Sab‘ah: ‘Usud Hamas* (The Seven Day War: The Lions of Hamas) (Amman: Filisteen Almuslima, 1993); and Muhib al-Nawati, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–90.

³⁰ The overwhelming majority of Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims considered these operations as “martyrdom operations,” while most Israelis and western writers and media are considering them as “terrorist attacks.” We will use throughout the book the word “self-immolation” to be as neutral as possible. However, such terms may need more discussions.

on 3/2/1989, and kidnapping and killing Corporal Ilan Saadon on 3/5/1989. But Hamas's military wing soon came under attack in May 1989, following a fierce campaign led by the Israeli occupation authorities.

The beginnings of the formation of Hamas's current military wing, Ezzedeen al-Qassam (Izz al-Din al-Qassam) Brigades, can be traced back to May 1990, replacing "the Palestinian Mujahidun." The first one killed in the Brigades was Muhammad Abu Nqeira, on 14/12/1990, in a clash with Israeli soldiers in the town of Rafah.

Operations by Al-Qassam Brigades intensified after that. According to Ghassan Duuar, an expert on Hamas, a total of 138 attacks were carried out in 1993 against Israel, killing 79 and injuring 220 Israelis according to Israeli figures.³¹ On 24/11/1993, one of Hamas's leading military leaders, 'Imad 'Aql was killed.

Hamas was able to overcome difficulties thanks to the willingness of its men to sacrifice themselves. One expert stated that Hamas had proved to be the most difficult number in the Palestinian equation.³²

The Jerusalem Post, an Israeli newspaper, quoted Ifrah Zilberman of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace of the Hebrew University, an expert on Hamas, as saying that Hamas displays dynamism, which is an important part of the secret of its strength.³³ The strong performance of Hamas prompted the then Israeli Minister of Construction and Housing Brigadier General Binyamin Ben-Eliezer to declare, in late March 1993, that Israel had two options, either to succumb or to continue the fight until the end. He added that Israel had chosen the second option, and it must decide who rules the area: Hamas or the Israeli government.³⁴

The majority of Hamas's losses were in the ranks of its cadres and civilian members during the *Intifadah*. With the gradual shift in the *Intifadah* into military action, the number of those killed among Hamas militants began to rise. According to Al-Qassam Brigades, 44 were killed during 1988–1993, (see table below).³⁵

³¹ See Ghassan Duuar, *Maw'ad ma' al-Shabak*.

³² See Musa al-Kilani, The Most Difficult Number in the Equation, *Addustour* newspaper, Amman, 1/2/1995.

³³ Ghassan Duuar, *Maw'ad ma' al-Shabak*, pp. 168–169.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

³⁵ See "Al-Qassam: Facts and Figures," *Qassamiyyun* magazine, the Resistance Media Unit – Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades, special issue no. 5, December 2007, p. 10. (in Arabic)

Table (1): Members of Ezzedeem al-Qassam Brigades Killed in the WB and GS 1988–1993

Year	Killed in a military operation			Killed in a resistance missions	Other		Total
	Self-immolation	Armed combat	Raid on settlement		Assassinated by Israel	Assassinated by collaborators	
1988	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
1989	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
1990	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
1991	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
1992	-	4	-	2	2	-	8
1993	6	9	-	11	6	-	32
Total	6	14	-	16	8	-	44
	20			16	8		

Hamas suffered several harsh blows and broad campaigns of arrest, most notably in August 1988, after its resistance operations in Beit Hanoun and Jabalia. A large part of Hamas’s central leadership in GS was arrested.

In May 1989, Israeli forces arrested more than one thousand cadres and members of Hamas. Hundreds of them were interrogated brutally, exposing the organizational structure of the movement for the first time, and Sheikh Ahmad Yasin was arrested on 18/5/1989. On the third anniversary of Hamas, on 14/12/1990, Hamas killed three Israelis, sparking the most comprehensive crackdown yet on Hamas and its various wings.

One of the most significant consequences of this crackdown was the exposure of Hamas’s relations with the Diaspora and its role in the Palestinian interior. Hamas’s organization in the Diaspora sent a leader to the interior to finance and rebuild the organization. He was able to reform the leadership and organize the intricacies of their relations. The crackdown was also accompanied by the first mass deportation of Hamas members on 8/1/1991, who were: ‘Imad al-‘Alami (Abu Hammam), Mustafa al-Qanou‘ (Abu Sa’id), Mustafa Leddawi, and Fadl al-Zahhar.

On 13/12/1992, Hamas kidnapped the soldier Nissim Toledano, calling for the release of Sheikh Ahmad Yasin in return for his release. After the slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin refused to comply with Hamas’s demands, Hamas

executed the soldier, prompting Rabin to declare a full war on Hamas in the Knesset. Up to 1,300 members of Hamas were arrested, and the Israeli authorities embarked on the largest deportation operation since the war of 1967, forcibly expelling 415 Palestinians, of whom the overwhelming majority (380 people) were civilian Islamist leaders affiliated to Hamas. However, their rejection of their expulsion by Israel and their steadfastness in Marj al-Zuhur, on the border with Lebanon, won them international media attention, broadened international interest in Hamas, and increased its popularity. This forced the Israeli authorities to approve the gradual return of the deported, which was completed one year after deportation.³⁶

3. Hamas in the Diaspora³⁷

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait threw Hamas into temporary disarray. In addition to the tragedy of the 430 thousand Palestinians there, and the decline in the interest in the *Intifadah* with the international preoccupation with the Gulf War of 1990/1991, the engine room of Hamas's work based abroad was Kuwait, where many of Hamas leaders lived (e.g., Khalid Mish'al, Muhammad Nazzal, 'Izzat al-Rishq, Sami Khater and so on).

However, Hamas in the Diaspora was soon able to put its house back in order, shifting the bulk of its operations to Jordan, taking advantage of the broad popular sympathy with Hamas there and the MB movement's influence in Jordan. This helped effect a quantum leap in the movement's presence abroad. With the arrival of Musa Abu Marzuq and 'Imad al-'Alami to Jordan, Hamas was largely able to reunite its scattered leaders and members of its political bureau outside Palestine.

Hamas in the Diaspora started gradually putting forward a number of its cadres. For instance, Ibrahim Ghushah participated in the delegation of popular Arab and Islamic mediation that tried to convince Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait in 1990. Ghushah also represented Hamas in a visit to Libya, to establish the World Islamic Popular Leadership in the same year.

In late 1991, Hamas appointed Ghushah as its official spokesperson. Ghushah remained in this post until the end of 1999. Also in 1991, 'Imad al-'Alami was

³⁶ See the issues of *Filisteen Almuslima* magazine, London, which covered the deportees and their news in detail throughout 1993.

³⁷ Interview by the author with Ibrahim Ghushah, Amman, 16/8/1998; interview by the author with Musa Abu Marzuq, Amman, 12/8/1998; and see Azzam Tamimi, *Hamis: Unwritten Chapters*, pp. 66–78.

appointed as Hamas's representative in Tehran, Muhammad Nazzal in the same capacity in Jordan, Munir Sa'id in Sudan, and Musa Abu Marzuq as the head of Hamas's political bureau.

Contacts between Hamas and Western countries began when the former's leadership decided to initiate contact with European countries, and the United States of America (US) if possible, to ask these countries to take action at the United Nations (UN) Security Council to return the deportees from Marj al-Zuhur. Their argument was based on the fact that the deportation contravened the Fourth Geneva Convention. Ibrahim Ghushah, in his capacity as Hamas's official spokesperson, was asked to handle these contacts. In early 1993 in Amman, he met with the political advisor at the US embassy, as well as the British, German, and Norwegian ambassadors. At the end of March 1993, the US State Department issued a decision banning any contact with Hamas, blacklisting the movement.

4. The Relationship with the PLO and Other Palestinian Factions

Hamas was able to impose itself as a major actor in this *Intifadah*, becoming a force equal to Fatah in terms of activities, but it was not able to impose itself politically. The PLO leadership and Fatah exploited the *Intifadah* for political gain, declaring the Palestinian state and recognizing UN resolutions, including UN Security Council resolution 242, at the 19th Palestinian National Council (PNC) on 15/11/1988, and then entered negotiations with the Americans.

The US and Israel then took advantage of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fragmentation and weakness of Arab and Muslim countries, following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, and the subsequent war that weakened Iraq and perpetuated US hegemony over the region. They pushed for the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991, and then the Oslo Accords were signed on 13/9/1993.

The PLO leadership, specifically its dominant faction Fatah led by Yasir 'Arafat, sought to contain Hamas, so that Fatah could effectively become able to speak on behalf of all Palestinian factions, without showing any serious desire for structural reform of the PLO or for a policy review. Commenting on the experience of dialogue with the PLO, Ibrahim Ghushah said that its leadership resorts to dialogue only when in crisis or when it wants something.³⁸

³⁸ *Al-Aswaq* newspaper, Amman, 8–9/3/1995.

The PLO offered to Hamas some seats in the PNC in 1988, but Hamas refused. In April 1990, Hamas asked for 40% of the council seats, as well as fundamental amendments to the PLO's policy as a prerequisite to their joining. In the period 10–12/8/1990, a week after the invasion of Kuwait, the first meeting was held between Hamas and Fatah over three days in Yemen. Hamas's delegation was headed by Ibrahim Ghushah, while Fatah's delegation was led by Akram Haniyyah, 'Arafat's former advisor. On 21/9/1990, a "gentleman's agreement" was reached between Fatah and Hamas to coordinate efforts in the face of the enemy and promote national unity.³⁹

In August 1991, a meeting was held between Hamas and Fatah in Khartoum, Sudan, at the invitation of President 'Umar al-Bashir. Hamas's delegation was led by Ibrahim Ghushah, and Fatah's delegation was led by Yasir 'Arafat. 'Arafat wanted Hamas to agree to join the PNC, which was planning to agree to go to Madrid. He was keen on having Islamists represented in the council. In late 1992, another meeting took place in Tunisia. A delegation led by Musa Abu Marzuq met with Yasir 'Arafat to coordinate over the deportees at Marj al-Zuhur. On 2/1/1993, talks were held in Khartoum between a Fatah delegation led by Yasir 'Arafat and a Hamas delegation led by Musa Abu Marzuq. These meetings helped thaw aspects of the relations between the two sides, but they were unable to bridge the wide gap between them.⁴⁰

Hamis was able to strengthen its presence on the Palestinian political arena, by forming the first broad-based political front to resist the path of political settlement with Israel, prior to the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991. The front comprised Hamas, PFLP, DFLP, PIJ, Fatah al-Intifadah, the PFLP-General Command (GC), the Fatah Revolutionary Council, al-Sa'iqah, the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF), and the Revolutionary Palestinian Communist Party (RPCP).

The official announcement of forming the Ten Faction formula did not come about until 29/9/1992, which admitted the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) instead of the Fatah Revolutionary Council. After the Oslo Accords were signed, Hamas proposed a project for developing the formula into the "Alliance of Ten Factions."

³⁹ See Ibrahim Ghushah, *The Red Minaret: Memoirs of Ibrahim Ghushah (Ex-spokesman of Hamas)* (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2013), p. 147.

⁴⁰ See *Ibid.*, pp. 127, 160–161, 173 and 175.

Hamas waived its demand to apply a quota system in sharing representation based on the actual size of each faction, as this was a sensitive issue for other factions. The Alliance of Ten Factions was officially declared in early 1994 in Damascus. This put Hamas in a strong political position, leading a broad alliance of Islamists, nationalists, and leftists against the peace process led by Fatah.

Third: The “Oslo Stage” 1993–2000

The Palestinian Authority (PA) was established after the Oslo Accords, which were initialed on 19/8/1993 in Oslo, Norway, before being officially signed on 13/9/1993 in Washington D.C. The agreement established a self-government authority in GS and Jericho first, while other Palestinian areas in the WB and GS were to receive self-rule later. The most important issues, namely Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders, and sovereignty were not tackled, and deferred to the stage of final negotiations.

The PA considered the Oslo Accords a prelude to the Palestinian state. It sought to be the only authority in the areas it covered, and to that end it established a powerful security apparatus. According to the Oslo Accords and the agreements that followed, the PA pledged to impose security and crack down on campaigns of propaganda and incitement against Israel, and to take all necessary measures to prevent attacks against Israel or any of its citizens. The Israeli side has played this card skillfully, to blackmail and encourage the PA to crack down on the Palestinian resistance against occupation, especially Hamas and PIJ.

Palestinian opposition forces were unconcerned by the Oslo Accords, and continued their armed resistance against Israel. The PA considered this a challenge to its own authority, a breach of its commitments, and an attempt to ruin the dream of a future Palestinian state. But the opposition believed that the Oslo Accords did not allow the establishment of a full sovereign Palestinian state in the WB and GS, nor the return of the refugees. And despite the fact that the Palestinian side made enormous concessions, the Israelis didn't offer any fundamental commitment, thus putting it in a comfortable position that would prolong the occupation and squander Palestinian rights. For this reason, these factions believed that resistance must continue.

The opposition (Hamis and pro-resistance factions) insisted on the continuation of armed resistance, but deemed Palestinian blood a red line, and refrained from any confrontations with the PA that could lead to civil war. It adopted a constructive form of opposition aimed at exposing the flaws of the “peace agreements,” and preserving the right of the Palestinian people to their land and holy sites, in addition to protecting political freedoms, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press.

When repressed by the PA, Palestinian opposition forces focused on taking revenge against Israel. In other words, the resistance made the relationship triangular, so that if Israeli coerced the PA to put pressure on Hamas, then Hamas puts would escalate armed attacks against Israel.⁴¹

The PA sought to resolve its problem with the opposition, especially the Islamist factions that constituted the most serious challenge to the occupation, specifically Hamas. Indeed, Hamas had a presence that rivaled that of Fatah, especially in student movements, trade unions, chambers of commerce, and municipalities. Consequently, the PA pursued three tactics:

1. Dialogue.
2. Containment.
3. Repression, arbitrary arrests, and attempts to marginalize and discredit them.

The PA benefited from its security forces, and the support it received in this regard from the Israelis, Americans, and even the Arab regimes. The slogans it pursued in this campaign were “preventing the duality of authority.”

Actually, unfortunate friction took place, for every resistance operation against Israel, the PA would carry out a broad crackdown on Hamas, PIJ, and other opposition forces. From May 1994 to August 1995, the PA carried out 12 waves of arrest that affected more than one thousand Palestinians.⁴²

In one month, (19/4–19/5/1995), the PA raided 57 mosques 138 times, searching them, tampering with their contents, and even vandalizing them.⁴³ On February

⁴¹ For more details see Hafiz ‘Alawi and Hani Sulaiman, “The Movements’ Relations in the Palestinian Arena,” in Jawad al-Hamad and Iyyad al-Barghouthi (eds.), *Dirasah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah: Hamas: 1987–1996* (A Study on the Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement: Hamas: 1987–1996) (Amman: Middle East Studies Center (MESC), 1997), pp. 225–285.

⁴² *Alrai* newspaper, Amman, 25/8/1995.

⁴³ Dawud Sulaiman, *Al-Sultah al-Wataniyyah al-Filastiniyyah fi ‘Am 1994–1995* (The Palestinian National Authority in 1994–1995) (Amman: MESC, 1995), p. 135.

7/2/1995, President ‘Arafat issued a decree establishing the State Security Court, which was a military tribunal whose judges were military commanders. The court began its work on 9/4/1995. By 27/5/1995, the court tried 33 people, mostly from Hamas or PIJ. The trials would be held after midnight, in secret, away from the press and the media, some of them lasting no longer than a few minutes. Amnesty International condemned these tribunals, and called on the PA to put an end to them immediately.⁴⁴ One of the victims of these courts was Sayyid Abu Musameh, a Hamas leader who was tried on the night of 14/5/1995, and sentenced to three years in prison for “slandering” and “inciting against” the PA.⁴⁵

One of the most tragic events in this regard was what became known as the “Black Friday Massacre.” On 18/11/1994, the Palestinian Security Forces killed 13 worshippers and wounded more than 200 who were planning to hold a peaceful march after Friday prayers, from the Filastin Mosque in GS, to the home of Hisham Hamad.⁴⁶

Tensions with the PA intensified when it arrested a number of Hamas leaders in the GS in late June 1995, including Mahmud al-Zahhar and Ahmad Bahar. They were tortured and humiliated, and their beards, a symbol of their religious devotion, were forcibly shaved off, causing widespread anger in the Palestinian arena.⁴⁷

However, the most intense crackdowns took place in March and April 1996 following a series of self-immolation operations that rocked Israel. These arrests affected more than one thousand Hamas and PIJ activists, who were also tortured. The infrastructure of the Islamic movement was targeted, and schools, charities, Zakat (alms) committees, and orphanages affiliated to Hamas and the PIJ were

⁴⁴ See *Ibid.*, pp. 75–83; and Amnesty International, *Muhakamat Muntasaf al-Lail: Al-Muhakamat al-Sirriyah wa al-Fawriyyah wa al-Ja'izah fi Gazzah* (Trial at Midnight: Secret, Summary, Unfair Trials in Gaza) (UK: Amnesty, June 1995), MDE 15/15/95.

⁴⁵ Amnesty International, *Muhakamat Muntasaf al-Lail*, p. 20; and *Al-Hayat* newspaper, London, 16/5/1995.

⁴⁶ See *Filisteen Almuslima* magazine, Issues December 1994 and January 1995.

⁴⁷ See *Asharq Alawsat* newspaper, London, 27/6/1995; *Alrai*, Amman, 2/7/1995; and *Filisteen Almuslima*, August 1995.

closed down.⁴⁸ The Israeli Army Chief of Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak and head of Israel Security Agency—ISA (*Shabak*) Ami Ayalon praised the “methodical” work of Yasir ‘Arafat in the crackdown on Hamas.⁴⁹

The PA launched a propaganda war against Hamas, accusing the movement of colluding with the hardline Israeli Likud Party to overthrow the government of the Labor Party and disrupt the peace process, as well as receiving financial backing and orders from Iran. It also claimed that Hamas was preparing for a war against the PA all the way to planning the assassination of Yasir ‘Arafat.

The PA tried to create a rift within Hamas, and claimed that there were moderates and hardliners, and a wing at home and a wing abroad, which were conflicting. The PA tried to attract some members of Hamas like ‘Imad Faluji, who was expelled by Hamas, and was admitted to the PA before he ran in the self-government authority elections on Fatah’s list in January 1996 and became a minister in the PA. The PA backed the formation of other Islamist parties, whose members were Hamas defectors, such as al-Watan Party led by Khodr Mahjaz, and the Islamic National Path Party led by Mahmud Abu Dan.⁵⁰

For its part, Hamas insisted on adhering to its general policy and refused to abandon armed resistance. It also refused to enter into a confrontation with the PA, but it continued to candidly and strongly express its attitudes vis-à-vis the PA, its conduct, and its practices. Hani al-Hasan, a member of Fatah’s Central Committee, even praised the position of Hamas, saying it had exercised commendable restrained, which will go down in history.⁵¹

There were several round of official and unofficial talks between Hamas and Fatah after the PA entered GS in May 1994. After the Black Friday Massacre at the Filastin Mosque in November 1994, a joint committee was created for investigation and reconciliation, though it did not achieve any concrete results.⁵²

⁴⁸ Most newspapers and magazines covered these campaigns, see for example: *Al-Mugtama*’ magazine, Kuwait, 29/6/1996.

⁴⁹ *Alrai*, Amman, 18/4/1996.

⁵⁰ See *Addustour* newspaper, Amman, 31/8/1995; *Al-Aswaq*, 20/9/1995; and *Alrai*, Amman, 11 and 23/4/1996.

⁵¹ *Al-Hayat*, 21/8/1995.

⁵² See *Al-Wasat* magazine, London, 25/12/1995.

In August 1995, from his prison cell, Sheikh Ahmad Yasin called on the Palestinian people to find a formula for accord and to preserve their unity, integrity, and future.⁵³ On 4/9/1995, Hamas called for a comprehensive and serious national dialogue, which would be binding on all influential parties, the PA and the opposition, to regulate Palestinian national action,⁵⁴ a call the PA welcomed the following day.⁵⁵

The efforts during that period culminated with dialogue in Cairo between the PA and Hamas on 18–21/12/1995, with Salim al-Za‘nun representing the former and Khalid Mish‘al the latter. The PA had sought this meeting, fearing the possibility that Hamas would thwart the elections of a self-government authority in the WB and GS. It tried to convince Hamas to participate in the elections, to stop its attacks on Israel, and to exercise its role in the opposition under the umbrella of the Oslo Accords, in a way that would not undermine the PA’s commitments to the peace process. During the talks, Hamas insisted that it would boycott the elections, but pledged not to obstruct them by force or compel anyone else to boycott. It also reaffirmed that its resistance operations against Israel would continue.⁵⁶

At any rate, since 1996, the PA no longer felt the need for dialogue with Hamas and opposition forces, especially as it was able to consolidate its control over its areas, thwarting dozens of resistance operations that Hamas and opposition forces tried to carry out. The repressive security approach was the main tactic of the PA in dealing with Hamas from 1996 and until *al-Aqsa Intifadah*. It dealt with Hamas as a “rebellious” movement but one that was “under control.”

The Palestinian Security Forces continued with their crack down and human rights violations. In January 1997, human rights groups announced that 1,600 Palestinians were languishing in PA prisons, including 700 who had not been charged or put on trial.⁵⁷ The PA repeatedly arrested a number of senior Hamas

⁵³ *Alrai*, Amman, 27/8/1995.

⁵⁴ *Al-Hayat*, 5/9/1995.

⁵⁵ *Addustour*, 6/9/1995.

⁵⁶ See *Addustour*, 23/12/1995; and *Alrai*, Amman, 24/12/1995.

⁵⁷ Palestine Facts, Palestine Chronology, February 1997, site of Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA), http://www.passia.org/palestine_facts/chronology/1997.htm

leader such as ‘Abdul ‘Aziz al-Rantisi, Mahmud al-Zahhar, Hasan Yusuf, Jamal Salim, and the commander of the Ezzedeem al-Qassam Brigades Muhammad al-Deif. Even Sheikh Ahmad Yasin was placed under house arrest.

After 1994, military action became more difficult, after the PA took control of the WB and GS. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of resistance operations increased. Hamas carried out five resistance operations in retaliation for the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre. While performing their dawn prayer, Israeli officer Baruch Goldstein killed 29 Muslims and injured more than 300 in Hebron. According to Israeli sources, the five Hamas attacks killed 39 Israelis and wounded 158. Yahya ‘Ayyash rose to prominence during that period, as he was deemed the mastermind behind these attacks.⁵⁸

On 5/1/1996, Yahya ‘Ayyash was assassinated. Hamas responded strongly to his murder in the period 25/2–3/3/1996, and according to Israeli sources, 45 Israelis were killed and 113 injured. These operations resulted in a fierce coordinated campaign to uproot Hamas, carried out by the PA and the Israeli authorities, even prompting an international conference for “anti-terrorism” attended by the leaders of major powers and a number of Arab and world leaders.

But Hamas was able to absorb the shock, and resumed resistance operations, which reappeared clearly in 1997. New names in military leadership rose to prominence such as Muhyieddeen al-Sharif, ‘Adel ‘AwadAllah, and ‘Imad ‘AwadAllah, who were assassinated in 1998.

Hamis and resistance factions suffered from the effective security coordination between the PA and Israel. In 1997–1998, Hamas was only able to carry out two self-immolation attacks, in addition to other types of operations that did not impact the peace process. The following table shows the number of members of Ezzedeem al-Qassam Brigades killed in the WB and GS, 1/1/1994–31/12/1999:⁵⁹

⁵⁸ See about Yahya ‘Ayyash: Ghassan Duuar, *Al-Muhandis: Al-Shahid Yahya ‘Ayyash Ramz al-Jihad wa Qa'id al-Muqawamah fi Filastin* (The Engineer: Martyr Yahya ‘Ayyash Symbol of Jihad and Resistance Leader in Palestine) (London: Filisteen Almuslima, 1997).

⁵⁹ See “Al-Qassam: Facts and Figures,” *Qassamiyyun*, p. 10.

Table (2): Members of Ezzedeem al-Qassam Brigades Killed in the WB and GS 1/1/1994–31/12/1999

Year	Killed in a military operation			Killed in a resistance missions	Other		Total
	Self-immolation	Armed combat	Raid on settlement		Assassinated by Israel	Assassinated by collaborators	
1994	5	11	-	2	10	-	28
1995	4	4	-	1	11	-	20
1996	4	-	-	-	4	-	8
1997	6	-	-	1	-	-	7
1998	1	-	-	-	3	-	4
1999	3	-	-	1	-	-	4
Total	23	15	-	5	28	-	71
	38			5	28		

Perhaps the opinion polls carried out by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre (JMCC), had suggested to the PA that they could be comfortable in continuing its approach during that period. Hamas’s popularity slumped to its lowest level in August 1996, reaching only 6.5%,⁶⁰ compared to 18.2% in June 1995. The rating ranged between 10–13% over the following four years, with the exception of November 1997, when Hamas had a rating of 17.3%.⁶¹ In other words, it no longer posed a serious challenge to the PA, and hence, its ability to influence policy and decision making was weakened.

Hamis in the Diaspora⁶²

Relations between Hamas and the Jordanian government, headed by Zaid bin Shaker, were normalized in late 1992 and early 1993. The government allowed Hamas, according to an unwritten “gentlemen’s agreement,” to engage in political and media activity in Jordan, on the condition of non-interference in the affairs of

⁶⁰ JMCC Public Opinion Poll No. 16 On Palestinian Attitudes Towards Current Issues, August 1996, site of Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre (JMCC), <http://www.jmcc.org/documentsandmaps.aspx?id=495>

⁶¹ JMCC Public Opinion polls, <http://www.jmcc.org/polls.aspx>

⁶² Regarding this subject, see interview by the author with Ibrahim Ghushah, 16/8/1998; interview by the author with Musa Abu Marzuq, 12/8/1998; and interview by the author with Khalid Mish'al, Amman, 19/8/1998. See also Azzam Tamimi, *Hamis: Unwritten Chapters*, pp. 79–134.

Jordan. This followed a meeting between Hamas's leadership represented by Musa Abu Marzuq, Ibrahim Ghushah and Muhammad Nazzal, and Zaid bin Shaker and his deputy Thuqan Hindawi.

Hamas's leadership continued to operate normally in Jordan after the Oslo Accords. However, the way the Jordanian government dealt with Hamas began to gradually take a negative turn, as Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel on 26/10/1994. The Jordanian authorities initiated a crackdown on some of Hamas's infrastructure, in conjunction with rising tensions between the government on the one hand, and the MB movement and the Islamic Action Front (IAF) on the other. This was in addition to pressures and complaints by the PA because of Hamas's activities. In May 1995, the Jordanian authorities asked Musa Abu Marzuq and 'Imad al-'Alami to leave Jordan; they went to Damascus.

Musa Abu Marzuq travelled to the US on 25/7/1995, where he was arrested without any reasonable evidence; he and family were in possession of permanent residence "green" cards there. Israel wanted him extradited, a request approved by US courts on 8/5/1996. Hamas warned the US of the consequences of handing Abu Marzuq over to Israel, saying that it was not seeking conflict with it. It further explained that its battle was restricted solely to Israel, and that extraditing Abu Marzuq would be considered an unprovoked hostile act, crossing a red line would lead to "dire consequences." It appears that the US authorities took Hamas's threat seriously, and decided to deport Abu Marzuq a year and a half later.

Khalid Mish'al took over the presidency of Hamas's political bureau, following the arrest of Abu Marzuq. On 25/9/1997, there was an attempt on the life of Khalid Mish'al by two operatives of the Israeli Foreign Intelligence Service, Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations (Mossad), in the Jordanian capital Amman. However, the two agents were arrested through the heroic actions of Mish'al's bodyguard. King Hussein intervened, feeling outraged by the Israeli violation of the treaty with Jordan by carrying out assassinations on its soil. Relations between Israel and Jordan almost soured. However, Israel quickly sent an antidote to treat Mish'al from the chemical toxin that went through his ear, and released Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, who was serving a double life sentence and another sentence of 15 years. In return, Jordan released the two Mossad agents.

The Israeli assassination attempt turned into a political and public relations victory for Hamas. The release of Sheikh Ahmad Yasin from prison helped rebuild

Hamas's capabilities in GS, and reorder relations between Hamas in the Palestinian interior and Hamas in the Diaspora. Sheikh Yasin's tour of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Syria, Qatar, Sudan, Yemen, and Iran, from 19/2–24/6/1998 was a resounding success, solidifying Hamas's ties to those countries.

In the late summer of 1999, relations between Jordan and Hamas began to worsen again. After a Hamas delegation left to visit Tehran, the Jordanian authorities arrested 16 Hamas members and office staff on 30/8/1999. All Hamas's offices in the kingdom were closed down, and Hamas was banned. Hamas's delegation returned to Jordan on 21/9/1999, despite threats of arrest. Indeed, Khalid Mish'al and Ibrahim Ghushah were arrested upon their return. On 21/11/1999, the Jordanian Authorities deported Khalid Mish'al, Ibrahim Ghushah, Sami Khater, and 'Izzat al-Rishq to Qatar, even though they were all Jordanian citizens. This led to an estrangement with Hamas that lasted for years.

Thus, Hamas lost a significant base in Jordan. However, it did not lose its popularity and respect in the Jordanian street. Meanwhile, it began rearranging its structure in the Diaspora, and made several political gains through rapprochement with Qatar and Syria. Its leadership began to settle in Syria where it received support for its activities.

Fourth: The al-Aqsa Intifadah 2000–2005

“They wanted to drag us into a bargain, but we dragged them to resistance,” proclaimed Sheikh Ahmad Yasin. By this statement, Yasin explained the essence of dispute between the PA and Fatah, and Hamas and the factions opposed to the peace process, while describing Hamas success during *al-Aqsa Intifadah*.

The anti-peace process camp believed that Oslo Accords carried the seeds of their own failure, and that this would be revealed sooner or later, especially when the time came for final status negotiations, involving the future of Jerusalem, the refugees, settlements, and the state and its sovereignty. This happened when the Camp David Summit collapsed in July 2000. Then came *al-Aqsa Intifadah* in September 2000, which took the Palestinian once again back to resistance, having tired of negotiations and Israeli stalling tactics, efforts to Judaize Jerusalem the

building of settlements, in addition to their anger at the performance of the PA and the widespread corruption in its ranks.

The provocative visit by Ariel Sharon, leader of the Likud Party, to *al-Aqsa* Mosque on 28/9/2000 was the spark that ignited the *Intifadah*. Between 28/9/2000 and 31/12/2005, the number of Palestinians killed reached 4,242, including 793 children and 270 women. The number of Israeli targeted killings of Palestinians reached 376, while the number of wounded reached 46,068.⁶³ By the end of 2005, the number of Palestinian detainees in Israel rose to 9,200.⁶⁴

Table (3): Members of Ezzedeem al-Qassam Brigades Killed in the WB and GS 1/1/2000–31/12/2005

Year	Killed in a military operation			Killed in a resistance missions	Other		Total
	Self-immolation	Armed combat	Raid on settlement		Assassinated by Israel	Assassinated by collaborators	
2000	2	4	-	3	3	-	12
2001	23	17	8	5	20	-	73
2002	12	48	21	33	39	1	154
2003	14	53	9	21	46	1	144
2004	9	47	3	69	69	-	197
2005	1	10	2	12	13	-	38
Total	61	179	43	143	190	2	618
	283			143	192		

In 2005, *al-Aqsa Intifadah* subsided somewhat, as a result of the situation that followed the death of Yasir ‘Arafat, and the election of Mahmud ‘Abbas as head of the PA, in addition to the preoccupation of the Palestinians in the WB and GS with the municipal elections and with preparations for the general election. This is not to mention the fact that on January 22, the Palestinian factions declared they would de-escalate unilaterally, before a ceasefire was declared between the PA and Israel on 8/2/2005.

Hamas was characterized by its major role and its self-immolation operations which shook the security of Israel as most attacks took place in the Palestinian

⁶³ Site of Palestinian National Information Centre, 9/2/2005, http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/quds/arabic/viol/quds_viol_12-2005.html

⁶⁴ See the report by the Ministry of Prisoners and Liberated Prisoners for 2005, Palestinian National Information Centre, www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/social/prisoners/2005.html

territories occupied in 1948. Until 1/12/2005, 135 self-immolation operations took place, mostly carried out by Hamas as well as the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and the PIJ.⁶⁵ A report by the Shabak indicates that 1,513 Israelis were killed and 3,380 others were injured from the start of the *Intifadah* and until July 2005.⁶⁶ The number of Al-Qassam Brigades members who were killed between 2000 and 2005 was 618, including 604 during *al-Aqsa Intifadah* (29/9/2000–end of 2005). This is in addition to scores of other Hamas non-combatants who were also killed, (see table (3)).⁶⁷

Regardless of the political and strategic factors that prompted the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from GS in the second half of 2005, the Palestinian resistance played a major role in this. Hamas emerged as the most effective resistance faction in GS. According to a statistical study prepared by Al-Qassam Brigades, for the period from the beginning of *al-Aqsa Intifadah* until 15/8/2005, the Israelis admitted to 400 resistance operations in GS causing casualties among the Israelis. The Al-Qassam Brigades carried out 217 resistance operations, killing 79 Israelis, out of 167 that Israel acknowledged, and injuring 646 Israelis, out of 1,084 that the Israelis have admitted to. For its part, al-Quds Brigades (PIJ) killed 12 Israelis and injured 104 others, while the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (Fatah) killed 8 Israelis and injured 43 others. Joint operations carried out by two or more factions killed 51 Israelis and injured 130 others. Regardless of how acceptable these figures are to various parties, it is safe to say that Hamas was at the forefront of armed resistance during the *al-Aqsa Intifadah*.⁶⁸

During the *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, several Hamas leaders were killed, including Jamal Salim and Jamal Mansur on 31/7/2001, Salah Shehadeh on 22/7/2002, and Isma‘il Abu Shanab on 21/8/2003. Hamas received one of the harshest blows in its history when its founder and spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yasin was killed on 22/3/2004, followed by the death of ‘Abdul ‘Aziz al-Rantisi on 17/4/2004. By the end of 2005, around four thousand Hamas members and supporters, mostly from

⁶⁵ Site of Israeli Defense Forces, http://www.idf.il/SIP_STORAGE/DOVER/files/6/31646.doc

⁶⁶ Published by *Maariv* newspaper and translated by *Assafir* newspaper, Beirut, 15/7/2005.

⁶⁷ See “Al-Qassam: Facts and Figures,” *Qassamiyyun*, p. 10.

⁶⁸ Site of Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades, Press Office, 16/8/2005, <http://www.alqassam.ps/ensihab/ehsaciat/ehsaciat4.htm>; and see *Filisteen Almuslima*, 1/3/2006, <http://www.fm-m.com/2006/Mar2006/story15.htm>

the WB, were languishing in Israeli jails. Among the members were first-, second-, and third-row leaders in Hamas in the WB.

The PA could not resist or disrupt the momentum of the *Intifadah*. So it tried to cope with it and take advantage of it politically to improve its negotiating position. However, Israel's arrogance and attempts to crush the *Intifadah* by overwhelming force inflamed it further and made it that much stronger, and deepened the bitter enmity between the Palestinians and Israelis. Throughout the first three years of the *Intifadah*, 75–85% of the Palestinians supported its continuation,⁶⁹ despite the massive destruction, economic collapse, and the tens of thousands of casualties and wounded.

Al-Aqsa Intifadah proved the expectations of the resistance movements, and gave them more credibility. Hamas once again proved that it could not be sidestepped in the Palestinian equation. This was encouraged by the wing of Fatah that supported armed resistance, which wanted to participate in the *Intifadah*, paving the way for establishing Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. The latter had a major role especially in operations within the WB and GS. In other words, Hamas succeeded in dragging the PA (including many Fatah members) into the resistance, and was able to impose the agenda of the *Intifadah* on the PA, as well as disrupt the peace process.

Hamas's popularity surged, while that of Fatah (the backbone of the PA) slumped as well as that of Yasir 'Arafat himself. Polls conducted by the JMCC recorded this trend very clearly, although the supporters of Hamas and the opposition expressed reservations as the centers are affiliated to the PA and other parties that tend not to show the strength of the Islamists. In April 2003, JMCC showed a convergence between Fatah's popularity (22.6%) and Hamas (22%), that is, they now shared influence on the Palestinian arena.⁷⁰ Another poll in August 2001 showed Fatah had a rating of 26%, and Hamas 27%.⁷¹

Hamas's rising influence put the PA face to face with an additional political crisis. The PA found itself in the middle of an intense tug of war. On one hand there

⁶⁹ JMCC Public Opinion polls.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Jonathan Schanzer, "The Challenge of Hamas to Fatah," *Middle East Quarterly* journal, Middle East Forum (MEF), Spring 2003, vol. X, no. 2, http://www.meforum.org/516/the-challenge-ofhamas-to-fatah#_ftn39

was Israeli-US-European pressure calling for an end to the *Intifadah* and further concessions. On the other hand, the Islamic and national resistance forces calling for a national program to escalate the *Intifadah* and force Israel to withdraw. One of the biggest paradoxes was that all sides (enemies, opponents, and supporters) agreed that the PA was corrupt, and needed fundamental reforms, though this meant different things to different parties.

Israeli-American dictates demanded Palestinian de-escalation, or in other words, the crushing or silencing of Hamas, in return for a resumption of negotiations. However, the Palestinian public who overwhelmingly wanted the *Intifadah* to continue, provided support for Hamas and the resistance.

Moreover, the intense Israeli pressure on the PA, which included attacks on its offices, police stations, and prisons, and the blockade against its president and even the re-occupation of PA-controlled areas, had backfired. Indeed, Israel ended up weakening the PA, its prestige, and its ability to control things, and hence, the ability to clamp down on Hamas and the resistance. In addition, Israel's conduct showed many Palestinians that the PA could not protect them, at a time when Hamas and resistance forces were carrying out operations that caused panic in Israel, and established some sort of balance of terror. 'Arafat had tried more than once to declare an end to the *Intifadah*, but it continued and expanded, undermining both his and PA's prestige.

Consequently, there were efforts to start an intra-Palestinian dialogue, for the PA and Egypt (which became heavily involved) wanted to stop the *Intifadah* or declare a truce, in order to restart negotiations. The resistance forces welcomed dialogue, to develop a new national program based on defeating the occupation. Hamas, PIJ and other resistance forces knew that the next goal of stopping the *Intifadah* was to strike at the infrastructure of resistance and crush it.

The talks themselves were a practical admission by the PA that it was unable to make critical and meaningful decisions on the ground, without consulting with the resistance factions, particularly Hamas. Egypt was able to benefit from its major role in the Arab world and close relations with the PA, Israel, and the US, as well as its ties with the Palestinian opposition, to call for these talks. Between 10–13/11/2002, one of the most important sessions of this dialogue was held in Cairo between Fatah and Hamas, and again in January 2003 and on 4–7/12/2003, attended by all Palestinian factions.

These talks may have helped to bring points of view together, but the PA failed to get what it wanted, especially since resistance factions were not committed to, or concerned with, the Oslo Accords.⁷² In the meantime, the Israeli side did not commit itself to a truce or to suspending its operations against Palestinian civilians, even if the Palestinian resistance factions declared a truce on their side. The truce declared by the factions of the *Intifadah* in the summer of 2003 (declared for three months, but lasting only 52 days, from 29/6–21/8/2003) was clear evidence of the nature of Israeli practices, as Israel continued its killings and destruction, weakening the prospect of the declaration of any new truce.

Israel continued its attempts to crush the *Intifadah*. Palestinian President ‘Arafat was under blockade within his compound in Ramallah for around two and a half years, having angered Israel with his secret support for the *Intifadah* and armed resistance. ‘Arafat died in November 2004, in extremely suspicious circumstances with questions about whether he had been poisoned by the Israelis. He was succeeded by Mahmud ‘Abbas as head of the PLO, the PA, and Fatah. In the absence of their symbolic and unifying leader, Fatah suffered from fragmentation, disbandment, corruption and from conflict among factions and leaders within its ranks. This caused a decline in its stature and popularity in the Palestinian arena. Meanwhile, Hamas managed to preserve its cohesion and the discipline of its members, its positive image as a result of its resistance activities, and its social and educational services, not to mention the fact that it was not involved in any corruption cases, and had not been “embroiled,” up to this point in 2005, in the machinations of holding power.

Hamas boycotted the Palestinian presidential election in early 2005, which was won by Mahmud ‘Abbas. However, Hamas dealt positively with the PA leadership, especially regarding its declaration of a truce in order to hold municipal and legislative elections, which Hamas decided to contend. On 15–17/3/2005, the Palestinian factions met in Cairo, including Hamas and Fatah. They adopted a Palestinian political program based on adhering to Palestinian fundamentals, the right to resist the occupation, and to declare a truce that would last until the year’s end. It was also agreed to hold legislative elections, and rebuild and reform the PLO according to principles that allow all Palestinian forces to join the organization.

⁷² Newspapers, news agencies, and television stations covered these meetings, see for example: *Al-Khaleej* newspaper, Sharjah.

The municipal elections, which were held in stages in 2005, were one of the strongest indications of Hamas’s rising popularity. The results achieved by Fatah and Hamas were close. Sometimes, it was difficult to identify the winner, because a number of Hamas candidates in the WB had run as independents, fearing arrest. In general, Fatah had better results in small municipal councils, while Hamas fared better in large cities and municipalities, prompting the PA leadership to suspend elections in the cities of Hebron and Gaza, where Hamas carries significant political weight, especially after Hamas took 74% of the votes in Nablus.

Whatever the case may be, the strong results obtained by Hamas challenged the credibility of opinion polls, which had given Fatah a significant lead over Hamas. It also increased Fatah’s fears of losing the general election, prompting President ‘Abbas to postpone the legislative elections from July 2005 to 25/1/2006. The table below tries to give a general overview of the results of the municipal elections, but it remains an approximation given the sometimes-huge inconsistencies between different sources.⁷³

Table (4): Municipal Elections Results in WB and GS According to the Number of Seats and Votes in the Four Rounds

Organization	% of seats in each round				% of votes in each round			
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	First	Second	Third	Fourth
	26 Districts in the WB and 10 in GS	78 Districts in the WB and 5 in GS	104 Districts in the WB	39 Districts in the WB and 3 in GS				
Fatah	38.9	35	53.73	32.85	32	40.2	53.73	30
Hamas	36.8	35.4	26.03	30	50	33.7	36.03	50.5

⁷³ See *Al-Hayat al-Jadida* newspaper, Ramallah, 18/9/2005; a study by the Middle East Studies Center (MESC) in Jordan published in November 2005; site of The Palestinian Information Center (PIC), 18/12/2005, <http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/palestoday/reports/report2005/entkhabat05/nataeej/nataeej.htm>; and site of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), <http://www.pogar.org/arabic/govnews/2005/issue2/palestine.html#m2a>

Table (5): Municipal Elections Results According to the Percentage of Seats

Organization	Fatah	Hamas	Other organizations and independents	Total
No of seats	1,164	862	701	2,727
% of seats	42.7	31.6	25.7	100

Conclusion

The reasons that explain the rise of Hamas during the period 1987–2005 concern its ability to present a moderate Islamist platform, which has resonated among wide segments of the population. Hamas also showed a dynamism that allowed it to quickly interact with, respond to and adapt to various events and developments. Thanks to this, Hamas was able to produce and replace three generations of field commanders during the first *Intifadah*.

There have been many times that the Israeli authorities have declared an all-out war on Hamas or pledged to eliminate Al-Qassam Brigades, but Hamas would returned, stronger and more prolific than ever. Furthermore, Hamas’s loss of many of its symbolic political and military leaders usually had only a temporary effect, and its dynamism allowed it to quickly cope with and overcome these setbacks.

Thirdly, Hamas enjoyed a high level of internal cohesion and organizational discipline, compared to other factions, notably Fatah, helped in this by having a strong institutional *shura* [advisory] structure. This has enabled Hamas to deal effectively with various challenges, and made it difficult for its enemies to penetrate it, fragment it, or deviate it from its course. For this reason, there were no splits within Hamas nor any important defections by its cadres throughout the outgoing period.

The fourth factor is that Hamas was the most effective organization in charitable work and social solidarity. It thus became part of the fabric of Palestinian society and its constituents, making it difficult to blockade or eliminate it.

Fifthly, Hamas has distanced itself from the PA and its burdens, and thus it was not implicated in the “sins” of the Oslo Accords and their repercussions, nor did it bear the formal responsibility for managing the Palestinians’ political,

economic, or social affairs. This put the blame for weaknesses and failures on the PA and Fatah movement. Furthermore, the suspicions of corruption, extortion, and dubious deals involving many of the PA's figures, did not affect any of Hamas's figures, as Hamas was able to preserve its good reputation throughout that period.

Moreover, Hamas distinguished itself in the military field. During *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, Hamas became the foremost Palestinian faction in terms of military operations, especially daring ones, and in terms of the number of Israelis it killed or wounded. Hamas offered a large number of resistance fighters who were killed, including some leaders. Accordingly, Hamas derived legitimacy and prominence from resistance, earning itself the respect of Palestinians, Arabs, and the Muslim world. These see armed resistance as the gauge by which things are measured, and proof of credibility and legitimacy.

By the end of 2005, Hamas had succeeded in avoiding spilling Palestinian blood and being drawn to civil strife. This remained a red line despite Hamas came under broad campaigns of arrest and crackdowns by the PA, especially in the years that preceded *al-Aqsa Intifadah*. This kept its image positive among the general public.

Although Hamas is an Islamic movement affiliated to a movement that most Arab regimes are hostile to or are actively persecuting, and although Hamas has been designated as a "terror group" in the US and Western Europe, Hamas was able to present a balanced discourse, and restricted its military operations to the Palestinian territories. Hamas could not be drawn into side battles or into intra-Arab disputes, earning it a great deal of respect in the Arab street and even among official Arab circles.

Finally, the post-2005 phase compelled Hamas to answer a number of strategic questions and make difficult choices and decisions, as it was no longer enough to criticize and oppose the conduct of the PA. Hamas would have to provide clear visions regarding how to put the Palestinian political house in order, make decisions and achieve national unity. It would have to work with Fatah and other factions in accordance with a comprehensive national program to solve the conflict between the right to resist and the process of building, as well as the PA's program and the relationship with Israel. It would have to sort out how to handle its local, Arab and international relations, even in hostile or unfavorable circumstances. Hamas would also have to answer the question of how it would actually implement its Islamic project.

Chapter Two

Hamas's Political Vision

Prof. Yusuf Rizqa

Hamas's Political Vision

Introduction

This study discusses Hamas's political vision by examining specific issues, namely: religion and state, patriotism and secularism, democracy and the power of the people, political pluralism, and human rights, with the aim of identifying Hamas's theoretical and practical attitude on these issues. The researcher in his approach relies on ideological and political determinants contained in Hamas's written documents, or statements by Hamas leaders, cross-referencing it with Islamic political literature, especially that of the MB movement. The research applied the analytical descriptive approach, only offering a deeper historical background to attitudes and facts when necessary.

First: On Hamas's Political Ideology

There is a difference between Islamic ideology and Islam itself. Islamic ideology is the intellectual product of Muslims aimed at meeting the interests of the community, and serving religious principles in general, whereas Islam is divinely revealed and contains a fixed set of laws. Accordingly, ideology can be developed, changed, and can tolerate multiple points of view, by virtue of changing reality and differences of opinions. Therefore, adherence to ideological principles is contingent upon its consistence with general Islamic rules and principles.¹

Our understanding of the difference outlined above is necessary if we are to understand Hamas's ideological and political vision on the issues pertinent to the research, which revolve around: religion and state, patriotism and secularism, democracy and the power of the people, political pluralism, and human rights, on the basis that these themes are components of the organization's political and ideological vision, and on the basis that Islam has put forward general principles for politics, which constitute a binding reference to the details that Muslims develop to manage

¹ Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Laysa min al-Islam* (Not of Islam), 6th ed. (Cairo: Maktabat Wehbeh, 1996), pp. 136–139.

their affairs and serve their interests, according to their changing temporal, spatial, and cultural needs. It is their right to establish institutions and necessary mechanisms to convert general Islamic provisions or principles into functioning mechanisms and specific institutions. This is what we call the political ideology of Hamas.

Hamas is a Palestinian national liberation movement with an Islamic frame of reference. It has defined itself in its Charter as being an Islamic Resistance Movement: Islam is its system. From Islam it reaches for its ideology, fundamental precepts, and world view of life, the universe and humanity.”² Although it is a resistance movement working to liberate the land and people, “it is not a military group but a comprehensive liberation movement... operating in various fields and arenas, and has its own goals and political vision. It is a popular movement living the concerns of its people at home and abroad, defending their interests and seeking to serve them.”³ Hamas also identified its relationship with the MB movement, and stated that “the Islamic Resistance Movement is branch of the Muslim Brotherhood chapter in Palestine.”⁴

But it does not seem that the idea of Hamas being a “branch” is very accurate, because it would suggest that there are two organizations in Palestine: A Muslim Brotherhood chapter, and a branch, Hamas. But in reality, this is not the case. When Sheikh Ahmad Yasin was interviewed on the television program *Shahid ‘Ala al-‘Asr* (Witness to an Era), he was more accurate, saying, “We are of the Muslim Brotherhood... We are an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood all over the world.”⁵

Based on the above, we can say: The sources of Hamas’s political ideology are made up of:

1. Islamic political ideology produced by Islamic thinkers, past and present.
2. The MB movement’s political ideologies and their interpretation of Islam.
3. The ideology of Hamas leaders, thinkers, cadres and their political literature.

² *Charter of Hamas*, Article 1.

³ Interview with Khalid Mish‘al, *Assabeel* newspaper, Amman, 23/8/2010. See document no. 16 in the appendix of this book, p. 635.

⁴ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 2.

⁵ Ahmad Mansur, *Ahmad Yasin Shahid ‘ala ‘Asr al-Intifadah* (Ahmad Yasin Testifies to the Era of the Intifadah), *Silsilat Kitab al-Jazira - Shahid ‘ala al-‘Asr* (2) (Al-Jazira Book Series, Witness to an Era (2)) (Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers and Dar Ibn Hazm, 2003), p. 253.

I find myself leaning on the first and second sources in my approach to understand Hamas's political vision, the topic of this study, given the lack of information regarding the third source. This lack of information, which Khaled Hroub characterized as "scarcity,"⁶ has some justifications, such as the lack of special intellectual experience and political experience, as well as preoccupation with the *Intifadah* and resistance and their implications. Before we delve into the issues of the research, I would like to note the following:

1. The lack of studies by Hamas on the topics of this research whether solely their own work or in collaboration with others. What we found was of the generalist type, or focused on historical events and developments.
2. The Hamas Charter has not discussed directly or in detail Hamas's political vision, and was dominated by a generalist moral vision without a specific political vision.
3. The issues of democracy, pluralism, religion and state, patriotism, and secularism have not been given the same priority enjoyed by the resistance and the religious call within Hamas. When Yasir 'Arafat created the Palestinian Authority (PA) after the Oslo Accords, this did not prompt Hamas to engage in politics or build its own theory.
4. The nature of the conflict with the occupation, and Hamas's preoccupation with its issues, outcomes, and implications, combined with the absence of any hope for the imminent creation of the Palestinian state, meant that these issues took a back seat.
5. Hamas does not represent a special ideological trend in its understanding of democracy. Instead, its understanding is part of the overall Islamic understanding of democracy, in line with the prevailing ideas of Islamist thinkers, calling for flexibility and engagement with others and other democratic countries.
6. Hamas's practical record was a useful source for this study, especially as regards its participation in the elections and the cabinet in 2006, in addition to the Palestinian Basic Law upon which Hamas's experience in power was based.
7. It is important to point out that Palestinians have had no state since 1948. The PA failed to build state institutions, and a constitution and laws regulating

⁶ Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasah al-Siyasiyyah* (Hamas: Political Thought and Practice) (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1996), p. 275.

political life must be prepared comprehensively. The PA focused on pushing back the occupation and its aggression, while trying to address the daily needs of government.

Second: Religion and State

Hamas is no different from the MB movement in its vision of the state, its function, and the necessity of establishing it. The state in the Islamic ideology is a “necessary instrument” for the implementation of *Shari‘ah* (Islamic Law), safeguarding faith, achieving the interests of society, and managing the affairs of citizens. Because of this, and given—as Rashid Ghannushi said⁷—the “state’s indispensability to society,” Hamas made resistance against the occupation, self-determination, and the establishment of the Palestinian state its primary advocacy and political goals.

Hamas calls for the establishment of an “Islamic” state, but not a “religious” state or a theocracy. In this regard, Hamas refuses the separation of religion from state, and sees it as a Western idea, stemming from a particular experience that has nothing to do with the Arab and Muslim environment.

Instead, Hamas calls for a comprehensive integration of politics and religion, in line with the approach of Hasan al-Banna who said, “Governance in the books of *fiqh* [jurisprudence] is classed under doctrinal beliefs and fundamentals, not secondary jurisprudence branches. Indeed, Islam is ruling and implementation, legislation and education, and law and judiciary, none is separable from the other.”⁸

Hamas thus affirms that polity is part of religion, and Hamas leader Ibrahim al-Maqadmah, considered the political position as tantamount to a *fatwa*

⁷ Rashid al-Ghannushi, *Al-Hurriyyat al-‘Ammah fi al-Dawlah al-Islamiyyah* (Public Freedom in the Islamic State) (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1993), vol. 1, p. 146.

⁸ Hasan al-Banna, *Majmu‘at Rasa’il al-Imam al-Banna* (The Collected Epistles of Imam al-Banna), *Silsilat min Turath al-Imam al-Banna (15)* (Imam al-Banna Legacy Series (15)), 2nd ed. (Giza: Al-Basa’ir li al-Buhuth wa al-Dirasat, 2010), p. 351. Banna also said, “We believe that the rulings of Islam and its teachings are comprehensive in managing the affairs of people in this life and the hereafter, . . . Islam is creed and worship, a homeland and a nationality, a religion and a state, a book and a sword, and the Quran states all of this,” *Majmu‘at Rasa’il al-Imam al-Banna*, p. 330.

(a religious ruling issued by a Muslim scholar) in one way or another.⁹ Al-Maqadmah called on Muslim scholars to become involved in politics, telling them that they are more deserving of political work, because they understand religion and the interests of the *Ummah* (the Nation).¹⁰ Al-Maqadmah's appeal stems from a special Palestinian-Arab experience, where liberals and leftists monopolized power for many decades. The criticism by Hamas and the MB movement of Arab governments is that they have not done their duty to safeguard Islam and implement its provisions as required by *Shari'ah*, while not realizing dignity, development and progress for the *Ummah*.

Palestine is not a state, it is an Authority without real sovereignty. It is less than a state. Therefore, Hamas has criticized the PA and the Arab states, since it is keen to establish a sovereign Palestinian state, which would fulfill its responsibilities set by Islamist principles, without the intervention of Israel or any other state.

Rejecting the separation of religion and state, and adopting the principle of integrating them, does not mean that Hamas calls for a theocracy in Palestine. To be sure, the Islamist ideology adopted by Hamas, rejects a "religious" state in that sense, and calls for a "civil" state with an Islamic frame of reference. Hamas refuses characterizing the Rightly-Guided Caliph state as being a theocracy.

The *Ummah* in Islamic thought is "the bedrock of sovereignty and power... and the state is authorized by this *Ummah* to exercise its jurisdictions and functions as mandated."¹¹ This mandate prevents the state from bypassing established tenets of Islamic law. Meanwhile, rejection of the religious state has been pronounced repeatedly by leaders of the MB movement and Hamas leaders, such as 'Abdul Qadir 'Odeh, Hasan al-'Ishmaawi, and Ma'mun al-Hudaibi who have stated that there is no such thing as a religious state in Islam, which would claim to have

⁹ Ibrahim al-Maqadmah, Public Opinion in the Muslim Society: Scholars and Rulers, *Al-Risalah* newspaper, Gaza, 26/2/1998. (in Arabic) Ibrahim Ahmad Khalid al-Maqadmah (1952–2003), a Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, member of Hamas political bureau, medical doctor, a thinker and a caller to Islam, who was assassinated by the Israeli planes in 8/3/2003.

¹⁰ Ibrahim al-Maqadmah, To the Scholars of Islam, *Al-Risalah*, 31/10/2003. (in Arabic)

¹¹ Muhammad 'Abdul-Fattah Futuh, *Al-Dimuqratiyyah wa al-Shura fi al-Fikr al-Islami al-Mu'asir: Dirasah fi Fikr al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali* (Democracy and Shura in Contemporary Islamic Thinking: A Study of the Thought of Sheikh Muhammad al-Ghazali) (Cairo: Shorouk International Bookshop, 2006) p. 34.

a divine right to rule, or that it is infallible, though it nonetheless must adhere to Islamic principles. Thus, the *Ummah* can exercise its role in evaluation or impeachment.¹²

According to Jamal Mansur, a prominent Hamas leader, “There is no such thing in Islam as theocracy, which declares it represents the will of *Allah* on Earth...” The first Muslim caliph had clearly declared that he was under the law and the will of the *Ummah*, saying, “Obey me as long as I obey *Allah* with you, but if I disobey Him then I shall command no obedience from you.”¹³

Third: The State, Constitution, and the Law

In the civil state, the people are ruled by the law and the constitution, which represents the governing frame of reference for the law. They are both developed by the people, and are both subject to being amended and changed according to specific mechanisms and procedures in civil and democratic systems. The constitution and the law can be seen as the benchmark for the nature and identity of the state.

Hamis advances the slogan “[Pleasing] *Allah* is our purpose, the Qur’an is our constitution,” the same slogan that has been used by the MB movement since the days of Hasan al-Banna. However, Hamas do not say or mean that the slogan is an alternative to a constitution drafted by the people, and adopted by the people as a binding frame of reference to the system of governance and the law. The Qur’an does not need a referendum to be approved, but a constitution does. Hamas thus

¹² Ma’mun al-Hudaibi in: Hazem al-Ashheb and Farid Ibrahim, *Misr Bayna al-Dawlah al-Diniyyah wa al-Madaniyyah* (Egypt Between the Religious and Civil State) (n.p.: Al-Dar al-Masriyyah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’, 1992), p. 49; See also ‘Abdul Qadir ‘Odeh, *Al-Islam wa Awda’una al-Siyasiyyah* (Islam and Our Political Conditions), 9th ed. (Beirut: Resalah Publishers, 1997), pp. 101–102; See also Muhammad Salim al-‘Awwa, *Fi al-Nizam al-Siyasi li al-Dawlah al-Islamiyyah* (On the Political System of the Islamic State), 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dar El-Shorouk, 2006), p. 206. ‘Abdul Qadir ‘Odeh (1906–1954), Hasan Muhammad al-‘Ishawi (1921–1972), and Muhammad Ma’mun Hasan al-Hudaibi (1921–2004) are all Muslim Brotherhood leaders in Egypt.

¹³ Jamal Mansur, Palestinian Democratic Transformation, an Islamic Perspective, unpublished memo, Nablus, 1996, p. 9. (in Arabic) Jamal ‘Abdul Rahman Mansur was a Hamas leader in the West Bank who had been expelled to Marj al-Zuhur in 1992. He was assassinated by Israeli warplanes at his office in Nablus in 2001.

demanded what Hasan al-Banna and the MB movement has always demanded: For the *Shari'ah* to be the primary source of legislation.¹⁴

Hasan al-Banna made a distinction between the constitution and the law. He said that the constitution is the general system of governance that defines the boundaries of authority, the duties of rulers, and their relationship with the populace. The law regulates relationships among individuals, protects their moral and material rights, and holds them to account for their actions.¹⁵

Since there are several systems of governance, all man-made, al-Banna favored the "constitutional system of government," about which he said, "This is the closest system among existing systems in the world to Islam."¹⁶ He explained this further by saying that when the researcher considers the principles of the constitutional system of governance; which are to maintain personal freedoms, consultations (*shura*), derive power from the *Ummah*, and the responsibility of the rulers before the people, who can be held accountable for their actions; and the statement of the limits of each branch of power, he will soon realize that these are all equivalent to the teachings of Islam and its rules concerning the form of governance.¹⁷ These rationales together form the basic principles and mechanisms of democracy.

Hamás's political ideology does not deviate from that of Hasan al-Banna in this regard. However, Hamas did not concern itself with the question of the constitution, and did not attempt to draft a constitution for the state. For one thing, the Palestinian state does not exist, and Hamas, like many other Palestinian factions, is preoccupied with liberation from the occupation and achieving self-determination. So not surprisingly, one can conclude that one of the main disadvantages of the legislative and legal status quo in the occupied Palestinian territories is the "absence of the constitutional reference represented in a constitution."¹⁸

¹⁴ *Majmu'at Rasa'il al-Imam al-Banna*, p. 564.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* In another part, he said, "Politics itself are not inconsistent with the constitutional system, and is its foundation as set forth in God's declaration," "and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves," *Surat Ash-Shura* (The Consultation): 38, <http://quran.com/42>

¹⁸ Khaled Hroub, *Hamás: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarah al-Siyasiyyah*, p. 24.

The PA is less than a state. When it was established on limited parts of the occupied territories in 1994 under the Oslo Accords, the PA did not try to draft a constitution, and its rule was based on two things:

First: The interim Basic Law, defined by its preamble as follows:

This Basic Law has established a firm foundation, representing the collective conscience of our people, including its spiritual components, its national faith and its nationalist loyalty. The titles of the Basic Law include a group of modern constitutional rules and principles that address public and personal rights and liberties in a manner that achieves justice and equality for all, without discrimination. Further, they ensure the rule of law, strike a balance between the executive, legislative and judicial branches, and draw lines between their respective jurisdictions in a manner that ensures independence to each of them while coordinating their roles to achieve a high national interest that will serve as a guide to all.¹⁹

Article 4 of the law identified the relationship between religion and the state, and stated, “Islam is the official religion in Palestine. Respect for the sanctity of all other divine religions shall be maintained.” Article 5 identified the system of the governance, stating, “The governing system in Palestine shall be a democratic parliamentary system, based upon political and party pluralism. The President of the National Authority shall be directly elected by the people.” And in Article 6, the Basic Law established the rule of law, stating, “The principle of the rule of law shall be the basis of government in Palestine. All governmental powers, agencies, institutions and individuals shall be subject to the law.”²⁰

Jamal Mansur saw that the Basic Law contained a reasonable balance. Despite some reservations, Mansur said the Basic Law was an acceptable basis for a political system that covers most of the requirements of democracy.²¹ After winning in the 2006 elections and presiding over the tenth government, Hamas adhered to the Basic Law, and continues to respect it despite the Palestinian division.

Jamal Mansur defines the state of law as, “the state where the actions and affairs of government are subject to specific rules and regulations.”²² Mansur has also

¹⁹ 2003 Amended Basic Law, Introduction, site of The Palestinian Basic Law, <http://www.palestinianbasiclaw.org/basic-law/2003-amended-basic-law>

²⁰ Ibid., Articles 2 and 5.

²¹ Jamal Mansur, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

²² Ibid., p. 9.

said, "The rule of law is an acceptable principle that is in line with the spirit of Islam."²³ This definition is actually based on a realistic experience in Palestine that saw serious violations of the Basic Law by the Executive Branch.

Second: The rule through the notion of historical leadership and personal charisma of the leader. This patriarchal society was criticized by the well-known scholar Hisham Sharabi, who said that power there is in the hands of a few men who speak on behalf of the people but not to the people, and who believe that they are infallible.²⁴

Such a rule is considered a clear violation of the rule of law and the concept of democracy. It is a good recipe for tyranny. For this reason, Hamas called for the rule of law, and for making it binding for both rulers and the ruled.²⁵ Hamas's attitude led it to conflict and divergence with the ruling PA.

Fourth: Hamas and Nationalism

The notion of Hamas and the MB movement of nationalism is in complete harmony with that of religion. For these movements, religious dimensions supersede other dimensions championed in the patriotic and nationalistic ideas of Europe in the Renaissance. It also seems that the notion of nationalism did not carry specific connotations even for those who advocated it in the Arab world in the early modern era, some of whom presented the idea as an alternative to pan-Islamism, the broader concept championed by the MB movement.

Hasan al-Banna, in a comparison between the nationalists' notion of nationalism and the MB's notion of nationalism, says:

If the advocates of patriotism mean love for one's homeland, attachment to it and sentiment and affection towards it, it is something anchored in the very nature of the soul, for one thing; it is prescribed by Islam... Or if they mean that it is necessary to make every effort to free the land from its [usurpers], to defend its independence, and to instill the principles of freedom and greatness in the souls of its people then we are with them in this too. For

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See Khaled Hroub, *Hamás: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasah al-Siyasiyyah*, p. 18.

²⁵ Jamal Mansur, op. cit., p. 9.

Islam has greatly stressed this... Or if they mean by 'patriotism' to reinforce the bonds which unite individuals within a given country, and to show them a way of utilizing this reinforcement for their best interests then we also in agree with them on this. For Islam regards this as a necessary religious duty... However if they mean by 'patriotism' the division of the nation into parties which engage in mutual throat cutting, hatred and reprehension, hurling accusations at one another, ... This type of patriotism is a forged one, which does no good, neither for its advocates nor for people in general.²⁶

With the absence of an accurate definition of the concept of nationalism during that early period that saw the rise of nationalism and the decline of the pan-Islamic bond, Hasan al-Banna made a distinction between two kinds of nationalism, one real and one false. Al-Banna analyzed false nationalism through what actually happened in Egypt and other Arab countries in that period, where nationalism meant fervor for the individual country, and dividing the *Ummah* into rival factions. False nationalism for Hamas and the MB movement is that divisive nationalism that was not known to the Arab and Muslim world, and which came with colonialism and the rise of materialism, nationalism, and geographic divisions in Europe.

Advocates of nationalism, with its narrow geographical connotation, had indirectly helped revive the Islamic bond from under the rubble, to supplement the idea of nationalism with Islamic concepts based on faith, while ignoring geography, ethnicity, and the divisions of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which nationalism advocates had accepted. Hasan al-Banna says, "The Muslim national horizon widened, transcending the geographical national borders and blood-based nationalism, to the nationalism of noble principles and correct beliefs."²⁷

Hamis, in its understanding of nationalism, does not deviate from what the founder Hasan al-Banna said. Its Charter states, "Nationalism, from the point of view of the Islamic Resistance Movement, is part and parcel of religious ideology... If other nationalisms have material, humanistic, and geographical ties, then the Islamic Resistance Movement's nationalism has all of that, and, more important, divine reasons providing it with life and spirit."²⁸

²⁶ Hasan al-Banna, Our Message, site of Young Muslims, http://web.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/our_message/

²⁷ *Majmu'at Rasa'il al-Imam al-Banna*, p. 65.

²⁸ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 12.

The concept in Hamas and the MB movement of nationalism, on one hand, is based mainly on faith, noble principles, and rejecting factionalism, and on the other hand, it is based on the notion of the “joint defense” of the Arab and Muslim world and the protection of its rights and interests, as if it is a religious duty. Hasan al-Banna, speaking on the idea of the Islamic homeland, wrote, “The preservation of every inch of the land is an Islamic duty that God shall hold us accountable for.”²⁹ Al-Banna also wrote, “For every region in which there is a Muslim saying: ‘There is no God but *Allah*, and Muhammad is the Messenger of *Allah*,’ is our homeland, inviolable and sacred, demanding love, sincerity, and sincere effort for the sake of its welfare.”³⁰

It is obvious that Hamas would accept and welcome this notion, when there is a negative discrepancy between theory and implementation in the Arab reality. For this reason, Hamas made it part of its Charter, because Palestine would benefit the most from it. Hamas stated, “There is not a higher peak in nationalism or depth in devotion than Jihad when an enemy lands on the Muslim territories. Fighting the enemy becomes the individual obligation of every Muslim man and woman.”³¹

The idea of liberation is a third dimension in Hamas's understanding of nationalism, a dimension closely linked to the previous two (faith and joint defense). Sheikh Ahmad Yasin said, “Since our homeland is under occupation, we want to liberate it. Then, we have two causes, faith and the homeland.”³² In turn, when Mish'al addressed the Arabs after explaining the flaws of narrow nationalism, he said, “Let us come together and share responsibility. Narrow nationalism must not hinder the *Ummah* from fulfilling its true role in the issue of Palestine.”³³

Hence, Hamas has in its political strategy the liberation of Arab and Islamic depths, blaming backwardness and defeat largely on narrow nationalistic rivalries, stating that “the narrow nationalistic logic does not befit nor fulfill even the requirements of nationalism itself, which some have chosen and restricted themselves to,”³⁴ i.e., in the context of large international blocs.

²⁹ *Majmu'at Rasa'il al-Imam al-Banna*, p. 132.

³⁰ Hasan al-Banna, *Our Message*.

³¹ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 12.

³² Ahmad Mansur, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

³³ Interview with Khalid Mish'al, *Assabeel*, 23/8/2010.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Hamas, in the electoral program of the Change and Reform bloc, called for “strengthening relations with the Arab and Islamic world in all areas, being the strategic depth of Palestine.”³⁵ The Islamic National Salvation Party (founded by Hamas) called on the Arab and Muslim *Ummah* to shoulder their responsibilities in liberation, and stated in its principles, “Arabs and Muslims are single *Ummah* and it is their duty to liberate Palestine.”³⁶

Pan-Islamism is not incompatible with nationalism in Islamic ideology or the ideology of the MB movement and Hamas. Islamists perceive pan-Islamism as a broad vessel that can accommodate nationalism and pan-Arabism, accepting their positive accepts and adding to them the faith-related dimension, joint defense, and liberation, in addition to Arab unity, the fourth important dimension. Hasan al-Banna argues that the Islamic concept of nationalism does not lead to fragmenting the Arab and Islamic *Ummah*, which today consists of many countries and many religious elements, because Islam, being the religion of unity and equality, guarantees a bond among all as long as they collaborate for the greater good: “Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.”³⁷

Returning to the program of the Change and Reform bloc, which represents Hamas in the PLC, we find great relevance with the fourth dimension of the notion of nationalism. The program stated, “The Palestinian people are a single unit, wherever they may be, and are an inseparable part of the Arab-Muslim *Ummah*.” “Indeed this, your religion, is one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me.”³⁸ The bond in the text does not just refer to the political concept of the unity of the Arab nation, but also adds to it religious dimensions that give it a measure of

³⁵ See Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006, site of Hamas’s Change and Reform bloc in Palestinian Legislative Council, Gaza, 2006, Article 1, <http://www.islah.ps/new/index.php?page=viewThread&id=128> (in Arabic)
See document no. 10 in the appendix of this book, p. 576.

³⁶ Islamic National Salvation Party, *Al-Nizam al-Asasi* (Basic Law), (Gaza: 1996), p. 3. The party is one of Hamas’s political arms.

³⁷ *Majmu‘at Rasa’il al-Imam al-Banna*, p. 131; and *Surat al-Mumtahanah* (She that is to be examined): 8, <http://quran.com/60>

³⁸ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006, Article 3; and *Surat al-‘Anbya’* (The Prophets): 92, <http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=21&verse=92>

holiness, since the Arab nation is part of the Muslim *Ummah*, both part of the bond of Islam.

The program rejects ethnic, regional, country-specific, and sectarian calls, which aim to fragment the *Ummah*, and it calls for encouraging any effort for unity between any two Arab or Muslim countries or more, all the way to total unity.³⁹ The Islamic National Salvation Party made Islamic solidarity and adopting Arab and Islamic causes one of its goals.⁴⁰

Hamás's alliances with other Palestinian factions, especially the ten-faction alliance or the Alliance of Ten Factions which had its early beginnings in a meeting held in October 1991, included secular and leftwing factions in addition to the Palestinian Communist Party (PCP), can be seen as evidence of Hamás's flexibility in its understanding of nationalism; Hamás did not find a conflict between nationalism and Islamism in its practical relations with others, which is due to Hamás's successful combination of nationalism and Islamism, and the ideas of joint defense and liberation.

At the level of the Palestinian interior and the alliances on a clearer political standpoint, i.e., the unity to protect Palestinian rights and liberation, Hamás deals with nationalism as a notion and a call. Hamás has always asserted that the homeland can accommodate everyone, regardless of their ideological differences and political attitudes. Hamás has stressed that "the Palestinian people is a single unit everywhere they are present."⁴¹ Hamás has said, "Palestine... is the homeland of all Palestinians at home and in the Diaspora, regardless of their religious, ethnic, and political affiliations."⁴² Hamás rejected the claim that its Islamic understanding of nationalism can fragment the people and lead to sectarian conflict. Its Charter thus stressed, "In the shadow of Islam it is possible for the followers of the three religions-Islam, Christianity, and Judaism-to live in peace and harmony."⁴³

Hamás deals with the notion of nationalism at the level of Arab relations with the same political standpoint. Thus, we find Hamás rejecting the use of force and violence to resolve problems between Arab countries. Based on this, Hamás rejected

³⁹ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006, Article 3.

⁴⁰ Islamic National Salvation Party, *Al-Nizam al-Asasi*, p. 4.

⁴¹ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006, Article 3, p. 2.

⁴² Islamic National Salvation Party, *Al-Nizam al-Asasi*, p. 3.

⁴³ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 6.

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, and called for restoring Kuwait as a free and independent country, which contributes with its capabilities and wealth to the development of the Arab world. Hamas called for a solution to the conflict between Kuwait and Iraq in the Arab-Islamic framework.⁴⁴ Khalid Mish'al also called for a gradual approach to ending the current state of narrow nationalism and general political fragmentation, especially at the official level, believing that the popular level is healthier than the official one.⁴⁵ The dimensions that Hamas assigned to nationalism are based on two levels: one religious and one political, which complement one another.

Fifth: Hamas and Secularism

It seems that we need to differentiate between theory and practice in our approach to Hamas's political position on secularism. Prior to that, we would like to alert the reader to the lack of information attributable to the leaders of Hamas on the subject. We did not find in the official sources of the movement any great interest in the topic, and did not find details about Hamas's vision and political position on it.

The lack or scarcity of information in the official documents of the Hamas movement or in the statements of its leaders, is due to many reasons, including: Hamas's preoccupation with managing the conflict with the occupation and liberation as a priority that does not have room for competition with secularism and other ideologies, which are accommodated by political and partisan pluralism. Another reason is Hamas's keenness to safeguard international Palestinian relations, to protect the national arena from disputes and side battles.

The PLO's adoption of the idea of the democratic secular state is incompatible with Hamas's vision for a Muslim state, and its conception of the relationship between religion and state. This means that any new ideological disputes could exhaust the Palestinian factions and also society. For this reason, Hamas avoided delving into the issue of secularism. Indeed, preoccupation with ideology

⁴⁴ Hamas Media Office, *Watha'iq Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah*, statement no. 61 and 63, pp. 58–61, and 65–69.

⁴⁵ Interview with Khalid Mish'al, *Assabeel*, 23/8/2010.

here serves little purpose, since the state is non-existent, and liberation needs everybody's efforts.

In light of the above, we may say: It is possible to determine Hamas's position on secularism as being in two levels with some variation between them: One theoretical, and another practical.

1. At the Theoretical Level

Here, the ideology that explains secularism away as non-religiosity, or as an anti-religion philosophy, and a call for the separation of religion and state, is rejected by Hamas. Hamas's Charter states, "Secularist ideology is in total contradiction to religious ideologies, and it is upon ideology that positions, actions, and decisions are made."⁴⁶ However, this lacks accuracy and detail, for not all secularists are created equal, and decisions are not always made based on their ideological or philosophical ideas. Hamas itself has adopted political positions and acted on the basis of interests, bypassing ideological theories.

Hamas has rejected the secularism of the PLO, and stated, "When the Palestine Liberation Organization adopts Islam as its system of life, we will be its soldiers."⁴⁷ But this position did not last for very long, and Hamas itself later overturned it through its political and practical positions.

Hamas's rejection of the PLO's exclusive representation of the Palestinian people may be attributed to two main reasons: First, because of the PLO's secularism; and second, because Hamas is not a part of the PLO and is not represented in its institutions, and therefore, recognizing the exclusivity of its representation would mean that Hamas is invalidating itself.

Hamas's accession to the PLO has been delayed and to date, for many reasons including some already mentioned, but also for other reasons related to the size of representation in the PNC, elections of the PNC and the Executive Committee of the PLO, and differences over the political vision concerning the conflict with the occupation.

The text quoted from the Charter has ideological significance, containing a generalist judgment rather than a political position. Generalist judgments as such

⁴⁶ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 27.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 27.

can be seen as flaws in the Charter, as Khaled Hroub and others have remarked,⁴⁸ calling on Hamas to reconsider it.

2. At the Practical Level

If we move to analyzing Hamas's position on secularism from theory to practice, we will find that Hamas has adopted flexible attitudes, revealing inconsistency between its theory and practice. Hamas took part in building many political alliances with secular and leftwing Palestinian factions against the occupation, the Oslo Accords, and Fatah's monopoly of Palestinian decision-making. Hamas's practical conduct has prompted researchers to say that "Hamas has overcome the barrier of secularism in its alliances with others."⁴⁹ Some have explained this as duplicitous, but for Hamas, it was a legitimate tactic, and is part of what is acceptable under *Shari'ah*, which accommodates supreme interests and priorities when interacting with reality. Hamas's practical position can be attributed to three main reasons:

- a. The overall political situation in Palestine, which focuses on liberation over theory and ideological differences.
- b. Hamas's rising strength and clout.⁵⁰
- c. The evolution of Hamas's political ideology, and its experience in power and in assuming public responsibilities.⁵¹

Notwithstanding the reasons explaining the evolution of Hamas's attitudes and its alliance with secular and leftwing factions, its flexible position has broken a traditional Islamist attitude that others continue to cling to. This is something that Fathi al-Shiqaqi, secretary general of the PIJ, confirmed by saying, "Hamas has shown clear flexibility regarding alliances inside the Palestinian movement with opposition factions, breaking a traditional Islamic taboo in this regard."⁵²

⁴⁸ Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasah al-Siyasiyyah*, pp. 125 and 210.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ See Yusuf Rizqa, *Al-Tariq al-Sa'b: Tajribat Hamas fi al-Hukumah al-Hadiyah Asharah (Gaza)* (The Difficult Road: Hamas's Experience in the 11th Government (Gaza)), part 1, p. 133, and part 2, p. 109.

⁵² Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasah al-Siyasiyyah*, p. 148.

Hamas has bypassed its condition stated in the Charter. Indeed, all parties in the alliance kept their own ideologies and visions, and worked together on common grounds. The idea of liberation and the state, the primary priority on the agenda of Palestinian national action, facilitates the task of overcoming the issue of secularism.

The Hamas leader 'Issa al-Nashshar says, "Hamas loses nothing by engaging others, by being the primary advocate of a call. Hamas meets with every faction that adopts resistance to repel the occupation."⁵³ Meanwhile, Khalid Mish'al says, "We are not advocates of detachment from reality. Our policy is to interact and influence reality."⁵⁴

Hamas, gradually, has gone beyond its Charter, and abandoned its condition for acceding to the PLO, that the latter renounces secularism. Instead, Hamas focused on the principles of democracy, pluralism, and elections, and its Charter is no longer a constraint on its political position. This is a sign of maturity for Hamas in dealing with the concept of democracy, and giving precedence to priorities and ultimate goals over abstract theories in political practice.

Hamas participated in the 2006 elections under the umbrella of the Basic Law, which regulates the jurisdictions of the branches of power and which contains laws. When Hamas won the majority of seats in the PLC, and was tasked with forming a government, it made an offer to the secular, leftwing, and Islamist Palestinian factions to form a coalition government and share responsibility. Secularism was not an obstacle to this offer, and Islamism was not an obstacle for others to accept it, and they rejected the offer to participate in the government for political reasons.

Hamas's educational and ideological literature criticizes secularism as an ideology and political philosophy that calls for the separation of religion from politics and the state. This critical position remains in the framework of the group's internal structure, but when it deals with secular Palestinian factions, it sides with supreme interests and political realism in determining its political position. In other words, the difference in ideological visions does not, from a *Shari'ah* standpoint or from a logical standpoint, prevent cooperation in issues of the homeland, the nation, the resistance against occupation, and liberation. Hamas leaders sometimes

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

need to make more of an effort to convince the members of the group and others to answer their questions about the disparity between theory and practice in dealing with secularism.

On the other hand, the Islamic National Salvation Party, which emerged from the Hamas movement in 1996, has overcome this issue, and did not address secularism in its bylaws or relations with others. One of its main goals is to build Palestinian civil society.⁵⁵

Sixth: Hamas and Democracy

1. Democracy and *Shura*

The concept of democracy is considered one of the political concepts that have their roots in Western thinking and philosophy. Western thinking has perceived democracy as the ideal model for a free political system against tyranny. But the concept and the term is the source of debate in the Arab world and in Islamic thinking, regarding the relationship between democracy and the concept of *shura* among Muslims. *Shura* is an Islamic term clearly mentioned in the Qur'an, representing a pure alternative to the concept of democracy that has come from the West to Muslim society, and which represents Western philosophy and political experience.

The concept of democracy is not entirely acceptable for the religious members of Islamic groups. Some reject it and do not use it in their political discourse, while others accept it and tolerate its use in their political discourse and also practice, on the grounds that it is an institutional system designed to counter tyranny, developed by people to protect individuals and society.

Remarkably, some Muslims are staunchly opposed to democracy, and insist on using the term *shura* instead. This has raised doubts in the West about the attitude of Islamic ideology and Islamist groups on democracy. Therefore, we shall begin by defining *shura*.

There are many definitions for *shura* in Islamic thought. However, they are all based on two components. The first one is the right of the nation or its representative to express opinion on public affairs and partnership in decision-making. The

⁵⁵ See Islamic National Salvation Party, *Al-Nizam al-Asasi*.

second for the *shura* council not to violate any definitive texts and general Islamic principles that cannot be subject to consultation or reinterpretation.⁵⁶

Bassam 'Atiyyah defines *shura* by saying that it is a way to know the opinion of the nation or its representatives in issues that concern it as a group or that concern a segment of it, provided that this does not clash with definitive scriptures and their meaning as agreed on by consensus, which have the quality of being eternal.⁵⁷ From this definition, it may be inferred that rulers have no right to make an absolute decision regarding anything of relevance to public affairs before discussion and deliberation with the nation's participation or the participation of its representatives in the *shura* institution or "parliament." These principles are considered binding and standard in the *shura* practice and the decisions it issues. The concept of *shura* in this sense is not cause for any dispute between Islamic thinkers. By contrast, democracy causes some differences among them. Therefore, we have decided to approach its definitions in brief, given the nature of the research.

One of the oldest, most common—and most controversial to Islamist—definitions is that democracy is "rule of the people by the people."⁵⁸ This definition later became the rule by the majority through the elected representatives of the people. *Mawsu'at al-Siyasah* (The Political Encyclopedia) defines it as: "A political social system that regulates the relationship between the members of society and the state, in accordance with the principle of equality between citizens, and their free participation in legislation that regulates public life."⁵⁹ Another definition says, "the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote"⁶⁰; or collective rule based on elections.⁶¹

⁵⁶ See Muhammad Futuh, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁵⁹ Abdul-Wahhab al-Kayyali et al., *Mawsu'at al-Siyasah* (Political Encyclopedia) (Beirut: Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1981), part 2, p. 751.

⁶⁰ Gerry Mackie, Schumpeter's Leadership Democracy, Forthcoming, Political Theory, University of California, San Diego, Department of Political Science, <http://pages.ucsd.edu/~gmackie/documents/SchumpetersLeadershipDemocrac.pdf>

⁶¹ Robert Dahl, *Muqaddimah ila al-Dimuqratiyyah al-Iqtisadiyyah* (A Preface to Economic Democracy), translated by Muhammad Mustafa Ghoneim (Cairo: Al-Dar al-Dawliyah li al-Nashr wal-Tawzi', 1992), p. 45.

The definitions of democracy mentioned above contain common governing principles, including: the power of the people or the nation; the rule of the majority; *shura*, and elections. Thinkers believe that it is possible to measure the state of democracy procedurally through important benchmarks, including: the state of human rights; and political and partisan pluralism; freedom; the separation of powers and independence of the judiciary; the integrity of elections; the peaceful transfer of power; and control and accountability.⁶² These benchmarks are something that democratic experience added to the concept of *shura*, which set the general principles for political life, but left the details and mechanisms for human experience and the requirements of time and place.

Hamas confronted tyranny by calling for democracy, adopting the benchmarks mentioned above. Hamas used it as something synonymous to *shura* in the Islamic concept in practice. Hamas did not delve into the difference between democracy and *shura*, which means that Hamas dealt with the concept of democracy in the general understanding opposed to tyranny and autocracy, and adhered to the mechanisms of democratic work in practice, albeit Hamas continued to prefer the term *shura* over the term democracy in its written documents.⁶³ For one thing, it would have caused disputes among Muslim populations, given what the Western term carries in terms of negative connotations linked to philosophy and distorted Western practice.

Hamas did not try to explore the rift between *shura* and democracy. Hamas did not delve into the debate among Muslim thinkers on this matter, and did not try to select a particular definition over another, or develop its own definition. Hamas continued to deal with the notion of democracy in general terms, focusing on mechanisms and institutions that have become the essence of democracy for Hamas.

Some have understood from the words of Jamal Mansur that Hamas dealt very cautiously with the term democracy, being also the product of the colonial powers. But this apprehension began to recede in Islamist circles including Hamas, following efforts by Muslim thinkers to rid the term of its negative baggage, and

⁶² See Ma'an Abu Nawwar, *Fi al-Dimuqratiyyah al-Hadithah* (On Modern Democracy) (Amman: Al-Mu'asasah al-Arabiyyah li al-Dirasat, 1992), p. 23.

⁶³ See Hamas, Bylaws, Gaza, 2012 (in Arabic); and the Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

focus on its positive connotations. In the light of his evolution and acceptance of the term and underscoring of its overwhelming advantages, Jamal Mansur, Hamas leader, chose the definition of the term from The Political Encyclopedia mentioned above, while stressing that democracy is not an ideology but a methodology and mechanism for decision-making.⁶⁴

Hamás's leaders and Hamas's literature did not tackle the dialectical relationship between *shura* and democracy, and left this for Muslim thinkers, because Hamas is not a cultural movement (although cultural activities are part of its interests), it is rather a movement with Islamic identity while being a resistance and national liberation movement as defined by Khalid Mish'al.⁶⁵ Hamas therefore rejects tyranny and occupation, and accepts their antithesis, that is, freedom and justice, which should be safeguarded under democracy.

Hamás, in its political experience in power, had encounters with Palestinian Salafis who reject democracy and declare those who advocate it as apostates. Hamas refused their logic, and their claim that those who partake in the elections of the PLC and adopt democracy are giving the right of legislation to people when this is the sole purview of *Allah*,⁶⁶ and are therefore engaging in idolatry. Indeed, this view is loose, illogical, and inconsistent with Islamic law and reality. In other words, Hamas believes in ruling according to *Allah*'s law, and believes that democratic practice must not violate definitive scriptures with conclusive meaning. However, it believes at the same time that there are broad shared grounds with democracy that are considered permissible according to the supreme goals and priorities of Islam. Hamas also believes in gradualism in building Muslim society, and creating a favorable environment for the application of the provisions of Islam. The PLC and its parliamentary blocs operate in the scope of the permissible that *Shari'ah* has left for people to interpret by themselves. Therefore, Hamas believes that Islam has developed *shura* as a general concept, and left the details and mechanisms

⁶⁴ See Jamal Mansur, op. cit., p. 8.

⁶⁵ See Interview with Khalid Mish'al, *Assabeel*, 23/8/2010.
See also Fahmi Huwaidi, *Felesteen* newspaper, Gaza, 14/10/2012.

⁶⁶ This is the view of the Salafi group in Gaza called (Jaljalat). Their view leans on the words of Ayman al-Zawahiri, who said, "All those who participated in the elections, while aware of the nature of democracy is an apostate who has left the pale of Islam." See Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Al-Hasad al-Murr: Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn fi Sittina 'Aman* (Bitter Harvest: The Muslim Brothers in Sixty Years) (Amman: Dar al-Bayan, n.d.), p. 14.

for the circumstances of time, place, and people, in a way that would fulfill the general interests of society and the nation,⁶⁷ something that is consistent with democracy.

Extremists do wrong to Islam in two ways; one, by comparing it to democracy; and two, by claiming that Islam is against democracy. Indeed, comparing the two is wrong, and claiming that there is incompatibility between them is a transgression. The comparison is invalid between Islam, which is a religion and a message containing principles that regulate how people worship *Allah*, what morals they should have, and how they deal with one another; and democracy which is a system of governance and a mechanism for participation, which contains themes carrying many positive values.⁶⁸

What is unlawful to legislate in *shura* councils because it contradicts *Shari'ah*, is also unlawful to undertake in democratic institutions. Indeed, *shura* in the Arab-Islamic environment can represent the foundations or the philosophical backgrounds of democracy, and democracy can constitute the methods, mechanisms, and institutions that apply these foundations.⁶⁹

Democracy is a “Western version of the Islamic *shura*,” according to Tawfiq al-Shawi.⁷⁰ Al-Shawi argued that democratic systems put this Islamic concept into practice, through practical mechanisms. Therefore, it is possible to benefit from these mechanisms that are compatible with Islamic values and principles. Otherwise, rejecting these mechanisms would be in the interests of an unacceptable alternative, namely, political tyranny or absolute autocracy, as argued Rashid Ghannushi⁷¹, whose views are acceptable to Hamas and its leaders.

⁶⁷ See Muhammad Salim al-'Awwa, *Al-Fiqh al-Islami fi Tariq al-Tajdid* (Islamic Jurisprudence on the path to Renewal, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islami, 1998), p. 49.

⁶⁸ See Jamal Mansur, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁶⁹ Muhammad Futuh, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁷⁰ Tawfiq al-Shawi, *Fiqh al-Shura wa al-Istishara* (The Fiqh of Shura and Consultation), 2nd ed. (Al-Mansura: Dar al-Wafa' li al-Tiba'a wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', 1992), p. 11. See also 'Abdul Hamid al-Ansari, *Al-Shura wa Atharuha fi al-Dimuqratiyyah "Dirasah Muqarinah"* (Shura and its Effect on Democracy “A Comparative Study”) (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 1996), p. 427, where he wrote that Quasi-direct democracy is the closest to shura in Islam.

⁷¹ Rashid al-Ghannushi, Exclusion of Shari'ah and the Islamic Ummah: The Implications of Fearing Strife, *Al-Muntalaq* magazine, Beirut, issue 110, 1995, pp. 32–33. (in Arabic)

2. *Shura* is Binding

While *shura*/ democracy as principles and mechanisms is consensually agreed upon, the issue of whether *shura* council decisions are “binding” is the subject of debate among Muslim thinkers. Some believe that they are binding, and call for adopting the principle of majority voting in decision-making, to prevent monopoly by the ruler or executive branch over decision-making in relation to the supreme interests of the people, which are the prerogative of *shura* councils. Others believe they are not binding, in many cases that scholars have described at length.⁷² Hamas chose the first view and adopted in its bylaws, stating, “Binding *shura* is the basis used in decision-making.”⁷³

This choice reflects a politically and organizationally stable position by Hamas, which had been confirmed by Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, from his place of incarceration, when he addressed the leadership in 1993, telling them, “*Shura* for us is binding, and no person or a clique should monopolize decisions that affect the future of our call [i.e., Hamas]. Any decision made by the majority would be binding for all.”⁷⁴

The actual practice of Hamas's institutions conforms with the commitment of its leaders and cadres to the view of *shura* as binding. For instance, the *Shura* Council has revoked many decisions by the movement's political bureau, which is the executive branch in Hamas. Hamas chose to have *shura* as binding in its bylaws, and did not preoccupy itself with contentious issues that have preoccupied thinkers. Hamas saw that the binding nature of *shura* immunizes its decisions against mistakes and prevents monopoly and tyranny. When Hamas participated in the PLC elections of the PA in 2006, it adhered to the principles of the Basic Law and its provisions, which give the Council the right to approve the government, the right to give it a vote of no confidence, and the right to monitor it and hold it accountable. Its decisions are adopted by a majority vote. The decisions of the majority are binding to the government.⁷⁵

⁷² See Muhammad Futuh, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁷³ Hamas, Bylaws, Article 7, Clause 2, p. 5.

⁷⁴ See Khaled Hroub, *Hamis: Al-Fikr wa al-Mummarasah al-Siyasiyyah*, p. 64.

⁷⁵ See 2003 Amended Basic Law, Article 78 and others.

3. Democracy and its Applications

Most of the debate about the concept of democracy and its applications in modern Islamic thought is centered on specific issues, including: sovereignty of the people, elections, the principle of majority rule, separation of powers, political and partisan pluralism, human rights, and freedoms. We will consider these issues through three axes:

- a. Elections and the rule of the people.
- b. Political and partisan pluralism.
- c. Human rights and freedoms.

Through these, we aim to identify Hamas's position and political approach towards these issues.

a. Elections and the Sovereignty of the People

1. People are the Authority

One of the most contentious issues of democracy for some segments of the Muslim public is that "People are the Authority." The source of the confusion comes from the fact that they link this statement to the concept of divinely revealed legislation. Indeed, if people are the authority, including the power of legislation through parliaments, then where do we place this with divine legislation?

The confusion comes also from the fact that this statement is the result of Western thinking and Western democracy, which separated religion from the state and legislation, and advocated the rule of the people by the people. This has required Muslim thinkers to introduce an Islamic understanding of this statement in a manner that ends ambiguity.

Muslim thinkers have argued that legislation itself is restricted in democratic systems and *shura* by the constitution. In the constitution, there are governing principles to address any possible conflict with *Shari'ah*, usually the main or primary source of legislation, and laws in the constitutions of Arab and Islamic countries.

If we analyze Hamas's position on this issue, we will find that it accepts the meanings assigned by Islamic theories to the statement about democracy, including the nation's right to choose its rulers. This right is translated through the democratic process, for example involving elections and voting, and the decisions of the majority.

Some Muslim thinkers believe that the electoral system achieves the purposes of the *Bay'ah* [Pledge of allegiance to the ruler] system, which the early Muslims adopted, and which gives the nation the right to appoint and impeach rulers. The Islamic system of *Bay'ah* is a cornerstone of *shura* in Islam.⁷⁶ The concept of *'Aqd* [contract] between rulers and the ruled is also achieved, where the contract compels the rulers to fulfill their duties; otherwise, the nation has the right to impeach a ruler and end the contract with him. Elections are the easiest mechanism in the modern era to fulfill the concepts of *Bay'ah* and *'Aqd*, giving a peaceful mechanism for terminating the contract and impeaching the ruler through elections that take place every four years in many countries.⁷⁷

The well-known thinker, Muhammad 'Amarah, differentiates between religious pledge of allegiance and political pledge of allegiance, because the former means: Joining and believing in a religion, where it would be a duty, and renouncing it would be apostasy. While the latter involves the ruler or the state, and is voluntary, tolerating dissent. This pledge of allegiance is linked to worldly matters, and makes it possible to appoint or impeach the ruler. As for issues linked to religious rites, they have nothing to do with this political pledge of allegiance.

Hamás compels its members to engage in the "organizational" pledge of allegiance, which is of the political kind that 'Amarah outlined, even though it has a religious overtone.⁷⁸ The idea is to enhance loyalty and organizational commitment. It is a political pledge of allegiance, which, if renounced, does not result in any religious judgment or blame. Similarly, for those who do not accept this pledge of allegiance, there are no religious responsibilities or duties.

⁷⁶ See Muhammad Futuh, *op. cit.*, p. 53; and Muhammad Hasan al-Amin, An Islamic View of Democracy, *Al-Manaber* magazine, Beirut, year 6, issue 66, January-February-March 1992, p. 64. (in Arabic)

⁷⁷ See Muhammad Futuh, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

⁷⁸ See Hamás, Bylaws, Article 11.

Text of the oath of allegiance: "*Those who swear allegiance unto thee swear allegiance unto Allah. The Hand of Allah is above their hands. So whosoever breaketh his oath, breaketh it only to his soul's hurt; while whosoever keepeth his covenant with Allah, on him will He bestow immense reward.*" I swear allegiance to you by Allah's covenant and his Charter, to be an active soldier in the Muslim Brothers movement. To listen and obey in hardship and ease, and fortune and adversity, except in disobedience of Allah, enduring being discriminated against. Not to dispute the power of those in authority, to exert my effort, money and blood for Allah's sake to the best of my ability. On all of what I pledged, Allah is my witness.

For Hamas, the pledge of allegiance is organizational and political, and gives the pledger of allegiance organization rights similar to those rights given to members of liberal and leftwing parties, including, for example, the right to participate in the internal elections of the movement. Those who renounce their organizational pledge of allegiance merely lose their organizational rights.

2. Nomination and Campaigning

Nomination and campaigning are among the principles and requirements of elections in the democratic system. There can be no elections without campaigning and nomination of individuals by themselves or by political parties. However, a segment of Muslim thinkers rejects nomination and campaigning in principle, and prohibit it based on their understanding of some religious texts, including the *Hadith* (the record of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (SAAWS)), “We do not assign the authority of ruling to those who ask for it, nor to those who are keen to have it.”⁷⁹ Hamas applies this principle in its internal elections, where in the internal electoral law it was stated, “Nomination to posts and campaigning in all phases of the electoral process are prohibited.”⁸⁰

However, Hamas accepts nomination and campaigning in the democratic process in general elections and municipal elections, as well as elections in institutions, trade unions, and student bodies. It could therefore be said that Hamas has two positions on the principle of nomination and campaigning, rather than one. Often, we find a clear impact by the second position on internal elections, where Hamas detects violations against the prohibition of nomination and campaigning in internal elections.

On the other hand, another segment of Muslim thinking understands that nomination for leadership posts is only prohibited in the context of fraud, deception and misleading propaganda. They say: The goal of nomination is announcing that a candidate has fulfilled the requirements and qualifications needed for a post.⁸¹

⁷⁹ *Sahih Bukhari*, vol. 9, Book 89, no. 263, site of Sahih Bukhari, http://www.sahih-bukhari.com/Pages/Bukhari_9_89.php

⁸⁰ Hamas, Bylaws, Annex: Electoral Law-General Rules 12, p. 59.

⁸¹ Abdul Wahab al-Masri, Democracy in the Contemporary Islamic Discourse, *Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi* Journal, Centre for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, issue 164, October 1992, p. 173. (in Arabic)

Further reinforcing the view of the second faction is its realism in facing developments, and the participation of Islamist groups in general elections, where they adopted the same methods and mechanisms adopted by other liberal and leftwing parties, with nomination and campaigning by candidates becoming part and parcel of political life in Arab and Muslim countries, and being one of the requirements of the democratic process. To guide these procedures Islamically, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the world-renowned Muslim scholar, reckoned that the process of selecting the candidate by the voter is an act of attesting to the candidate's merits, for which the voter is accountable under *Shari'ah*, just like other issues, a Muslim is accountable for. For this reason, he finds it mandatory that the voter should investigate his selection on *Shari'ah*-based criteria rather than partisan criteria, which include honesty and strength of character, pursuant to the verse, "*Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy.*"⁸²

3. The Principle of Majority Rule

One of the democratic principles in elections and the work of parliaments is that decisions should be made by majority vote, as determined by procedural texts. Indeed, seeking unanimous agreement would disrupt life and work, because this is often impossible. It seems that the principle of majority rule has basis and is accepted in Islamic thought. Fahmi Huwaidi writes:

Objectively speaking, there are two criteria for what is right, and only two. If on a certain matter there is definitive religious text, then there is no room for second-guessing or interpretation, and this would be the standard by which everyone in the *Ummah* should abide.

Beyond this narrow and limited scope, the opinion belongs to the nation, and the right thing is what the majority of its representatives agree upon. Nothing can supersede the majority opinion; otherwise, it would be a justification of whim and tyranny, exposing the interests of the nations to the risks of chance that may either satisfy or disappoint.⁸³

It seems that the principle of majority rule is no longer the subject of debate among Islamic movements, or an issue of contention when it comes to practical

⁸² *Surat al-Qasas* (The Stories): 26, <http://quran.com/28>

⁸³ Fahmi Huwaidi, *Al-Islam wa al-Dimuqratiyyah* (Islam and Democracy) (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahram li al-Tarjamah wa al-Nashr, 1993). See also Hasan al-Turabi, "Shura and Democracy: Dilemmas of Terminology and Concept," *Al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi Journal*, issue 75, May 1985, p. 13. (in Arabic)

measures. Hamas has adopted this principle, even when there is a possibility that the opinion of the minority is the right thing in rare occasions. Mahmud al-Khalidi states, “The principle of majority rule is a manmade rule, not a fixed Islamic principle.”⁸⁴ But the issue in practice for Hamas is not about right and wrong, or the Islamic merits of the principle or its manmade nature, because right and wrong in issues that have room for opinion is a relative matter, linked to achieving interests, and simplifying the mechanisms for decision-making, because full consensus is almost impossible and does not work as a mechanism for decision-making.⁸⁵

Hamas adopts the principle of majority rule in its internal elections and in making many other decisions and procedures. Hamas accepts this principle also in general elections, and the administration of legislative and trade union councils, and accepts the idea of a referendum on issues that require it.

4. The Principle of Separation of Powers

One of the democratic principles and procedures is the separation of powers, executive, legislative, and judicial, from one other. The goal is to achieve justice and prevent tyranny and the predominance of the executive authority, the branch with the means and funds to dominate, over the legislative and judicial branches. To be sure, Islamic political thought has emphasized the importance of this principle; however, one might find differences among Muslim thinkers regarding the degree of separation, and whether it should be absolute or relative, i.e., attenuating.⁸⁶ For example, Rashid Ghannushi believes that separation of powers in Islam must take place on the basis of cooperation between the branches of power, rather than competition and conflict, because the entire state is an executive instrument subject to the authority of the entire nation.⁸⁷

We find that Hamas has two stances regarding the issue of the separation of powers: One at the general level in society, where it calls for the separation of powers to prevent tyranny, and the predominance of the executive branch over

⁸⁴ See Mahmud al-Khalidi, *Al-Dimuqratiyyah al-Gharbiyyah fi Daw' al-Shari'ah al-Islamiyyah* (Western Democracy in the View of Shari'ah) (Amman: Maktabat al-Risalah al-Hadithah, 1986), p. 131.

⁸⁵ See Jamal Mansur, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸⁷ Rashid al-Ghannushi, *Al-Hurriyyat al-'Ammah fi al-Dawlah al-Islamiyyah*, p. 247.

other authorities. Hamas does not reject the idea of cooperation among the branches of powers, and understands the responsibility of the state with all its branches, based on what is stated in the Palestinian Basic Law.⁸⁸ Hamas does not object to the implementation of the idea of cooperation mentioned by Ghannushi and Jamal Mansur.⁸⁹ Furthermore, Hamas's concept of opposition in partisan work and the PLC differs from the concept in the West. Hamas believes that opposition in Islam is obliged to cooperate with the executive branch of the ruling administration, in light of the verse, "*And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty,*"⁹⁰ because partisan opposition based on rivalry and nitpicking to topple the government and take its place weakens the state, and perhaps harms the interests of the people. This was the opinion of Ibrahim al-Maqadmah in his lectures. Hasan al-Banna, in turn, saw that rivalry among Egyptian parties stems from personal and partisan motives, leading him to personally reject partisanship in the era of decolonization.⁹¹

The second position has to do with the fact that the separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial branches is not entirely complete at the internal level in Hamas. However, the separation does exist. The powers available to the legislature and the judiciary are at an advanced state compared to other movements and parties similar to Hamas in the Arab and Muslim world. Moreover, these branches carry out their work in exceptional circumstances due to the Israeli occupation and siege at home, and because of the difficulties involved in work, movement, meeting (especially after the departure of Hamas from Syria) and making related security arrangements at home and abroad.

b. Political Pluralism

Difference is a universal law. Political pluralism is an expression of the principle of difference, and the organization of differences in society.⁹² For Muhammad Salim al-'Awwa, difference is taken as a given, because it is a reality that no

⁸⁸ 2003 Amended Basic Law, Article 2.

⁸⁹ See Jamal Mansur, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁹⁰ *Surat al-Ma'idah* (The Table Spread): 2, <http://quran.com/5/2>

⁹¹ *Majmu'at Rasa'il al-Imam al-Banna*, p. 364.

⁹² See Muhammad Futuh, *op. cit.*, pp. 61 and 63.

sane person can deny. Having different opinions is an undeniable right.⁹³ Positive pluralism, so to speak, would have people of different views recognize one another, with the “will to coexist.”⁹⁴ When the will to coexist is absent, pluralism becomes something negative.

Yusuf al-Qaradawi divides differences into two parts: the first is one of diversity and the other is one of antagonism. The first does not entail a risk to the cohesion of society and the nation, because diversity leads to complementarity.⁹⁵ But antagonistic types of differences lead to fragmentation and dissent, which is a threat to the cohesion of the community. On the second type, Hasan al-Banna said, after witnessing partisan life in Egypt, “The [Muslim] Brothers believe that this partisanship has spoiled for people all the facilities of their lives, disrupted their interests, damaged their ethics, torn apart their bonds, and had the worst effects on their private and public lives.”⁹⁶ Therefore, Muslim thinkers surrounded pluralism and partisanship with guarantees that prevent abuses, and stop pluralism from turning into an antagonism that reason and religion both reject.

Yusuf al-Qaradawi believes that political pluralism prevents tyranny.⁹⁷ It is necessary to achieve many Islamic values like freedom, equality, and *shura*.⁹⁸ In pluralism, we can find a solution to the question of minorities, regulating differences and rights on the basis of citizenship, which means that the homeland belongs to all its citizens, all of them having equal rights.

There can be no democracy without political pluralism, and no pluralism without organized parties and regulatory laws. Parties in the democratic system have many tasks, whether the parties are in power or in the opposition. Yet despite its importance and role, there have been varied positions among Muslim thinkers. This difference in views does not stem from the principle of political-partisan

⁹³ See Muhammad Salim al-‘Awwa, Political Pluralism from an Islamic Perspective, *Al-Insan* magazine, Paris, year 1, issue 2, August 1990, p. 22. (in Arabic)

⁹⁴ See *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁹⁵ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fatawah Mu‘asirah* (Contemporary Islamic Religious Rulings) (Al-Mansura: Dar al-Wafa’ li al-Tiba‘a wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi‘, 1993), part 2, p. 658.

⁹⁶ *Majmu‘at Rasa’il al-Imam al-Banna*, p. 364.

⁹⁷ See Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *op. cit.*, p. 652.

⁹⁸ See Muhammad Salim al-‘Awwa, Political Pluralism from an Islamic Perspective, p. 56; and Abdul Raziq ‘Eid and Muhammad Abdul Jabbar, *Al-Dimuqratiyyah Bayna al-Islam wa al-‘Ilmaniyyah* (Democracy between Islam and Secularism) (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1999), p. 43.

pluralism, but rather stems from having a faction rejecting partisanship because of negative practice in their countries. Some of the proponents of this view might also adduce the fact that the Qur'an had criticized partisanship. However, this is not valid, because the Qur'an also praised it in other places. Furthermore, those rejecting partisanship did not dig deeper into the nature of what the Qur'an had criticized in this regard. To eliminate ambiguity, Muhammad Salim al-'Awwa, the Egyptian Islamist thinker, showed that the Qur'an's criticism was only of those parties based on idolatry, paganism, polytheism and enmity against Islam and the Muslims,⁹⁹ or those parties that spread fragmentation and vision as Hasan al-Banna stated. For this reason, Ishaq al-Farhan laid the condition that parties must not violate Islamic principles.¹⁰⁰

Yusuf al-Qaradawi defines a political party as: "A group of members who share certain ideas, and consider them the closest to the Truth."¹⁰¹ Al-Qaradawi requires parties to recognize other parties, and not to be established on regional, ethnic, or religious bases, or something similar.¹⁰²

Parties in the modern era constitute the most mature and most capable institution in society to lead and develop a democratic political system; they are the best equipped to interact with issues of democracy: such as elections and the rotation of power; fulfilling the principle of monitoring and accountability; and the organization of the parliamentary opposition. No one can imagine an effective political opposition emerging without strong parties. The absence of parties and a strong purposeful opposition equates to tyranny.

Communist parties are not considered a big problem for many Muslim thinkers in the democratic system when talking about partisan political pluralism, despite acknowledging the differences that exist between them. Both sides agree on the fundamentals of government, including that the nation is the source of power, and that the members of the nation exercise their powers using sound mechanisms including regular elections. Among those thinkers is Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Rashid Ghannushi, and al-'Awwa, "as long as this remains within the scope of the

⁹⁹ Muhammad Salim al-'Awwa, *Political Pluralism from an Islamic Perspective*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁰ See Ishaq al-Farhan, *The Islamic Position on Political Participation*, *Al-Nadwah* magazine, Amman, vol. 7, issue 1, February 1996, p. 240. (in Arabic)

¹⁰¹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *op. cit.*, p. 656.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 565.

freedom of expression.”¹⁰³ However, these parties can oppose the political position and the state, but must not preoccupy themselves with combating Islamic creed. Al-‘Awwa accepts that the communist party should take power if the nation grants it its confidence in free and fair elections, attributing this scenario to the failures of Islamic parties.¹⁰⁴

Hasan al-Turabi, the Sudanese Islamist thinker, probably speaking from the Sudanese experience, believes that there is no good in the emergence of atheist communist parties.¹⁰⁵ For his part, the Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, the Shiite religious authority, sees links between allowing their emergence and the international situation. For him, non-Islamic parties may emerge if the international situation or circumstances require it. In other words, he views it as a provisional matter.¹⁰⁶

The above shows the richness of Islamic political thought in its approach to the issue of political and party pluralism. However, we observe that there is want in Hamas’s intellectual approach of this issue. Hamas has dealt with it in a general manner and in broad terms, which we believe is due to Hamas’s preoccupation with liberation, and the search for a state. In addition, Hamas is satisfied with following the ideological lines of the leaders of the Islamic movement and thinkers like Hasan al-Banna, al-Qaradawi, al-‘Awwa, Ghannushi, Hasan al-Turabi, and others, and draws from their ideas without reservation, in a way that is commensurate with the Palestinian situation.

We do not find disparities between Hamas’s words and deeds on the issue of pluralism, and what has been quoted from the sources above. Accordingly, consideration could be given to these sources on the basis that they compensate

¹⁰³ Rashid al-Ghannushi, *Exclusion of Shari‘ah and the Islamic Ummah*, pp. 34–35.

¹⁰⁴ See Mustafa Mashhour et al., *Al-Ta‘addudiyyah al-Siyasiyyah: Ru‘yah Islamiyyah* (Political Pluralism: An Islamic Vision) (Cairo: Markaz al-Dirasat al-Hadariyyah, 1994) p. 54. See also Muhammad Khatami, *Religion and Democracy: Questions about the Religious State, Al-Muntalaq*, issue 115, Spring-Summer 1996, p. 54. (in Arabic)

¹⁰⁵ See Hasan al-Turabi, *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Sudan: Al-Tatawwur wa al-Kasb wa al-Nahj* (The Islamic Movement in Sudan: Evolution, Gains, and Approaches) (Khartoum: n.p., 1989), p. 245.

¹⁰⁶ See Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, *Ta‘ammulat fi al-Fikr al-Siyassi al-Islami* (Contemplations in Political Islamic Thinking), *Silsilat Kitab al-Tawhid (4)* (Kitab al-Tawhid Series (4)) (Beirut: Mu‘asasat al-Tawhid li al-Nashr al-Thaqafi, 1995), pp. 40–41.

for Hamas's lack of interest in political theory. But Hamas's Charter does tackle factional pluralism in its Islamic and national parts, stating that for the nationalist movements in the Palestinian arena, and given "due respect, and considering its situation and surrounding factors, Hamas will lend support to it as long as it does not give its loyalty to the Communist East or the Crusading West."¹⁰⁷

On the Islamic part, the Charter states:

The Islamic Resistance Movement regards the other Islamic Movements with respect and honor even if it disagrees with them on an issue or viewpoint. However, it agrees with them on many issues and viewpoints and sees in those movements—if they have good intentions which are purely for *Allah's* sake—that they fall within the area of *Ijtihad*¹⁰⁸

In these two texts, there are hallmarks of a political approach dominated by generalist ideas and moral vision, emphasizing respect and appreciation on two conditions:

First, that the other factions do not align with the eastern or western powers, without defining what its definition of alignment as that would prevent respect and appreciation, and how this would be expressed. This condition is clearer and more specific for Islamic thinkers, who rejected the emergence of atheistic communist parties because of their hostility to religion. This also conflicts with the prevailing view that accepts all parties and accepts that the communist party would take power if the nation chooses so in free and fair elections, something that is acceptable to Hamas founder Ahmad Yasin.

Second, there is the endeavor to liberate occupied lands. Liberation is a major idea in the philosophy of Palestinian pluralism, and for both resistance factions and political parties.

Hamas's Charter determines its position on what is already on the ground, more than on pluralism from a political-theoretical perspective, and its relation with democracy and tyranny. The same position based on "respect" is reiterated by Hamas leaders, including Ahmad Yasin, who says of the relationship between his group and Fatah, "We overcame our differences during the *Intifadah*, and

¹⁰⁷ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 25.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, Article 23.

Ijtihad: Creative self-exertion to derive legislation from legitimate sources. (I. Faroqui, Islamic English.)

joined into resistance, and collaboration returned... there are no differences now [i.e., clashes]. Differences exist over political matters: Oslo [Accords], Oslo's path, but for us as resistance factions, we have no differences or conflicts."¹⁰⁹

Palestinian society is not familiar with political partisanship in its political sense as is seen in the West or in stable countries, where the party is an organized group and a system that aims to take power by itself or in a coalition with other parties.¹¹⁰ Resistance action has overshadowed political theorizing and concerns. The PLO does not represent a real partisan-coalition phenomenon, but it is a representation of factions, based on quotas rather than program-based partisan competition.¹¹¹

Partisan life needs stability and public action, things that the Palestinian scene lacks. Because of resistance, Hamas like other Palestinian factions pursued secretive action, and many of its activities take place in the political underground. Hence, Hamas has defined itself as a resistance movement rather than a political party. In 1995, Hamas decided to establish a political party—The Islamic National Salvation Party—for objective reasons relating to the movement and to the environment created after the Oslo Accords, without there being a well-developed political life in Palestine, or laws that regulate political parties. It was established in the GS, and did not branch out to the WB by a decision of Hamas itself. Hamas, at the same time, did not give the party a broad and independent margin of action that would preserve its personality and progress. For this reason, it declined, and later on turned into a skeleton party. This was in favor of Hamas itself, something that could be understood as a negative retreat from the concept of political and party pluralism, at least by Hamas's rivals. Meanwhile, many Hamas leaders understood that the matter was not related to differences over pluralism, but that the idea was not ripe enough to make a decision on whether the party would be the façade of that pluralism, or Hamas itself should continue playing this role. The decision in the end was that Hamas should continue playing a political role, as most other Palestinian factions do.

It appears difficult for political parties to succeed when there are resistance factions seeking liberation. It is also difficult for resistance factions to give up their positions and roles in favor of political parties. For this reason, Fatah did

¹⁰⁹ Ahmad Mansur, *op. cit.*, pp. 249–250.

¹¹⁰ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *op. cit.*, p. 656.

¹¹¹ See Jamal Mansur, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

not establish a political party, even though some of its younger leaders called for it. It should be said here that the Islamic National Salvation Party, in its bylaws adopted in 1995, presented a more developed project for a party that went ahead of existing factions in regard to the concepts of democracy and party pluralism, which the bylaws said were “a right guaranteed to everyone in the framework of *Shari'ah* and law.”¹¹² Nevertheless, we can say two main things about Hamas and other factions:

1. Hamas and other factions undertake actions and policies that are the purview of political parties. For this reason, we can say that they fill a partisan vacuum with the Palestinian interpretation of the concept.
2. These factions are prepared organizationally to transform into political parties, when liberation is achieved and a stable independent state is created, creating a sound environment for a more developed partisan life.

The PA under Yasir ‘Arafat tried to make strides towards the establishment of a pluralistic partisan life though the Parties Draft Law of 1995, prepared by the Office of the Fatwa and Legislation.¹¹³ The Palestinian Basic Law identified the system of government in Palestine as “a democratic parliamentary system based upon political and party pluralism.”¹¹⁴ But the law in question has yet to be passed (end of 2012). This, in the opinion of the researcher, has to do with the lack of development of partisan life in Palestine, meaning: free and fair elections; the peaceful transfer of power; and the formation of the opposition, which engages in monitoring and accountability, and so on and so forth.¹¹⁵ This has led Jamal Mansur to conclude that there is something suspicious about the PA’s attitude on real partisan pluralism.¹¹⁶ Here it is worth mentioning some of the main barriers to political and party pluralism:

1. The factional and revolutionary political heritage, and its traditions that sometimes conflict with the requirements of partisan work, like quotas,

¹¹² See Islamic National Salvation party, *Al-Nizam al-Asasi*.

¹¹³ Office of Fatwa and Legislation, one of the institutions of the Ministry of Justice in the Palestinian National Authority, studies laws before approving them, and oversees the publication of *Al-Waqai' al-Filastiniyyah* magazine (Palestinian official gazette).

¹¹⁴ 2003 Amended Basic Law, Article 5.

¹¹⁵ See Jamal Mansur, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

historical leadership, political monopoly, and the absence of rotation of posts and political programs.

2. The overlap between liberation and nation building, and its impact on remaining hesitant about developing partisan life, in addition to the Israeli factor and the ambiguity of the stance of the Palestinian factions towards this issue.
3. The absence of a legal basis for organizing political life and the failure to pass a law on political parties. It follows from these obstacles that the ambiguity between the nature of resistance factions and stable political parties will continue to be prevalent during the current stage.¹¹⁷

Hamas addressed the barriers to political-partisan pluralism early on, calling for a real democratic system, political-partisan pluralism with regulatory laws, and for reinvigorating the power of the people through elections. In this regard, Ahmad Yasin said, “I want a multi-party democratic state, and power to be given to those who win the elections... even if the communist party should win, then I would respect the desires of the Palestinian people.”¹¹⁸ Yasin made those remarks in 1989, before the creation of the PA under the 1994 Oslo Accords. This was confirmed by Mahmud al-Zahhar, who said, “Hamas respects the opinion of the Palestinian street, even if it was contrary to its desires. But others must also respect the views of the Palestinian street, if it says yes to Islam.”¹¹⁹ Thus, we infer that Hamas accepts political pluralism without conditions, which is the view that many Muslim thinkers and scholars favored as detailed earlier.

‘Ali al-Jarbawi, professor of Political Science, believes that Hamas “has secured for itself a distinguished position in the Palestinian political landscape by accepting ideological pluralism in the Palestinian arena, and dealing with the latter on the basis of that reality, confirming its pragmatic approach.”¹²⁰

Hamas has considered political and party pluralism as an instrument to organize political and non-political differences and manage them by using peaceful democratic mechanisms. The movement confirmed in statements by its leaders

¹¹⁷ See *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Ahmad Yassin, *Annahar* newspaper, Jerusalem, 30/4/1989.

¹¹⁹ See Interview with Mahmud al-Zahhar, *Al-Watan* magazine, Gaza, 19/8/1995.

¹²⁰ See Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasah al-Siyasiyyah*, p. 238.

that it categorically rejects internal violence and political assassinations, calling on other Palestinian factions to treat it in kind. 'Abdul 'Aziz al-Rantisi, a leader and a cofounder of Hamas, said, "Hamas will oppose autonomy, but will not use violence against any party that chooses the path of self-rule, and it asks others to respect any faction that expresses its opinion... and respects other views. We have no qualms about cooperating with any other faction in a way that serves the Palestinian issue."¹²¹

Hamas's practical record has confirmed its acceptance of pluralism, its belief in national dialogue, and managing internal disputes by peaceful means, as Hamas entered into the Alliance of Ten Factions. When Hamas formed its cabinet in 2006, after winning the elections, it offered to include all Palestinian factions in the cabinet, including the Palestinian People's Party (PPP). Hamas continues to call for the formation of an expanded national coalition government, because the burdens of the Palestinian issue are too much for one faction, and therefore need everybody's concerted efforts.

Khalid Mish'al has previously stressed the special nature of the Palestinian situation, adding to the ideas of democracy and elections the notion of "partnership." He said:

Building institutions and national Palestinian reference frames should always be on democratic foundations, led by free and fair elections and equal opportunities. In addition, there is the principle of partnership and coalition-based work, because it is not right to make do with elections... partnership must be in all stages regardless of the odds for success.¹²²

c. Hamas and Human Rights and Freedoms

Among the basic principles of democracy is that of human rights and freedoms. This is the basis that modern Islamic thought launched itself from, in linking democracy to *shura*, where this basis enjoys or almost enjoys the unanimous endorsement of Muslim thinkers.¹²³ At the same time, one almost does not find

¹²¹ Interview with 'Abdul Aziz al-Rantisi, *Al-Fajr* newspaper, Jerusalem, 3/8/1992.

¹²² Working paper by Khalid Mish'al, presented at the conference titled: Islamists and Democratic Governance: Experiences and Future Directions, Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies, 6-7/10/2012. (in Arabic)

¹²³ See Muhammad Futuh, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

any disagreements between the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights, published in Paris in 1981, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by UN, concerning the human rights and freedoms.¹²⁴

The bulk of the rights stipulated in international conventions on human rights in general do not conflict with the rights and freedoms in Islamic law, according to the Egyptian Thinker Esmat Saif al-Dawlah.¹²⁵ Yusuf al-Qaradawi even believes that Islam was ahead of democracy, with the rules, principles, and rights it has enshrined.¹²⁶

Human rights are defined as: a set of natural rights that man possesses, which continue to be valid even if they are not recognized or were violated by a given authority.¹²⁷ Freedom is defined as: A person doing as he pleases while being responsible.¹²⁸ It is usually linked to the freedom of choice and bearing responsibility for it.¹²⁹

Protecting human rights and freedoms is “the basis of governance in Islam,” according to the Muslim Scholar Muhammad al-Ghazali. Because of this, they need political and legal guarantees to protect them from violation and tyranny. For this reason, democratic countries included these rights and freedoms in their constitutions. Muslim thinkers have continued to call for them.¹³⁰ The

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 166; and the site of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/#atop>

stating: the right to life, equality before the law, equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, the right to the protection of the law against arbitrary interference with one’s privacy, family, home or correspondence, or to attacks upon one’s honor and reputation, the right to freedom of movement and residence, the right to a nationality, right to marry and to found a family, etc.

¹²⁵ Muhammad Emara, *Al-Islam wa Huquq al-Insan: Darurat la Huquq* (Islam and Human Rights, Necessities not Rights), *Silsilat ‘Alam al-Ma’rifah (89)* (Alam al-Maarifa Series (89)) (Kuwait: Al-Majlis al-Watani li al-Thaqafa wa al-Funun wa al-Adab, 1985), pp. 37–39.

¹²⁶ See Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *op. cit.*, p. 638.

¹²⁷ See ‘Issa Bairam, *Al-Hurriyyat wa Huquq al-Insan* (Freedoms and Human Rights) (Beirut: Dar al-Manhal al-Lubnani, 1998), pp. 13–14.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.

¹²⁹ See Muhammad Salim al-‘Awwa, *Political Pluralism from an Islamic Perspective*, p. 24.

¹³⁰ See Muhammad Qutb, *Khutab al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali fi Shu’un al-Din wa al-Hayat* (The Sermons of Sheikh Muhammad al-Ghazali in the Affairs of Religion and Life) (Cairo: Dar al-I’tissam, 1986), p. 119.

Palestinian Basic Law devoted its second section to the issue of rights and freedoms in article 9–34.¹³¹

Islamic thought is distinguished from democracy in its approach to human rights and freedoms, which it considers “duties” that cannot be waived, and rejects violations against them. Islamic thought links them to the implementation of religion, because some of these rights and freedoms are linked to physical and mental health first, and worship second. By contrast, human rights and freedoms have the power of law in the West. They are not only basic values to build society but also political demands.¹³²

Hamás sees these rights and freedoms as values that must be respected by both the authorities and society. Muhammad Salim al-‘Awwa believes that defending human rights and freedoms is a threefold duty in Islam:

1. Promotion of virtue and prevention of vice.
2. Cooperation in righteousness and piety.
3. Fighting injustice.¹³³

These three dimensions are the basis of Da‘wah (preaching about Islam) and political work of Hamás. They are both an individual and a collective right. Ibrahim al-Maqadmah says, “Every person can say the truth and not fear any blame, and the ruler must heed the truth and defer to the truth.”¹³⁴

Some thinkers divide human rights to three sections:

1. Political rights and freedoms.
2. Individual rights and freedoms.
3. The rights that are related to essential humanitarian, economic, and social needs.¹³⁵

Political rights and freedoms are a priority for thinkers and those who believe in these values, being an important part of personal freedoms that guarantees other freedoms. Political rights include the right to vote, freedom of speech, freedom

¹³¹ 2003 Amended Basic Law, Articles 9–34.

¹³² Muhammad Futuh, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

¹³³ Muhammad Salim al-‘Awwa, *Al-Fiqh al-Islami fi Tariq al-Tajdid*.

¹³⁴ See Sharif Abu Shammaleh, *Al-A‘mal al-Kamilah li al-Shahid Ibrahim al-Maqadmah* (Complete Works of Martyr Ibrahim al-Maqadmah), (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), p. 470.

¹³⁵ Muhammad Futuh, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

of research, the right to a fair and impartial election held at reasonably frequent intervals, and the right to form unions and political parties, etc. They also include the right to hold public office without discrimination or exclusion, subject to competence.¹³⁶

Those who enjoy their political freedoms must also enjoy other rights such as education and securing the necessities of life, because there is a close relationship between what is personal and what is political.¹³⁷ Some have equated political freedom with democracy itself.¹³⁸ The enjoyment among the people of their rights and political freedoms would mean that they enjoy, therefore, their other rights, because conflict with authority lies in rights and political freedoms. To regulate the exercise of individual and public freedoms, Islam put forth several rules, including:

1. To avoid offending others.
2. Freedoms must not deviate from the provisions and boundaries of Shari'ah.
3. Required freedoms should aim to tell and defend the truth without slander.¹³⁹

Exercising these rights requires a delicate balance between the individual and the community on the one hand, and between them and the authorities on the other, in a manner that preserves the rights of individuals and groups, and preserves the role and prestige of the authorities.

We said that political freedoms guarantee other freedoms and rights. For this reason, Hamas focused on political freedoms, and resisted tyranny, suffering arrests and exclusion from public posts, despite the fact that its internal resistance was peaceful and non-violent. However, on a few occasions, Hamas was forced to defend its rights by force, happened on 14/6/2007.

Jamal Mansur says, "We are at the forefront of supporters of respect for human rights and securing those rights for all people, and to facilitate access to

¹³⁶ See Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Huquq al-Insan Bayna Ta'alim al-Islam wa I'lan al-Umam al-Muttahidah* (Human Rights Between the Teachings of Islam and the United Nation Declaration) (Cairo: Dar al-Da'wa, 1993), pp. 63–64; and Robert Dahl, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

¹³⁷ See Ahmad Mubarak, *Al-Islam wa Azmat al-Dimuqratiyyah* (Islam and the Crisis of Democracy) (Tripoli, Libya: Publications of Risalat al-Jihad, 1986), p. 56.

¹³⁸ See Muhammad Futuh, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

¹³⁹ See Bashshar 'Awwad Ma'rouf, Freedoms, Their Types, and Their Rules Under Islam, *Afaq al-Islam* magazine, Amman, year 2, issue 3, September 1994, p. 69. (in Arabic)

the exercise of freedom in the context of ethical and legal systems. Violation of rights and freedoms under any guise—even if it is Islam itself—disrespects humans.”¹⁴⁰

Hamas's view of human rights and freedoms is identical to that of the MB movement and modern Islamic thinking at large, which we have referred to previously. This view is based on two things: First, accepting universal principles and international conventions on human rights and freedoms, especially the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, because they agree with Islamic Shari'ah. For this reason, it has called on regimes and authorities to secure these rights for all people, without discrimination based on identity or religion. The second thing is that the exercise of human rights and freedoms has specific controls in Shari'ah and other laws, as mentioned above. The beneficiaries, whether they are individuals, groups, or authorities must comply with these regulations.

Hamas delved into democracy as a matter of human rights and freedoms, when it saw that Western societies were advancing towards justice, equality, and development thanks to the state of public freedoms, with members of society enjoying their human rights under the protection of a democratic state, and awareness of public opinion and its dominion. Meanwhile, Arab and Muslim societies lived under tyranny, authoritarianism, and rule by autocratic dynasties, where the authorities assault the rights of individuals and groups and their freedoms, suppress public opinion, and falsify the will of the people in the pro-forma elections that take place as a smokescreen.

Hamas's history is rich in resistance against the assault of ruling authorities on Palestinian human rights and freedoms. Hamas's literature is rife with calls for public freedoms, and the exercise of human rights in full, a position that can be seen in Hamas's attitude on the PLO and the Oslo Accords, and the PA's detention of Hamas leaders and cadres in 1996. The common denominator among these positions is that Hamas demanded its political and human rights in general, and the rights of Palestinians to be given by the PA, which shunned to those rights and demands and resorted to violence and repression. Hamas remained committed to the principles of peaceful advocacy for its demands.

¹⁴⁰ Jamal Mansur, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

We can also consider Hamas's resistance against the Israeli occupation from the standpoint of Hamas's commitment to its national rights and human rights endorsed by international conventions. Indeed, the Israeli occupation represents the most shocking model of cruelty in violation of Palestinian human rights and freedoms. The cooperation of Hamas and its government in the GS with the UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict that investigated war crimes during the Israeli aggression on the GS in 2008/2009, its acceptance of the report (aka the Goldstone Report), and its request to the UN to implement its provisions, were evidence that Hamas is committed to human rights, and accepts international conventions governing such rights.

Those interested in identifying Hamas's attitudes on human rights and public freedom, particularly political freedom, must track Hamas's record from the days it was a *Da'wah* movement in the 1970s, through to when it participated in the first *Intifadah* in 1987, and later when it took part in the political process and elections in 2006.

In the first stage, Hamas adopted the principles of the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice, cooperation in righteousness and piety, and fighting injustice, as fixed bases and mechanisms to defend human rights and freedoms in the face of tyranny.

In the second stage, Hamas combined *Da'wah* in the Palestinian interior, and popular and military resistance against the Israeli occupation, in fulfillment of these rights.

In the third stage, Hamas participated in the political process and elections on the basis of a political platform whose essence was promoting freedom and human rights. Its tenure in power and the premiership saw some progress in human rights issues, and cooperation with civil society organizations, despite the difficult circumstances in which it was forced to operate.

Ibrahim al-Maqadmah calls on the PA to give the people real freedoms, and says, "We want real freedom of opinion to prevail among us, as set forth by Islam under fair governance that would safeguard human rights, led by the right to human dignity. We want to have our own legal and judicial system, which is not polluted by whims and the contingent economic interests of a certain class."¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ *Al-Risalah*, 22/11/2011; and Sharif Abu Shammaleh, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

Al-Maqadmah was not comfortable with the work of the PA's institutions in that period, where institutions seemed a formality devoid of powers in tandem with the predominance of the security forces. Al-Maqadmah was one of those arrested and brutally tortured in 1996.

The experience of Hasan al-Banna when he ran for Egyptian parliamentary elections, the experience of the MB movement in Jordan and their participation in parliament and the government, and Hamas's experience in the 2006 elections, where it ruled in accordance with the Palestinian Basic Law, in addition to the participation of the Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt in the elections after the revolution of 25/1/2011 and the victory of Muhammad Morsi in the presidential election, are all proof that Hamas and the MB movement accept democracy and respect its mechanisms and institutions, and by extension, that they are committed to human rights and freedoms; they also reject some Salafi and extremist attitudes that proscribe democracy and elections.

Among the established principles for the MB movement and Hamas is that to protect human rights in the case of a dispute with the ruling authorities, the parties should resort to the constitution, the law, the parliament, the judiciary, or public opinion through peaceful means. Hamas's adoption of these measures means that Hamas recognizes that the nation is the source of power (when not inconsistent with the unequivocal texts of Islam), and accepts operating under the working mechanisms and institutions that were created by modern democracy, in defense of its rights, human rights, and public freedoms.

A quick look at Hamas's internal structure gives one a good idea about the democratic practice of the Hamas movement among its members. The movement has a leader, *Shura* Council, and administrative councils, as well as regional leaders. They all reach their posts through free elections, which are not accompanied by any nomination or campaigning according to Hamas's internal electoral law. Voters enjoy all their organizational and human rights, and their freedoms with equality and justice in accordance with the regulations prescribed by the *Shura* Councils.

Actually, the 2011 amendments of Hamas's internal law adopted the principle of rotation of power at the organizational level, where the regulations give the leader a maximum of two four-year terms, a central principle in democracy. Hamas has turned away from the view of a group of thinkers who believe that the leader in the Islamic system should rule for life. Hamas's practical applications show that

it accepts what Islamic thinkers wrote about democracy and *shura*, and hence, has exhibited no dichotomy between theory and practice except in special cases.

In Hamas's literature, there is a lot of talk about justice and equality among people, regardless of religion, gender, or color. Hamas views this as values linked to religion and human rights. Its perception of justice and equality is imbued with a political stance in dealing with the international community and UN institutions, where Hamas complains of Western and Security Council bias for Israel. The most important reservation Hamas has on Western democracy is the absence of justice and equality in issues related to Palestinian rights and the conflict with the occupation.

Seventh: Hamas and the Rights of Minorities

Historically speaking, there is no sectarian problem in Palestine, neither before the occupation of Palestine nor after. There have been no problems caused by the presence of religious or ethnic minorities in the history of Palestine, where the relationship between the Christian community and the Palestinian Muslim majority is based on tolerance and co-citizenship. All people in Palestine have equal rights and duties.

Khalid Mish'al says, "We deal with Christian brothers as an essential component of the people and the homeland, and an active part in the fight against occupation, away from considerations of who is Muslim and who is Christian. We are partners in the homeland, and everyone has rights and responsibilities."¹⁴²

Christians in Palestine do not constitute their own political party or resistance factions. They are present in all Palestinian factions, especially the DFLP and PFLP, as well as the Fatah movement. Some Christian leaders assumed important posts in the PA and the inner sanctum of Yasir 'Arafat and the PLO.

Because Hamas is an Islamist movement and a national liberation movement, it has paid considerable attention to Christians and others, setting forth its position

¹⁴² Interview with Khalid Mish'al, *Assabeel*, 23/8/2010.

in this regard in its Charter, stating, “The Islamic Resistance Movement is a humanistic movement that takes care of human rights and follows the tolerance of Islam with respect to people of other faiths. Never does it attack any of them except those who show enmity toward it or stand in its path to stop the movement or waste its efforts.”¹⁴³

In reference to historical co-existence and tolerance in Palestine, the Charter says, “In the shadow of Islam it is possible for the followers of the three religions— Islam, Christianity, and Judaism—to live in peace and harmony, and this peace and harmony is possible only under Islam: The history of the past and present is the best written witness for that.”¹⁴⁴

Hamás is not hostile to Jews because of their religion and their beliefs, but is only hostile to those who assaulted and occupied Palestine, and forcibly expelled Palestinians from the land. Indeed, Hamás's position is not related to “creed” as much as to confronting the assault.¹⁴⁵ Hamás therefore does not take a position hostile to anyone based on their creed or ideology, but only against those whose creed and ideology turns into aggression and assault, and therefore stresses that the conflict with Zionism is cultural.

Khaled Hroub identifies what can be termed the specific political principles governing Hamás's relationship with Christians, including:

1. Christians in Palestine are an integral part of the Palestinian people, the Arab nation and its cultural identity.
2. Christians have the same civil rights as the rest of the Palestinian people and the Arab nation.
3. Reminding them of the importance of their bond to their land and holy sites based on religious and national perspectives.
4. Emphasizing the importance of their participation in political life and the struggle of the Palestinian people in the period of the occupation and after liberation, and working to inducing them into national action and institutions.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 31.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Article 6.

¹⁴⁵ Khaled Hroub, *Hamás: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasah al-Siyasiyyah*, p. 152.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

Membership of the Islamic National Salvation Party, Hamas's political arm, is open to Christians on the basis of co-citizenship. In 2006, Husam al-Tawil, a leading Christian Palestinian figure, won on Hamas's electoral list, and Judah Georges Morqos, a Christian from Bethlehem, joined the Hamas-led government under Isma'il Haniyyah in 2006. In general, Hamas's commitment to defending the rights of Christians in Palestine is based on two foundations, one religious and another democratic.

An evaluation of the presence of minorities in senior positions and the PLC reveals that they are actively present in official and popular positions, beyond their demographic representation. Representation in the PLC is guaranteed under the quota system for Christians and Sumerians, while posts are open to them like all other sectors of the population. For this reason, they have a double chance.¹⁴⁷ Jamal Mansur believes that the quota system enshrines sectarianism and conflicts with democracy, but accepts it because the Christian community accepts it, and feels it is fair.¹⁴⁸

If we return to the program of the Change and Reform bloc, which represented Hamas in the PLC, we find that item No. 10 of the internal policy calls for "respecting and ensuring the rights of minorities in all fields on the basis of full citizenship."¹⁴⁹ The program calls for "preserving the Palestinian Islamic and Christian endowments and protecting them from assault and tampering..."¹⁵⁰ This is a very important appeal in the face of Israeli aggression against the rights of Muslims and Christians through acquisition, Judaization, and confiscation of their properties, especially in Jerusalem.

The program also calls for "justice and equal opportunities for all citizens in hiring, employment, and promotion."¹⁵¹ These principles cover minorities necessarily. Despite the fact that Israel is the one summoning and exploiting religion in the conflict, Hamas does not view religion as the creator of the conflict and resistance, but rather the occupation. Khalid Mish'al says, "We do not fight

¹⁴⁷ Jamal Mansur, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁴⁹ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006, p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

the Zionists because they are Jews, but we fight them because they are occupiers. The reason behind our war with the Zionist entity and our resistance against it is the occupation, not the difference in religion.”¹⁵²

Hamas's commitment to the rights of minorities is part of its commitment to human rights in general, as established by Shari'ah and international conventions. Its commitment is reinforced by the fact that Palestinian are the people in the world most affected by occupation and violations of human rights, while lacking the sort of international protection of their rights enjoyed by others in the world.

¹⁵² Interview with Khalid Mish'al, *Assabeel*, 23/8/2010.

Chapter Three

*Hamas' Conceptualization of the Other
Its stance towards Judaism, Jews, Zionism, Zionists
and Israel*

Prof. Mustafa Abu Sway

Hamas' Conceptualization of the Other

Its Stance Towards Judaism, Jews, Zionism, Zionists and Israel

Introduction¹

Is there a connection between conflict and the creation/ spread of stereotyped images about certain groups or parties? Does every time a religious, ethnic or national entity is mentioned critically or negatively constitute a demeaning narrative? Is there a possibility of objective criticism of these cases? One thing seems to be universal; every community suffers from cruel and denigrating narratives, which continue to fuel conflicts.

As for the choice of the term “Judeophobia” or the “fear of Jews” instead of “anti-Semitism” in this paper, for the most part, it is because Arabs are Semites, although beyond the oneness of humanity, almost everything else is a “social” construct, including colonial anthropological racial categories. The statement that “color is skin deep” might still have some negative connotations because there is an assumption that “skin color” is not appreciated in all cases, and that one could only recognize the equality of human beings beyond the skin façade. The Qur’an goes one step further by declaring these colors as positive signs from *Allah*, and as signs positively pointing to Him:

*“And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge.”*²

The Qur’an invites people to celebrate these differences. No one is superior because of her genome. Speaking from an Islamic perspective, all “skins” being equal, only faith and moral action can make a difference. How could one discriminate against another or persecute someone else because of her physical appearance, including imagined and constructed appearance (as in stereotyped images) let alone committing the heinous crime of massacres and genocide?

¹ Although this introduction seems to be relatively long, and does not serve directly the purpose of this research, the writer believes that it is very important to understand the points in question.

² *Surat Ar-Rum* (The Romans): 22, <http://quran.com/30>

One has to be objective in assessing this sensitive topic; there should be no double standards when addressing the same phenomenon. This paper will address Hamas' narrative vis-à-vis Judaism, Jews, Zionism, Zionists and Israel. I will try to deconstruct or respond to major "Judeophobic" statements when possible, with these responses being based primarily on Islamic sources and principles, and a deep understanding of the Palestinian context in which such statements are constructed.

We shall begin with two examples, one "Islamophobic" or "fear of Islam" and the other "Judeophobic," simply to show that these two narratives are similar as they dehumanize and demean the other:

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, spiritual leader of the Shas party, the largest ultra-Orthodox Israeli political party, declared on August 2000 that [at the time] Prime Minister Ehud Barak has "no sense" because he is trying to make peace with the Palestinians, who are "snakes." Yosef was speaking in his weekly Saturday night sermon broadcast over the party's radio stations and is even beamed overseas by satellite. Yosef, who ordered Shas to quit the coalition with Prime Minister Barak as the latter was leaving for Camp David's summit to hold negotiations with the Palestinians, described the Arabs as "snakes" interested mainly in murdering Jews. Yosef wondered "What kind of peace is this?" "Will you put them beside us? You are bringing snakes beside us. ... Will we make peace with a snake?"³

A preacher delivering the Friday sermon at al-Jami' al-Kabir mosque in the city of Khan Yunis, in the Hamas controlled GS, which was aired on Al-Aqsa TV on 24/2/2012, a media outlet that must be associated with Hamas on one level or the other, said about Jews: "A bunch of the grandchildren of the apes and pigs."

As for Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, his theology of exploitation vis-à-vis Gentiles (a category that includes Palestinians) is that they were "born to serve Jews" and that "Goyim have no place in the world only to serve the People of Israel."⁴

The Muslim Imam's anti-Jew position is a constructed phrase that distorts and betrays the Qur'anic message, such as in the following verse:

³ Site of ABC News, 6/8/2000, <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=96252>

⁴ *Haaretz* newspaper, 20/10/2010.

“And you had already known about those who transgressed among you concerning the Sabbath, and We said to them, ‘Be apes, despised’.”⁵ The context for this Divine punishment is upholding the sanctity of the Sabbath. Muslims also have their “mini-Sabbath”; they are also required not to do business during the Friday prayer,⁶ and those who violate this Divine commandment obviously did not benefit from the story about transgressing on Sabbath in the Qur’an.

One can add that this Imam’s statement is a direct and stark negation of the status bestowed on humanity, which *Allah* dignified:

“And We have certainly honored (karramna) the children of Adam....”⁷ Furthermore, the Qur’an addresses all mankind saying:

“O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.”⁸

This behavior of the Friday preacher reflects part of folk literature, widespread among Arabs and Muslims, which means to belittle the status of Jews as a reaction against the attacks perpetrated by the Israeli occupation and its usurpation of the Palestinian people’s land and rights. But it does not accurately reflect the understanding of the Islamic Shari‘ah (Islamic law), which treats Jews as People of the Book, who have their own rules and precepts, including citizenship, protection and full civil rights. It is also known among Muslim scholars that those of the children of Israel, who, because of their sins, were transformed into monkeys and pigs, died and left no children or grandchildren.

“That you may know each other” (*lita‘arafu*) became the banner that many prominent contemporary Muslim scholars raised as the antithesis of Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations*, a thesis that saw a future engulfed in a clash based on cultural differences, rather than economic and material resources, including land clash. The latter is usually occupied and confiscated to the detriment of indigenous people, such as the Palestinians who include indigenous Jews,

⁵ *Surat al-Baqarah* (The Cow): 65, <http://quran.com/2>

⁶ *Surat al-Jumu‘ah* (The Congregation, Friday): 9, <http://quran.com/62>

⁷ *Surat al-Isra’* (The Night Journey): 70, <http://quran.com/17>

⁸ *Surat al-Hujurat* (The Rooms): 13, <http://quran.com/49>

Christians and Muslims. “That you may know each other” is understood as the norm where different people are invited to subscribe to *convivencia*, to live in peace and harmony together and not to despise each other.

The Qur’an, furthermore, designates a special status for the People of the Book, a beautiful affirmative action that manifests itself in social and economic openness and, most importantly, confirming the original theological common roots of all revelations, despite the fact that the post-revelational constructs put by the scholars of each faith took Jews, Christians and Muslims in different directions. Vagaries of transmission coupled with human subjectivity increase the distance between the various communities and produce new collectives.

The essential story of Jewish suffering in modern times is European per se. Karl Marx writing about the Jewish question reflects the unwelcoming ethos that prevailed in Europe. The pogroms in Russia and the publication of the so called *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were clearly Judeophobic, and the latter generated or provided support for fraudulent theories of an international Jewish conspiracy, with the underlying message denouncing Jews as disloyal citizens. The “voelkisch movement” which included German intellectuals and reject what is foreign, viewed the Jewish spirit as alien to Germandom—shaped a notion of the Jew as “non-German.” They considered Jews as outsiders.

This is similar to the “Islamophobes” in the US who portray US Muslims as disloyal citizens who have a conspiracy to rule the US (and Canada and Europe) and along with them Arabs and Palestinians who are considered as “outsiders” and savages who are not compatible with the civilized west. The “Islamophobes” vilify all the key words pertaining to Islam, including Shari‘ah (Islamic law) are doing to the Muslims exactly the same thing that was done by the authors of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and members of the “voelkisch movement” to the Jews. What else one would make out of Robert Spencers’ *The Truth about Muhammad: Founder of the World’s Most Intolerant Religion*, and *Stealth Jihad: How Radical Islam is Subverting America without Guns or Bombs*. Pamela Geller co-founded the “Stop the Islamization of America” with Robert Spencer, and campaigned against Park 51 Islamic community center in New York, near Ground Zero. In the aftermath of the massacre (77 total killed) committed by Norwegian terrorist Behring Breivik, Geller said that the camp were the youth who were killed gathered was an anti-Israel indoctrination center. Behring Breivik praised Pamela Geller’s blog in his manifesto. This shows the direct influence of “Islamophobes”

over the minds and souls of many people. Britain just banned Geller and Spencer by the Home Secretary's Office from entering the United Kingdom (UK) because their presence "is not conducive to the public good."⁹

The rise of Nazis to power in Germany signaled trouble to Jews who began to lose their citizenship rights and privileges, only to be followed by Kristallnacht (The night in which the windows of Jewish-owned stores were smashed) on 9–10/11/1938, resulting in hundreds of damaged synagogues, thousands of homes and businesses, many deaths and the incarceration of thousands of Jews. The worst was yet to come; the Jews (and the Polish and the gypsies...) suffered from pre-planned and systematically carried out genocide. The Jews should have been protected from the Nazis, but the powers that could have made a difference didn't act immediately.

One of the most important and difficult issues when one is discussing modern Jewish suffering is the shift to the root of contemporary Palestinian suffering at the hands of Zionists and those who support them. But who are their major supporters? On 22/2/2013, Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor of *Tikkun Magazine*, commented on Uri Avnery's article, *The Fantasy of an American Peace Initiative to end the Israel/Palestine struggle*, he said:

The Israel Lobby is not primarily AIPAC [The American Israel Public Affairs Committee] and the Jewish world, but the tens of millions of Christian Zionists who mistakenly believe that the best way to be friends with the Jewish people until Jesus returns and forces all Jews to convert or go to suffering eternally in hell is to give a blank slate of approval to whatever the Israeli government decides to do, including holding on forever to its Occupation. AIPAC takes the credit (or blame) for its hold on American foreign policy, but the Christian Zionists are the ones who deliver the Congress for Israel (and even J Street, the well-intentioned voice of some liberal Jews, often ends up being so concerned to prove its pro-Israel credentials that it doesn't often stand up to the clammer from AIPAC and the Christian Zionists, and instead lobbies for the aid package for Israel to NOT be conditional on ending the Occupation).

Beginning with the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897, the 200 western Zionist delegates who arrived in formal dress, tails and white ties, along

⁹ *The Washington Times* newspaper, 27/6/2013.

with ten non-Jews, began working on the establishment of a Jewish nation-state in Palestine. The Zionist's influence over Britain was reflected with the iconic Balfour Declaration on 2/11/1917:

His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing *non-Jewish communities* (emphasis is mine!) in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

It is this denial of the indigenous Arab Palestinian people of the Land of Canaan and reducing them to the nameless "non-Jewish communities" that continues to be the core issue. Forgotten are old Jericho, the first city in the world dating back 10 thousand years ago, and Jebus, the city of Arab Canaanites before the old and new testaments were revealed, which is being reproduced as the City of David. But even if there were no Palestinians in existence except for Ghassan Kanafani, who would write in 1969 "*Return to Haifa*" in which he reflects the complexity of the *Nakbah*, the Palestinian catastrophe, that is still unfolding since 1948, he would have qualified as a people and not as a non-Jewish community!

And the Palestinians fell under the colonial British Mandate that prepared the ground for the establishment of Israel. The Palestinians were ethnically cleansed and forced to exile and massacred, as in Deir Yassin and other places, paving the way for demolishing and wiping out more than 400 Palestinian villages off the map. Mosques and Churches were destroyed or desecrated. Moreover, about 800 thousand Palestinians out of 1.4 million Palestinians (57.1%) were expelled from their land during the 1948 war. The ethnic cleansing continues but this time using laws that target the Palestinians. Israel admitted revoking the ID's of tens of thousands of Palestinians since the 1967 war until now. East Jerusalemites continue to suffer from this policy. In 2008 alone, 4,577 Palestinians from East Jerusalem lost their ID's and they were expelled from the city of their birth. They can only visit now as tourists, if the Israeli Authorities grant them visas at border crossings.

A Peruvian church that was converted to Judaism and subsequently "returned" as part of the "Aliyah" to Palestine, ended up settlers in the WB!¹⁰ Native Americans replacing native Palestinians! What a *chutzpah*?

¹⁰ *How 90 Peruvians became the latest Jewish settlers, The Guardian newspaper, 7/8/2002.*

The Zionist project led to the emergence of many Palestinian resistance movements and parties. While the right to resist occupation is entrenched in International Law, not every action against it is legitimate and not every narrative is acceptable. This paper deals with the latter. It does not claim to be comprehensive covering all statements and narratives attributed to Hamas or its leaders.

The Charter of Hamas

Dr. Ahmad Yusuf, the former adviser of Isma'il Haniyyah who is the head of the government ruling the GS, wrote an article in Arabic titled "*Mithaq Hamas... Al-Waqi' wa al-Ro'yah wa al-Riwayah*" (The Charter of Hamas... The Reality, the Vision and the Narrative).¹¹ Yusuf began his article by stating that Israel accuses Hamas with being anti-Semitic and that Israel employs certain parts of the Charter out of context. He said that it was written under exceptional circumstances in 1988 as a response to the Israeli occupation, and that its wording was not scrutinized enough and that it reflects the opinion of only one scholar who was the author. He added that Hamas's leadership discussed modifying the Charter in the 1990's, but they decided against the change for fear of being compared to Fatah faction, therefore, being construed as making concessions [to Israel]. The alternative to modifying it was the political platform of the "Change and Reform" bloc, which ran for the PLC elections in 2006, which Yusuf described as pragmatic. It reflected political openness, including the acceptance of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, therefore bypassing the Charter. From his perspective, the Charter is a historical document, not a constitution that Hamas has to abide by. The ethos of his article could be detected in his statement: "Our people never denied one day that Jews and Christians form one component of the Palestinian people, and that its land is historically the land of all the prophets". He affirmed, despite the accommodation of certain religious dimensions, that the "current struggle against the occupation is political." The latter statement should be compared to the introduction of Hamas Charter in which it was said that "Our battle against the Jews is very big and dangerous."

¹¹ *Al-Quds* newspaper, Jerusalem, 12/1/2011.

The Charter of Hamas was adopted by its administrative office inside Palestine in 1988, but it was neither adopted officially by its *Shura* Council, nor inside or outside Palestine, knowing that the *Shura* Council is the only body legally authorized to adopt charters and legislations in Hamas. The Charter was respected by Hamas which de facto dealt with it, but at the same time bypassing it. One can say with a degree of certitude that for the last twenty years, some articles of the Charter have fallen out of favor. The narrative coming from some Hamas leaders, such as Khalid Mish'al, has become more sophisticated. In an article that was published by *The Guardian* on 31/1/2006, Mish'al said:

Our message to the Israelis is this: we do not fight you because you belong to a certain faith or culture. Jews have lived in the Muslim world for 13 centuries in peace and harmony; they are in our religion 'the people of the book' who have a covenant from *Allah* and His Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him) to be respected and protected. Our conflict with you is not religious but political. We have no problem with Jews who have not attacked us—our problem is with those who came to our land, imposed themselves on us by force, destroyed our society and banished our people.

It is true that essentially the Israeli Zionists are Jews, but a generalization concerning the Jews would be a fallacy. There are Jews who are anti-Zionists such as the Haredi or ultra-Orthodox Neturei Karta, and there are their equivalent ultra-Orthodox, yet larger, Agudat Yisrael community, who are non-Zionists but not anti-Israel, and there are secular Jews who are post-Zionists in their worldview, and who seek to de-legitimize the Zionist project as a colonial project. This also shows that to be anti-Zionist is not restricted to the Palestinians, not to mention the Syrians of the Golan Heights and others, who continue to suffer under Israeli occupation.

It should be noted that tolerant statements about Judaism and Christianity are not rare in Hamas literature. Article 31 of the Charter of Hamas states the following:

The Islamic Resistance Movement is a humanistic movement that takes care of human rights and follows the tolerance of Islam with respect to people of other faiths. Never does it attack any of them except who show enmity toward it or stand in its path to stop the movement or waste its efforts. In the shadow of Islam, it is possible for the followers of the three religions— Islam, Christianity and Judaism—to live in peace and harmony...¹²

¹² *Charter of Hamas*, Article 31.

Yet, in the presence of articles in the Charter of Hamas that do contain “Judeophobic” content, attention is diverted by the supporters of Israel and the Zionist project away from good statements that carry a positive humanistic approach. Thus, the Charter should be looked at in its totality. Article 32, for example, associates the Zionist project with the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Such Russian forgeries, as the so called *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* should never be part of any Islamic, Arabic or Palestinian narrative. In fact, it should not be part of any narrative at all, except when addressing modern Russian “Judeophobic” literature. Abdel Wahhab El-Messiri, the late Egyptian intellectual and one of the leaders of the Egyptian Movement for Change, *Kifaya*, in *Al-Protokolat, wa al-Yahudiyyah wa al-Suhyuniyyah* (The Protocols, Judaism and Zionism), reaches the conclusion that the *Protocols* are forgeries based on contextual and textual analysis, and that conspiracy literature is reductionist. He explains that the claim that the Jews maintain and inherit fixed unethical traits, generation after generation, is not compatible with Islam which considers virtue or vice a matter of choice and not a matter of inheritance. He also said that Zionism is rooted in anti-Semitism and western colonialism, and that “Judeophobia,” when translated into persecution, does help Zionism by driving Jews out of their home countries to end up as settlers in Palestine. Another point that el-Messiri puts forward in deconstructing the *Protocols* is that the false claim of Jewish powers plotting to control the world fails to recognize the enormous and comprehensive support that Zionism gets from the US.

It seems that the *Protocols* were part of the discussion between Hamas and a delegation of American “personalities” in Beirut. In what appears to be a good gesture, Musa Abu Marzuq, one of Hamas’ top political leaders, said that Hamas agreed to remove the *Protocols* from its website.¹³

Yet, not all of Hamas leaders are keen to address “Judeophobic” narratives. On 2/3/2009, Al Jazeera program *Akthar min Ra’i* (More than One Opinion) interviewed Sami Abu Zuhri, a Hamas leader, Palestinian Ambassador to the UK Manuel Hasassian and Martin Linton, chair of the Labour Friends of Palestine & the Middle East. Regarding the Charter of Hamas, four times in a row Sami Abu Zuhri dodged the question regarding the “Judeophobic” clauses (Article 22 was used as an example), shifting the narrative as much as he could away from the

¹³ *Al Bayan* newspaper, Dubai, 20/4/2005.

straightforward question. Hasassian's position is that there is a clear contradiction between the Charter and Hamas' pragmatic policies. Former MP Linton said that Hamas will do itself a favor if it reviews its Charter, which he said its principles include a lot of nonsense.

Yet, reviewing the Charter, though a necessity, does not seem possible anytime soon. Hamas leader Mahmud al-Zahhar, the former foreign minister in the Hamas-led government, said in an interview with the Jordanian newspaper (*Alghad*), one day after Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections in 2006, that "[Hamas] will not change a single word of [its] Charter."

Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, one of the founders and spiritual leader of Hamas, who was assassinated on 22/3/2004 by an Israeli helicopter gunship missile as he was wheeled from early morning prayers, mentioned the word *Israel* and referred in an interview with Al Jazeera on 29/5/1999 to Hamas operatives as "brothers entering Israel" during their operations, that he was "a human being acting against the occupation" but he also said that Izz al-Din al-Qassam, after whom the military wing of Hamas was named, "fought the Jews and the British." In reference to his prison wardens, he said that the "Jews did not choose" those who would accompany him in prison from amongst other Palestinian political prisoners. He needed personal assistance because he was quadriplegic. The use of this expression (i.e., Jews) is common among Palestinians and Arabs, and normally it is meant to define the intended party, and not as an insult to any particular religion or any particular people. Moreover, the use of the word "Israel" does not necessarily mean recognizing it as a legitimate entity; as the term is used among Palestinians and Arabs to define the intended party, for the benefit of the listener. However, it is useful for us to point out that the Palestinians and the others should select precise terms and synonyms that do not confuse Judaism with Zionism; while the Palestinian leaders can certainly make the distinction between the two if they need to.

In 2005, Isma'il Haniyyah said that "Hamas's struggle was restricted to the Zionist enemy, and not against the Jews in general."¹⁴ When Haniyyah was asked to form the new Palestinian government by President Mahmud 'Abbas, after Hamas won the PLC elections, he reiterated in several interviews with local and western media the position that Hamas harbors no animosity towards the Jews for just being Jews, and that it has no interest in sustaining the cycle of violence.

¹⁴ PIC, 4/7/2005, <http://www.palestine-info.co.uk/en/>

There is no doubt that pragmatic policies became the hallmark of Hamas's political platform and policies during its tenure in the Palestinian Government, and that the narrative of many Hamas leaders, evolved in directions that depart from its Charter. The head of the political bureau of Hamas, Khalid Mish'al, expressed in the same *The Guardian* article mentioned above his position regarding the relationship between the Holocaust and the creation of a state for its Jewish victims. Mish'al, who accepts a Palestinian state on the pre-1967 borders, pledged in the same article never to recognize the

legitimacy of a Zionist state created on [Palestinian] soil in order to atone for somebody else's *sins* [emphasis is mine] or solve somebody else's problem. But if [Israelis] are willing to accept the principle of a long-term truce, we are prepared to negotiate the terms. Hamas is extending a hand of peace to those who are truly interested in a peace based on justice.

Of interest is Mish'al's alluding to the Holocaust as "sins." As for Mahmud al-Zahhar, he explained in his book *La Mustaqbala bayna al-Umam* (No Future Among the Nations), a response to Benjamin Netanyahu's *A Place Among the Nations: Israel and the World*, the roots of the expulsion of Jews from all European countries over the past centuries "of their involvement in assassinating their Caesars and rulers, and for their spread of discord and hatred amongst all the peoples of the world." He also said that the Jews were the first ones to become anti-Semitic.¹⁵

The explanation of al-Zahhar is an inaccurate understanding of the European anti-Semitism, which has roots in Christian theological constructs about Jews being responsible for the death of Jesus Christ, something that the Qur'an denies categorically and provides an alternative narrative about what happened that could potentially help bridge a gap here. This constructed deicide led to the development of the "blood libel" myth in England during the middle ages. This "Judeophobic" myth accuses the Jews of using the blood of Gentile children for religious purposes. In Greece, the Easter ritual of "burning [the effigy] of Judas" is still taking place in numerous local ceremonies, which is sometimes described as the "Burning of the Jew." There are still people who believe that Jews drink the blood of Christians on Passover. Killing the Christian Lord by the Jews continued to be the Catholic official position until the declaration of the Vatican II Council "*Nostra Aetate*" in 1965, which abolished the collective responsibility of the Jews for the "Crucifixion

¹⁵ Site of Felesteen Online, 2/12/2010, <http://www.felesteen.ps/>

of Jesus.” Nevertheless, old theologically based anti-Semitism is still lingering around. This is the crux of the matter.

The Palestinian Information Center (PIC), providing an entry on Hamas on 15/9/2006, it cited Qur’anic verses advocating freedom of religion, justice and excellent relations with non-combatant non-Muslims.

Hamas respects the rights of the followers of the other monotheistic religions, and considers the Christians who reside on the land of Palestine as partners in the homeland; they were equally subjected to the same treatment at the hands of the Occupation Authorities, similar to their Muslim brethren, and they participated in facing the Occupation and confronting its Apartheid policies. They are part and parcel of the Palestinian people, entitled to having full rights and required to perform full duties.¹⁶

The following paragraphs in the same article speak about the “Hebrew State,” making sure that the word Israel is not used to delegitimize it. The same idea applies to the use of “Zionist enemy,” “Zionist presence,” “enemy,” “Zionist project,” “Zionist Occupation” and “fighting the Zionists until they leave Palestine the way they immigrated to it.”

The previous quotation, while mentioning “the other monotheistic religions” (the plural form is original), and while it mentions Palestinian Christians, it fails to mention Palestinian Jews. The Question is, is it Islamic to advocate a reversed ethnic cleansing of Jews in response to what had happened to Arabs in 1948, since the narrative does not make room for other solutions? Isn’t resistance primarily concerned with ending the Zionist project in Palestine and the occupation that favors one people over another?

Let us assume for one moment that the occupiers belonged to a fourth religious background (i.e., other than Judaism, Christianity and Islam), wouldn’t the Palestinian national narrative include Jews as part of the social fabric? Wouldn’t our events include a rabbi, a priest and a Sheikh, with all of them speaking the same language of unity?

It appears that the text referred to does not concern itself with the Jews in Palestine and their future, because it is preoccupied mainly with the mobilization against the Zionist project and Israel; and it does not want to enter into a debate

¹⁶ An Entry About Hamas, PIC, <http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/who/who.htm> (in Arabic)

about who is the Palestinian Jew and who is the Jewish immigrant, the colonizer, the usurper of rights, and whether he can have the same privileges if Palestine became liberated, or if the Zionist project in it ended.

The original "Palestinian Pan-Arab Charter" *Al-Mithaq al-Qawmi al-Filastini* (1963) stated that "Jews of Palestinian origin are considered Palestinians..." It was replaced in 1964 with *Al-Mithaq al-Watani al-Filastini* (Palestinian National Charter) of which article 7 was changed in 1968 (as a result of the 1967 war) effectively restricting Palestinian Jews only to those "who had resided in Palestine until the beginning of the Zionist invasion." This article was nullified, among many other articles that were considered not compatible with the Oslo Accords (Israel was not required to nullify any of its numerous racist laws), in 1996 by the PNC then in 1998 in the presence of US President Bill Clinton in Gaza.

"Judeophobia" is real, but working to eliminate it should not be used to silence legitimate criticism of Israel. A state is not a moral entity, and it should not be construed in this case as the "ultimate Jew." Nothing short of the end of Israeli Occupation will remove the structural violence that manifests itself in all sorts of policies and practices that breed misery and hatred.

The Charter of Hamas is not a revealed book, but it is a historical document that reflects (or reflected!) the thinking of someone or a group in Hamas. To distance Hamas itself from "Judeophobic" or anti-Semitic statements and to educate its rank and file about these sensitive issues is a moral issue. It does not mean that it has to accept injustices that befell the Palestinians, but it is a step in the right direction. This is not to please any one, but as a matter of compatibility with the nature and fundamentals of the Islamic understanding itself, on which Hamas relies.

Chapter Four

*Hamas Position Vis-à-Vis the Palestine
Liberation Organization (PLO) and Its Factions
[In particular Fatah, PFLP and DFLP]*

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Hamas Position Vis-à-Vis the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Its Factions

[In particular Fatah, PFLP and DFLP]

Introduction

When Hamas was launched in 1987, the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli occupation of Palestine entered a new phase. The launching of Hamas was considered a great boost for the Palestinian national movement. So it was only natural that Hamas should join the PLO, being one of the largest Palestinian factions and the most popular and influential. That is if the PLO was to really represent the Palestinian people, especially considering the fact that some of its factions no longer carried any real weight among Palestinians, not at home nor in the Diaspora. Furthermore, some members of its Executive Committee represented only themselves, and had almost no role in the popular national struggle.

The purpose of the founding of the PLO was to unify the ranks of the Palestinian people in a single organization, to enable them all to participate in the liberation of Palestine, occupied since 1948; and this was the organization's first milestone. The second milestone was the entry of Palestinian guerilla organizations into the PLO, after less than three years of its founding. So if Hamas (with PIJ at its side) were to join the PLO, this move would be the third major milestone; thereby the PLO would actually represent all segments of the Palestinian people.

The purpose of the founding of the PLO in 1964 was to work toward the liberation of Palestine, occupied in 1948. The reason for the entry of armed Palestinian organizations, led by Fatah and the PFLP, into PLO institutions, was to lend support to armed struggle as the right approach to liberate occupied Palestine. The call for Hamas to join the PLO came in the context of supporting the Palestinian national project that demands the liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea. This followed a decline of this rallying call following the signing by the PLO of the Oslo Accords in 1993, which reflected negatively on the PLO and

consequently it lost its mandate to represent the Palestinian people inside Palestine and abroad. Hamas still proposes the goal of the liberation of Palestine, the motto of the PLO at its founding and then its primary goal. Therefore, the probability of Hamas joining PLO institutions would represent the organization's third birth, according to a statement by Khalid Mish'al, head of Hamas political bureau in 22/12/2011. This asserts that Hamas is not against the PLO, but rather is against its political agenda; and that in the event of Hamas joining the PLO, this could lead to the re-drafting of the Palestinian national project on new foundations.

It must be noted at the outset that it is difficult to talk about Hamas's position vis-a-vis the PLO without an overlap occurring between this position and its position toward Fatah, the PA and other factions, such as the PFLP and the DFLP on the grounds that the officials in three of those organizations (PLO, PA and Fatah) represent the same political line and directions; in addition to the fact that the PFLP and DFLP are members of the PLO. That is why there may be some overlap when analyzing Hamas's positions toward the PLO, the PA and Fatah.

First: Hamas' Position Vis-à-Vis the PLO, Fatah and the PA

When the PLO was founded, its president, Ahmad al-Shuqayri, aspired to have the various Palestinian political currents and organizations represented within it; an aspiration he failed to realize. Guerilla organizations, such as the Fatah Movement and *Shabab al-Tha'r* (Youth for Revenge) (later PFLP), remained outside the organization until 1968 when all the Palestinian factions joined the organization and took control of it; but this was after Al-Shuqayri's resignation. However, the presence of all these factions in the organization did not lead to their agreement on a unified national program; as each of them kept its entity and program independent from that of the PLO; with Fatah controlling the organization and its national program. These factions failed to change the PLO's policies and political positions on different issues, for these reflected those policies of Fatah more than those of the other factions.

The disagreements between the PLO's leadership and Fatah, during the 1960s, were similar to those taking place between Hamas on the one hand and the PLO and Fatah on the other in recent years. They were due not only to contradictions in political stances regarding the peace process, the recognition of Israel, and the

agreements concluded with it that were signed only by the PLO and the PA, but also to the failure of the PLO in fulfilling its promises to the Palestinian people, and distancing itself from the fundamentals of the Palestinian issue. It is well known that, during the sixties, Fatah took control of the PLO, due to its raising of the flag of armed struggle against Israel, and its call for the removal of Israel by way of a popular war of liberation. The Palestinian people stood by them and by the other Palestinian organizations that called for armed struggle, and abandoned their support for the PLO leadership. Some even blamed Al-Shuqayri for the Arab countries' defeat, of which he was innocent. While he was the same person behind whom the Palestinian masses stood when he founded the PLO in 1964, and whom they supported during his visits to Palestinian refugee camps and gatherings in the Palestinian Diaspora. The support Al-Shuqayri enjoyed was transferred to the Palestinian organizations; at their head, the Fatah movement, which very skillfully used this support to control the PLO leadership, in what could be described as a bloodless coup. Fatah did not take leadership of the PLO through elections, but by sounding the call for of resistance, supported by the Palestinian and Arab masses. If elections had been held then, Fatah could have won a victory similar to the one secured by Hamas in the legislative elections of 2006.

Fatah was the harshest critic of the PLO leadership before it took control of the organization and waged a media war against it. In a program devised by Fatah under the title "The Movement and the Proposed Entity," it was stated that the Palestinian issue could only be solved militarily and by putting an end to the Arab trusteeship over Palestine. It also accused the PLO: "that it carries hollow mottos, that it is not revolutionary, and that it takes from the people without giving to them." On 9/12/1967, it distributed a memorandum at the conference of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo, in which it criticized the policies of Al-Shuqayri, and emphasized that "it trusts neither his person nor his actions." In recent years, this matter was repeated in a similar fashion when Hamas criticized the PLO and its political stances.

Fatah entered the fourth session of the PNC in 1968, and won 38 seats out of 100, the total number of PNC members at the time. It dominated the PLO with more than 55% majority, due to the support of a number of independent members. This is approximately the same ratio obtained by Hamas in the legislative elections held in the WB and the GS in 2006.

The relationship between Hamas and Fatah has been characterized by rivalry, distrust, and sometimes infighting. Since the founding of Hamas, there has been rivalry between the two; noting that both were working in the climate of the *Intifadah* (uprising) and the Palestinian popular resistance to Israeli occupation. The existence of two different programs for the two movements contributed to the heightening of the discord between them, because the program of Fatah and the PLO is primarily based on reaching the peace settlement plan through negotiations, and on working to establish a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders; this took formal expression in the Oslo Accords of 1993. While the Hamas program is based on the resistance approach, recognizing the futility of negotiations, and the rejection of the Oslo Accords and its consequences.¹

The essence of the dispute between Hamas and Fatah is the contradiction between their two plans; it is linked to the ideological points of reference of each and their reliance on different ideological and intellectual bases. Hamas proceeds from an Islamic reference with the belief that Palestine from the sea to the river is an Islamic *waqf* (endowments) land. While Fatah embraces peace settlement solutions that call for the two states' option in historic Palestine, and living side by side with Israel in comprehensive peace.² Hamas insists on the continuation of resistance and *Jihad* (military struggle), while the Fatah leadership has declared its renunciation of violence and armed struggle against Israel.

Among the other reasons that had affected the relationships between the two is Fatah's monopolization of power, Hamas's participation in the elections, competing with Fatah over this branch of authority, and Fatah's fear of the widening popularity of Hamas and the possibility of its supplanting Fatah as the most powerful domestic party. Hamas's position was consolidated by the failure of the negotiations between the leadership of Fatah (the organization) and Israel. Furthermore, despite the Israeli-imposed blockade on Hamas-controlled GS, Hamas managed to survive and had some great successes in repelling Israeli aggression against the GS.³

¹ 'Awwad Jamil Abed al-Khadir 'Awada, *The Problematic Relation Between Fatah and Hamas and its Impact on the Democratic Change in Palestine, 2004–2010*, Master Thesis, The Faculty of Graduate Studies, An-Najah National University, Palestine, 2011, pp. 117–130. (in Arabic)

² Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *The Experience of Dialogue Between Fatah and Hamas, Where is the Problem?*, site of Aljazeera.net, 4/9/2008, <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/C8518609-168D-49AE-A26F-E421CC9E75AB.htm#0> (in Arabic)

³ Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *The Violated Palestinian Legitimacy*, Aljazeera.net, 18/10/2008, <http://www.aljazeera.net/opinions/pages/4fc6f519-bb9a-495b-8fa2-97c27eab2f6> (in Arabic)

1. Evolution of the Relationship 1987–1993

In this period, Hamas did not preoccupy itself with becoming a substitute for the PLO; rather it hoped to provide the Palestinian struggle with fresh support after the PLO had moved away from the objectives for which it was established. It was difficult for the PLO to allow Hamas to join the organization without the PLO making major reforms that reflected Hamas's vision and its national project, and without conserving its true weight among the Palestinians in the organization and ending Fatah's monopoly over it. In many instances, the covert rejection and the stalling in admitting Hamas to the organization came from those dominating the PLO (Fatah) as well as from other factions, as they feared that Hamas joining the organization would come at their expense. That is why it was natural that, after Hamas had won the legislative elections, it should join the organization, providing it with weight and support rather than staying outside the PLO.

From the beginning, the question was whether Hamas actually wanted to join the PLO, or if it preferred to remain outside its institutions. In reality, and despite the ambiguity that accompanied Hamas's stance vis-à-vis the PLO during some intervals, it kept in touch with the PLO, even in the most difficult times when the positions of Hamas were far removed from those of the organization. Article 27 of the Hamas Charter, which deals with its relationship with the PLO, states the following:

The Palestine Liberation Organization is closest of the close to the Islamic Resistance Movement, in that it is the father, the brother, the relative, or friend; and does the Muslim offend his father, brother, relative, or friend? Our nation is one, plight is one, destiny is one, and our enemy is the same..... the position of the Islamic Resistance Movement toward the Palestine Liberation Organization is the position of a son toward his father, and the brother toward his brother, and the relative toward his relative. He will be hurt if a thorn pricks him; he supports him in confronting the enemy and wishes guidance for him.⁴

Some may criticize the Hamas Charter for its lack of clarity in defining its relationship with the PLO, because it does not explicitly recognize the organization as “the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people” as the PLO presents itself, and as it is recognized in the League of Arab States and the UN. The Charter

⁴ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 27.

describes their relationship as intimate, like that “of a son toward his father and the brother toward his brother.” Yet the dispute with the PLO is based on the grounds that it is a secular organization. The Charter states “we cannot exchange the current and future of Islam in Palestine to adopt the secular ideology.... When the Palestine Liberation Organization adopts Islam as its system of life, we will be its soldiers and the firewood of its fire, which will burn the enemies.” Thus we note the absence of an explicit position regarding the PLO representation of the Palestinian people.

With the start of the first *Intifadah*, a tense situation arose between Hamas and the PLO factions, which had formed a new coalition, called “Unified National Leadership of the Uprising—*Qawim* (UNLU)”⁵; as each side sought to prove its precedence and priority in leading the *Intifadah* through the communiqués issued by each. However, it is known that Hamas’s first communiqué in this *Intifadah* was issued on 14/12/1987; while the first communiqué by the UNLU was issued in early January 1988. According to a study by Yezid Sayigh, Fatah issued its first appeal in the name of the “Palestinian National Forces” on 8/1/1988, followed by a similar appeal by the PFLP two days later; while the first communiqué by the UNLU was issued on 16/1/1988.⁵ Also, a document published by the Palestinian News and Information Agency (Wafa) indicated that the second communiqué by the UNLU was issued on 10/1/1988, without providing the text and the date of the first communiqué.⁶

Almost a year after the Hamas Charter was issued, in an interview with *Filisteen al-Muslima* magazine, specifically in response to a question about Hamas recognition of the PLO as representative of the Palestinian people, Hamas Leader Ahmad Yasin made a distinction between the PLO as a national framework and the PLO as a political orientation and an existing structure. In terms of its goals and form, the PLO as a national framework was acceptable to Hamas, as stated in its Charter. As for the PLO as a political orientation “currently recognizing

⁵ Yezid Sayigh, *Al-Kifah al-Musallah wa al-Bahth ‘an al-Dawlah: Al-Harakah al-Wataniyyah al-Filastiniyyah, 1949–1993* (Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993) (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2002), pp. 859–860.

⁶ Al-Intifadah Communiqués, site of Wafa Info, <http://www.wafainfo.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=3973> (in Arabic)

Israel and the resolutions of the international legitimacy, it is rejected.”⁷ Hence, the dispute with the PLO is no longer based only on the grounds that it is a secular organization, but also on “its recognition of Israel.” The dispute had become wider; it had become one between two contradictory Palestinian projects: one adopted by the PLO in which it recognizes Israel in exchange for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the WB and GS, and another belonging to Hamas that calls for the liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea from the Israeli occupation.

Thus the decision of Hamas to join the PLO is not the outcome of current events, for it is an old decision. The factor that keeps Hamas from joining the PLO is the absence of an agreement on common understandings with its leadership on the terms of its joining. How will Hamas enter the organization? Will it enter it according to its political program or according to a different approach? What weight would Hamas carry in the organization? Also, what about the organization’s structure?

Apart from what is in the Hamas Charter regarding its relationship with the PLO, and through an analysis of statements and positions expressed by the movement’s leaders, it can be determined that Hamas’s position seeks to change the equation of the Palestinian National Project; through the adoption of another project that focuses on the resistance against Israel in various ways, that does not recognize Israel, and that rejects the concessions made by the PLO to it, including the Oslo Accord and its annexations.

In 1990, ‘Abdul Hamid al-Sa’ih, the speaker of the PNC, sent a formal invitation to Hamas to participate in the work of the preparatory committee of the council, at the time when the PLO was preparing to hold a new session of the PNC; but Hamas turned down the invitation. Instead, on 6/4/1990, it sent a note in which it stressed that elections and not appointments must be the primary means for selecting PNC members. And that if it became impossible to hold elections, the composition of the council should reflect the weight of the political forces on the ground. Hamas demanded the amendment of the Palestinian National Charter, in line with the doctrine of the Muslim Palestinian people and their genuine heritage. Hamas stressed the importance of national unity “at this critical juncture of our people’s struggle.” Adding, “That is why; we in Hamas open our hearts and souls

⁷ See Ibrahim Abrash, Political Participation in the PLO on the Basis of Commitment to Palestinian Nationalism, site of Al-Hiwar al-Mutamaddin, 12/11/2013, www.ahewar.org (in Arabic)

and extend our hands to coordinate with all Palestinian forces, sides and institutions in the interest of our people and our cause.”

Hamas laid down ten conditions for its participation in the PNC, which can be summarized in considering Palestine from the river to the sea and from the Negev to Ras al-Naqoura, one and indivisible, as the right of the Palestinian people; refusing to alienate any part of the land of Palestine; emphasizing the military option; considering *Jihad* the right way to liberate Palestine; refusing to recognize Israel; considering that the Palestinian issue belongs to the whole Arab and Islamic nation; renouncing all retreats, concessions and recognitions that are contrary to the rights, aspirations and sacrifices of the Palestinian people. Hamas demanded its rightful representation, proportional to its size and weight in all the PLO’s institutions and agencies; and to be represented in the council with a number equal to its weight on the ground, which, in its opinion polls, ranges from 40–50% of the PNC total.⁸

This means that Hamas was not against the PLO as a political framework that represents the Palestinians, but against any deviation from the basic charter of the PLO.⁹

Hamas’s offer faced rejection from the Fatah movement that was in control of the PLO and its institutions; they considered it overblown. It would have been possible for Hamas to agree to reduce the percentage of the representation it offered, had it felt assured of the political and resistance choices of the PLO and its leadership. However, the PLO leadership was primarily concerned with widening the circle of its popular representation, by assimilating Hamas, represented by an easily controlled small number that would not actually have an effect on Palestinian national decision-making.

Once again Hamas was invited to participate in the work of the preparatory committee, charged with proposing principles and criteria for the new PNC, prior to the convening of the council at its 20th session in September 1991. Hamas was invited to name its representative to the meetings, but declined the invitation

⁸ Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasah al-Siyasiyyah*, pp. 318–321; and Ibrahim Ghushah, *al-Mi’dhanah al-Hamra’: Sirah Dhatiyyah* (The Red Minaret: Memoirs of Ibrahim Ghushah) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2008), pp. 165–166.

⁹ ‘Awwad Jamil Abed al-Khadir ‘Awada, *The Problematic Relation Between Fatah and Hamas and its Impact on the Democratic Change in Palestine, 2004–2010*. (in Arabic)

in its letter of May 1991, stressing that the principle that democracy, and not appointment, should be the means for choosing PNC members.¹⁰

Hamas criticized the decisions of the PNC meeting in Algiers in September 1991, which approved participation in the Madrid Peace Conference. It felt that, in its formation, the PNC was not qualified to make momentous decisions, with the absence of a comprehensive representation of all Palestinian factions, including Hamas.

During this period, dialogues and negotiations took place between Fatah and Hamas, most notably the meeting that lasted three days during the period 10–12/8/1990, that is, one week after the occupation of Kuwait. The meeting was opened in the presence of Yasir ‘Arafat. Hamas had a major reason for attending this meeting, which was that Hamas prisoners in Israeli jails (they were few at the time) were being subjected to persecution by Fatah inside the prisons. Hamas wanted to agree on a formula to stop this persecution. As for Fatah, it wanted to extract from Hamas recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The meeting did not exactly succeed; however, during the next month, specifically on 21/9/1990, a “document of honor” or a “gentlemen’s agreement” was signed between Fatah and Hamas to coordinate their efforts in the face of the enemy, so as to promote national unity. Then another meeting took place after an intervention by the Sudanese President Umar al-Bashir and his call for Fatah and Hamas to meet in August 1991 at the Presidential Palace in Khartoum. At this meeting, several issues were raised, including support for the *Intifadah* and joining the PLO; the meeting ended without agreement.¹¹

In July 1992, serious clashes erupted between Fatah and Hamas in GS. Hamas accused Fatah of carrying out a failed attempt to liquidate it in GS. Eventually, the leaders of the two factions succeeded in containing these events and calming the situation.¹²

When the Israeli authorities expelled 415 prominent Palestinian symbols and figures from the WB and GS (among them, 385 Hamas activists) to Marj al-Zuhur in Southern Lebanon on 18/12/1992, the Hamas leadership met in Amman, and

¹⁰ Hafiz ‘Alawi and Hani Sulaiman, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

¹¹ Ibrahim Ghushah, *al-Mi’dhanah al-Hamra’*, pp. 184–185.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 196.

found it necessary to meet with Yasir ‘Arafat, to try to take advantage of the PLO’s international connections and secure the return of the expelled. A Hamas delegation, headed by Musa Abu Marzuq, went to Tunisia and over three days held talks focused on the deportees and methods to bring them home, on support and escalation of the *Intifadah*, and on the PLO and how Hamas could join it.¹³

On 2/1/1993, in Khartoum, capital of Sudan, a dialogue was conducted between a Fatah delegation, headed by Yasir ‘Arafat, and a Hamas delegation, headed by Musa Abu Marzuq, at the invitation of Hasan al-Turabi. Yasir ‘Arafat was keen not to let Hamas join the PLO except according to his own strict conditions that Hamas rejected.¹⁴

2. Evolution of the Relationship 1993–2000

This period witnessed a halt in the *Intifadah*, the signing of the Oslo Accords, and the establishment of the PA. It is known that the PA was established in the framework of a political settlement that Hamas had rejected from the beginning. In its session of 10–12/10/1993 in Tunisia, the Palestinian Central Council (PCC) declared its decision to establish the PA. Its statement said, first: the Executive Committee of the PLO is charged with the formation of the council of the Palestinian National Authority, during the transitional phase, from a number of members from the Executive Committee and a number of others from home and abroad. Second: Mr. Yasir ‘Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, is to be named chairman of the council of the PA. The PA’s basic law confirmed that the PLO is the PA’s reference.

Hamis took an opposing stance to the PA throughout the years that preceded its participation in the elections of the PLC that arose from the PA. As for the PA leadership, its animosity towards Hamas meant that it foiled most attempts at creating a favorable environment for negotiating. The PA would invite Hamas to join the PA, while at the same time arresting its supporters in GS and WB. Furthermore, the officials controlling the PLO became the leaders of the PA; and many of those affiliated with Fatah became preoccupied with authority and its privileges. Thus, the Palestinian political system under the self-rule authority was witness to an ambiguous and thorny relationship between the PLO and the PA. This

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 202–203.

paradox became exacerbated when Hamas's influence grew during the *Intifadah* years. And so the relationships between Hamas and the PA became characterized by a disparity in their stances toward the fundamentals of the Palestinian issue, a lack of a unified vision, and an absence of consensus on the means to achieve national goals.¹⁵

Despite the fact that the PLO had established the PA in 1994, and provided it with cover and legitimacy, the PA began to grow at the same time as the PLO began its withdraw and retreat, so that with time it started to look like a tool of the PA. The PLO's leadership (which is also the PA's leadership) actually and implicitly worked on marginalizing and neglecting the PLO, confining it to the "recovery room" and limiting it to providing "stamp of approval," only when necessary to legitimize some action or resolution of the PA.

From the founding of the PLO in 1964 and until 1991, the PNC held just 20 sessions. This contravenes its bylaws that call for the council to meet once a year. In the next two decades (until 2013) just one session was held! In other words, the PNC has actually lost its legislative and supervisory role (especially since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993); and it has been marginalized and isolated from Palestinian national decision-making. Furthermore, the PNC session held in April 1996, convened only under American-Israeli pressures to annul those articles in the Palestinian National Charter that were antithetical to Israel and Zionism.

Hamas did not present itself as an alternative to the PLO, but as a Palestinian faction with a different vision of the struggle than that of the PLO, especially Fatah. Gaining power was not one of its goals, according to the statements of Hamas founder, Sheikh Ahmad Yasin; "We do not believe there is a free authority under occupation. That is why we do not think, want or ask for authority in this reality." One of its leaders, Muhammad Nazzal, had said, "the PA has become a security project to protect Israel."¹⁶

¹⁵ Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarah al-Siyasiyyah*, p. 31.

¹⁶ Saqr Abu Fakhr, "Second Paper: Hamas and Fatah and the PLO, Misery of the Brothers," in Mohsen Mohammad Saleh (ed.), *Qira'at Naqdiyyah fi Tajrubat Hamas wa Hukumatih: 2006–2007* (Critical Assessments of the Experience of Hamas & its Government 2006–2007) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations, 2007), p. 66. Citing Mohammad Abo Khudir interview with Ahmad Yasin posted by *Alrai* newspaper, Kuwait, 7/6/2002; and a lecture at the National Union of Kuwaiti Students in 7/10/2002, *Alrai* posted some of its excerpts in 9/10/2002.

In such an environment, Hamas activists found themselves in a difficult position, under a Palestinian authority where their past comrades in struggle became the ones to keep them from action and *Jihad*, and where any operation against Israel meant in practice a confrontation with the PA. Hamas has insisted on the continuation of armed resistance, but has considered Palestinian blood a red line not to be crossed. When subjected to the PA's strikes and prosecutions, Hamas would focus its revenge on Israel. The relationship was three-sided; if Israeli pressure on the PA led to the PA pressure on Hamas, Hamas was inclined to put pressure on the Israeli side through an escalation of armed operations.¹⁷

Hamis has determined certain regulations to deal with such circumstances, including preservation of national unity, striving not to engender any justifications for collision with the PA, avoiding civil war, adopting a constructive opposition aimed at detecting flaws in the peace settlement agreements, preserving the Palestinian people's rights to their land and holy sites, protection of political freedoms, the right of expression, freedom of the press, and maintaining the Palestinian people's dignity and vested rights. At the same time, it announced that it is not a party of or bound by the Oslo Accords, that its struggle continues to aim to defeat the Israeli occupation, and that its guns are turned only on the usurper occupiers.¹⁸

In practical terms, the PA had to respect its commitments and obligations towards Oslo Accords, and dealt with the resistance operations carried out by Hamas and PIJ as obstacles in the project of building the Palestinian state. Therefore, The PA carried out a campaign of mass arrests in the ranks of Hamas and PIJ, especially after the massive operations of the resistance. Nonetheless, Hamas insisted on its general policies; refused to quit armed resistance, as well as, rejected to indulge into any clashes with the PA.

In the context of clarifying PA practices, Hamas has issued many statements, one of which said:

The PA insists on ignoring all calls to spare Palestinian blood and respect inviolable national principles, through its continued campaign of night raids, detention and torture against our people and the freedom fighters among

¹⁷ See in details Hafiz 'Alawi and Hani Sulaiman, *op. cit.*, pp. 225–285.

¹⁸ This can be concluded from the published literature and media interviews with Hamas during 1993–1996.

them; this is in addition to its continuous issuance of unfair sentences and holding of mock and unjust trials in the PA military court.¹⁹

In another statement, Hamas accused the PA of violating the sanctity of mosques, and stating that hardly a day was going by without the security forces waging a series of attacks that violate the sanctity of mosques, terrorize worshipers, and destroy their contents and properties, in a manner much similar to the practices of the Israeli occupation.²⁰

Hamas has confirmed its rejection of the policy of political assassination and the use of violence to resolve disputes between Palestinians. It stressed that its struggle is directed against Israel, and that the self-rule authority is playing a dangerous game by confronting the Palestinian people, their institutions, and their fighting forces.

It did not once refrain from accusing the freedom fighters of being agents of foreign powers without a shred of evidence, the accusations being mere fabrications. While it turns a blind eye to thousands of pieces of publicized evidence that confirms its alliance with the Zionists to the degree of receiving commands and dictates from them to suppress the Palestinian people.

Hamas said that the world could still attest to its success in self-control, and in restraining its members when they face provocations from the PA and attempts to drag Palestinian society into civil war. Hamas added that it believes that “the political death of the PA and its president is harder on the PA than being assassinated”!²¹

In general, the relationship of the PA with the Islamic movement has been characterized by tension. In 1996, there were about one thousand Hamas members and supporters detained in PA prisons, in addition to four thousand others detained in Israeli prisons. However, this tense climate did not prevent attempts on both sides to ease the strain and friction between them. It also did not prevent some Hamas leaders to endeavor, along with a number of PA officials and a number of Fatah leaders, to find common channels to overcome any incidents that may occur; reinforcing common points and avoiding points of contention. Several official

¹⁹ *Al-Hayat*, 16/5/1995.

²⁰ *Asharq Alawsat*, 17/8/1995.

²¹ Statement of a Hamas official in 11/4/1996, and a Hamas communiqué on 22/4/1996, see *Filisteen al-Muslima* magazine, London, May 1996. (in Arabic)

and non-official dialogues took place after the PA entered the GS in May 1994. Following the massacre of Filastin Mosque on “Black Friday” in November 1994, a joint committee of the two sides was formed to investigate and overcome the crisis, without achieving any tangible results.²²

In August 1995, Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, from his prison, called on the Palestinian people to lay down a formula for mutual understanding and for preserving the unity, integrity and future of the people “while maintaining our principled positions and convictions.” He renewed his prohibition of shedding Palestinian blood, viewing turning Palestinian arms on Palestinians as an unforgivable crime.²³ On 4/9/1995, Hamas called for a comprehensive and serious national dialogue, binding on all influential groups in the arena, including the government and the opposition. The goal was to reach an understanding that regulated the nature of Palestinian national action.²⁴ The next day the PA welcomed Hamas’s call for dialogue.²⁵ This period witnessed remarkable activity in various circles to promote dialogue. The efforts culminated in the convening of the dialogue in Cairo between the PA and Hamas on 18–21/12/1995, headed by Salim al-Za’nun on behalf of the PA, and Khalid Mish’al on behalf of Hamas. The PA had sought this meeting, fearing the possibility that Hamas might disrupt or even abort Palestinian self-rule elections in the WB and GS. It tried to persuade Hamas to participate in the elections. It also tried to persuade it to stop its operations against Israel, and to practice its opposition under the auspices of the Oslo Accords without undermining the PA’s commitment to the peace process. During this dialogue, Hamas insisted on boycotting the elections, but committed itself to refraining from thwarting it by force or by forcing anyone to boycott it; it also restated its commitment to the continuation of its armed operations against Israel.²⁶

The Cairo dialogue was not without some positive aspects for both parties. The atmosphere of open and serious dialogue contributed to reducing differences and identifying their details, and worked towards avoiding a collision between the two parties. The two delegations agreed to emphasize national unity on the basis of

²² See *Al Wasat* magazine, London, 25/12/1995.

²³ *Alrai*, Amman, 27/8/1995.

²⁴ *Al-Hayat*, 5/9/1995.

²⁵ *Addustour*, 6/9/1995.

²⁶ See *Addustour*, 23/12/1995; and *Alrai*, Amman, 24/12/1995.

political pluralism, the prohibition of infighting, the adoption of dialogue between various Palestinian parties, and the formation of a joint committee to deal with contingent problems, an emphasis on creating an atmosphere that deepened trust, cooperation to achieve national goals, and striving for the release of prisoners in Israeli jails.²⁷

Unfortunately, not all the attempts at dialogue succeeded in achieving their goals, and there were repeated arrests by the PA of its interlocutors from Hamas. A number of them were tortured in PA jails, some of whom had even participated in the Cairo dialogue, like Hasan Yusuf, ‘Abdul Fattah Dukhan, Muhammad Sham‘ah and Jamal Salim.²⁸

Muhammad Nazzal, Hamas’s representative in Jordan during that period, believed that dialogue was the civilized method that all should have resorted to in order to reach an agreement, he added:

Regarding our dialogues with Fatah in Khartoum, Tunisia, Amman and inside Palestine, they did not achieve what we aspired for and wanted; for Hamas did not feel that the other side is seriously interested in solving the problems that exist between the two parties, or even has the desire to apply what has been reached on the ground...²⁹

In a statement published in 1996, Mish‘al considered that future relations between Hamas and PA, or rather between the Palestinian people and the PA was “not a reassuring future, because the PA has made it conditional on its relationship with the enemy, and subjected it to the Zionist mood and priorities, and gave precedence to the enemy’s interests and demands over the interests of our people, their national unity, and the cohesion of their social fabric.”³⁰

Nevertheless, since 1996, the PA no longer felt the need to dialogue with Hamas and opposition forces, particularly as it had been able to exert its control over its territories, and managed to thwart tens of operations that Hamas and the opposition forces had tried to execute. The repressive security language was the PA’s common language in dealing with Hamas for most of the period between 1996 and until the outbreak of the *al-Aqsa Intifadah*.

²⁷ *Addustour*, 23/12/1995.

²⁸ See for example an interview with Khalid Mish‘al, *Filisteen al-Muslima*, August 1996. (in Arabic)

²⁹ *Addustour*, 30/8/1994.

³⁰ *Filisteen al-Muslima*, August 1996.

3. Evolution of the Relationship 2000–2005

During the period 2000–2005, *al-Aqsa Intifadah* gave the resistance movement much credibility and proved the truth of its expectations. Once again Hamas became a central player in the Palestinian arena, which cannot be bypassed. This encouraged the movement within Fatah, which calls for armed resistance, to join the uprising; thus Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades of Fatah was established.

Consequently, there was a call for an inter-Palestinian dialogue; which was, for the PA and Egypt (which entered with force on the scene), to stop the *Intifadah* or declare a truce, in order that negotiations could continue. Hamas welcomed the dialogue in an effort to find a new common national program, based on defeating the occupation; in spite of the fact that Hamas, PIJ, and the rest of the resistance movement knew that the next objective of stopping the *Intifadah* was to strike the infrastructure of the resistance and crush the resistance movements.

Holding negotiations was in itself a practical admission from the leadership of the PLO and PA of their inability to make critical and effective decisions on the ground without referring to the resistance movement, Hamas in particular. Egypt took advantage of its great weight in the Arab world and its special relations with the PA, Israel and the US, in addition to its openness to the Palestinian opposition, to call for these discussions. Thus, the most important of these negotiations between Fatah and Hamas took place on 10–13/11/2002 and in January 2003, with the participation of all Palestinian factions, and on 4–7/12/2003, again with the participation of all the Palestinian factions. These dialogues may have contributed to the convergence of views. However, the PA failed to get what it wanted, especially since the resistance factions remained uncommitted to the Oslo Accords and their aftermath.³¹

Hamis did not question the legitimacy of the PLO itself, but it held the view that the Executive Committee, the PPC, and the PNC were old institutions, the validity of which had expired years ago. Accordingly, these institutions' decisions no longer reflected Palestinian legitimacy and fundamental needs, and they no longer truly represented the Palestinian people. Therefore, Hamas's position was to emphasize respect for the PLO and its decisions, but after rectifying, activating

³¹ There was a full media coverage of the meetings, see for example the media during the date of meetings in *Al-Khaleej*. (in Arabic)

and restructuring it as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Mahmud Ramahi, a Hamas leader in the WB, stressed that the current leadership of PLO no longer represented all Palestinians; he accused some Palestinian parties of hindering the restructuring of the PLO in order to prevent Hamas from participating in it, and described the PLO's decisions thus:

biased towards one party and against another, saturated with the spirit of partisanship and they sow seeds of discord and division within Palestinian society, especially if they were issued by those who have no democratic qualification, or those who have been occupying their positions for a long time, and were not chosen in free elections. He pointed out that some members of the Executive Committee no longer represent even their own factions, because they were expelled from them. Thus these decisions have no value and cannot contribute to solving the problems.³²

The Cairo Agreement, which was concluded on 17/3/2005 between all the Palestinian factions, was an important milestone on Hamas's path toward joining the PLO. In its closing statement, it says the following: "Those gathered agreed to develop the Palestine Liberation Organization on bases that will be settled upon in order to include all the Palestinian powers and factions, as the organization is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." This item, which was approved by Hamas, opened the way to dialogue for the sake of achieving this goal. It also charges the members of the Executive Committee with a crucial part of the responsibility for their lack of a serious quest for the implementation of this resolution.³³

After attending a meeting in Cairo headed by President Mahmud 'Abbas, Hamas and PIJ became members in a certain PLO framework for the first time. The meeting was also attended by the secretaries-general of Palestinian factions, members of the PLO Executive Committee, the PNC Speaker, as well as some independent figures. It was called the Interim Leadership Framework and was charged with the reactivation and development of the organization's structures, until new PNC elections were held. The meeting was considered consent by Hamas to join the PLO. Isma'il Radwan, a Hamas leader who participated in the Cairo meeting,

³² *Al-Khaleej*, 29/3/2005.

³³ *Al-Ayyam* newspaper, Ramallah, 17/3/2005; and Text of the Palestinian "Cairo Declaration," site of Palestine Media Center (PMC), Statements, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070704163620/http://www.palestine-pmc.com/details.asp?cat=2&id=849>

said that, “his movement and all the factions agree to join the organization after rectifying and restructuring it.” Radwan pointed out that Hamas and the PIJ had become members of PLO’s Interim Leadership Framework. Under an agreement signed in 2005 by the Palestinian factions, it was agreed that this framework would be entrusted with supervising the development of PLO institutions on democratic bases, and it would oversee PNC elections in the WB, GS, and in places where elections are permitted abroad.³⁴

A committee was formed of members of the Executive Committee, PNC Speaker, and the secretaries-general of the national and Islamic factions and forces and their representatives, to discuss ways for Hamas to join PLO institutions. In the wake of the meeting, PNC Speaker Salim al-Za‘nun, stated that Hamas has come to be “in principle, within the PLO,” and expressed the hope that “the process of developing and activating the organization will be achieved without disputes.” However, Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri, denied that the movement had joined the PLO; rather it agreed to participate in the committee agreed upon during the Cairo dialogue.³⁵

During 2005, there was a Palestinian consensus, almost unanimity, on the view that the number of PNC members should number approximately 300; half of them were to be from WB and GS, and the other half from the Palestinian Diaspora (Palestinians abroad). These remarks were repeatedly made by Al-Za‘nun and his deputy Taysir Qubba‘a. There were no objections from Fatah, Hamas, or any others, to the proposed number. Al-Za‘nun stressed that the half from inside were to be chosen through elections; as for those abroad, they would be elected, but if this proved impossible, they would be chosen by consensus.³⁶

4. Evolution of the Relationship 2006–2013

On 25/1/2006, Hamas’s landslide victory in the PLC elections, 74 seats to 45 for Fatah, shocked the mainstream that led the PLO and controlled the PNC (Fatah branch). This led to PNC Speaker Al-Za‘nun, (a member of the Central Committee of the Fatah movement) to deliver some strange and surprising statements that were in contrast to what he had previously declared. On 4/2/2006, he presided

³⁴ *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper, London, 23/12/2011.

³⁵ *Al-Hayat*, 30/3/2005.

³⁶ See *Alghad* newspaper, Amman, 28/7/2005; and site of Arabs 48, 4/7/2005, <http://www.arabs48.com>

over a meeting in the PNC headquarters in which more than 100 personalities participated, members of the PNC and Fatah cadres in Jordan. Al-Za'nun stressed that the PNC would continue its work in spite of financial hardship; and that it would defend each of its members, and would not allow, under any circumstance, harm to come to any member, protecting its numbers and its structure. Al-Za'nun also said, "We will maintain the National Council as it is now, and I will defend the "national" [the word used in the description of the council] until the last drop of blood in my body."³⁷

In opening PLC session on 16/2/2006, Al-Za'nun declared that the 132 members of the PLC would be added to the 783 members of the PNC! To say the least, this move spoilt the atmosphere of PLO reform and it meant that the elected members would be lost in a sea of appointed members.

Immediately after the PLC elections, President 'Abbas stressed that the negotiation dossier will be returned to the PLO, the reference of the self-rule authority and its government, regardless of which political power is leading the government. For on the one hand, the president sought to isolate Hamas from the negotiation file, and on the other, to impose the PLO's political agenda on the government. 'Abbas transferred the responsibility for overseeing Palestinian embassies abroad from the PA Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the PLO; after he had removed it himself few months earlier from the PLO's jurisdictions. Thus the PLO reform file stumbled, because some Palestinian, Arab and international parties feared the possibility of Hamas dominating the PLO after winning the PLC elections in WB and GS early.

However, some voices within Fatah demanded that the popular will be respected and Hamas be given its full chance. Husam Khader, a Fatah leader, stated that, "we [meaning the PLO, Fatah and the PA] should prepare not only for a partnership with Hamas, but also for its leadership of the PLO." He pointed out that Hamas's resistance to the occupation grants it legitimacy to participate in the organization and even to lead it.³⁸ However, the overwhelming tendency among the Fatah leadership was to disrupt, obstruct and disarm the powers of the Hamas-led government.

³⁷ *Addustour*, 6/2/2006.

³⁸ *Al-Hayat*, 23/3/2006.

The program of the new Hamas government, headed by Isma‘il Haniyyah, led to confrontations between Hamas and the PLO leadership, Fatah and the PA. The PLO Executive Committee demanded that the government amend its program, noting that “it does not acknowledge the reference of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people,” and does not adopt the program and the commitments of the PLO and the PA. The Executive Committee announced that “the political practice of any Palestinian government must be based on the PLO program, the Declaration of Independence of 1988, and the PLO decisions and its Arab and international obligations;” arguing that “any departure from this approach exposes our national achievements, including the consolidation of the PA institutions and expanding its role on the ground, to real threats and it challenges its legitimacy.”³⁹

The Executive Committee also demanded that the Hamas “government respects the Palestinian national consensus because it is not acceptable that the government avoids recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people,” and that “it is not reasonable that this organization is recognized by the United Nations and by more than 120 countries, while the Hamas government refuses to recognize it as the political reference of our people.”⁴⁰ A member of the PLO Executive Committee, Zakariya al-Agha, said “the Executive Committee has decided to ask Hamas to amend its political program and to say clearly that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people of whom Hamas is a part and not a substitute for the organization.”

As for Hamas, it considered the PLC to be the body authorized to make decisions on the subject of the government, and not the PLO Executive Committee. It also noted that the technocratic and functional nature of the PA government’s task did not oblige it to take political stances; it should seek to avoid some of the disputed political issues that did not in practice has an effect on the ability of the government carrying out its functions.

In Damascus, on 28/3/2006, a meeting of all Palestinian factions, including Hamas, was held to agree on steps to rebuild the PLO. Mish‘al said, “With respect to the PLO, we agreed to these steps in order to rebuild it, and this is the real patriotic position.” Taysir Qubba‘a, Deputy Speaker of the PNC, read a statement

³⁹ *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 23/3/2006.

⁴⁰ *Al-Hayat*, 23/3/2006.

at the conclusion of the meeting, calling for the formation of a committee to follow up on the decisions taken by the Palestinians in Cairo in March 2005 on “rebuilding the PLO.” Hamas confirmed that it had agreed to join the organization, after a meeting between a Hamas leader, Mahmud al-Zahhar, and Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas. Al-Zahhar said that there was a firm decision to participate in the PLO, although there remained differences between them on the Palestinian National Charter on the basis of which Hamas will join, and on the mechanism of determining the rate of participation of Hamas in the PNC and other PLO institutions. Al-Zahhar added that the entry of Hamas in to the PLO would strengthen it and restore its soul, after it had moved away from the Palestinian fundamentals.⁴¹

Following the formation of the Hamas government, and amid conflicts of jurisdictions, disruption and siege in the Palestinian arena, in May 2006 prisoners of various Palestinian factions including Fatah, Hamas and the PIJ signed the National Accord Document, which emphasized national unity and the necessity of PA and the PLO reform. In Article Seven, the document stated that “Running negotiations is the responsibility of the PLO and the National Authority president based on adhering to and achieving the Palestinian national goals. Any crucial agreement should be presented to the new Palestine National Council to be ratified or to hold a referendum on it wherever possible.”⁴² After lengthy discussions among Palestinian factions and community leaders, an amended document was issued on 28/6/2006, retaining most of its texts, while keeping a kind of ambiguity that invited different interpretations, on which Fatah, Hamas and the other factions can base. The Articles related to the negotiating process remained, with an addition to Article Four to the effect that comprehensive Palestinian political efforts must preserve the rights and fundamentals of the Palestinian people.

In the period 6–8/2/2007, intensive meetings were held that led to “the Mecca Agreement” between Fatah and Hamas. This agreement stressed the sanctity of Palestinian blood, forming a Palestinian government of national unity, and moving

⁴¹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 29/3/2006.

⁴² See Mohsen Mohammad Saleh and Wael Sa’ad (eds.), *Al-Watha’iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2006* (Palestinian Documents for the Year 2006) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations, 2008), p. 364; and on reactions to the document, see *Al-Hayat* and *Assafir*, 12/5/2006; and the full text in: *Assafir*, 27/5/2006. (in Arabic)

forward with the process of developing and reforming the PLO. It also stressed the principles of political partnership and political pluralism.⁴³

Haniyyah presented his new cabinet to President 'Abbas on 15/3/2007, and he approved it. Then on 17/3/2007, the government won a vote of confidence from the PLC. Haniyyah gave a speech before the PLC that was considered a working program for the new government, in which it was stated that the management of negotiations was the prerogative of the PLO.

The formation of a National Unity Government led to a spread of optimism that the siege might be lifted, the period of lawlessness ended, and made Palestinians proceed towards implementing the Mecca Agreement, which was founded on the basis of political partnership between Fatah and Hamas (as well as the other factions and blocks). Although the agreement clearly included three areas: the government, its ministries and its affiliated bodies, the security forces, and the PLO, it soon became clear that the Palestinian presidency and the influential figures in Fatah had another understanding of political partnership, i.e. that it was confined to the government and its ministries, and does not include security forces or the PLO, which were viewed to be the exclusive prerogative of the Palestinian presidency. This contradiction weakened the new government and no meeting was held to discuss the activation of the PLO and its institutions.⁴⁴

In a press statement published by Quds Press International News Agency on 7/5/2007, Usamah Hamdan, the head of International Relations in Hamas, pinpointed three points that he considered fundamental to reforming the PLO; first: the need for the reform process to be founded on a political, institutional and democratic basis, second: everyone should participate in rebuilding the organization, with no one exempt, and no party should be given the right to reject the participation of any other Palestinian party in the rebuilding, and third: the process of choosing representatives of the Palestinian people in the PLO should be done by direct elections, and the Palestinian people should enjoy freedom of choice and oversight, without the PLO becoming a hotbed of quotas and biddings as this

⁴³ Mohsen Mohammad Saleh and Wael Sa'ad (eds.), *Al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2007* (Palestinian Documents for the Year 2007) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations, 2009), p. 122.

See document no. 13 in the appendix of this book, p. 617.

⁴⁴ Mohsen Mohammad Saleh (ed.), *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2007* (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations, 2010), p. 39.

would lead to the spread of corruption, and then to the collapse of PLO institutions. Another condition set by Hamas for joining the organization was agreement on a new national charter. Especially after the 1998 visit by US President Bill Clinton, when the PNC amended most of the items in the charter which called for struggle against Israel. Consequently, Hamdan demanded that the PLO's political platform stem from this charter, and be approved by the PNC, which would be charged with monitoring its implementation.⁴⁵

Hamdan said that with regard to the PLO institutionally, it had executive and legislative institutions. Regarding the legislative institution, it was suspended (the PNC); and regarding the executive institution, PLO departments such as the Department of Culture and Information, the Military, the Palestinian National Fund and others, had been undermined in favor of PA institutions, when Fatah was leading the PA. Hamdan saw that there was a need to "rebuild PLO institutions from the ground up." He said:

We in Hamas believe that addressing the democratic dimension in PLO institutions should be based on activating the democratic principle within these institutions. Previously, the PNC used to be formed in accordance with the quota system, in a way that ensures the dominance of a certain faction over it. We believe that the perfect formula is for the council to be elected by the Palestinian people at home and abroad. This would strengthen democracy in Palestinian society and would also create an oversight mechanism on the executive track and the factions' performance.⁴⁶

The National Unity Government formed in March 2007 did not last long, as differences between Fatah and Hamas soon led to armed conflict in GS. Hamas seized control of GS after clashes in what it described as a preemptive strike against elements within Fatah acting to overthrow the Hamas-led government. It was said that in the period 11–14/6/2007, 116 were killed and 550 wounded.⁴⁷ The statistics of the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) indicate that, due to the preemptive strike, 161 people were killed in the period 7–16/6/2007, among them 43 civilians, 91 members of Fatah and the security forces affiliated with

⁴⁵ Quds Press International News Agency, London, 7/5/2007, <http://www.qudspress.com>

See also PIC, 12/5/2007, <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=9090> (in Arabic)

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *Al-Hayat*, 16/6/2007.

it, and 27 from Hamas, Ezzedeem al-Qassam Brigades and the Executive Force.⁴⁸ While Hamas took control in GS, Fatah was able to take control of the WB.

Hamas considered what it did a legitimate and necessary action. That it was done under orders from the PA prime minister, who was also the Interior Minister, supported by the majority of the PLC, in the face of a strategy of lawlessness, under the protection of PA security forces (and influential forces in Fatah), which refused to obey the instructions of its government. It also held the view that the caretaker government led by Haniyyah was the legitimate government in accordance with the Palestinian Basic Law.⁴⁹ But President ‘Abbas and his supporters considered that Hamas had carried out a “bloody, black coup;” that there was no way to come to terms with Hamas unless it recanted, and declared its commitment to Palestinian, Arab and international “legitimacy.” And in a speech on 18/7/2007 in front of the PLO Central Council, he announced the end of the Cairo Agreement declared on 17/3/2005.⁵⁰

And as Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh said:

Recurrently, the trust-building process has suffered harsh blows. As while President ‘Abbas was charging Haniyyah with forming the government, he was stripping the government of its most important authorities in security, media, foreign affairs and administrative appointments... This is how “armed” negotiations eventually took the place of the “table” ones. Things became complicated in mid-May 2007, reaching their climax in mid-June, when Hamas was able to control the Gaza Strip. This caused a break and an intense crisis of trust between the two parties.⁵¹

The inclination of the Palestinian presidency to drive Hamas out of areas of legitimacy necessitated ignoring and bypassing the PLC, in which Hamas enjoyed a majority. It was essential for the presidency to have an alternative reference to lend legitimacy to its decisions, so it resorted to the PLO and its institutions.

⁴⁸ Palestine Center for Human Rights (PCHR), “Black Pages in the Absence of Justice: A Report on the Bloody Events Witnessed by the Gaza Strip 7–14 June 2007,” pp. 87–95, http://pchrgaza.org/files/Reports/English/pdf_spec/Gaza%20Conflict%20-%20Eng%209%20october..pdf

⁴⁹ See Khalid Mish'al Meeting the Press in Doha, *Al-Watan* newspaper, Doha, and *Al-Hayat*, 22/7/2007. (in Arabic)

⁵⁰ Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2007*, p. 56.

⁵¹ Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *The Experience of Dialogue Between Fatah and Hamas, Where is the Problem?*

Suddenly the PLO became present on a daily basis; although, over the previous years, it had almost always forced to be absent. And so its institutions began to meet, discuss and decide on the PA's daily affairs, despite the fact that it had been generally agreed that it should not have executive or legislative functions but be solely a reference to the PA on major issues.⁵²

In line with this trend, the PLO Executive Committee held an emergency meeting that started on the first day Hamas-led government seized full control over GS on 14/6/2007; several recommendations were approved and given to President 'Abbas for approval. These were:

- a. Dismissal of Isma'il Haniyyah's government (dismissal of a government being a president's right.)
- b. Declaration of a state of emergency.
- c. Forming a government to enforce this state of emergency.
- d. Holding early elections.⁵³

Immediately, President 'Abbas adopted these recommendations and issued three decrees for their implementation.

In July 2007, Fatah tried to change the PLC leadership, but failed. It also did not succeed in exploiting Israel's arrest of Hamas deputies to form an alternative majority. Thus it fell back on the option of the PLO; and on 18/7/2007 the PCC convened, President 'Abbas called for the approval of holding early presidential and legislative elections, on the basis of proportional list representation. He also announced the end of the Cairo Agreement, signed by all the Palestinian factions in which they had agreed to rebuild and develop the PLO.

Hamas responded by saying that President 'Abbas did not have the constitutional authority to hold early elections, and stressed its commitment to the Mecca and Cairo Agreements.⁵⁴ During a meeting with reporters in Qatar, Khalid Mish'al stated that Hamas absolutely refused to disregard existing Palestinian Legitimacies by concentrating only on the legitimacy of the presidency and ignoring the legitimacy of the PLC and the elected government. He added that Hamas refused to use PLO institutions as an alternative point of reference to the PLC.⁵⁵

⁵² Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2007*, p. 53.

⁵³ See Arabs 48, 14/6/2007; and *Al-Hayat*, 15/6/2007.

⁵⁴ *Al-Hayat*, 20/7/2007.

⁵⁵ See *Al-Watan*, Doha, and *Al-Hayat*, 22/7/2007.

This disagreement crippled the PLC. Furthermore, on 2/9/2007, President ‘Abbas proceeded to adopt a new election law, which imposed on each candidate for parliament or the presidency an advance commitment to the political position of the PLO. This, therefore, prevented anyone in the opposition from exercising their right to run for election, and led to having a legislative council made up of one political color. This is a stance that does not allow compromise and mutual understanding, since Hamas is not a member of the PLO, and opposes many of its decisions and policies.⁵⁶

The conditions that were set by President ‘Abbas, the PA in Ramallah and Fatah to start a dialogue with Hamas were:

- a. Undo the “coup” in GS and apologize to the Palestinian people.
- b. Recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians, abide by the agreements it had signed, and accept the legitimacies it has accepted.

The grounds upon which the agreement with Hamas was to be based were:

- a. To reach an agreement that did not isolate the Palestinian leadership or government, and did not lead to the resumption of blockade of the Palestinian people.
- b. To hold early presidential and legislative elections.

Fatah refused to have a bilateral dialogue with Hamas, preferring to grant itself wider legitimacy and greater impetus by sending a delegation on behalf of the PLO to dialogue with them, or by convening dialogue sessions in the presence of all the factions. While Hamas saw that the essence of the problem was between itself and Fatah, and that the two of them should first hold a direct dialogue to resolve core issues before expanding the circle of dialogue to include others. Hamas spokesman, Sami Abu Zuhri, commented, “We consider ourselves not interested in the committee formed of PLO factions to deal with the issue of dialogue. For the dialogue is not between Hamas and the PLO, but between Hamas and Fatah; and it could evolve into a national dialogue, in which all Palestinian factions can participate.”⁵⁷ Hamas insisted that the dialogue be without preconditions, that all relevant issues should be discussed, and that all political prisoners should be

⁵⁶ See *Al-Hayat al-Jadida and Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 3/9/2007.

⁵⁷ PIC, 8/6/2008.

released. Hamas also refused advance recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Hamas believed it should first be reformed and activated. Hamas was not about to commit itself to the agreements signed by the PLO, especially those that conflicted with fundamental Palestinian rights, the right to resistance and those that related to recognition of Israel.

Talk about the Fatah-Hamas dialogue and putting the Palestinian political house in order occupied most of 2008; however, the atmosphere of accusation, mistrust and preconditions remained prevalent throughout that year. On 5/6/2008, President ‘Abbas met with the PLO Executive Committee in the presence of factional representatives, and renewed his call for dialogue, using conciliatory language, free of accusations. Soon President ‘Abbas requested that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak launch an inter-Palestinian dialogue under the patronage of Egypt. Hamas welcomed the dialogue.

By the end of September 2008, there were reports that Cairo had prepared a paper of five sections to be presented to the Palestinian dialogue; and that there was almost consensus on four of these sections, all concerned with not resorting to violence, the formation of a national consensus government, rehabilitation of the security forces, and rehabilitation of the PLO. The fifth section was about fixing a date for presidential and legislative elections.⁵⁸

The dialogue stalled when Hamas, along with three other Palestinian factions, apologized for not attending the reconciliation conference, which was scheduled on 10/11/2008 and demanded the release of detainees in the WB, that its delegation from the WB be allowed to attend. It also asked that ‘Abbas participate in all the dialogue sessions, and not just be present at the opening ceremony.⁵⁹ This demand aroused Egypt’s anger and resentment within Fatah. The PLO Executive Committee charged Hamas with “full responsibility” for the failure of the Cairo meeting.⁶⁰ The PCC, in spite of the reservations about its validity, supported President ‘Abbas by electing him president of the State of Palestine on 23/11/2008, shortly before the end of his term as president of the PA, to let this be a “leverage” for him in the face of what Hamas and his opponents might do.

⁵⁸ *Okaz* newspaper, Jeddah, 30/9/2008.

⁵⁹ See statement of Khalil al-Hayyeh, *Felesteen*, 12/11/2008. (in Arabic)

⁶⁰ *Annahar* newspaper, Beirut, 13/11/2008.

The Israeli aggression on GS (27/12/2008–18/1/2009) was a major turning point, as the heroic steadfastness of the people and the resistance frustrated the hopes of some that Hamas might fall. Furthermore, the overwhelming Palestinian, Arab, Muslim, and even international public sympathy restored momentum to Hamas and the resistance movement. It brought Hamas out of the corner it had been squeezed in to, as a result of its nonparticipation in the national dialogue in Cairo in autumn 2008, thus accusing it of causing the dialogue to abort. Moreover, some analysts say that the lackluster and confused performance of the PLO leadership and PA put the Fatah leadership and the government of Salam Fayyad in an awkward position. There were increasing calls in Fatah and PA circles for dialogue and putting the Palestinian political house in order and for an end to the campaigns of mutual incitements. In addition, the PA froze the peace process with Israel.

This lethargic performance by the PLO leadership and the stumbling reform and reconstruction process, prompted Khalid Mish'al—in a celebration held in Doha on 28/1/2009, after its victory in the Cast Lead war—to declare that Hamas “is working with all factions to build a Palestinian reference that preserves the right of return and holds on to the rights and fundamentals.”⁶¹ Mish'al's remarks caused a storm in the Palestinian political arena. Figures in Fatah and its close circles used them to attack Hamas, taking advantage of the Palestinian people's feelings regarding their traditional desire for unity and for the PLO as their moral house. Some saw it as an opportunity to undermine Hamas, which had reached the height of its popularity after its steadfastness in the Cast Lead war. Some PA and Fatah leaders pledged to confront Hamas “which is trying to bury the PLO.”⁶² They stated that “Mish'al's attempts will fail,” Fatah would confront “the Iranian conspiracy,”⁶³ Hamas “from the start, has refused to engage in the Palestinian national action,”⁶⁴ and that Mish'al statement constituted “an unacceptable and despicable conspiracy and a coup against the PLO.”⁶⁵

Thus, the controversy took on a hostile and provocative character, but did not address head on the reasons for the miserable state that the PLO had reached. Such

⁶¹ *Felesteen*, 29/1/2009.

⁶² Statement of Saeb 'Uraiqat, *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 30/1/2009. (in Arabic)

⁶³ Statement of Hussein al-Sheikh, *Asharq Alawsat*, 30/1/2009. (in Arabic)

⁶⁴ Statement of 'Azzam al-Ahmad, *Aljazeera.net*, 29/1/2009. (in Arabic)

⁶⁵ A PNC Statement, *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 1/2/2009. (in Arabic)

crucial issues included the need to as who was benefiting from the suspension of the PLO's legislative institutions and executive departments, turning it into a mere tool in the hands of a certain faction, placing it in the recovery room to be awakened whenever there was a need to provide the "stamp of approval," to legitimize some action or resolution of the PA. Muhammad Nazzal, a member of Hamas's political bureau, explained that Mish'al did not mean to call for the abolition of the PLO or find a substitute for it; but he meant to call for finding a framework for the Palestinian factions, which are excluded from joining the organization, to coordinate among themselves.⁶⁶

In general, after the war on GS, Egypt was quick to agree to sponsor the dialogue, striving as far as possible to create the appropriate conditions for its success. It launched the dialogue process with meetings between Fatah and Hamas on 24–25/2/2009, followed by the participation of other factions on 26/2/2009. Five committees were formed to address five issues: elections, security, the PLO, the transitional government, and national reconciliation.

Whatever the case may be, the PLO has become a key item in the Palestinian dialogue dossier. It was the subject of extensive discussions during the six sessions of Palestinian national dialogue in the first half of 2009. An agreement was reached on the points related to its reformation. However, in the summer of 2009, the Fatah leadership showed a desire to fill the vacant seats on the Executive Committee, which had lost quorum due to the death or absence of a number of its members. That was a negative indicator for Hamas and the factions concerned with rebuilding and reorganizing the PLO on new bases. This coincided with putting finishing touches to the understandings related to Palestinian reconciliation, chiefly the issue of the PLO. It would have been more appropriate for these factions not to rush to open the issue of filling vacancies without consensus, make arrangements that consecrate the dominance of Fatah to the exclusion of the others and continue its use as a tool in the face of the opposition.⁶⁷

However, Fatah saw no reason to wait an indeterminate time for the reconciliation to be put into effect. It saw a need to make arrangements, even temporary ones, to

⁶⁶ *Asharq Alawsat*, 3/2/2009.

⁶⁷ On Hamas Position, see statement of Sami Abu Zihri, *Al-Khaleej*, 18/8/2009 (in Arabic); the Statement of the Palestinian Government in GS, PIC, 18/8/2009 (in Arabic); and Hamas Statement, *Okaz*, 22/8/2009. (in Arabic)

put in motion the minimum functions of the PLO, which, no matter what is said about it, remained regionally and internationally the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Indeed, Salim al-Za'nun called for an extraordinary emergency session of the council on 25/8/2009 in the presidential headquarters in Ramallah, where six members of the Executive Committee were elected to replace the six members who had died.⁶⁸ The council was held in the presence of 325 members out of more than 700 members, who have been registered members since the Council of 1996.

Egypt submitted a proposal for the final text of the reconciliation agreement, "the Egyptian paper," composed of nearly 4,100 words on 22 pages. The paper provided for the activation and development of the PLO on bases to be agreed upon, so that it would include all Palestinian forces and factions. A new PNC would be formed, that would ensure a wide representation of Palestinians at home and abroad. The committee in charge of developing the PLO would complete its formation, and would hold its first meeting as soon as it started the implementation of this agreement. It had the task of determining the relationship between the institutions, structures and functions of the PLO and the PA, so as to maintain the PLO as a reference of the PA, while ensuring that there would be no duplication. And until the new PNC was elected, the functions of the committee would be to lay the foundations and mechanisms of the new council, address crucial issues related to political and national affairs, make decisions about them by consensus, and follow up the implementation of the decisions reached during the dialogue.

"The Egyptian paper" stipulated the formation of a 16-member committee from Fatah, Hamas, the factions and the independents. Fatah and Hamas would name eight members each. Then President Mahmud 'Abbas would issue a presidential decree for its formation, after a consensus on its members had been reached. He would then become the reference of this committee in his capacity as chairman of the PLO and the PA. The committee was to be a coordinating framework without any political commitments or benefits; it would start its work immediately after the signing of the agreement and end it in the aftermath of elections and the formation of a new Palestinian government.

⁶⁸ *Al-Hayat*, 25/8/2009.

The paper emphasized that on 28/6/2010, elections for the PLC, the presidency, and the PNC in the WB including Jerusalem and the GS would be held simultaneously; and that everyone would abide by their outcome. The PNC elections would be held on the basis of full proportional representation, at home and abroad wherever possible; while the PLC elections were to be held on the basis of a mixed system, 75% lists, 25% electoral districts, with a 2% qualifying threshold.

Egypt asked Hamas and Fatah to sign “the Egyptian paper” before 15/10/2009. Then, in the climate surrounding the scandal of the PLO leadership and Fatah’s mishandling of the Goldstone Report on the Israeli aggression on GS, Fatah was quick to agree; while Hamas asked for time to review the text. Hamas presented a number of amendments, which it insisted should be included in the text of the Egyptian paper or be placed in an annex to the text, so that it gained legal and political authority. One of the most important remarks was that the interim leadership scheduled to be formed until the reelection of the PLO institutions “may not be subject to suspension,” and that the election committee should be formed by President Mahmud ‘Abbas in “concurrence” with Hamas.

The leadership of Fatah and the PA in Ramallah benefited from the signing of the Egyptian paper, and from Hamas refraining to do so, as it allowed them to get out of the predicament caused by the scandal of their postponing the vote on the Goldstone Report. It also enabled them to wage a broad media campaign against Hamas, accusing it of hampering the efforts to achieve national unity and reconciliation. Fatah also benefited from the sincere Palestinian, Arab and international desire to achieve reconciliation, and used it to attempt to squeeze Hamas into a corner. As for Hamas, it refused to sign under duress, and insisted on matching the text to what had been agreed upon in the minutes of the previous sessions. However, the Egyptian government and the Fatah movement refused to open the paper for discussion or for any amendments thereto. Thus, the reconciliation project continued to face hindrance, while all attempts by parties such as PFLP and independent personalities such as Munib al-Masri, failed to find appropriate solutions. There were also mediation efforts by Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Libya, which continued until just prior to the Arab Summit in Sirte in Libya, in late March 2010, but yielded no results.

These circumstances prompted Mahmud ‘Abbas, on 23/10/2009, to issue a presidential decree specifying 24/1/2010 as the date for presidential and legislative

elections.⁶⁹ This was interpreted as a bypassing of Hamas, an attempt to impose specific routes for Palestinian action, and an attempt to put pressure on Hamas to sign the Egyptian paper. The PCC announced its support for the election decree.⁷⁰ Fatah considered the decree an imperative constitutional requirement that paved the way for returning to the people to find a way out of the crisis. However, Hamas rejected the elections decree. ‘Aziz Dwaik, PLC speaker, said that the decree required the approval of the parliament, especially that there were 110 deputies present, and there was a parliamentary majority for the convening of any PLC session,⁷¹ while the PA in Ramallah prevents it from taking place. Deputy Speaker Ahmad Bahar, he said that ‘Abbas had no “legal or national status.”⁷² A statement by Hamas said that ‘Abbas has “brushed aside all efforts to reach a national reconciliation and end the schism,” and reiterated its rejection of the decree, considering it illegal, because “ ‘Abbas has lost his legitimacy, and ended his legal tenure.”⁷³

The PCC tried to provide cover for failing to hold the elections on time; so on 16/12/2009, it decided to extend the mandate of the PA president as well as that of the PLC, until general presidential and legislative elections were held in the WB and GS.⁷⁴ PCC decisions did not provide cover for President ‘Abbas only, but also sought to provide cover for the PLC; perhaps so the fact that their support goes only to the presidency would be obscured, and so that the schism would not become wider. But on the other hand, it is possible that this could be understood as an abuse of powers and an imposition of a guardianship that was not theirs. Hamas said that the PCC did not have the constitutional validity to extend the term of President ‘Abbas, because it was “an illegal body” that “arises from bodies with expired terms.”⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Palestinian News and Information Agency (WAFA), 23/10/2009.

⁷⁰ Reuters News agency, 25/10/2010, <http://ara.reuters.com/> (in Arabic)

⁷¹ *Felesteen*, 25/10/2009.

⁷² *Al-Hayat*, 25/10/2009.

⁷³ *Arabs* 48, 23/10/2009.

⁷⁴ *Al-Hayat*, 17/12/2009.

⁷⁵ See statement of Fawi Barhum, *Felesteen*, 17/12/2009 (in Arabic); and statement of Musa Abu Marzuq, *Assabeel*, 26/12/2009. (in Arabic)

The disruption of national reconciliation continued throughout 2010. However, this file witnessed a new breakthrough after a meeting in Mecca, which took place between Mish'al and 'Omar Suleiman, director of the Egyptian General Intelligence Services (EGIS), who said he was not opposed to an agreement between Fatah and Hamas on understandings that take into account Hamas's reservations about the Egyptian Paper.⁷⁶ Then on 24/9/2010, a dialogue was held in Damascus, during which most of Hamas's remarks were accepted, except those linked to the security aspect. The delegations of the two factions met again in Damascus on 9/11/2010, without reaching the desired result.

The changes taking place in the Arab world since the beginning of 2011 contributed to increasing the pressure for Palestinian reconciliation. Positive signs emerged through an invitation extended by Isma'il Haniyyah to 'Abbas to visit the GS, and the latter's consent to do so.

However, Fatah and Hamas's signing of the reconciliation agreement in Cairo on 3/5/2011 (celebrated the next day), which took in to account the remarks of Hamas, and resolved the security problem, constituted an important milestone on the path of Palestinian national unity.

The path to reconciliation has once again become a faltering process. And in order to reactivate it, a meeting took place between 'Abbas and Mish'al on 23/11/2011 in Cairo, where the beginning of a true national partnership was announced and an intra-Palestinian reconciliation.⁷⁷ 'Azzam al-Ahmad announced that the two sides had reached an agreement on the implementation of Palestinian reconciliation regarding the political program of the next phase, the future of the Authority, the PLO and the Palestinian State, community reconciliation, and the holding of elections on schedule.⁷⁸ During the meeting, it was agreed that the PLO Interim Leadership Framework should convene, the body charged with the reactivation and development of the organization's structures. 'Izzat al-Rishq, a member of the Hamas political bureau, said that the meeting was positive, open and transparent.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ *Al-Hayat*, 6/10/2010.

⁷⁷ Wafa, 24/11/2011,

⁷⁸ *Asharq Alawsat*, 25/11/2011.

⁷⁹ *Asharq Alawsat*, 25/11/2011.

Despite new hopes of bringing about a breakthrough in the reconciliation file, the days following the Mish'al-'Abbas meeting did not bear anything new, which made the former warn of foreign interventions intended to derail reconciliation efforts.⁸⁰ On 18/12/2011, Fatah and Hamas delegations met in Cairo under Egyptian auspices, and announced practical steps to resolve the outstanding issues between them.⁸¹ This helped spread an atmosphere of optimism, and prompted Mahmud al-Zahhar, who participated in the dialogues, to say that there was a breakthrough in many of the reconciliation issues.⁸² Then on 20/12/2011, the Palestinian factions met in Cairo and agreed on the formation of the Central Election Commission, the Committee of Freedoms and Confidence-Building in the WB and GS, and the Committee of Societal Reconciliation, along with the names of their members, provided that the cabinet formation file be completed by the end of January 2012. They also agreed that the blocs and lists should hold a consultative meeting in Cairo, then another in the WB and GS, following which they would make recommendations to the PA president, who would then issue a presidential decree calling for the PLC to convene at the beginning of February 2012.⁸³ Following these arrangements, Mish'al said, "No one now can monopolize the political decision or management of the PA and PLO institutions."⁸⁴

This meeting was considered an important step towards Hamas joining the PLO, through the participation of Mish'al in the Interim Leadership, and the participation of all factions and independents in it. As this framework included members of the Executive Committee of the PLO, the secretaries-general of the Palestinian factions and PNC Speaker, in addition to four independent figures. And for the first time, the PIJ Secretary General Ramadan Shallah participated in such a meeting. It was decided that this framework should continue with its functions until the PNC elections were held and until a new PLO Executive Committee was elected in May 2012. It was agreed to hold elections for the president and the PLC in May 2012, in conjunction with the PNC elections. As for those outside the Palestinian territories, PNC elections would be held "wherever possible," and by consensus where they could not be held.

⁸⁰ Interview with Khalid Mish'al, site of Sudaneseonline.com, 28/11/2011.

⁸¹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 19/12/2011.

⁸² *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 20/12/2011.

⁸³ Felesteen Online, 21/12/2011.

⁸⁴ PIC, 24/12/2011.

This position did not mean that Hamas had abandoned its political stances, and the head of International Relations in Hamas, Usamah Hamdan, stressed that the expansion of the PLO leadership framework was not a nominal process that led to new members joining the PLO, but a strategic matter related to the nature of the PLO and its political agenda in order to be consistent with the goals of liberation and return. Hamdan denied that the talk of rebuilding the PLO and of Hamas joining its leadership framework meant the birth of a “tame” Hamas primarily motivated to become part of the political process. He said:

Regarding Hamas political position, it is well-known and clear to all. Hamas, which had rejected the logic of surrender to the enemy under the heading of [peace] settlement when this process had the consensus of the whole world, cannot slip into this path that has proved its failure after a track of 20 years. Whoever thinks that Hamas has changed its positions, and that it accepts the PLO political surrendering agenda, is either deluded or is deceiving himself.

Hamdan added that Hamas, within a national framework, was seeking to rebuild the PLO, reconsider its political agenda, and make a comprehensive political review based on “our fundamentals and uncompromising rights; foremost among them, the liberation of our land from the river to the sea and the right of return.” As for his opinion on the directions that the organization should take after the agreement, Hamdan said: “Talk about intentions takes a long time; however, I believe that whoever thinks we will continue with the failed political track that the PLO followed in the past era is most certainly deluded. For this track must be reviewed strategically and not nominally, and events on the ground will distinguish the truth from the lie.”⁸⁵

Things continued to stagnate until the start of February 2012, when Hamas and Fatah agreed on President ‘Abbas to become the head of the consensus government, as a way out of the crisis between them. However, this breakthrough in the government file did not mean closing it permanently in light of the stalled application of other reconciliation files.

And at the time of writing (late 2013) the reconciliation file is still open, without tangible progress. ‘Abbas did not form his government, even two years after accepting this position; meanwhile, the gap continues to exist between Fatah and Hamas.

⁸⁵ Sama News Agency, 23/12/2011, <http://samanews.com/ar>

In general, the stances and practices of Fatah and Hamas contained mistakes. Mish'al has called on the two movements to have courage in self-criticism and to shoulder the responsibility for the mistakes they made. Mish'al said, "We must be courageous in our self-criticism... we should admit that there were mutual errors made by Hamas and Fatah; and at the same time we must not lay the blame on one another." He added that "we all shared in making mistakes; so each faction must bear a part of the responsibility. All must join forces to end the schism, for it is not a Palestinian commodity, it is a contingent state that was forced on us, and we must discard it and let go of it." Mish'al stressed that "the nation is more important than all the factions, and the partisan ego must be dwarfed... for Palestine is greater than Hamas and Fatah and all the factions." He further added:

We say in a clear voice "let bygones be bygones"; we must forget the past, and leave it behind us. Enemies come to terms; but we in Hamas and Fatah are brothers. It is true that each faction of us has a different view of how to deal with the nation's public affairs, but we have many common areas where we can cooperate and work in partnership with Fatah and with all the Palestinian factions. True, we will not be in total agreement, but we will work with each other on things we agree on.⁸⁶

There is no doubt that Mish'al's position signified giving precedence to national considerations in the way Hamas views Fatah, and to the importance of developing that relationship, despite the challenges and difficulties that continue to stand in the way.

Second: Hamas' Position Vis-à-Vis the Palestinian Left

There is a large ideological gap between Hamas, which adopts Islam and the Palestinian Left, which generally adopts Marxism-Leninism. However, the Palestinian leftist forces are gradational in their leftism, and in the extent of their commitment, whether partial or total, to socialism and communist theories, their view of religion and of the cultural, social and economic environment that regulates the life of the Palestinian and Arab individual. Furthermore, the enthusiasm of some of them for the communist Marxist-Leninist thought, even socialist economics,

⁸⁶ *Asharq Alawsat*, 22/12/2011.

has subsided with time; especially after the collapse of the communist experiment in the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Eastern Europe. Some on the left even took a more positive attitude to religion, as in the case of the PFLP-GC. We will not deal with Hamas's position vis-à-vis every leftist Palestinian faction separately, but we will focus on two of the most prominent factions affiliated with the PLO, namely the PFLP and the DFLP; both of which came from the School of Arab nationalists who embraced Marxism-Leninism years after their inception.

Perhaps the Islamic movement in general, felt great aversion towards the school of thought that considers "religion the opium of the people" and says that "there is no god and life is matter", which is an impression that has generally stuck in the mind of Islamists when they think about leftists. Islamists have also felt great aversion towards those leftists who mock expressions of piety, make a link between backwardness in the region and religion, and consider dissenting from religion or from the dominance of clerics as a condition for progressiveness. What made this aversion grow is the fact that, historically, Palestinian communists associated with Jewish communists, and supported the decision to partition Palestine in 1947 and establish the Israeli entity in 1948.

That is why mutual suspicion, challenging loyalties and affiliation, even accusations of treason, were the language used by people on both sides. What made this situation worse were the miserable conditions under which Muslims and Islamic movements lived under communist and socialist regimes, which adopted dictatorial and repressive methods in dealing with their peoples and opposed religious manifestations. This was the case in the Soviet Muslim republics, China, Albania, Yugoslavia, South Yemen, and Afghanistan....

In such an atmosphere, Hamas appeared. In the beginning, those belonging to it felt, in general, that they were closer to Fatah and its "conservative right-wing" nature; and which was originally reared in the laps of the MB Movement. However, they later did not recognize in the left a real popular rival or an imminent danger. They found that the influential leadership in Fatah had become proponent of serious political concessions, and was leading the Palestinian national project into the unknown. In contrast, they found that the leftist forces in general intersect with them on many political stances, especially in their stand against the Oslo Accords.

1. Elements Affecting Hamas's Relationship with the Palestinian Left

The most prominent elements affecting Hamas's relationship with the Palestinian left are summarized in the following points:

- a. Ideological background: the Marxist socialist background of leftist forces places them under the classification of the secular school, which is a school that provides a joint cover to Marxist parties and Fatah with its secular nature (although there are left and right classifications within this school). This classification means that the common ideological meeting points between the Islamists and the leftists are fewer in number; especially when it comes to social policy, economics, educational policy and views on the role of government.
- b. The Palestinian left, specifically the PFLP and DFLP, is part of the PLO structure, and one of its essential components alongside the Fatah movement. While until now, Hamas (and PIJ) have not joined the PLO.
- c. The Palestinian left has adopted the phased program for the liberation of Palestine, including the plan to set up a Palestinian state in the WB and GS; and its consequence, the recognition of Israel on the land occupied in 1948. In that, the Palestinian left differs from Hamas and agrees with Fatah, recognizing international legitimacy and joining the peace settlement plan, but under conditions different to those approved by Fatah.
- d. In its funding, the Palestinian left depends mainly on the PLO; especially after the depletion of other sources of income from some Arab regimes and the Soviet system. This funding is controlled by Fatah, which leftist forces must take into consideration.
- e. The two fronts, the PFLP and DFLP, reject the Oslo Accords, deeming them unable to fulfil to the aspirations of the Palestinian people who want to establish their independent state on the land occupied in 1967. They are critical of the PA and its political, security, economic, and social performance. They also refuse to oppose the resistance, and they assert its right to go on until the Palestinian people's objectives are achieved. These matters constitute common meeting grounds between the two fronts and Hamas.
- f. The PFLP and DFLP have had good relations with the Refusal Front, especially Syria. This fact provided a positive atmosphere for cooperation with Hamas, especially in the period before the Arab revolutions, before 2011.
- g. The Palestinian left suffered from weakness, deterioration and divisions, so it turned into a marginal force in the Palestinian arena. Thus, at the time when

Fatah and Hamas combined commanded 86% of the Palestinian people's votes in the WB and GS in the 2006 elections, and 90% of PLC seats, the leftist forces combined got no more than 7% of the votes, and 4% of the seats. Moreover, student unions' election results, and wherever elections were free, mirrored these results.

This meant that leftist forces became obsessed with the fear of marginalization and dissolution; so they sought to find an influential position in the Palestinian political equation that exceeded their limited weight. That is why we find them regularly criticizing the “policy of dividing shares” between Fatah and Hamas; they also criticize the negotiations that are limited to these two. At the same time, leftist forces called for adopting the system of full proportional representation, and not the system of lists as the proportional system probably prevents either Fatah or Hamas from gaining a majority (half + 1), and provides small parties with the chance to play a key role as a preponderant factor between the parties, after they realize the greatest part of their conditions in the political game.

Based on the above, we can see that there are points of intersection between Hamas and the forces of the left. But what unites the left, in general, with Fatah is more than what unites them with Hamas. Moreover, the political situation, the atmosphere of resistance, and the uprisings, all play a role in expanding or narrowing points of intersection between these parties.

2. The Development of Relations and Attitudes Between Hamas and the Palestinian Left

When the blessed *Intifadah* broke out on 9/12/1987, which Hamas had a major role in igniting, Hamas began to organize its activities and public demonstrations independently. As for the PFLP and DFLP, they joined Fatah in the formation of the UNLU. When the 19th PNC held its session in November 1988, the left agreed, along with Fatah, on the decision to declare independence, which was an implicit recognition of the Partition Plan for Palestine, Resolution 181 of 29/11/1947. However, the PFLP refused to approve UN Security Council Resolution 242, which deals with the Palestinian people as refugees.

Leftist factions followed the peace process that the Fatah leadership was conducting in Madrid in 1991, only to then be shocked by the signing of the Oslo Accords on 13/9/1993. So they took a clear stand of opposition to the leadership

of Fatah and the PLO, and most leftist factions banded together in the Alliance of Ten Factions, which also included Hamas and the PIJ. This provided the basis for joint action and wide opposition to the Oslo Accords. This alliance had its origins in a meeting held on the sidelines of the Conference in Support of the *Intifadah* in Tehran in October 1991, shortly before the Madrid Peace Conference. Then the alliance was formalized on 1/1/1994, when it announced itself a part of the Alliance of Ten Factions.⁸⁷

When Hamas issued its Charter in August 1988, it did not refer specifically to the forces of the Palestinian left; it rather emphasized what Palestinian forces have in common in the area of national action. Thus Article 24 stressed that Hamas “does not allow slander or condemnation of individuals or movements”; while Article 25 confirmed that Hamas and other national movements had mutual respect for one another, that Hamas understands their circumstances, as long as they do not pledge their allegiance to East or West. Hamas also assured all movements, whatever their directions, that they have its support and assistance. Consequently, this positive spirit provided the ground for common national action with all political outlooks; although Article 25 did not lack caution in considering the relations of some of them with major powers (in the east or in the west.) It stressed positively the independence of Palestinian decision-making and its freedom from subservience to major powers.

The PFLP and DFLP continued their opposition to the Oslo Accords; while other leftist forces, such as the communist PPP, and Palestine Democratic Union—FIDA, a breakaway faction arising from a split within DFLP, preferred to join (in general) Fatah and the PA in the peace process. The PFLP and DFLP were in agreement with Hamas on boycotting the PLC elections in January 1996, but at the same time, they continued to participate in the PLO leadership and its representative institutions, and in providing quorum to meetings. This allowed Fatah the chance to pass the decisions that it needed, even those related to the peace process itself, which Hamas did not approve.

It appears that the stability of the PA and its institutions, and the desire of many of the cadres of the PFLP and DFLP to return to the WB and GS, created a rift within the ten factions that had taken a stand against the return under the occupation and Oslo Accords.

⁸⁷ See Ibrahim Ghushesh, *al-Mi'dhanah al-Hamra'*, pp. 186–188 and 208–209.

Moreover, this alliance continued to witness disagreement in its perception of the PLO, and provisional action, placing this alliance in 1996 in a “debilitated state,” in the words of ‘Abdul Rahim Mallouh, a member of the PFLP Central Committee;⁸⁸ and living in a state of “crisis”, as expressed by George Habash, leader of the PFLP.⁸⁹ Hamas has tried to activate and develop the Alliance by calling for the establishment of the “Independence Front.” However, the PFLP and DFLP refused to participate in it, on the basis that this initiative addresses regulatory and not political issues.⁹⁰ Moreover, in December 1996, ‘Abdul Rahim Mallouh stated that “the factional aspect and the differences within the coalition, which has become incapacitated, led us to withdraw from it, along with the DFLP.”⁹¹ In general, the coalition has kept thereafter a fragile cooperation, especially with regard to opposition to the Oslo Accords, without further developing itself.

During *al-Aqsa Intifadah* 2000–2005, there was consensus between Hamas, the PFLP and DFLP on the continuation of the *Intifadah*, the activation of the resistance, the rejection of the Road Map proposed by President George W. Bush, and the activation of the PLO. The popular cooperation and the cooperation in resistance during the *Intifadah* were among the factors that led to breaking down the barriers between Hamas and the other parties, and creating a better environment for convergence in national action. The prominent and effective role played by Hamas in armed resistance engendered stature and respect among the national work forces.

The PFLP has demanded that Hamas joins the PLO and develops “a new resistance strategy,” based on national principles and the reform of the PLO institutions to include all national and Islamic forces.

The Cairo Agreement of 17/3/2005 was the basis to rebuild and activate the PLO, in which Hamas would participate. This was in addition to the participation of all national forces in the municipal and legislative elections. However, the election results came as a shock to leftist forces; as the PFLP got only three seats, while the

⁸⁸ *Albilad* magazine, 6/11/1996.

⁸⁹ *Addustour*, 24/11/1996.

⁹⁰ *Addustour*, 3/11/1996.

⁹¹ *Alquds* newspaper, 18/12/1996.

alliance of the DFLP, FIDA and the PPP got only two seats, against 74 seats for Hamas. The PFLP and DFLP found in the victory of Hamas and the election results a chance to stop the wheels of the Oslo Accords, end the dominance of Fatah, and activate the PLO. However, they were afraid of Hamas' Islamic agenda and its ability to "control" the national situation.

The PFLP stated that the people want change, and that they have chosen the option of resistance.⁹² But it noted an evident contradiction in vision between the presidency and the PLC; so it called for a comprehensive national dialogue to come to an agreement on a transitional political vision and a timetable for the development of the PLO. It stated that the agreements that the PA had signed were not fate, and that there was a new reality that required a new political vision, which took the people out of the Oslo Accords and the Road Map. At the same time, the PFLP criticized the conduct of Hamas regarding "the acquisition" of the presidium of the PLC.⁹³ Jamil Majdalawi, a PFLP political bureau member, asked Hamas to uphold the resolutions of "international legitimacy," adding that the front considers Islam one of the sources of legislation and not the main source.⁹⁴

For its part, Hamas sought to form a National Unity Government, and entered into negotiations with Fatah and leftist forces. The PFLP refused to join the government, under the pretext that Hamas did not explicitly include in the government's program that it considers the PLO the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.⁹⁵ According to a statement by its central media, the DFLP considered the 2006 Hamas government a consecration of governments of "one color."⁹⁶ The DFLP Secretary General Nayif Hawatmeh considered Hamas to be acting the same way Fatah used to in the seventies, and that Hamas's strategic errors lay in that it "has yet to announce its commitment to the international legitimacy resolutions, so to avoid Israel's accusations." Hawatmeh predicted that there would be greater siege of the Palestinian people as a result of Hamas' program. He reiterated his call on Hamas to recognize the resolutions of international legitimacy in order "to create for itself a civilized political ground in all circles."⁹⁷

⁹² *Alrai*, Amman, 27/1/2006.

⁹³ *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 19/2/2006.

⁹⁴ *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 18/2/2006.

⁹⁵ *Al-Ayyam*, 20/3/2006.

⁹⁶ *Al-Ayyam*, 20/3/2006.

⁹⁷ *Sada Elbalad* newspaper, Beirut, 30/3/2006.

As for Hamas, it was surprised that the PFLP refused to join the government, and it did not see anything in its program that justified nonparticipation. According to the Hamas leader Salah al-Bardawil, “the PLO is clearly listed in our program.”⁹⁸ while Sami Abu Zuhri said that “political differences are not a reason to give up participation.”⁹⁹ Hamas stated that it respected the PFLP decision, and that its formation of the government did not mean exclusivity in making decisions, and that cooperation would continue in other areas.¹⁰⁰ Despite its nonparticipation in the government, the PFLP decided to grant confidence to the government formed by Hamas;¹⁰¹ while the DFLP decided to abstain.¹⁰² This meant that a positive spirit was still present, and that the matter did not escalate into a quarrel and attempts to topple and defeat the Hamas government. On the other hand, some have interpreted the left’s unwillingness to participate as its refusal to ride in a boat that was virtually sinking, whether because of the Israeli and international blockades or the internal disruption caused by the Fatah leadership and its cadres, which were scattered across the PA’s institutions and apparatus.

When Fatah and Hamas concluded the Mecca Agreement on 8/2/2007, the PFLP welcomed the stop in fighting and bloodshed, but it considered that this agreement came to consecrate duality and polarization, and that Hamas and Fatah had agreed on everything, keeping only three ministries for the other Palestinian factions.¹⁰³ The PFLP also rejected the stipulation to “respect” the PLO agreements with Israel, and saw in that a deterioration in the national program found in the National Conciliation Document, signed in June 2006. That is why the PFLP has refused to participate in the government of national reconciliation.¹⁰⁴ However, al-Bardawil saw in the position of the left-wing blocs a kind of overbidding, and described this position as non-democratic. He also rejected their claim that the Mecca Agreement was different from what the National Conciliation Document stipulated.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ *Al-Ayyam*, 20/3/2006.

⁹⁹ *Al-Ayyam*, 20/3/2006.

¹⁰⁰ *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 20/3/2006.

¹⁰¹ *Al-Ayyam*, 23/3/2006.

¹⁰² Wafa, 26/3/2006.

¹⁰³ *Alquds*, 12/2/2007.

¹⁰⁴ See *Al-Ayyam*, 21 and 27/2/2007.

¹⁰⁵ *Asharq Alawsat*, 22/2/2007.

As for the DFLP, it saw in the Mecca Agreement an incomplete agreement that should be developed through comprehensive dialogue that included everyone.¹⁰⁶ But in spite of its accusation of dividing shares between Fatah and Hamas, the DFLP participated in the National Unity Government, formed in March 2007, with one minister in the Ministry of Social Affairs; he was Saleh Zaidan, a member of the DFLP Political Bureau.

When Hamas took over the GS in what is known as the military takeover of 14/6/2007, the forces of the Palestinian left saw the matter as a coup against legitimacy. While the PPP and FIDA have stood clearly with President ‘Abbas and Fatah, the two fronts, the PFLP (and to a lesser extent the DFLP) considered that both Hamas and Fatah bore responsibility; however, they placed greater responsibility on Hamas.

The PFLP demanded that Hamas withdraws its control of GS, but it saw in what the Palestinian presidency has done in forming an emergency government a hasty step that aggravated the internal Palestinian situation. ‘Abdul Rahim Mallouh considered what Hamas had done had hurt the Palestinian issue, disrupted it, and caused it to regress. He added that the method it employed to take control gained her the enmity of “no particular current in Fatah, but the political enmity of all Palestinian parties.”¹⁰⁷ For his part, Jamil Majdalawi said that the primary responsibility for what took place in GS lies with Hamas.¹⁰⁸

As for the DFLP, it also demanded that the situation in GS be returned to what it was before the Hamas “coup.” Hawatmeh called on Fatah and Hamas to retreat from “their divisive destructive policies,” and said the “Somalization” of GS by military force has turned the Palestinian issue back 60 years. Hawatmeh stressed the DFLP repeated calls to build a new Palestinian democratic political system based on full proportional representation.¹⁰⁹ A member of the DFLP Political Bureau, Qais Abdul Karim, stressed what Mallouh had mentioned, that Hamas “after the coup against legitimacy... has put itself in the face of all

¹⁰⁶ *Addustour*, 22/2/2007.

¹⁰⁷ *Al-Hayat*, 2/9/2007.

¹⁰⁸ *Al-Hayat*, 9/12/2007.

¹⁰⁹ See *Al-Ayyam*, 22/6/2007; and *Alghad*, 6/8/2007.

PLO factions and all the Palestinian people.”¹¹⁰ The DFLP provided a four-point initiative as a solution for the predicament, summarized as follows: Hamas retreats from “its coup” and works on maintaining freedom and political pluralism; a transitional government headed by an independent personality to replace the emergency government formed by Abu Mazen, which prepares for new elections; adopting the proportional representation system; and activating the PLO and its institutions.¹¹¹

Although most of the Palestinian forces and factions tried to play the role of mediator between Fatah and Hamas, and made great efforts to defuse the tension between them, the forces of the left that are affiliated with the PLO (PFLP, DFLP, PPP and FIDA) participated in the meetings of the PCC. The Palestinian presidency used this as a tool for taking over legitimacy, and to provide cover for a range of procedures and decrees that it had taken to confront Hamas, and also to entrench its authority. And while it used to criticize the practices of Hamas in the GS, its criticism of PA practices in Ramallah against Hamas, its cadres and institutions was “lackluster.”¹¹² The PPP and FIDA parties supported the Fayyad government; then the DFLP joined the government he formed on 20/5/2009. All of this was a source of discomfort for Hamas.

An atmosphere of tension prevailed in GS following statements by Mallouh, who resides in the WB, to the effect that the leaders of the PFLP are being subjected to “obscene and systematic” attacks in GS; and that the PFLP radio station was raided, and all its contents were confiscated. Hamas spokesman, Sami Abu Zuhri accused the PFLP of bias in favor of Fatah... he said that the criticisms of Mallouh were unfounded. He denounced the PFLP for failing to protest against what the security forces in the WB are doing against Hamas and its activists; he added that the PFLP radio station had been looted before the events of 14/6/2007, i.e., before Hamas took over control of GS.¹¹³

Hamas and both the PFLP and DFLP shared many points of consensus and convergence in the 2007–2013 period; although, in general, the PFLP was

¹¹⁰ *Al-Sharq* newspaper, Doha, 16/9/2007.

¹¹¹ *Arabs* 48, 4/7/2007.

¹¹² See Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2007*, p. 65.

¹¹³ *Asharq Alawsat*, 16/9/2007.

more understanding of Hamas than the DFLP. Hamas and the two fronts were on agreement in their criticism of the Annapolis conference in late 2007, and in criticizing the bargaining behavior of the PLO and the PA leadership. Furthermore, the two fronts stood by Hamas in its resistance in GS against the Israeli aggression, while Hamas allowed them a reasonable margin of political action and let them keep their military structures. It even tried to enlarge its government and let the two fronts join in; but it failed because of the relationship between the two fronts on the one hand and the PLO and the PA in Ramallah on the other; and because of their desire to tackle the division within a Palestinian comprehensive national framework.

The PFLP suspended its participation in the meetings of the PLO Executive Committee, because of what it called the decision of “the powerful leadership of the PLO” to return to direct negotiations under American-Israeli conditions. Hamas described the PFLP decision as “wise,” and called on the rest of the factions, members of the PLO, to do the same until the intended and “absurd situation” instituted by the Palestinian president was stopped.¹¹⁴ The front also condemned the PA agencies because they arrested a number of PFLP and Hamas activists in the WB, calling for a halt of security coordination with the Israeli occupation, which aims to eliminate the resistance.

As for Hamas, the PFLP and DFLP have criticized some of its political positions, and a number of its measures in GS. The PFLP, for example, criticized the summoning of a member of its political bureau, Rabah Muhanna, by security authorities in GS, in March 2008.¹¹⁵ When Hamas agreed to a six month period of calm, in June 2008, the PFLP accused it of “courting the occupation,” because it agreed on a deal “less than that it had with the factions.”¹¹⁶ In August, Jamil Majdalawi directed sharp criticisms at Hamas that it was seeking to “impose its religious vision on GS by force;”¹¹⁷ an accusation that Hamas denied. In December 2009, the PFLP accused Hamas of preventing it from celebrating a festival on the

¹¹⁴ *Alghad*, 28/9/2010.

¹¹⁵ *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 25/3/2008.

¹¹⁶ *Asharq Alawsat*, 19/6/2008.

¹¹⁷ *Okaz*, 8/8/2009.

occasion of its launch in Brigade Square, west of Gaza City.¹¹⁸ Then in April 2010, the two fronts, the PFLP and DFLP, accused Hamas of imposing taxes in order to improve the income of the dismissed government, thus adding to citizens' burden, and they called for organizing peaceful protests against these taxes.¹¹⁹

The DFLP Secretary General Hawatmeh accused Hamas of being "mired in the peaceful solution," referring to the "Ahmad Yusuf document."¹²⁰ More than once, the front accused Hamas of disrupting Palestinian reconciliation.¹²¹

Hamas saw in a number of these accusations exaggeration and distortion. Observers noted that the behavior of the PFLP leaders abroad was friendlier than the behavior of their leaders at home, especially in the WB. It is not surprising that the leaders of Hamas resent being accused of "courting the occupation" or "being mired" in the peaceful solution; for if this was the case, the Hamas government would not be subject to defeat, to overthrow or to suffocating siege. It would have long ago resolved its differences with Fatah, agreed with it on the management of the PLO, the PA, and the negotiation path; and the schism would have lost its most fundamental *raison d'être*. That is why Hamas sometimes resorted to clarification and other times to directing harsh responses and criticisms at the forces of the left. For example, Hamas responded to the "imposing taxes" accusations by stating that it only activated the tax system that was in effect over the past years. A Hamas spokesman, Fawzi Barhoum, criticized the PFLP, saying that it keeps silent about the arrest of its cadres in the WB, preventing it from organizing festivals, and depriving it of the right of resistance; while it enjoys full freedom in GS, and carries out all its activities and events.¹²²

Mahmud al-Zahhar said in May 2010 that leftist forces serve the Fatah movement, whether consciously or unconsciously; and added that these factions have become an instrument of Fatah and its policy.¹²³ In late February 2012,

¹¹⁸ *Al-Arab* newspaper, Doha, 8/12/2009.

¹¹⁹ *Asharq Alawsat*, 28/4/2010; and *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 30/4/2010.

¹²⁰ See Aljazeera.net, 26/12/2006 (in Arabic); and *Al-Khaleej*, 21/2/2007.

¹²¹ See *Al-Hayat*, 5/9/2008 and 10/2/2013.

¹²² *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 30/4/2010.

¹²³ Felesteen Online, 8/5/2010.

al-Zahhar replied to charges by the left that Hamas was the reason for the perpetuation of the division, by saying that the left was linked historically, politically and physically to Fatah.¹²⁴ Salah al-Bardawil responded to accusations by Rabah Muhanna that Hamas disrupts the reconciliation because it is occupied with its interior elections, and its turning toward the Israeli side to achieve a twenty-year truce, as “pure lie and fabrication, and it is the maturity of the salary paid to the PFLP by Fatah.”¹²⁵ A leader of Hamas, Isma‘il al-Ashqar, denied allegations by the PFLP and leftist forces that Hamas had held meetings with Israeli officials in a European country to agree on a long-term truce. Al-Ashqar accused the PFLP and the Palestinian left of being in a state of “political intoxication,” saying that the party who sits with Israel and recognizes it is the PLO, which the PFLP is considered one of its factions; pointing out that the political money obtained by the Palestinian left from the PLO pushes them to launch campaigns of calumny and distortion against Hamas.¹²⁶

It is worth noting the lack of comments and responses by Hamas to the Palestinian left. These mostly come in the context of reaction and clarification; unlike the many and varied statements relating to Fatah, the PLO leadership and the PA. Perhaps Hamas’s desire to search for common points with the left in the face of the Oslo Accords on the one hand, and the relative weak popular and political weight of leftist forces on the other, are the reason for the scarcity of these statements. It was clear that the criticisms of Hamas by the left focused on political aspects; and Hamas did not involve itself with criticisms based on ideology or religion.

Conclusion

Some of the differences between Hamas and the PLO are basically due to the overlapping of authorities between the PLO, the PA and Fatah, leading to an imbalance in the Palestinian political system. This imbalance was not apparent before, when Fatah was in control of the PLO and the PA. But after the victory of Hamas in the elections and its formation of the Palestinian government, the

¹²⁴ Felesteen Online, 29/2/2012.

¹²⁵ Quds Press, 1/11/2012.

¹²⁶ Site of *Mufakkirat al-Islam* (ISLAMMEMO.CC), 1/12/2012, <http://islammemo.cc/>

Palestinian leadership became divided into two leaderships that differed in their political approach and stances, the Hamas leadership and the PLO leadership, each driving the leadership vehicle in a direction different from that of the other. Thus, in order to mend the relationship between the two, there must be:

1. Emphasis on the fundamentals of the Palestinian issue and a rebuilding of national tasks required from the PLO, taking into consideration the new reality in the structure of the Palestinian political system, in light of the growth of Hamas, and the demise of some organizations that no longer have real presence in the Palestinian street. There should also be emphasis on the fact that the PLO represents all Palestinians, at home and abroad; while Hamas, which won the legislative elections, and has considerable support in the Palestinian street at home and in the Diaspora, should be represented in the PNC and the Executive Committee of the PLO, according to its true strength in the Palestinian arena.
2. Agreement on a joint program between all existing Palestinian factions, which are still struggling and working for Palestine. It is natural for these to adhere to the Palestinian fundamentals without compromising the right of the Palestinian people to resistance to end the occupation and establish an independent sovereign Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital, while guaranteeing the right of refugees to return to their homes from which they were expelled in 1948.
3. Ensuring a free, fair and equitable representation of the Palestinian people, their factions, and their patriotic competent individuals, in the membership of the PNC, proportionately shared inside and outside Palestine.
4. Emphasis on the Palestinian fundamentals, on the basis of which the PLO was instituted; return of the articles that had been canceled from the Palestinian National Charter under exceptional circumstances in 1996 and 1998. And that any change in the Charter should take into account the aspirations of the Palestinian people and their forces that are active on the ground.
5. To remove the overlapping between the PLO and its institutions and the PA; on the grounds that the PLO represents the Palestinian people at home and in the Diaspora, while the PA represents the Palestinians in the WB and GS.

In conclusion, everyone is a target at this stage of the Palestinian issue. It is feared that Israel and the US take advantage of Palestinian differences to realize their interests. Fatah and Hamas may be right and may err, peaceful transfer of power is normal in politics, and it does not hurt Fatah to leave the leadership of

Palestinian action to Hamas, in order to assess its long experience in power. More important is to continue to maintain the fundamentals of the Palestinian issue and the rights of the Palestinian people in their homeland, taking into account what is happening in the Arab countries with popular unrest and changes and their impact on the Palestinian issue. The struggle with Israel is a long one, and will not end with the change in the Palestinian leadership between one organization and the other. On the contrary, this change might activate the Palestinian struggle in every period of time, and introduce new elements that have a political vision that would serve the interests of the people and the liberation of Palestine.

Chapter Five

Hamas's Position on Palestinian Islamic Movements

Mr. Sameeh Hammoudeh

Hamas's Position on Palestinian Islamic Movements

Introduction

This paper aims to analyze the relationship between Hamas and Palestinian Islamic movements that are active politically and religiously: Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Salafis, the Sufis, and the PIJ. This paper specifically addresses the relationship between Hamas and PIJ since the 1980s, as these two groups are the most cooperative, preoccupied, and engaged in the Palestinian issue compared to other Islamist groups, and are the most influential and popular among the Palestinian population.

The analysis is based on two tracks:

First, clarifying the changes witnessed by the Arab and international arenas in the 1980s. These changes led to important developments related to the Palestinian issue, resulting in the rise of popularity, strength, and influence of Islamic groups especially in relation to the conflict with Israel. This led to the decline and atrophy of other national and leftist movements in the Palestinian arena.

Second, analyzing the political thought of Palestinian Islamic movements, in their various orientations and developments resulting from subjective, Arab, and international factors. This paper does not follow a narrative approach following the issue from a historical perspective only, but also seeks to shed light on the roots of the relationship among Palestinian Islamists, based on the ideological differences between them resulting from the differences in their interaction with Arab and international developments.

It is important to note that there is a systemic problem facing researchers when it comes to Hamas's positions on other Islamist groups in Palestine. First, Hamas did not develop a specific approach or clear political theory prior to its appearance.¹

¹ Sheikh Ahmad Yasin used to say: "I dedicated my life for deeds, not words. My entire life was the application of what I read and learned." See the book by Muhammad al-Yafawi, *Al-Shaykh al-Shahid Ahmad Yasin: 'Azamat al-'Ataa' wa raw'at al-Shahadah* (The Martyr Sheikh Ahmad Yasin: The Magnificence of Bestowal and the Splendor of Martyrdom) (Jerusalem: Al-Ibaa Publishing and Distribution, 2004); Amer Shamakh, *Ahmad Yasin: Shahid Ayqaz Umma* (Ahmad Yasin: a Martyr Who Awakened the Nation) (Cairo: Islamic Publishing and Distribution House, 2004), p. 96. =

Rather, its ideas and political discourse on Palestine began to crystallize essentially after its launch in late in 1987.

This does not mean that Hamas, when established, lacked a theoretical background, and lacked a systematic intellectual platform. Indeed, Hamas is considered an extension of the MB movement, and it bases its general ideological orientations and political ideas on the literature of this movement. Hamas was also inspired by the political and ideological discourse of the Palestinian MB movement in their student and trade union activities.

The movement also benefited from what was agreed at the (secret) founding conference held in October 1983, and when the Palestine Apparatus was formed in 1985. All of this does not contradict the premise that Hamas's political ideas developed and matured over time as happens with other movements, and through its activities and work in the conflict with Israel during the *Intifadah*, then again following the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the PA in GS and parts of the WB. Hamas's ideas also developed further as a result of its relations with other national and Islamist groups like Fatah and the PIJ.

What is certain for any researcher studying the emergence and evolution of Hamas is that its political ideas have responded, in most cases, to the questions and challenges it has faced. Thus, Hamas is a political movement that engages, affects and gets affected by surrounding changes.² The researcher is required here to carefully follow the movement's intellectual progression and avoid slipping into crude and/or propagandistic characterizations, be they negative or positive, which lack scientific accuracy and objective research.

The second problem related to methodology has to do with the fact that the attitudes of the leaders and symbols of Hamas have not always been identical, but rather, there were often clear differences and disagreements among them.

= Jawad al-Hamad and Iyyad al-Barghouthi, editors of *Dirasah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah: Hamas: 1987–1996*, pp. 13–14, noted, “Hamas's leaders do not have a distinguished contribution in writing and theorizing regarding the movement's philosophy in the form of published studies and journals. For this reason, the movement did not address in its literature (at least until the book was published in 1997) some of the ideological concepts related to the conflict, such as the questions of Zionism and Judaism, negotiations with Israel, and the movement's vision for an interim or comprehensive political settlement.”

² Basim al-Zubaidi, *Hamas wa al-Hukum: Dukhul al-Nizam am al-Tamarrud 'alayh* (Hamas and Power: Entering the System or Rebelling Against It) (Ramallah: Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 2010), p. 9.

The researcher studying Hamas's thought will certainly find contradictions in its discourse, lack of clarity in its vision and proposals, and will find disparities in the account of events related to Hamas from its leaders and founders. Therefore, sound methodology in analyzing the positions of Hamas and its leaders must take into account the impact of time and place, and the subjective factors related to those leaders. These factors imposed different views regarding facts that are themselves variable, and regarding successive different political events that are complex in their subtexts and backgrounds.

First: Arab and International Changes and Their Impact on the Rise of Islamic Movements in Palestine

Arab, Islamic, Western, and international changes had a large impact on the Palestinian issue, helping the Islamic movement rise in parallel with the decline of the Palestinian left and Fatah movements. Perhaps the 1973 October War was one of the most important changes. That war proved to the Arabs that the possibility of achieving victory against Israel was limited, for the Western powers led by the US would always side fully and unequivocally with Israel in its wars with Arabs, and would not allow Arabs to defeat Israel decisively and would be willing to commit significant resources to guarantee this state of affairs.

For this reason, the ruling Arab political elite judged that it was inevitable that they would need to reach a political settlement with Israel that would recover elements of Arabs' rights, and end Israel's expansionist policy. The Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel were the first result of this thinking. This stage also saw the start of the shift by 'Arafat and Fatah's leadership, which dominated the PLO, towards political action, merging it with military action. Previously, the main focus was on armed resistance as the basis of the efforts to fulfil Palestinian national goals. It was therefore not a surprise that in 1974, following the October War, the idea of transitional solutions was proposed by the DFLP Secretary General Nayif Hawatmeh in the ten-point program, which was adopted by Fatah and the PLO.

This shift was followed by an accord between the world's two superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union, which agreed to resolve their problems peacefully and through dialogue. As a result, the Soviet Union began putting pressure on the

Arabs, particularly the PLO, to accept a political solution based on UN resolutions including 242 and 338. Other factors include a number of major changes and events, led by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, when the PLO was forced to withdraw from Lebanon and its fighters were scattered across many Arab countries away from the borders of occupied Palestine.

The PLO bowed to the pressure and adopted primarily political programs and projects that accepted the two-state solution and a political settlement with Israel. In parallel, the PLO moved away from armed struggle, practically abandoning it.

This position undermined the legitimacy of the PLO, which was derived from its program to liberate all of Palestine through armed struggle. Subsequently, the PLO's popularity went into decline, and huge defections took place in the ranks of the Fatah movement. Relations between Fatah and the Syrian regime deteriorated, as the latter started supporting Palestinian organizations opposed to the Fatah leadership, especially Yasir 'Arafat and his inner circle, further weakening them.

These changes took place in parallel with the Iranian revolution led by Ruhollah Moosavi Khomeini in 1979. The successful revolution sparked a great Islamic awakening in the region that spread throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds. This empowered Islamic movements, which call for a return to Islam and its teachings, and for populations to counter the Western challenge and Israeli presence culturally, economically, politically, militarily, and intellectually.

As a result of the strong interest Khomeini gave to the Palestinian issue, his call for the liberation of Jerusalem and for creating an Islamic army for that purpose, the Islamic movements and others that were just beginning to emerge joined this orientation. These groups called for the liberation of all Palestinian territories and for putting an end to Israel. These movements began attracting Palestinians including those who abandoned the left and lost hope in the Soviet Union, and those who had doubts about the political settlement adopted by Fatah and the PLO.

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, when the socialist camp was collapsing, economic aid, financial and political support for the Palestinians disappeared. The Soviet Union collapsed and broke up into multiple countries, Russia's economic and political power declined, and it became dependent on Western powers, accepting their dictates in return for economic aid. Consequently, Palestinian leftist factions were weakened, as they relied financially, politically, and ideologically on the socialist bloc. The PLO also found itself on its own against the US and pro-Israel Western powers.

When the PLO agreed to enter the peace process, it was placing itself and its people at the mercy of its enemies: Israel, the US, and their Western allies. This position led the PLO to adopt policies that destroyed what was left of its legitimacy, such as committing to Israel's security (including security coordination with Israel), placing the leaders of Fatah and the PA in a position that was at odds with their people and freedom fighters.

Very briefly, the rise of Islamic movements that coincided with the decline in the Palestinian national program led to the formation of the PIJ (emerging publicly in 1981) and Hamas (which began operating in late 1987), led to the return of Hizb ut-Tahrir activity in Palestine, and led to the growth and proliferation of Salafist movements.

Second: The Bases of Hamas's Position Vis-à-Vis Islamic Movements

Theoretically, as Hamas states in its discourse and media, the group has no qualms with the presence of other Islamist groups on the Palestinian arena. The movement's Charter included a special clause titled "Islamic Movements," explaining Hamas's position on Islamist groups in general³

The Islamic Resistance Movement regards the other Islamic Movements with respect and honor even if it disagrees with them on an issue or viewpoint. However, it agrees with them on many issues and viewpoints and sees in those movements-if they have good intentions, which are purely for *Allah's* sake-that they fall within the area of *Ijtihad* [Creative self-exertion to derive legislation from legitimate source]. As long as its actions are within the Islamic (Jurisprudence), to every *Mujtahid* there is a reward.⁴

Khaled Hroub, former managing editor of the magazine *Filisteen Almuslima*, which expressed Hamas's thought, pointed out:

³ Rajab al-Baba, in his master degree dissertation at the Islamic University in Gaza supervised by Ahmad Muhammad Sa'aty, believes that this clause is related to the PIJ (Rajab Hasan al-Awadi al-Baba, *The Efforts of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the Palestinian Intifadah 1987-1994*, unpublished master degree thesis, Islamic University, Gaza, 2010, p. 230). This conclusion could be correct given that Hamas has not clashed and interacted during the period in which the Charter was published except with PIJ.

⁴ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 23.

Islamists of all backgrounds in Palestine agree that the project of liberation is the projection of a nation and not one of individual groups. If the Islamic and practical duty requires mobilizing the wills and capacities of the whole nation for the sake of this project, then it is a bigger duty to unify Islamic jihad efforts in Palestine, if not through organizational unity then at least through the unity of practice.⁵

However, can this be considered the final answer to the questions regarding the relationship between Hamas and all other Islamists? If the relationship between Hamas and other Islamic groups should be referred to their single religious-doctrinal frame of reference, then why does separation continue between these movements?

Certainly the image of the relationship between Islamic movements is more complex than many hope, especially the supporters of the Islamic movement who would like to see all these movements become unified. The relationship is also much more complex than many think, especially the opponents of Islamists who tend to put all Islamic movements in one basket and lump them all together just because they have the same ideological roots and because of the similarity of their proposals, and thus reject them all without distinction.⁶

Indeed, Islamic groups have profound differences in their political programs. It is not reasonable to ignore or simplify these differences, as they reflect the emergence and evolution of different socio-political groups. They may be based on the same Islamic heritage ideas and culture, but they operate in different backgrounds and climates; local, regional and international. They are led by social forces and elites with different and even rival intellectual, economic, and social backgrounds.

Having the same ideological frame of reference cannot cancel out these differences, which are natural and in line with the realities of human sociology.

We can analyze and study Hamas's attitudes on Palestinian Islamic movements, in general, based on the ideological platform of the MB movement, which

⁵ Khaled Hroub, *Al-Islamiyyun fi Filastin: Qira'at wa Mawaqif wa Qadaya Ukhra* (The Islamists in Palestine: Readings, Positions, and Other Matters) (Amman: Dar al-Bashir, 1994).

⁶ For example: The Islamists agree that Islam is the ideological reference for the project of liberation, that this project is the project of the entire Islamic nation and not just the Palestinians', and that it is unacceptable to compromise any part of Palestinian territory in favor of the Israelis.

established Hamas, especially the parts related to Islamic action and the Palestinian issue, and based on the evolution of Hamas itself.

There are two elements in the ideological platform of the MB movement, which have had the most important role in determining Hamas's positions towards other Islamists:

The first is the MB movement's position on political pluralism in society in general, and between Muslims and their movements in particular. This element is linked to the movement's perception of itself and its role in the Islamic arena. The second element is related to the movement's position on the Palestinian issue and its belief that it is the best suited group to liberate Palestine.

Concerning the first element, theoretically speaking, and as a number of experts indicate, including Egyptian MB leader Tawfiq al-Wa'y, the MB movement allows partisan pluralism in the Islamic state. He said that it allows the multiplicity of ideas, approaches, and policies proposed by each side, backed with arguments and proof. As such, those who believe in these, will support them and see reform is only possible through them. The pluralism of parties in politics is similar to the pluralism of doctrines in jurisprudence.⁷

According to Khaled Hroub, Hamas understands the issue of pluralism based on Islamic *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law) and doctrinal principles. The Qur'an has recognized plurality and differences of peoples, and the Prophet (SAAWS) recognized other religions, and organized the relationship with Jews in al-Madinah on the basis of citizenship rights and duties.⁸

Actually, the MB movement prefers the unity of Islamic action and does not welcome the emergence of other groups, believing this weakens Islamic ranks. It strongly believes that it is the mother and pioneer of all Islamic movements, the most important, most committed, and most aware of the teachings of Islam. Consequently, and like any other movement or party, it seeks to be the most popular and most present.

⁷ See Tawfiq al-Wa'y, *Al-Fikr al-Siyasi al-Mu'asir 'Ind al-Ikhwān al-Muslimin* (Modern Political Thought of the Muslim Brotherhood) (Kuwait: Al-Manar Islamic Library, n.d.), p. 106.

⁸ Khaled Hroub, "Hamas and Religious and Political Pluralism," in Jawad al-Hamad and Iyyad al-Barghouthi (eds.), *Dirasah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah: Hamas: 1987–1996* (A Study on the Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement: Hamas: 1987–1996) (Amman: MESC, 1997), pp. 173–183. (in Arabic)

However, despite these beliefs, the movement does not prevent others from expressing or organizing themselves into independent movements. This is based on the rule adopted by the group's founder Hasan al-Banna: "We cooperate where we agree, and excuse each other where we disagree." Yet this has not prevented competition and disputes between MB movement supporters and the others. Mistakes are committed by both sides, as happened in the 1980s between the youths of MB and PIJ.

The second element was that the MB movement strongly believes it will have a crucial role in liberating Palestine, and that the group is the most capable of achieving this. This was based on the belief that Islam is the only creed that will bring about the liberation of Palestine, and supporters of the movement believe that the MB adopts Islam correctly, comprehensively, and moderately; and that they are the most acceptable and present among Muslims; that their ideas are the most widespread, effective, and persuasive; thus they believe that it is natural for them to lead the Muslim *Ummah* in the project of liberation.⁹

According to MB literature, the movement is "the only party capable of snatching the cause from the hands of those who are complacent and the defeatists, and to endure, strike, and be honest in endeavoring and being patient when it comes to diligent guided work."¹⁰ These statements are not based on "excessive self-confidence," and are not just media propaganda, but they express the sense of responsibility MB members have towards Palestine, and the need to lead the ranks to perform this duty. As for their pride in their approach to liberation, it is not because they are biased towards their opinion, but, according

⁹ Former Palestinian MB leader 'Abdullah Abu 'Izzah explains in his memoirs how the MB movement perceived the Palestinian issue in the 1950s, which was considered an alternative to the proposals of influential nationalist and leftist movements. They called for doubling the support to the movement, because if it prevails then it shall be the one to liberate Palestine. They also believed that when the movement mobilizes its ranks for liberation, it would not be the Palestinians alone who will comply, rather it will be the entire Muslim *Ummah*. This participation would not be just to help and assist, rather it would be to fulfill the sacred duty of all Muslims, i.e., rescuing the first of the two Qiblahs and purging the land of *Al-Isra'* (The Night Journey) and Mi'raj (Night Ascension) from Zionism. See 'Abdullah Abu 'Izzah, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

¹⁰ Ziad Abu 'Amr, *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qita' Gazzah: Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimun al-Jihad al-Islami* (The Islamic Movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: The Muslim Brotherhood the Islamic Jihad) (Acre: Dar al-Aswar, 1989), p. 51.

to a number of their leaders, if they knew a better approach (based on Islamic reference itself) they would have followed it.

As for the intellectual, political, and military evolution of Hamas, several factors increased its self-confidence and strengthened its belief in its success and the success of its approach. These factors were: the rise of Hamas's military power and ability to confront the Israeli occupation army and deal painful blows to Israeli society; the growth of its political influence in the Palestinian street and the Arab and Muslim worlds; and the extension of its alliances and its activities and its expansion in Arab and Muslim countries. However, at the same time, these pushed Hamas to open up to other forces, and to seek to form wide Islamic and national alliances.

Voices within Hamas believed it was necessary for the PIJ to merge with Hamas. Their argument was that the justifications for PIJ's founding revolved around the need for military action against Israel, something that Hamas subsequently adopted and pursued extensively.

However, this argument did not take on serious proportions, even though some Hamas leaders quoted PIJ Secretary General Ramadan Shallah proposing unification more than once. In any case, it now seems clear that the two sides tend towards coexistence, cooperation, and coordination, rather than towards integration.

Accordingly, it can be said that Hamas's positions on other Palestinian Islamic movements were different and diverse. They ranged from extreme keenness about a given group to apathy about others, based on the ideological structure and political vision of every respective Palestinian Islamic movement and its influence on the public, and hence, its ability to compete with Hamas.

If these movements refuse to merge and insist on continuing to operate independently, Hamas considers cooperation and collaboration in practical steps and political positions the next acceptable position. In the coming section, we will briefly consider Hamas's positions towards Hizb ut-Tahrir, Sufi groups, Salafist groups, and PIJ.

Third: Hamas's Position Towards Hizb ut-Tahrir

Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of liberation) was founded in 1953 in Jerusalem by *Shari'ah* Judge Taqiyuddin al-Nabahani in collaboration with Dawood Hamdan, and Nimr al-Masri, Munir Shuqair, 'Adel al-Nabulsi, and 'Abdul-Qadim Zalloom, and Ghanem 'Abdo.

The party took its name from the need to revive the Muslim *Ummah*, halting its decline and liberating it from "infidel ideas, structures, and laws." The party believes this liberation could be achieved by "lifting it [the nation] intellectually by changing, fundamentally and comprehensively, ideas and concepts that led to its decline, and fostering the correct ideas and concepts of Islam within it, so that it adapts its behavior in life in accordance to the ideas and provisions of Islam."¹¹

Hizb ut-Tahrir also saw that the establishment of an Islamic political party was a religious duty, in order to save the Muslim *Ummah* from its severe decline and restore the Islamic caliphate.¹² This party saw itself as the rallying of Muslims on the basis of Islam alone as an idea and method, "and prohibits them from rallying on a capitalist, communist, socialist, nationalist, patriotic, sectarian, or Masonic basis, prohibits them from forming or joining communist, socialist, nationalist, patriotic, sectarian, or Masonic parties."¹³

This means that the party is radically different from any nationalist or patriotic movement, including the various Palestinian groups that gathered in the framework of the PLO.

However, the differences the party had were not just with nationalist and patriotic political movements, but also with the MB movement. Hizb ut-Tahrir considered it and all other reformist Islamic movements inconsistent with the sound path for Muslim revival. According to the party, these movements suffer from:

Lack of clarity in the way Islam implements the ideas and provisions of Islam. They carry the Islamic idea in an improvised manner, marred by ambiguity. They think that Islam's return can be achieved by building mosques and publishing books, by establishing charitable and cooperative societies, and by educating and

¹¹ As stated in a book published by the party: *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (Party of Liberation) (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), p. 12.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

reforming individuals. By being oblivious to the corruption of society, and the dominance of infidel ideas, provisions, and systems, believing reforming society can be achieved by reforming its ideas, sentiments, and systems, which they believe will lead to reforming its individuals.¹⁴

Therefore, we can say that Hizb ut-Tahrir, when founded in 1953, considered itself an alternative to the MB movement for the restoration of the Islamic caliphate and liberation of Muslim countries from Western colonial domination. As a result, a theoretical, political, and practical dispute appeared over the years between the party and the movement. Meanwhile, the history of the party since its foundation was characterized by a political clash with the Jordanian regime and an ideological clash with the MB movement, which maintained a generally good relationship with the Jordanian regime.¹⁵

This background of political and ideological differences prompted Hizb ut-Tahrir in Palestine to keep its distance from Hamas and its activities, not trusting its policies and stances, and constantly criticizing it. The party did not recognize the government Hamas leads in GS,¹⁶ and reiterated in its statements its demands of Hamas to adhere to the approach it believes is the only correct path to liberate Palestine, namely to seek support from the armies of the Muslim *Ummah*, establish the caliphate, and then liberate Palestine.

These positions led to clashes between supporters of Hizb ut-Tahrir and the Hamas-led government in GS, when they sought to stage public events and the government denied them permission.

Criticisms made by Hizb ut-Tahrir revolve around Hamas's political positions and the statements of its leaders. Whereas Hizb ut-Tahrir has a strict position on refusing to recognize Israel, Hamas's political position, after its entry into politics and vying to lead the PA in 2006, precipitated a shift in its discourse and tone, as dictated by its new position. This invited candid and public criticism from Hizb ut-Tahrir.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

¹⁵ For more details on the conflict between the party and the Hashemite regime in Jordan, see Amnon Cohen, *Al-Ahزاب al-Siyasiyyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah fi Zalam al-Nizam al-Urduni 1949–1967* (Political Parties in the West Bank Under the Jordanian Regime 1949–1967), translated into Arabic by Khaled Hasan (Jerusalem: Al-Qadisiyah Printing Press, 1988).

¹⁶ On 26/6/2012, member of Hizb ut-Tahrir media office in Palestine Maher Ja'bari said on television that his party does not recognize the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority under occupation, whether in WB or GS. Site of Loblab, <http://www.loblab.com/item.aspx?itemid=26162>

Al-Wa'i magazine, the mouthpiece of Hizb ut-Tahrir, commented on the issue of recognition of Israel in November 2006, saying: “‘Abbas says ‘yes’ to recognition, and Haniyyah does not think of saying ‘no’ or ‘yes,’ but rather ‘Nes.’”¹⁷ Concerning the Mecca Agreement between Fatah and Hamas, brokered by Saudi King ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz, Hizb ut-Tahrir was not enthusiastic, and did not see in it any good for Muslims or the cause of Palestine.

In an editorial in March 2007, *Al-Wa'i* magazine commented on the decisions and agreements reached in Mecca saying: “It is evident and clear for anyone with eyes that all these decisions and agreements recognize the state of the Jews, and is a prelude to removing the rest of the fig leaf—if there is still rest left—covering the verbal maneuvers, to be replaced by direct recognition without even a scrap of paper!”¹⁸ The editorial goes on to consider the Mecca Agreement a “disaster,” and says that what made this disaster even worse for the religion of *Allah* was:

1. That it was signed in the sacred month in the sacred land, where crime is worse than in other lands.
2. That the signatories had prepared for the agreement by escalating the fighting between those in the PA (Fatah) and the government (Hamas), “with the shedding of innocent blood to terrorize the people of Palestine to accept the disastrous agreement to prevent further bloodshed.”
3. That recognizing Israel was taking place at a time when its crimes were being escalated, such as in the excavations at the *al-Aqsa* Mosque.¹⁹

Hizb ut-Tahrir’s criticism of Hamas did not stop. Naturally, we will not be able to enumerate all criticisms here, but we refer to some. On 21/12/2012, Hizb ut-Tahrir addressed Hamas in a press comment published by the party’s media office in Palestine, titled “Brothers in Hamas: Why do you keep mistaking who to ask for support whenever a Jewish crime occurs?” Hizb ut-Tahrir called on Hamas to stop appealing to the international community, arguing that “the battle with the Jewish occupation is not a legal battle,” and sending what it called “a message of guidance to our brothers in Hamas” that said: “It is time for you to make a call to

¹⁷ *Al-Wa'i* magazine, issue 237, November 2006, p. 4, the magazine is published in Beirut, Lebanon by a group of Muslim university students who adhere to the party’s ideology.

See http://www.al-waie.org/issues/237/article.php?id=422_0_33_0_C

¹⁸ *Al-Wa'i*, issue 241, March 2007, *Al-Wa'i* editorial, p. 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

the correct side for support, the armies of the Muslim *Ummah*, and to call on them to move to do their jihad duty to remove this occupation, especially in the climate of revolutions that shook the pillars of the Arab regimes.”

Hizb ut-Tahrir concluded its comment by saying: In the context of assuming good faith in every Muslim, do Muslims expect the future to bring with it new statements by Hamas leadership that call on the “army of Egypt and the armies of surrounding countries to act urgently to rescue Palestine from the Jewish occupation and its crimes?”²⁰

Hizb ut-Tahrir's statement came in the wake of statements attributed to Ahmad Bahar, first deputy speaker of the PLC, who called on “the international community to save Palestinian lands from theft,” and called on the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC),²¹ the UN, and Arab, Islamic, and international parliaments to take a serious position and speak out against racist Israeli laws.²²

Hizb ut-Tahrir said: The “Jewish occupation state” does not care about legal threats. It fully realizes that there is a broad American cloak ready to cover up its legal violations whenever they are exposed in international forums. The organizations that have the Arab regimes as members that have failed Palestine, such as the League of Arab States and the OIC, are complicit in the crimes of the occupation. They cover up the flaws of the regimes failing Palestine and promoting initiatives for normalization with the occupation like the League of Arab States has done. It added that the UN has legitimized the occupation on the land of Palestine, and is a mere tool in the hands of the US and international powers, which consider the security of the “state of the Jews” is above all else, as Barack Obama declared.

Hizb ut-Tahrir then asks: “What is the purpose of seeking this support from all those conspiring parties? What can these delusional legal battles produce vis-à-vis the crimes of the occupation?” Hizb ut-Tahrir also said, “Stopping the series of Jewish crimes can only be done when the armies of the Muslims move for a fateful battle that uproots this occupation.”

²⁰ See site of the media office of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Palestine, 17/12/2011, <http://www.pal-tahrir.info>

²¹ The official name of the organization became the Organization of Islamic Cooperation as of 28/6/2011.

²² Ma'an News Agency, 21/12/2011, <http://www.maannews.net/Content.aspx?id=446756> (in Arabic)

Despite the harsh criticisms made by Hizb ut-Tahrir against the MB movement and Hamas, the latter do not assign great importance to the party, because of its limited influence, and given that its activities are confined to propaganda and discussions without any practical activities. Practically speaking, this means Hizb ut-Tahrir has little impact politically, and is unable to attract significant public support.

Hamas's position on Hizb ut-Tahrir comes not only from the belief the MB movement has, that unifying the Islamic ranks is better than fragmenting and dividing them, but because it believes the methods the party has advocated for achieving its goals will not lead to achieving the desired results. Furthermore, the MB movement has responded in their writings to the ideas of Hizb ut-Tahrir, highlighting their contradiction, lack of realism, and inconsistency with the known provisions of *Shari'ah*.²³

Fourth: Hamas's Position on Sufi Groups

There is no considerable interest by Hamas in Sufi groups. For one thing, these movements are not politicized. Furthermore, Sufi sheikhs do not constitute an ideological or political challenge for Hamas, and do not bar their followers from joining the Prime Minister of the Hamas government in GS, Isma'il Haniyyah. In his youth, Haniyyah was a follower of the Sufi Shadhili order Sheikh Ibrahim al-Khalidi,

²³ One of the most famous books published by the MB movement in responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir was written by Sadiq Amin (a nom de plume for a prominent MB movement leader in Jordan 'Abdullah 'Azzam), Sadiq Amin, *Al-Da'wah al-Islamiyyah Faridah Shar'iyyah wa Darurah Bashariyyah (The Islamic Da'wah is a Shari'ah Duty and a Human Necessity)* (Amman: Cooperative Print Press Workers Association, 1978). The book *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi Filastin (The Islamic Movement in Palestine)* published by Abu al-Khawalid al-Hasan, a Hamas supporter in Palestine sums up some of the main ideas of Hizb ut-Tahrir, and overviews the MB movement position on the party and response to some of its religious and ideological tenets. The book narrates the debate between Sayyid Qutb and Nabahani when the two men met in Jerusalem after the party was declared, where Qutb "reminded him of the consequences of his actions and his responsibility before *Allah* as well as the dismal state of the Muslims that required all to unite their efforts, proposing to him to operate within the MB movement in Jordan if he wanted reform." However, Nabahani's condition, according to the book, was for the MB movement in Jordan to separate from that of Egypt. See Abu al-Khawalid al-Hasan, *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi Filastin (The Islamic movements in Palestine)* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), pp. 144–165.

and visited his lodge in the Shati' refugee camp.²⁴ Nevertheless, the Sufi focus on spiritual matters with no equal interest in Islamic causes and advocacy, has been criticized by the MB movement.²⁵

Fifth: Hamas's Position on Salafist Groups

Hamas's position on Salafist groups differs from its position on Sufi groups, as many of these are involved in military and political activity, and their ideas and programs conflict with those of Hamas. Nevertheless, Hamas does not see Salafist groups as a real rival, essentially because these groups, despite their political activity, lack a clear political program and appropriate vision to address Palestinian reality. At the popular level, they do not pose a challenge to Hamas.

The Salafist groups also consist of different groups that have ideas with varying degrees of convergence or divergence from those of the MB movement. On the other hand, the term Salafism is not understood or defined by Islamic movements in the same way. The MB movement themselves call their movement a "Salafist call," according to the definition of Hasan al-Banna himself. However, this concept is different from the one espoused by other Salafist movements, which adopt ideas similar to the Saudi "Wahhabism" school, which is hostile to the Sufi education that al-Banna had also adopted. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning here that many supporters of the MB movement have Salafist tendencies in that sense, especially those who studied in KSA or who have lived in Gulf countries.

The dispute and clash between Hamas and some Salafi groups was the result of the latter's ties to al-Qaeda, and their attempts to implement *Shari'ah* provisions by force in GS and impose their will on society. It was not the result of any challenge these groups posed to Hamas's strength and ability to lead Islamist action.

From the ideological point of view, there are disputes between Hamas and some Salafi movements, especially those linked to al-Qaeda, particularly in declaring people apostates who should be killed. Disputes also include the position on Twelver Shiites, as Hamas and the MB movement in general refuse the Salafi-Wahhabi

²⁴ Information from Sheikh Ya'qub Qarrash, leading Shadhili sheikh in Palestine, in an interview with the researcher on 11/11/2011.

²⁵ Abu al-Khawalid al-Hasan, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

position that declares them apostates. They consider the differences with them only doctrinal and historical and do not declare them as apostates, based on the positions of Sheikh Ibn Taymiyyah himself in not declaring them as apostates.

The differences between Hamas and these Salafi movements were not confined to ideology and doctrine, but went beyond this in to armed clashes. The incidents in Rafah involving clashes between security forces in GS and Jund Ansar Allah caused a huge controversy. The mentor of the group ‘Abdul-Latif Musa had proclaimed an Islamic emirate from the Ibn Taymiyyah Mosque in Rafah on 14/8/2009. Clashes erupted between security forces and the group, killing 28 and injuring 150 others. Among the dead were ‘Abdul-Latif Musa himself and Khalid Banat (aka Abu ‘Abdullah al-Suri), the founder and military commander of the group. Six were killed from the security forces and Hamas, including Muhammad al-Shamali the commander of the East Battalion in Al-Qassam Brigades in Rafah, as well as six civilians. The authorities arrested around 100 members and supporters of the group.²⁶

The clashes spread to the house of Sheikh Abu Musa, which Hamas demolished. The second clash took place in April 2011, after a Salafi group calling itself “Tawhid Wal Jihad” kidnapped the Italian solidarity activist Vittorio Arrigoni on April 15, to force Hamas to release its detainees led by the group’s leader Hisham al-Sa‘idani.²⁷ On the following day, Arrigoni’s body was found in an abandoned apartment in northern GS. Hamas described the group as deviant outlaw group. The Hamas government security forces succeeded on April 19 in tracking down the killers and had them surrounded at a home in Al-Nusairat refugee camp in central GS. Two of the killers died in the armed clashes that ensued, while a third was apprehended.

Sixth: Hamas’s Position Towards PIJ

Hamas’s relationship with the PIJ is more complex than with other groups, and has passed through three main phases over the past three decades.

²⁶ Mohsen Mohammad Saleh (ed.), *Al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini li Sanat 2009* (The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations, 2010), pp. 55–56.

²⁷ Aljazeera.net, 15/4/2011, <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/11006454-def-47f2-b053-a81f8abc508b> (in Arabic)

The first stage was one of sharp conflict and rivalry between the PIJ and the MB movement, and subsequently Hamas. This was the result of differences of thought and general approach to the Palestinian issue, and differences related to the MB movement and its role in the Islamic arena in general, and the Palestinian arena in particular.

The second stage was marked by rapprochement and cooperation between the two groups, especially with Israel's relentless targeting of both groups including its targeting of their leaders and cadres. This compelled the two sides to close ranks against Israel.

The third stage followed a series of events; Hamas's victory in the 2006 PLC elections, forming the 10th government and then the National Unity Government, before it had to take military action in GS precipitating the estrangement from Fatah.

There were differences between the two groups regarding participation in the elections and accepting membership of the PA. Then came the official Arab, Western, American, and Israeli positions that opposed Hamas and rejected its democratic electoral legitimacy. This strengthened the bond between the two groups in order to defend GS and thwart attempts aiming at bringing it back in to the fold of the Oslo Accords and their restrictions.

Israel's aggression on GS in late 2008 and early 2009, the Palestinian reconciliation talks, and the Arab revolutions that toppled the regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya led the two groups to an even higher level of cooperation and coordination.

1. The First Phase Until 1987

The emergence of the PIJ out of the womb of the MB movement in GS was not an easy process and was marred by disputes and conflict between the two. Since its foundation, the PIJ had lived in a state of conflict with the movement, which ultimately led to the formation of Hamas. Hence, there was a radical shift in the movement's overall political position vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue. Was the PIJ then the main driving force behind the founding of Hamas?

Experts and scholars are in disagreement over this. Some believe that Hamas emerged when the MB movement saw the PIJ as a challenge to it, and not as a result of a natural development of the group's political discourse and positions.

This was the conclusion of researcher Khalid Zawawi,²⁸ and it is possible to say that this view expresses the PIJ position and narrative.

Others believe otherwise, however. In the testimony offered by Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmad Yasin broadcast by Al Jazeera in its program *Shahid 'ala al-Asr* (Witness to the Era), and published later in a book, he did not mention any PIJ influence on Hamas's founding. Furthermore, Khalid Mish'al, in a long interview conducted by Ghassan Charbel for *Annahar* newspaper, published later in a separate book, does not allude to this influence either. Instead, he spoke about a historical context leading up to the foundation of Hamas outside Palestine, beginning with the establishment of Islamic Justice list for the elections of General Union of Palestinian Students at Kuwait University in 1977.²⁹

At any rate, it is certain that the PIJ's emergence was a catalyst that sped up the MB movement's adoption of armed resistance against Israel, as well as a number of PIJ analyses and ideological proposals. The MB youths were influenced by the ideas of Fathi al-Shiqaqi, especially his idea that the Palestinian issue is the central cause for the Islamic movement. This was unprecedented in the MB movement. Palestinian historian Mohsen Mohammad Saleh believes that the MB movement agreed that Palestine was a central cause for the nation and Islamists but, before al-Shiqaqi, their literature did not proclaim it to be the central cause. Yet he also believes, according to a number of interviews he made, that discussions within the movement's ranks regarding this idea and the inclination to adopt it dates back to at least 1981–1982, especially among the Palestinian MB in Kuwait (Khalid Mish'al and his associates).³⁰

The head of Hamas's political bureau Khalid Mish'al had said that the Hamas project began to emerge between 1985 and 1986. The project began to mature without being declared, and extensive contacts were underway between concerned parties outside and inside Palestine to draw its features. He added that the leadership abroad focused on raising funds to put it into practice and cover its expenses, and

²⁸ Khalid Zawawi, *Marja'iyyat al-Khitab al-Siyasi fi Filastin* (The Reference Frame of Political Discourse in Palestine) (Ramallah: The Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy—Muwatin, 2012), p. 87.

²⁹ See Ghassan Charbel, *Khalid Mish'al Yatadhakkar: Harakat Hamas wa Tahrir Filastin* (Khalid Mish'al Remembers: Hamas and the Liberation of Palestine) (Beirut: Dar Annahar, 2006), pp. 32–38.

³⁰ E-mail from Mohsen Mohammad Saleh to the author Sameeh Hammoudeh, Ramallah, 8/10/2012.

on rallying Palestinians in the Diaspora, as well as communicating with Arab and Islamic movements. He added that the idea they started promoting in these circles was that the Palestinian issue is the central cause of the Muslim *Ummah*.³¹

However, this was not the only factor. There were also the MB movement's ideological and doctrinal structures, in addition to the role the group played historically concerning the Palestinian issue. This included its role in the 1948 war, and its experience with Fatah through the Shuyukh Camps in Jordan, which ended with the September 1970 conflict between the Jordanian regime and the Palestinian freedom fighters (*fedayeen*). These factors clearly indicate that the idea was never absent from the awareness of the group and its future plans, even though they did not fully develop until after the first *Intifadah* in late 1987.

We can speak of three main issues that determined Hamas's position on PIJ:

First, the PIJ originates from the MB movement, and it developed a discourse critical of Islamic groups and movements, describing their positions as disappointing vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue. The discourse also tackled the military action against the occupation, which could be considered an ideological and political challenge to these movements in general, and the MB movement in particular.³² PIJ adopted a revolutionary ideological, political and organizational approach, one that did not subscribe to that of the MB movement, which is based on gradual and slow reform of Arab society order to prepare it for resistance. PIJ believed that the alternative was a revolutionary movement by an Islamic vanguard that could impose an Islamic system, which would then wage a total war on Israel.³³

Second, the sharp criticism voiced by the PIJ founders against the MB movement was not limited to the latter's position on the Palestinian issue. It also

³¹ Ghassan Charbel, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

³² Iyyad al-Barghouthi believes that the MB movement's prime concern with respect to PIJ was that the latter would become more popular and secure more achievements than the former. For this reason, the movement rushed to rebrand itself as Hamas at the start of the *Intifadah* on 14/12/1987, announcing that it is a branch of the MB movement. This was done particularly during this *Intifadah*, because the PIJ rose to quick prominence as an Islamic military organization. See Iyyad al-Barghouthi, *Al-Aslamah wa al-Siyasah fi al-Arabi al-Filastiniyyah al-Muhtallah* (Islamization and Politics in the Occupied Palestinian Territories) (Jerusalem: Al-Zahraa Center for Studies and Research, 1990), p. 89. One of the PIJ founders, Sheikh 'Abdul-'Aziz 'Odeh, also reckons that the MB saw the PIJ as an alternative to them. See Ziad Abu 'Amr, *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qita' Gazzah*, p. 158.

³³ Ziad Abu 'Amr, *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qita' Gazzah*, p. 151.

applied to their position concerning the Arab world in general, and Egypt and GS in particular. This caused sensitivity in the movement's ranks vis-à-vis the PIJ, leading sometimes to some skirmishes, especially in GS.

Third, the PIJ considered the Islamic revolution in Iran led by Ayatollah Khomeini as a reference frame, and considered Imam Khomeini a renewer of the faith and a leader of change during that period. This set off alarms among the MB, who would never accept following an authority from outside their ranks, let alone a Shiite rather than a Sunni authority.

The MB follow their authority in administrative and organizational matters, and benefit greatly—when it comes to general ideological and Islamic issues—from renowned scholars in their circles or in close circles, such as Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi, Abu al-Hasan al-Nadawi and others. However, in Palestine, they were unsettled by how far the PIJ went in getting close to the Iranian revolution and its proposals, and how its founder al-Shiqaqi pledged loyalty to Imam Khomeini.

Al-Shiqaqi, in the course of criticizing the position of Islamic movements on the Palestinian cause, said: “If the absence of the Islamic movement was understandable and justified in the 1950s and 1960s, it is not possible to understand or justify this astounding absence of the Islamic movement from occupying its natural position in leading the stage, steering its events, and controlling its changes.”³⁴

Al-Shiqaqi proposed the Palestinian cause as the central cause of the Islamic movement, and said the Zionist project and the Hebrew state were the essence of Western-Islamic conflict, stressing that confronting Israel was the primary duty of the Islamic movement.

The PIJ's Critique of the MB Movement

We do not intend to analyze exhaustively all criticisms made by the PIJ against the MB movement. What concerns us is stating the most prominent of the criticisms in order to explain their effect on the position of the MB movement, and Hamas later, vis-à-vis the PIJ, and the sensitive relations between the latter two in the 1980s. While bearing in mind that relations between them at a later stage overcame

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

crisis and conflict and became accord, coordination, and alliance. Both groups are in fierce conflict with the Israeli occupation, and they needed to close ranks against Israel. Here, we note the following criticisms:³⁵

1. The MB movement does not engage in self-criticism.
2. The absence of a clear political program for the MB movement.
3. The proclivity to hallow leaders.
4. The movement's lack of a vision and theoretical understanding of history.
5. The movement's appeasement of and coexistence with Arab regimes.³⁶
6. The reliance of the MB movement on educating its members on rigid and prescriptive curricula detached from the constantly changing objective reality, be it social, economic, political, or intellectual. This has led their youths to complacency.³⁷
7. The prevalence of an uncritical mentality among the MB.³⁸

Perhaps some of these criticisms reflect the climate in which the founders of PIJ lived, or perhaps some of their personal experiences. Indeed, many of these criticisms do not apply to MB chapters in other places.

The PIJ's Position on the Iranian Revolution and the Shiites

Fathi al-Shiqaqi, the PIJ founder, was influenced by the Islamic revolution in Iran led by Ayatollah Khomeini. To him, this was the beginning of a revolutionary transformation. Al-Shiqaqi, when he was still a student at Al-Zaqaziq University³⁹ in Egypt, wrote his book "Khomeini the Islamic Solution and Alternative."⁴⁰ Multiple editions of the book were printed in a short period of time, and because of the book, the author was detained for four months before being forced to return to

³⁵ This analysis is based on books by Ziad Abu 'Amr and Khalid Zawawi, previously mentioned, and a book by Muhammad Moro, *Fathi al-Shiqaqi: Sawt al-Mustad'afin fi Muwajahat Mashru' al-Haimanah al-Gharbi* (Fathi al-Shiqaqi: The Voice of the Oppressed Against the Western Dominance Project) (Gaza: Palestinian Center for Studies and Civilizational Communication, 2011).

³⁶ Ziad Abu 'Amr, *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qita' Gazzah*, p. 154.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

³⁹ After al-Shiqaqi graduated from the Faculty of Medicine, he applied to study history at the Faculty of Humanities.

⁴⁰ Fathi al-Shiqaqi, *Al-Khomeini al-Hall al-Islami wa al-Badil* (Khomeini the Islamic Solution and the Alternative) (Cairo: Dar al-Mukhtar al-Islami, 1979).

his home in Rafah. There, he became active in disseminating his ideas and political visions, and rallied Islamist youths around him.

Some of al-Shiqaqi's views were met with reservations by the MB in GS. His views regarding the Iranian revolution and his strong defense of it; considering the differences with Shiite Muslims irrelevant in the course of the conflict fought by Muslims against "Western imperialism" and Israel. He glorified the Iranian position on this conflict and its defiance of the West, especially the US and Israel, believing the latter to be a cancer that must be uprooted. This is despite the fact that the MB movement initially had a positive stance regarding the revolution, a position they maintained until the eruption of the Iraq-Iran war in 1980.

The MB movement in GS believed the resolution stemmed from Islamic foundations, "but began to lose its brilliance year after year," having failed to establish a model Islamic state based on stable institutions, and to overcome the sectarian dimension,⁴¹ as they said. The difference in the positions over the Iranian revolution and Shiite Muslims led the MB to accuse the PIJ of having Shiite tendencies.⁴²

2. The Second Phase 1987–2005⁴³

Hamas began operating in late 1987, and quickly took a major role in the *Intifadah*. It became the main rival of Fatah on the popular and resistance levels. With Hamas's launch, most of the previous PIJ criticisms of the MB movement decreased. The PIJ became akin to Hamas's younger sibling, meeting with it on politics, ideology, and jihad, as well as strategic proposals, differing only in some partial and tactical matters.

The two groups maintained their different approaches during the *Intifadah* of 1987–1993. Each side had its own programs, events, and activities. Yet no side sought to disrupt the work of the other.

Nevertheless, there was sometimes friction on the ground, for example when competing over influence in mosques. But the two sides continued to stress Islamic unity, and formed a joint front to resist political concessions by the PLO leadership.

⁴¹ Ziad Abu 'Amr, *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qita' Gazzah*, p. 157.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁴³ The editor (Mohsen Mohammad Saleh) added the text related to the second phase 1987–2005 and the third phase 2005–2013, which was not present in the original text.

The two movements jointly formed an alliance comprising 10 factions in total, the “Alliance of Ten Factions,” on the sidelines of a conference to support the *Intifadah* on 22–25/10/1991. The alliance opposed the peace process and the Madrid Peace Conference held on 30/10/1991.

On the sidelines of the conference, the delegations of Hamas and PIJ met and held discussions. According to Ibrahim Ghushkeh, Hamas spokesperson, the inclination was to reach unity through three stages: first, coordination, second forming a joint front, and third, unity.

Ghushkeh said that Fathi al-Shiqaqi had stressed to him the need for unity between them. Ghushkeh said that Hamas's relationship with the PIJ was and remained strong because “what brings us close to the Islamic Jihad are two main factors: First, we share the same Islamic background, and second, our political programs are very close.”⁴⁴

On 17/12/1992, Israel deported 416 Islamist leaders from Palestine to Marj al-Zuhur in Lebanon, mostly from Hamas, but the group also included 16 PIJ members. This created an opportunity for contact between the two sides, who began coordinating their plans for steadfastness and returning to Palestine.

Hamas and PIJ agreed to confront the Oslo Accords and to continue armed resistance, becoming active as part of the “Alliance of Ten Factions.” Both groups were persecuted by the PA's security forces, which did not reduce the pressure on the two groups until *al-Aqsa Intifadah* in 2000. Both boycotted the PA legislative and presidential elections in 1996, and staged self-immolation⁴⁵ attacks together, including the attack in Beit Lid on 22/1/1995 and an attack on a shopping center in Tel Aviv on 5/3/1996. Hamas provided logistical support, while PIJ members carried out the attacks.

The *al-Aqsa Intifadah* of 2000–2005 was a turning point for both Hamas and PIJ. They showed remarkable abilities in resistance activity, with reduced PA pressures and restrictions, and coordinated directly on the ground, for example with the attack on the Erez crossing in GS on 8/6/2003.

⁴⁴ Ibrahim Ghushkeh, *Al-Mi'dhanah al-Hamra'*, pp. 188–189.

⁴⁵ The overwhelming majority of Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims consider these operations to be “martyrdom operations” while most Israelis and western writers and media describe them as “suicide operations.” We used the word “self-immolation” in this report to be as neutral as possible. However, such terms may need more discussion.

3. The Third Phase 2005–2013

Hamas and the PIJ boycotted the Palestinian presidential elections on 9/1/2005, in which the Fatah candidate Mahmud ‘Abbas won. They were among the Palestinian factions that signed the Cairo Agreement on 17/3/2005, which sought to prepare the ground for them to join the PLO and put the Palestinian house in order. The two movements took part in the municipal elections in WB and GS, allying in a number of municipalities. The huge popularity of Hamas and extreme rivalry with Fatah was obvious to observers, while the PIJ and other factions achieved modest results compared to Hamas and Fatah.

Hamas decided to take part in the PLC elections based on advisory opinions related to the need to protect the resistance program, reform, fighting corruption, and preventing political concessions. For its part, the PIJ decided to boycott the elections because they were being held under the Oslo ceiling, where the resistance forces had little chance to impose the rules of the game on the PA.

Hamas’s victory in the election in early 2006 gave it a strong impetus, which was met in pro-resistance circles including the PIJ with great relief. Iran (the main backer of the PIJ) provided broad and extensive assistance to Hamas and its government, in light of its popularity. In addition, regional and international forces opened to Hamas more extensively.

Hamas offered the PIJ the chance to participate in the government that Isma‘il Haniyyah was tasked with forming, but it declined.⁴⁶ PIJ Leader Khalid al-Batsh asked Hamas to decline to form a government if it did not include a national coalition comprising all Palestinian sides.⁴⁷

Al-Batsh stressed the PIJ’s cooperation with Hamas because it is committed to Palestinian fundamentals, and because it is an essential part of the resistance.⁴⁸ PIJ Leader Nafez ‘Azzam indicated there was a possibility of cooperating with the Hamas-led government on a number of issues, the most important among them being internal reform, promoting resistance, and protecting the rights of

⁴⁶ *Al-Hayat*, 29/1/2006.

⁴⁷ *Al Bayan*, 4/2/2006.

⁴⁸ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 10/2/2006.

the Palestinian people. He added that they could also cooperate in resisting the pressures put on Hamas.⁴⁹

Relations between Hamas and the PIJ continued in a positive way. The special relationship between the leaders of the two movements, Khalid Mish'al and Ramadan Shallah, gave their accord a strong impetus that helped overcome friction.

After Hamas forged a National Unity Government led by Isma'il Haniyyah in March 2007, reports emerged that the Hamas-PIJ coordination was at a peak. There were reports that Hamas had received PIJ promises to adhere as much as possible to the truce with Israel, to help ease the blockade on the Palestinian people and government. Mahmud al-Zahhar indicated there were continuous bilateral meetings, and added that at the start of their relationship, there were differences in points of view regarding the desire of the PIJ to engage in armed action at its inception, while the MB movement wanted to focus on education before armed struggle. He said that after all sides became involved in armed struggle, they became closer, and pointed out that the two groups were an Islamic project with a joint vision.⁵⁰ He also said that the merger of the two groups under a unified organizational framework was on the table, but required prior arrangements and measures and maturation on a high level.⁵¹

However, the PIJ opposed the military takeover by Hamas in GS in mid-June 2007, and tried to mediate with Fatah. This upset Hamas, for it expected the PIJ to side with it or at least be more understanding of its position.

Hamas did not conceal its annoyance either when many Fatah members and supporters joined the PIJ as an umbrella providing them with protection and freedom to act. Hamas saw these elements as factors of potential tension in GS or within the PIJ, with the goal of pushing the latter into a more rigid direction vis-à-vis Hamas and its government. For its part, the PIJ continued its efforts to mediate and bring the parties closer together.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Al-Khaleej*, 26/2/2006.

⁵⁰ *Al-Akhabar* newspaper, Beirut, 9/5/2007.

⁵¹ *Al-Khaleej*, 9/5/2007.

⁵² See for example on mediation efforts: site of Islam Online, 22/6/2007, <http://islamonline.net>; Paltoday News Agency, 10/7/2007, <http://paltoday.ps/ar>; and *Addustour*, 19/9/2007.

That period was not free of individual frictions between Hamas and PIJ members.⁵³ Khalid al-Batsh reckoned that the Hamas takeover emboldened Israel to the extent of endangering the Palestinian cause, calling on both Fatah and Hamas to back down and make mutual concessions.⁵⁴ Bilateral meetings did not stop, and a series of them were held in GS to better coordinate their positions. The two sides also agreed to form joint field committees to address any disputes that arose between them.⁵⁵ Tensions and clashes broke out several times on 21/10/2007, however, the two agreed to pull out fighters immediately and address the causes of tensions, while accusing suspicious elements of trying to instigate sedition between them.⁵⁶

On 8/9/2008, the two movements held a lengthy meeting and issued a statement stressing their strategic bilateral relations, and the Palestinian fundamentals that both movements believed in. The meeting stressed that a serious national dialogue was the only way to address Palestinian political division. In the statement, the two movements said they had agreed to form joint committees to address any possible disputes.⁵⁷

The two movements coordinated their positions on the comprehensive dialogue meeting for national reconciliation that was supposed to be held in Cairo on 9–11/10/2008. Along with two other Palestinian factions, they declined to attend a day before the meeting was scheduled, citing Fatah's lack of seriousness. The PA failed to release political prisoners in WB; the Hamas delegation was not allowed to travel from WB; and 'Abbas insisted on attending only the opening session but not subsequent dialogue sessions.⁵⁸ Coordination between Hamas and PIJ continued for the next years regarding reconciliation, national dialogue, and PLO reform.

⁵³ See for example about the misunderstanding regarding the targeting of the Sufa crossing in: *Al-Ayyam*, 24/7/2007, and, the story about clashes that killed three and injured seven in Gaza in *Alrai*, Amman, 3/8/2007.

⁵⁴ *Al-Ayyam*, 6/8/2007.

⁵⁵ See *Al-Khaleej*, 16 and 28/8/2007; and *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 18/9/2007.

⁵⁶ PIC, 22/10/2007; and *Al-Khaleej*, 24/10/2007.

⁵⁷ PIC, 9/9/2008.

⁵⁸ See Mohsen Mohammad Saleh (ed.), *Al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini li Sanat 2008* (The Palestinian Strategic Report 2008) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations, 2009), pp. 38–39.

When Israel assaulted GS, 27/12/2008–18/1/2009, PIJ stood by Hamas. Both, along with other Palestinian factions, played a significant role in confronting the Israeli attack. After that, Muhammad al-Hindi, the top PIJ official in GS, called for quick unity between the two.⁵⁹ However, PIJ Leader Nafez 'Azzam confirmed the following day that while his movement sought unity for Islamic action in Palestine through better coordination with Hamas and other factions, this did not mean that the two groups would merge.⁶⁰ Hamas Leader Ra'fat Nassif said that the resistance's victory in GS reduced the differences preventing the establishing of a unified leadership or unified action.⁶¹

The two sides continued to stress unity, but they did not seem to be in a rush about merging, when the development of joint coordination seemed satisfactory to them. For example, Hamas Leader Isma'il Radwan stated that both parties agreed on the vision and strategic goals. The relationship reached a peak through positive coordination between secretary generals, whether inside or outside Palestine. However, Radwan added that they did not see any problem in the continued existence of the two groups as separate movements, in light of the high level of coordination between them, because their strategic goals were the same.⁶²

At any rate, leaders from both sides continued to call for unity or for practical gradualism towards it. For example, Muhammad al-Hindi called for a dialogue between Hamas and PIJ to build a strategy and vision for the coming phase.⁶³ In early 2012, the Hamas Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah called for a profound dialogue to achieve full merger. Muhammad al-Hindi welcomed Haniyyah's call, explaining that the unity of Palestinian resistance forces was a religious and patriotic duty.⁶⁴ *Al-Quds al-Arabi* and *Assafir* newspapers both reported that such a dialogue had been launched between the two groups.⁶⁵ Despite this, leaders from both sides were well aware that achieving unity was still far off. Nafez 'Azzam asserted that great efforts and a much time must be invested to reach the goal.

⁵⁹ *Al-Hayat*, 25/1/2009.

⁶⁰ *Asharq Alawsat*, 26/1/2009.

⁶¹ *Asharq Alawsat*, 26/1/2009.

⁶² *Felesteen*, 5/7/2009.

⁶³ *Assabeel*, 20/10/2010.

⁶⁴ *Alghad*, 18/1/2012.

⁶⁵ *Al-Quds al-Arabi* and *Assafir*, 18/1/2012; and see *Alquds*, 20/1/2012.

Taher al-Nunu, spokesperson for the GS government, said there were four factors conducive to unity: the common Islamic starting point, the joint project and goals, the joint methods, and the tactical nature of any disputes between the two groups which al-Nunu said were normal and expected.⁶⁶

PIJ Secretary General Ramadan Shallah had stressed that talk about unity was both old and new, and that the desire for unity was present in principle on both sides. Regarding the form and timing of unity, he said the matter was still being discussed inside and between both sides.⁶⁷ Although Muhammad al-Hindi indicated in mid-March 2012 that talks for unity were going ahead and positively proceeding,⁶⁸ there was no concrete progress until the end of 2013.

In addition to their military coordination against Israeli assaults on GS, joint attacks were carried out, such as the one on the industrial zone near Tulkarm in WB on 25/4/2008. The *Shabak* also announced it had arrested members of the cell that carried out an attack in Tel Aviv on 21/11/2012 that injured 29 Israelis, saying the members belonged to both Hamas and PIJ.⁶⁹

While dialogue and coordination continued between the two sides, friction on the ground also continued from time to time, albeit always dealt with promptly. It seems that the “government” logic which Hamas represents, and the “non-state actor” logic, which the PIJ represents, led to some conflicts in priorities and methods. Hamas is committed to a truce (as happened after the 2009 Cast Lead Operation or Al-Furqan Battle), it saw any truce violation by other factions as damaging to its political commitments, including its bid to ease the GS blockade. Whereas, the PIJ saw it necessary to respond directly to Israeli violations. Frictions occurred between the two sides for this reason.⁷⁰

The rivalry between the two over winning some supporters by dominating mosques was another reason for friction. PIJ accused Hamas of exploiting its power to dominate mosques the PIJ originally dominated. It said that the number of such

⁶⁶ *Al-Hayat*, 20/1/2012. Also see statement by Isma‘il Radwan to Ma‘an agency on 20/1/2012. (in Arabic)

⁶⁷ Felesteen Online, 4/3/2012.

⁶⁸ Felesteen Online, 18/3/2012.

⁶⁹ Palestinian Press Agency (Safa), 23/11/2012.

⁷⁰ See for example *Asharq Alawsat*, 10/3/2009; *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 27/3/2009; *Al-Ahram* newspaper, Cairo, 22/4/2009; *Al-Hayat*, 11/10/2009; *Alghad*, 27/8/2010; and *Al-Hayat*, 25/6/2013.

mosques was 70, of which 11 Hamas took control of at a time when Hamas already dominated hundreds of other mosques.⁷¹ For his part, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs in the GS government, Taleb Abu Sha'ar, said there were no armed clashes in the context of the "competition for mosques," saying the latter were platforms for national unity and warning against strife. He added that the GS government had inherited a complex status quo many years ago in the mosques, where various factions were present, and yet the Ministry did not prop up any imam or prevent anyone from delivering their sermons.⁷²

On the other hand, Hamas leader Salah al-Bardawil attributed the clashes on the ground between the two sides to the failure of some PIJ members to abide by the orders of their political leaders. Al-Bardawil said that after the military takeover in GS, members of former security forces and former Fatah members joined the military formations of the PIJ, where they would have cover to attack Hamas and instigate strife between the two sides. Al-Bardawil referred to violations attributed to the PIJ, such as firing celebratory rounds during weddings, and kidnapping citizens and interrogating them.

Al-Bardawil stressed that Hamas was keen to address these problems with the PIJ leadership.⁷³ At a later time, al-Bardawil stressed that Hamas's ties to PIJ were solid on all issues, and governed by brotherly, patriotic, and honest checks and balances. Al-Bardawil said the two movements worked in "full harmony" and that coordination between them was solid and governed by the ethics of the "*Mujahid* (freedom fighter)."⁷⁴

The revolutions and changes in the Arab world caused huge reverberations that were translated as victories, defeats, gains, or setbacks for the Palestinian Islamic movement, a topic for another treatise. However, the damage sustained to the relationships between Hamas, and Iran, Syria, and Hizbullah, made some Hamas observers wary of reports about increased Iranian military and logistical support for the PIJ, in parallel with the decline in support for Hamas. This was understood as a bid by the Iranian side to strengthen the PIJ at the expense of Hamas.⁷⁵

⁷¹ *Al-Hayat*, 11/7/2009.

⁷² *Al-Hayat*, 11/7/2009.

⁷³ Aljazeera.net, 15/9/2010. (in Arabic)

⁷⁴ Felesteen Online, 20/6/2013.

⁷⁵ Also see quoted Israeli sources on the topic in *Alquds*, 27/6/2013.

In general, what brings Hamas and PIJ closer is much bigger than what pushes them apart. Competition between them remains in the context of resistance, liberation, and national action. Therefore, developing cooperation and moving closer to unity is the most logical path for the future course of events as far as they are concerned.

Conclusion

The centrist moderate Islamic movement continues to represent the strongest Islamist faction in Palestine and the Diaspora. This is essentially expressed by the MB movement, specifically Hamas.

However, the Salafist movement must not be underestimated, and the PIJ represents one of the strongest Palestinian resistance factions. This is in addition to the historical and ongoing presence of the Islamic Hizb ut-Tahrir. As for extremist groups close to Al-Qaeda or those affiliated to Salafist-Jihadism or Takfirism, they still have a limited presence and influence in the Palestinian arena.

Hamas has dealt with other Islamist groups in the arena on the basis of “We cooperate where we agree, and excuse each other where we disagree.” Hamas has avoided, as much as possible, being drawn into conflicts, clashes, and accusations. It also sought to unify visions, ideas, and coordinate on various issues.

Hamas benefited from the MB movement’s definition of itself as a Salafist calling to seek common ground with the Salafists. Furthermore, the MB movement background of the PIJ founders and the similarities with the latter over ideological, strategic, and practical starting points, especially after the launch of Hamas, served to strengthen greatly bilateral relations and their bid for unity in the future.

The situation in Palestine and the Arab region is undergoing huge changes and revolutions. Hamas must deal well with the Palestinian Islamist phenomenon and its complexities, and in containing or allying with it in a way that serves the joint strategic causes and the liberation of Palestine. Otherwise, any negative consequence related to the Palestinian Islamist phenomenon could adversely affect Hamas and its Islamic project, and the Islamic project in Palestine in general.

Chapter Six

Hamas and the Peace Process

Dr. Raid Nairat

Hamas and the Peace Process

Introduction

There have been many studies and articles and brainstorming sessions about the nature of the relationship between the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the peace process. Numerous attempts have been made to define a possible role for Hamas in the peace process, the possibility that Hamas could be an active player in the peace process, and with the idea known as “finding room for Hamas in the peace process.” However, most of these studies and brainstorming sessions have suffered from being biased or lacking an accurate methodology.

Any person following up these studies would find that they all revolve around the attempt to find an answer to the question: Why can't Hamas be part of the peace process? The answers were all based on the assumption that Hamas is a religious resistance movement with ideological and political positions that do not allow it to be part of the peace process, regardless of any shifts made by the movement.

Accordingly, all Hamas's policies were viewed narrowly within the framework of its religious-ideological positions. Subsequently, some of the approaches to the peace process pursued by Hamas were explained as attempts by the organization to benefit from the peace process without paying any price, or adapt it to further its own goals. Based on this approach, there has been complete rejection of Hamas's involvement, while Hamas was always asked for more, without being given a chance to develop its attitude on the peace process.

The other type of study viewed Hamas as a political movement like any in the world, and hence, the issue is a matter of time and circumstances. Based on this perception, several international policies were formulated and directed at putting pressure on Hamas, to try and corner the movement by not allowing it to develop and progress. This methodology looked to thwart it and prove it incapable, in order to force Hamas to adopt policies more in line with the peace process, regardless of the nature of the peace process, its achievements, or its failures. Here, a certain bromide was concocted, claiming that the only obstacle to the peace process was Hamas, and that the peace process itself had no inherent problems.

In addition to these studies, literature is rife with articles that tackle this issue, particularly Hamas's ability to engage in the peace process. Here, the nature of Hamas and the nature of the peace process were completely overlooked. Some events and observations that show Hamas drawing close to the peace process were built upon. This type of literature also ignored the progression of the peace process, whether in relation to its approach, outcome, or even the nature of the developments that took place within it. It was as though the peace process is something constant, while Hamas is the variable. Consequently, it is Hamas that must change in order to be part of the peace process.

At the same time, we find that, regardless of how the issue of Hamas and the peace process is viewed, there is an indisputable axiom among political decision-makers, observers, or experts on the Palestinian issue: We cannot speak of a successful peace process and achieving peace in the Middle East, without finding an approach that makes Hamas part of the peace process.¹ But this axiom still needs to answer this question: Who should change? Should Hamas get closer to the peace process? Or should there be changes in the peace process so that the latter is brought closer to Hamas? The legitimacy of this question stems from an important issue, namely that the peace process today has ground to a halt, not because of Hamas, but rather, as the Palestinian side argues—in particular the Fatah movement, (which has considered the peace process the cornerstone of its methodology and strategy for nearly two decades)—because the Israeli side refuses to allow the peace process to achieve a comprehensive peace. The Palestinian side consider that the Israelis are seeking to maintain negotiations for negotiations' sake, while stepping up settlement activity in a way that precludes any possibility for the Palestinians to establish their state, or, in the words of the chief Palestinian negotiator and the Palestinian President, “leaves nothing to negotiate over.”

This study seeks to pursue a different methodology based on an attempt to answer the following question: How did Hamas's attitude on the peace process evolve, and what are the determinants of its attitude. It is neither an assessment of this attitude, nor it is a practical study of the peace process. To be sure, it gives the reader information about the nature of the stances adopted by Hamas on the peace

¹ See statements by Tony Blair, the envoy of the international Quartet for peace in the Middle East, in the Israeli *Haaretz* newspaper, as quoted by *The Times* newspaper, where Tony Blair said Hamas must be part of the peace process. See *Haaretz*, 1/1/2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/blair-hamas-should-be-part-of-peace-process-1.267153>

process during different phases, as a result of the changes in the determinants and the circumstances in which these stances and policies were pursued.

The study develops a realistic model based on studying the situation as it is. Hence, we will attempt to conduct a comparison of the policies and stances adopted by Hamas in its political history regarding parts of the peace process, or the peace process as whole, to determine the extent of developments that have occurred in the attitudes and policies of the movement, and the causes behind them.

First: Hamas: Inception and the Peace Process

Studying the inception of Hamas is of paramount importance for identifying the determinants of Hamas's attitudes and pertinent developments vis-à-vis the peace process. Indeed, returning to the subject of Hamas's inception allows us to understand better the ideological premises that guide Hamas's work in general, in addition to understanding the dynamics and mechanisms that shape Hamas's political action and its conduct.

Returning to Hamas's roots helped the researcher answer a question about what is fixed and what is variable in the movement's ideology and political behavior. To be sure, Hamas has changed over the past two decades, whether at the level of its political conduct or in the way it has presented its ideas, and even in the way it has dealt with events around it. However, this change, according to the opinion of most Hamas leaders and political figures, is based on a fixed foundation, namely, the general aim of the movement to end the occupation,² and refuse to compromise on any part of Palestine.

The importance of Hamas's inception and the need to study it becomes greater when the issue has to do with the peace process and Hamas's attitude towards it. The issue can be framed in terms of what is fixed and what is variable in Hamas's ideas and conduct, i.e., whether there have been changes in the ideological attitudes of the movement vis-à-vis the core issues of the conflict, or whether there is a change in the political conduct of Hamas, while ideological positions on the core issues of the conflict remain unchanged.

² An exclusive interview conducted by the researcher with Ayman Daraghmeh, member of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), from the Change and Reform Bloc, 10/8/2011. (in Arabic)

The emergence of the movement in 1987 took place in response to a series of internal, regional, and international developments. Internally, Fatah began to decline in popularity at the domestic level, while it became busier after it got involved with the peace process. Regionally, the scene was dominated by the accelerating spread of religious sentiment. And internationally, the era of the bipolar superpower system was drawing to an end and a new world order was evolving.³ To this day, we find that all these scenarios continue to dominate the Palestinian political landscape. Indeed, all these factors are still in the phase of searching for self-fulfillment, so to speak, because goals have not yet been achieved.

During its emergence, Hamas presented itself as a “popular and national resistance movement.”⁴ On the one hand, it chose resistance as its approach towards liberation, and on the other hand, it saw that the frame of reference for resistance is based on Islam and the Islamic revival movement.⁵ Hence, we see that Hamas is not an Islamist movement in the traditional sense and as per the stereotypical image of Islamist movements seeking to establish Islamic rule or the Islamic state, and is not a jihadi movement in the general sense of jihadi movements that have no political program. We also find that if we want to classify Hamas accurately, as a movement that is affiliated to Islamism, then Hamas does not reject political participation, and adopts moderation in the interpretation of Islam, and relies on gradualism in the implementation of Islamic ideology.⁶ The Head of its political bureau Khalid Mish'al, explains: “we do not only speak of Hamas as being simply an Islamic movement, but also as a national liberation movement.”⁷

³ Jawad al-Hamad and Iyyad al-Barghouthi (eds.), *Al-Madkhal ila al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah* (Introduction to the Palestinian Cause) (Amman: MESC, 1997), pp. 386–387.

⁴ Hamas Movement: A Brief History, PIC, <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/default.aspx> (in Arabic)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Raid Nairat, Impact of Hamas' Political Culture on Hamas' Governance Political Behavior, *An-Najah University Journal for Research*, Nablus, vol. 22, issue 4, 2008, pp. 1139–1160. (in Arabic)

⁷ An Important Document by Khalid Mish'al: Hamas Political Thought and Stances in Light of the Arab Uprisings, site of Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2012, <http://www.alzaytouna.net/en/conferences-and-seminars/151556-an-important-document-by-khalid-mish%E2%80%98al%3A-hamas-political-thought-and-stances-in-light-of-the-arab-uprisings.html>

When studying the movement's political behavior, we find that it is a practical and realistic political movement (in the sense of realism that applies to Islamist movements), which interacts with changes in ways that serve its interests. Indeed, Hamas's track record shows that its political conduct is subject to the gains-and-losses metric. Even when Hamas engages in resistance activities, this has a political compass, and falls within its calculations of gains and losses. This is what Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, from an Israeli viewpoint, describe as "controlled violence."⁸

Studying the relationship between Hamas and the peace process at this early stage of the movement's emergence does not reveal significant change, as we see that the attitude and political conduct of Hamas at this stage reflected a categorical rejection of the philosophy and methodology of the peace process, as well as all the mechanisms that emerged from it. The general attitude of Hamas was not to deal in any way with the peace process and its outcomes.

At the same time, we cannot overlook the fact that there are some events that require in-depth analysis of Hamas's methodology in dealing with the products of the accords produced by the peace process, including in particular the PA, and the problems they created on the ground.

For instance, Hamas, which rejects the Oslo Accords, and which calls for prohibiting any infighting, found itself in awkward position, as internal Palestinian relations became governed, one way or the other, by the Oslo Accords.⁹

For this reason, we will now tackle the important milestones where Hamas's attitude on the peace process crystallized, and its subsequent political conduct, notably:

Hamas and the Madrid Peace Conference

The 1991 Madrid Peace Conference was a turning point in the history of the region, and in the political perceptions of the parties to the conflict. For the first time in the history of the conflict, a peace conference was held, attended by

⁸ Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 12.

⁹ Qais 'Abdul Karim (Abu Layla) et al., *The Oslo Peace Between Illusion and Reality, an analytical study of the agreements signed between the Palestinians and the Israelis, 4/5/1994*, p. 4. (in Arabic)

all Arab countries, giving a certificate of legitimacy to it based on Resolutions 242 and 338, and recognition of the state of Israel as indicated by the invitation letters.¹⁰

Hammas rejected the Madrid Peace Conference on ideological and methodological bases, as it saw that the conference was based on conceding most of the Palestinian territories. In addition, Hammas believed that the circumstances that produced the conference, represented by dominance of a unipolar superpower system (US) made it difficult to reach a just solution to the Palestinian issue. For this reason, Hammas focused on resistance as the sole path to the liberation of Palestine.¹¹

Hammas issued a joint statement with the forces opposing the Madrid Peace Conference, signed by the representatives of 10 Palestinian factions (excluding Fatah) rejecting the Madrid Peace Conference in principle, for ceding most of the land of Palestine. The statement also demanded the Arab countries and the Palestinian personalities taking part in the conference withdraw from the conference, calling on the Palestinian people to take retaliatory steps on the day the conference was scheduled to convene.¹² Hammas stressed its rejection of the conference or even participating in the mechanisms it was to create, primarily the elections, for two main reasons:¹³

1. Principle-based reason: Hammas considered that any elections based on the Madrid Peace Conference should be rejected in principle, as the conference ceded 78% of Palestine, be they legislative, executive, or administrative elections.
2. National political reason: The attempts at autonomy brought little sovereignty and independence, let alone self-determination. Instead, it was limited to administrative autonomy, while foreign policy and security were still in the hands of the Israeli occupation.

¹⁰ Text of the invitation to the Madrid Conference 18/10/1991, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, issue 9, Winter 1992, p. 194, citing *Al-Hayat*, 21/10/1991. (in Arabic)

¹¹ Khalid Thouwaib, *The Relationship Between Hammas and Jordan 1987–2007*, unpublished MA Thesis, Hebron University, 2010, p. 39. (in Arabic)

¹² Statement of the Representatives of the Palestinian Factions Except Fatah Declaring Their Opposition to the Peace Conference, Tehran, 24/10/1991, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 2, issue 8, Fall 1991, p. 267. (in Arabic)

¹³ Interview with spokesperson of Hammas in Jordan, announcing Hammas's rejection of administrative autonomy and related elections, *Filisteen Almuslima*, October 1992, p. 10. (in Arabic)

Hamis and the Oslo Accords

Hamis rejected the 1993 Oslo Accords categorically, seeing them as a dangerous precedent in the lives of the Palestinian people and their history, especially with regards the correspondence between PLO leader Yasir ‘Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Hamis considered this an attempt to grant legitimacy to the occupation, and surrender the rights of the Palestinian people to the lands occupied in 1948. Hamis said that the Accords were illegitimate, and that the authority they established was illegitimate, and only an executive authority.¹⁴

Hamis also saw that the Oslo Accords would not lead to achieving the Palestinian dream of getting rid of the occupation and fulfilling the right to self-determination; on the contrary, Hamis said, the agreement was doomed to fail at every level, political, economic, and social, and only achieved Israel’s interests. Hamis said that the agreement had only one task: to make the Palestinian side undertake “a dirty job,” namely, preventing the resistance from exercising its role in the liberation of Palestine, and give Israel an opportunity to normalize its relations with the Arab countries.¹⁵

Moreover, Hamis felt that the Oslo Accords carried the seeds of its ultimate failure within it, and that it would end itself by itself, as it was not in the interests of the Palestinian people. Therefore, Hamis refused to participate in any of the outcomes of the Oslo Accords, announced it would boycott all institutions established, and refused to participate in the agencies created in the wake of the agreement.¹⁶

At the same time, Hamis faced a major dilemma, represented by the nature of the policies that the movement would have to adopt in the Palestinian territories. What position would Hamis’s bodies at home have towards those of the PA? This has often led to contradictory positions, or what Hamis would call personal opinions and differences in points of view, that must ultimately be settled through *shura*-based bodies (consultative bodies) in Hamis and through democratic means.¹⁷

¹⁴ See Interview with Hamis’s representative in Syria, *Assafir*, 1/2/1995.

¹⁵ Interview with Musa Abu Marzuq, *Filisteen Almuslima*, 11/11/1993, pp. 11–12.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Muhammad Muslih, *The Foreign Policy of Hamis* (A Paper for the Muslim Politics Project), Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 1999, pp. 9–10, <http://www.cfr.org/terrorism/foreign-policy-hamis-paper-muslim-politics-project/p8610>

What can be noted is that most of Hamas's attitudes towards the peace process at this stage were completely at odds with the peace process. Hamas rejected the methodology, purpose, and instruments through which the peace process was reached. It played two central roles as regards the peace process:

First: Theoretically, Hamas presented religious and intellectual arguments to explain its rejection of the peace process as represented by the Oslo Accords, and had the support of other factions in this. Hamas published extensive literature rejecting the peace process and elaborating on the reasons for its rejection, focusing on the political aspect, with Hamas arguing that the agreement did not meet the hopes of the Palestinian people. However, this rejection also involved religious dimensions based on the fact that the agreement concedes the territories occupied in 1948 which are an Islamic *waqf* (endowment) land.

Second: Practically speaking, Hamas, in collaboration with PIJ, worked on forming a framework for Palestinian Islamic and national movements outside the framework of the Unified National Command of the *Intifadah*. Then the term "Islamist forces" began to occupy a significant place in the Palestinian arena and this continues to the present day, referring to the Islamist forces that are not part of the PLO.¹⁸ Hamas has also succeeded in forming a broad framework for the Palestinian opposition, known as the "Alliance of Ten Factions," which includes Islamic, national, nationalist, and leftist factions opposed to the Oslo Accords.

The stance of Hamas in that stage toward the peace process has a set of parameters, some subjective and some objective. Subjective parameters include:

1. The phase of Hamas's inception and its bid to recruit individuals, using religious ideas as the quickest way to do so.
2. Hamas's self-perception as a resistance movement that only accepts methods such as resistance, liberation, and ending the occupation.¹⁹

¹⁸ Statement of the Representatives of the Palestinian Factions Except Fatah Declaring Their Opposition to the Peace Conference, Tehran, 24/10/1991, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 2, issue 8, Fall 1991, p. 267. (in Arabic)

¹⁹ See About Hamas Movement: a Brief History; The Struggle with Zionism in Hamas's Ideology; and Military Action, where Hamas considered Israel a hostile totalitarian project, not just with regional ambitions, PIC, <http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/who/who.htm#1> (in Arabic)

The objective parameters, meanwhile, are:

1. The strained relations between Fatah and Hamas as a result of the groups feeling that they were mutually exclusive.
2. The security-based environment in which the peace process was born. Indeed, the peace process had a security and not a political character.²⁰

These parameters had impacts on the position of the Hamas movement at this stage of the peace process, and in the adoption of policies that still have implications to this day, most notably:

1. There was no clear separation between the religious and political positions of Hamas towards the peace process, in particular with regard to political mobilization, which took place on a mostly religious platform.
2. The abundance of literature that focused on the failure of the peace process, in both methodology and objectives, and built a model for individuals in this direction. Hamas even sought to illustrate the risks of the agreement on the Palestinian issue and the Arab world, pointing out the risks on the Arab world of normalization and infighting.²¹
3. No attempt was made by any party in the peace process to bring Hamas in to the peace process. Instead, the opposite dominated the landscape, and to this date, there are still questions about the US position on Hamas, and whether the US wants Hamas to be part of the peace process or not. Many believe that the US and Israel do not want Hamas to be part of the peace process.²²
4. Hamas considered itself the victim, that it would be scapegoated in order to prove the success of the peace process. For this reason, the progress of the peace process was dictated by what the PA had to offer in terms of successes in combating “violence and terrorism,” which is what Hamas believes is its resistance. Hence, Hamas took an opposing path, entering a new stage, namely, thwarting the peace process.²³

²⁰ See the Arabic translation ‘*Asr Hamas* (Hamas Era) of Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Hamas Wind - Violence and Coexistence* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 1999) (in Hebrew), in “Talks Under Oslo Between Careful Rejection and Reserved Acceptance,” Episode 13, Chapter 4, pp. 144–152, PIC, http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/books/aser_hamas/aser_hamas14.htm

²¹ Memo addressed to Arab foreign ministers convened in Cairo, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), 19/9/1993. (in Arabic)

²² Interview conducted by the researcher with Khalid Sulaiman, member of the PLC from the Change and Reform Bloc, 22/7/2011. (in Arabic)

²³ Fares Fa’iq Daher, The Role of the Peace Process in Perpetuating the Subservience of the PA to Israel, Amin Media Network, <http://blog.amin.org/faresdahaher/2011/12/18> (in Arabic)

Second: The Stage of Confrontation and Collision

In this stage, Hamas charted two clear paths for its policies: First, weakening the block of factions supporting the peace process, through the formation of political alliances such as the “Alliance of Ten Factions” And Second: Directly undermining the peace process and developing its own strength through the operations it carried out.²⁴

With respect to the first track, Hamas resorted to forming the “Alliance of Ten Factions,” teaming up with the rest of the Palestinian factions opposed to the peace process. By studying this step, it can be seen that Hamas has achieved a set of objectives, including proving that it is not a religious movement in the traditional sense, as the forces Hamas allied itself with were national, nationalist, and leftist movements.²⁵

Second, Hamas has been able to confine support of the peace process to the Fatah movement, and other small factions like FIDA and PPP.

Third, Hamas obtained the first political formation with broad popular representation, indicating the possibility of creating an alternative to the PLO, which moved in step with the peace process. This weakened the legitimacy of the PLO’s representation in the Arab and international arenas.

The second track came a natural result of several determinants, the first of which: the natural evolution that has occurred in the movement, particularly the emergence of Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of the Hamas movement, which conducts military operations against the Israelis to resist the occupation and undermine the personal security of Israelis.

²⁴ Hamas was long accused by the PA of choosing the timing of its operations before any Palestinian-Israeli meeting to undermine the results of any of these meetings. However, Hamas rejected these allegations and said that its military operations are not linked to the developments of the peace process.

²⁵ The ten factions: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the PFLP-General Command (PFLP-GC), and the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF), and Al-Sa’iqa, Fatah *al-Intifadah*, the Palestinian Liberation Front, and the Revolutionary Palestinian Communist Party (RPCP), Hamas, and the PIJ, a coalition against the Oslo Accords.

Second: To prove that attempts to crackdown on Hamas both from the Israeli occupation, and through arrests by the PA, would not weaken Hamas. On the contrary, this would increase the strength and influence of the movement. The main theme at this stage of Hamas's life was resisting any policies aimed at the abolition of the existence and impact of Hamas on the Palestinian political scene.²⁶ Hamas understood that the Oslo Accords was a security agreement, detrimental to the interests of the Palestinian people, but granted international legitimacy and designed to liquidate the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. Moreover, Hamas considered the Oslo Accords to be directed against it, as the implementation of the Accords was accompanied by waves of arrests against Hamas members. This left the impression that alongside progress in the peace process, the crackdown on Hamas would further intensify.²⁷

This phase saw the implementation of the Oslo Accords, and in particular the Cairo Agreement and subsequent agreements that established the PLC, and therefore direct friction between Hamas and the Oslo Accords and its products.

Hamis and the Cairo Agreement of 1994

Hamis rejected the Cairo Agreement, and felt that the Authority it established did not represent the Palestinian people, but endorsed and legitimized the occupation. Hamis said that the autonomous administration consisting of 24 people (the PA) did not have any sovereignty, and that it was managed by the occupation. It also stressed that the agreement did not stop settlement building, in addition to the fact that the PA pledged not to incite violence against the occupation.

Hamis called on all political and popular forces to continue their resistance and struggle, on the basis that the Cairo Agreement is the end of a phase, not the end of the Palestinian issue. It also called on its members in prison not to sign the document given to them as a condition for their release.²⁸

²⁶ Interview with Muhammad Nazzal, member of the political leadership of Hamas and its representative in Jordan, explaining the position of the movement on military operations, and the position on the PA, *Al-Hayat*, 9/3/1996. (in Arabic)

²⁷ Ahmad Mansur, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

²⁸ Statement by Hamas: Cairo Agreement Carries the Seeds of Failure and the Consecration of the Occupation, 14/5/1994, PIC, <http://palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/documents/cairo.htm> (in Arabic) See document no. 4 in the appendix of this book, p. 556.

The most important development during this stage was the holding of PLC elections, and the formation of the first elected Palestinian political body in the Palestinian territories. But this event was a dilemma for Hamas²⁹; for how could Hamas refuse to participate in the elections for the Palestinian people? At the same time, how could Hamas participate in elections that were originally concocted to implement the Oslo Accords? Hamas refused to participate in the 1996 PLC elections, and justified its decision with the following arguments:

1. The elections were taking place at a time when the land was still occupied.
2. The elections were meant to create a body for the implementation of the Oslo Accords.
3. The PA appointed the heads of municipalities rather than holding elections.

At the same time, Hamas stressed that in spite of its boycott of the PLC elections and its call for the Palestinian people to boycott them, it would not use force to thwart them, given the negative effects this would have on the national unity of the Palestinian people.³⁰

However, the first phase of the agreement and its implementation revealed several interpretations within the movement, regarding the nature of the agreement and how Hamas should deal with the PA and its institutions, which sometimes led to extensive debates between the leaders of the movement. The Israelis also tried to engage some Hamas leaders in prison, who were forced to engage in dialogue because they did not have any legal representation. Therefore, the movement sought to present a political vision as regards the peace process, which would delineate the guidelines to be adopted.³¹ Hamas also went on to form a political party, known as the Islamic National Salvation Party.³²

²⁹ Husam 'Ali Yahya Dujani, *Hamis Victory in the Palestinian Legislative Elections in 2006 and its Impact on the Palestinian Political System*, Master Thesis, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Al-Azhar University, Gaza, 2010. (in Arabic)

³⁰ Memo issued by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamis) on the Elections of the Limited Palestinian Autonomy, 16/1/1996, PIC, <http://palestine-info.com/arabic/hamis/documents/election2.htm> (in Arabic)
See document no. 5 in the appendix of this book, p. 560.

³¹ A statement issued by the Political Bureau of the Hamis movement in 21/4/1994, explaining Hamis' position on the peace process; Among the most prominent pillars of this position: the unconditional withdrawal of the occupation from the West Bank (WB), Gaza Strip (GS) and Jerusalem; dismantling and removal of the settlements; the deportation of settlers from the WB the GS and Jerusalem; conducting free and fair elections at home and abroad to choose the leadership and the true representatives of the people.

³² The party was officially established on 21/3/1996, and has been defined as a Palestinian political party that believes in Islam as a doctrine and way of life, Wafa Info, <http://www.wafainfo.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=3561> (in Arabic)

A closer reading of Hamas's position—during that period—vis-à-vis the Oslo Accords and its dynamic policies towards it leads us to the following observations:

First: Hamas dealt with the Oslo Accords from a political standpoint, contrary to what has always been claimed, that Hamas dealt with the agreement from a purely religious-ideological standpoint. This is evidenced by Hamas's statements, which focused on dealing with the agreement's political implications. Even when determining its position regarding the first Palestinian legislative elections in 1996, we see that Hamas's handled the issue from a political perspective.³³ The same goes for Hamas's performance, as the movement's policies were dominated by interest-based equations (gains and losses), including those for resistance operations. It is perhaps also worth noting that Islamic political thought is intricately linked to achieving the interests of the people, within *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law), which is what Hamas was seeking to apply.

Second: Hamas tried to seek rapprochement with the PA, sometimes through bilateral talks, and sometimes with its political party, the Islamic National Salvation Party, but this did not lead to the alleviation of tension in relations between Hamas and Fatah, or a softening of Hamas's stance on the peace process.

Third: This phase acted like the gauge of how Hamas dealt with the Oslo Accords and the peace process, and even of the level of its international and foreign relations. At the level of internal relations, the general impression was as follows: for Hamas implementing the agreement meant uprooting the movement and its institutions. Hamas thus stepped up its resistance activities to prove that they were more effective than the attempts to compromise with Israel. Hamas focused on targeting Israelis, while avoiding any possible confrontation with the PA, even if the latter's security forces were cracking down on resistance operatives. Hamas did not care much for the negative repercussions of resistance on the peace process.

In terms of foreign relations, Hamas's bilateral relations were dominated by the US designation of the movement as a "terror" group, while Europe designated its military wing as a terrorist organization. This led to strained relationships between the parties, and prevented the possibility of reaching any rapprochement

³³ In the very beginning, many figures were nominated for the elections, but they later withdrew. According to what is stated in the literature of Hamas, the withdrawal took place after the issue was discussed democratically in the movement. The figures included: Isma'il Haniyyah from GS, and Jamil Hamami from the WB.

even at the level of bilateral dialogues between Fatah and Hamas, or between the PA and Hamas, which were now governed by this climate. The climate in question perceived the Hamas movement as a party opposed to the peace process, and one that aimed to demonstrate its failure. Thus, the parties to the peace process adopted a systematic and programmed policy designed to root out Hamas, and reduce its effects on society and Palestinian political life.

Third: The Stage of Cautious Understanding

This stage extends chronologically from the beginning of *al-Aqsa Intifadah* in 2000, to Hamas's victory in the PLC elections in 2006. The *al-Aqsa Intifadah* became a key determinant of the attitudes of Hamas on a range of Palestinian issues, internal and external. Hamas saw *al-Aqsa Intifadah* as practical proof of the accuracy of its perception of the peace process. In addition, the *Intifadah* served Hamas in the internal Palestinian rapprochement against the Israeli occupation.³⁴

In these circumstances, Hamas adopted a number of policies that made it a central player in the Palestinian social and political scene. Among the most prominent of these policies were:

1. Hamas proved that despite attempts at uprooting it, it managed, in just a few months, to return to the Palestinian reality with unprecedented momentum.
2. Hamas championed the slogan "partners in blood, partners in decision, partners in fate."
3. Hamas showed exceptional coherence, whether in terms of its relations with the Palestinian society and political forces, or in terms of the movement's internal cohesion, manifested in the sacrifices made by Hamas leaders.

During this period, Hamas cautiously approached the peace process by interacting with the PA in two ways, first: the theoretical approach within Hamas, guided by the acceptance of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state along the border of 4/6/1967; and second: the operational aspect, where Hamas adopted two complementary tracks. In the first, many joint operations were carried out by Hamas and other Palestinian resistance factions. A joint command and control

³⁴ See Interview with 'Abdul 'Aziz al-Rantissi, site of Muslim Brothers Movement Wikipedia, <http://www.ikhwanwiki.com/index.php> (in Arabic)

room was established for coordination among forces resisting the occupation in WB and GS. In the second track, Hamas pursued political rapprochement, most notably the unilateral truce declared by Hamas in 2003 to facilitate the work of Prime Minister Mahmud ‘Abbas.³⁵ This was the beginning of the new behavioral approach of Hamas towards the peace process. Although the unilateral truce took place in the context of internal relations between Hamas and the PA, it also represented a new approach for Hamas regarding foreign relations.

This step came within the framework of supporting the efforts of Prime Minister Mahmud ‘Abbas, who called for putting the Palestinian house in order, and rearranging institutions based on the roadmap. This was unprecedented in the history of the relationship between the two factions and in the conduct and general approach of Hamas to the occupation, where Hamas and other resistance factions declared a unilateral truce.³⁶ Moreover, this step took place amid European deliberations over designating Hamas’s political wing as a “terrorist” group. This didn’t happen until Hamas responded to the assassination of leader Isma‘il Abu Shanab.

This stage of Hamas’s life and its ties to the peace process is considered extremely important, as Hamas developed in this period the general outline of its strategy; it matched its theory (a state based on the 1967 borders), with its practice (the truce). Hamas proved during this period its pragmatism, that it had become a movement that weighed its actions with costs and ensuing interests. Furthermore, Hamas proved that its commitment to Islamic principles did not mean that it was an ideological movement detached from reality, but that it was a movement seeking to interact with reality in a manner that served its Islamic principles. This gave Hamas a golden opportunity consisting of two parts: On the one hand, Hamas managed to lay the first building block of its strategy towards the peace process, and energize itself regarding its interactions and internal movement vis-à-vis other Palestinian forces and factions of various spectra. On the other hand, Hamas gave others the opportunity to re-read the movement differently, which is what happened during subsequent years and next stages of Hamas’s life.

³⁵ Statement of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the PIJ in Palestine on the suspension of military operations on 29/6/2003, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 14, issue 55, p. 183. (in Arabic)

³⁶ Shafiq Shuqair, Palestinian Truce: A Price With Nothing in Return, Aljazeera.net, Al-Ma‘rifah, Special Files, 3/10/2004. (in Arabic)

Also during this stage in the life of the movement, there were successive internal dialogues, under regional sponsorship, towards the development of a general Palestinian strategy, approved by the Palestinian factions. This materialized with the entry of Egypt as a regional actor, with a view to unify the efforts of the Palestinian factions under one general policy. Indeed, Palestinian political forces and parties became engaged in in-depth political dialogues brokered by Egypt over three main issues, namely: a comprehensive truce, a joint political program, and putting the Palestinian house in order.³⁷

What characterized this stage is that Egyptian mediation was confined to the security role, while the Palestinian factions stressed the need for a truce with the Israelis. However, Israel rejected the truce, because it would mean an implicit recognition of Hamas. Another problem was the bid by some factions to implement the roadmap declared by President George W. Bush. As was known, the undeclared objective in much of the dialogue was to attempt to implement the roadmap or deal with it in a manner than did not antagonize the Israeli and American sides.

However, despite all this, one cannot ignore the role played by these dialogues. To be sure, the documents produced by the meetings were the equivalent of a new national charter for the Palestinian factions. The Palestinian parties still see the Cairo Agreement between the factions as a reference frame agreement that can be basis of any future Palestinian dialogue, or when discussing Palestinian reconciliation.³⁸ As for Hamas, it was able to enter into the regional and internal Palestinian political order. Indirectly, Hamas became an international political player in the Palestinian issue, and although the dialogues in question did not have direct international sponsorship, they took place with international blessing, and in extensive coordination between the PA led by ‘Abbas, and the US, Egypt, and Israel.³⁹

³⁷ Mu’in al-Tanani, the Palestinian National Dialogue: Uneasy Truce, site of Palestinian Planning Center, Ramallah, <http://www.oppc.pna.net/mag/mag13-14/new5-13-14.htm>; and *Majallat Markaz al-Takhteet al-Filastini* magazine, issue 9–10, 2003, p. 68. (in Arabic)

³⁸ Interview conducted by the researcher with ‘Abdul ‘Aziz Dwaik, head of the PLC, 10/10/2011. (in Arabic)

³⁹ Mu’in al-Tanani, op. cit.

Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the important developments that afflicted Palestinian political life, and which dominated the Palestinian political landscape, whether in terms of the vision of US President George W. Bush, or in terms of the Geneva Accord. Hamas's position regarding the vision of the US President George W. Bush over the Palestinian state was clear. Hamas emphasized that Bush's vision cannot constitute a solution to the Palestinian issue, saying that it was a rehash of the traditional Zionist vision.

First, Hamas rejected reducing the Palestinian issue to being a matter of Israeli security, and the designation of resistance as "terrorism." Hamas also rejected US interference in internal Palestinian affairs.⁴⁰ Hamas considered the creation of the post of prime minister a response to the dictates of the US, and not to internal demands for reform, and also to be an implementation of the requirements of the security roadmap.⁴¹

Hamas also rejected the Geneva Accord, which it considered to be inconsistent with the rights of the Palestinian people, especially the Palestinian refugees. Hamas called for putting those behind the document on trial, and the PA to lift its political cover for the signatories.⁴² The Geneva Accord was an unofficial agreement signed by figures close to Yasir 'Arafat and Mahmud 'Abbas, calling for the establishment of a demilitarized state in the WB and GS, with border adjustments that would allow settlers and the Jewish quarters in Jerusalem to be annexed to Israel, while Arab quarters in Jerusalem would be under the control and sovereignty of the Palestinian state. The Accord effectively forfeited the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their occupied lands, from which they were expelled in 1948.⁴³

⁴⁰ Hamas, A press statement about George Bush's speech, 25/6/2002, PIC, http://palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/statements/2002/25_6_02.htm (in Arabic)

⁴¹ Hamas, A press statement about the introduction of the post of prime minister of the PA, 11/3/2003, PIC, [http://palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/statements/2003/11_3_03.\(1\).htm](http://palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/statements/2003/11_3_03.(1).htm) (in Arabic)

⁴² Hamas condemns the Geneva Accord and calls on the authority to lift political cover from its signatories, 10/12/2003, PIC, http://palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/statements/2003/1_12_03_3.htm (in Arabic)

⁴³ For the full text of the Geneva Accord, see site of Geneva Initiative, <http://www.geneva-accord.org/mainmenu/english>

Fourth: The Stage of Merging the Subjective with the Objective

This stage of the movement's life extends chronologically from 2005 until October 2011. The main feature of this stage for Hamas was: Not in favoring of the peace process but not standing as an obstacle to it. This stage revealed much about Hamas's attitude towards the peace process, on the back of several factors that produced the general political scene. Hamas's attitude on various issues developed after the Israeli withdrawal from GS and the subsequent legislative elections. The latter was the compass dictating reciprocal relations between Hamas and the others, and it was dictated also by the conditions of the Quartet on the Middle East, the problems of Palestinian division, and Hamas's control of GS, in addition to the slowdown of the peace process and the uprisings and changes in the Arab world.

During this stage Hamas developed beyond being a pure resistance movement, and evolved in to a ruling resistance movement. It became legitimate to ask questions about the determinants of Hamas's attitudes, whether they were subjective and emanating from its ideology and beliefs, or objective and realistic, emanating from the requirements of the current situation. As much as this stage offered opportunities to Hamas, it also presented it with challenges.

One of the biggest of these challenges lies in answering the crucial question: Can Hamas, by being in power, propose mechanisms of interaction consistent with its principles—despite the Oslo Accords requirements—and overlook the general philosophy of the peace process?⁴⁴ And was the aim of what was offered to Hamas to make it a political player, or were the facilitations given to Hamas meant to expel it completely from the peace process or pacify it?⁴⁵

The Cairo Agreement: Ideology and Politics

At the beginning of this stage, the Palestinian factions, led by Hamas, signed the Cairo Agreement in March 2005. This was a starting point for Hamas, in that it was

⁴⁴ For more information, see the electoral program of Hamas presented by Hamas under the title *The Change and Reform*; the program focused on the themes of change and reform in the PA, ignoring the general philosophy of the peace process, especially in what regards the recognition of Oslo.

⁴⁵ Michael Herzog, *Can Hamas be tamed?*, *Foreign Affairs* magazine, March/ April 2006, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/61512/michael-herzog/can-hamas-be-tamed>

the first inclusive political document that brought together the Palestinian factions over various Palestinian issues, and it was also an attempt to draft a unanimously approved general Palestinian policy. Its main features are:

First: “Adherence to Palestinian principles, without any neglect, and the right of the Palestinian people to resistance in order to end the occupation, establish a Palestinian state with full sovereignty with Jerusalem as its capital, and the guaranteeing of the right of return of refugees to their homes and property.”

Second: Putting the Palestinian political house in order, whether in what regards the PA, conducting legislative elections, or the PLO.⁴⁶

For Hamas, the Cairo Agreement was the first practical step that put the movement in direct contact with the peace process, by agreeing to participate in the legislative elections and not obstruct presidential elections.⁴⁷ On the other hand, Hamas began its first practical steps towards separating what was its own organizational attitude, and what was a public stance concerning general Palestinian policies. However, this certainly does not invalidate the fact that Hamas relied in its decision to participate in the elections and to enter the PLC on the fact that changes had occurred in the peace process and the PLC itself. Indeed, the latter was no longer the same organization as it had been in 1996. However, all this did not negate the major dilemma, namely, whether Hamas had the ability to harmonize between the movement’s own stances towards various issues, and what was general and pertains to the entire Palestinian spectrum. Another major question concerned Hamas’s ability to participate in the structures created by the peace process, despite its rejection of the philosophy the latter is based upon, and the central question of recognizing Israel.⁴⁸

However, any observer cannot but conclude that Hamas, with this move, overcame a large barrier, by interacting positively with the institutions of the Palestinian political regime, notwithstanding the philosophy that founded the regime. An important fact is that the Cairo Agreement, which was signed by

⁴⁶ See document no. 9 “The ‘Cairo Declaration’ that was issued by the Palestinian Factions on 17/3/2005,” in the appendix of this book, p. 575.

⁴⁷ Hamas boycotted the presidential elections, but did not seek to obstruct them. The elections took place more than two months before the Cairo Declaration.

⁴⁸ Ibrahim Abu al-Haija, *Hamis and the Legislative: The Dialectic Between Politics and Resistance*, site of Al-Arab News, <http://alarabnews.com/alshaab/2005/22-04-2005/9.htm>

all Palestinian factions, was a consensus agreement on general philosophy; the liberation of the land and the legitimacy of resistance.

However, at the same time, it was an indirect recognition of the legitimacy of some of the mechanisms of action emanating from the Oslo Accords, specifically the legislative elections. Whether Hamas wanted this or not, or whether it was unintentional, such a step can only be seen as having broken the wall of rejection, formed by Hamas over the philosophy of the Oslo Accords and its institutions. Hamas is even demanded, after the Cairo Agreement, a strategy for managing governance relations, whether in power or in opposition.⁴⁹ What followed subsequently showed that answering this question was postponed. However, a major development took place as Hamas tried to devise new instruments to manage governance relations through the totality of Palestinian polity, which in itself was a qualitative development in Hamas's political conduct.

Israel's Withdrawal from GS and the Position of Hamas

No doubt, Israel's withdrawal from GS was a watershed moment in the Palestinian political scene since 2005, and its consequences would continue to reverberate in Palestinian political life for a long time. To be sure, Hamas saw the Israeli army's withdrawal from GS as the result of its inability to cope with resistance attacks, at a time when the Quartet and the US dealt with it as something that was within the roadmap's framework.⁵⁰

Hamas expressed its detailed position on the withdrawal and what was to come afterwards in a political statement read by the then political bureau member Isma'il Haniyyah, in which he described the position of the movement as follows:

1. Withdrawal from GS must be comprehensive so as not to turn GS into a big prison.
2. Withdrawal must include border crossings and borders.
3. Hamas was keen on seeing a complete withdrawal.

⁴⁹ Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *The Future of Partnership in Palestinian National Decision-Making*, Strategic Assessment series (44), May 2012, <http://eng.alzaytouna.net/2012/05/22/strategic-assessment-44-the-future-of-partnership-in-palestinian-national-decision-making/>

⁵⁰ Quartet Statement, site of US Department of State, archive, 9/5/2005, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2005/45845.htm>

4. The occupation must fully leave GS.
5. Called for partnership with all Palestinians in managing the withdrawal.
6. Called on others not to monopolize power.
7. Hamas is not an authority within an authority, and is not above the law, but it remains committed to resistance.⁵¹

Legislative Elections: Legitimacy and Illegitimacy

The PLC elections of 2006 are considered one of the most important events and stages in the life of Hamas, and a key determinant of its political behavior towards the peace process. Indeed, Hamas's decision to take part in the legislative elections represented a new case for researchers and observers in Palestinian political culture, behavior, and thought while the consequences that followed from this participation produced a new series of challenges that Hamas had to then deal with.

Hamas's official statement justified participation when it considered the representation of the Palestinian people a legitimate right, and that the dysfunction in the Palestinian political system, both in corruption and monopoly of government posts, enjoined the movement to contribute to the development of the democratic construction of the Palestinian political system and to rebuild its institutions. Hamas stressed that participation did not indicate that it was abandoning its resistance platform aimed at ending the occupation.⁵² Hamas also presented an electoral program focusing on the Palestinian political system and the corruption and mismanagement within it, offering itself as a party capable of generating reform and change in the Palestinian political system.⁵³

Hamas's participation in the PLC elections took place with Arab and Palestinian encouragement, and with Israeli and a US approval after a long period of hesitation and reservation. However, this all vanished when the results of the legislative

⁵¹ Hamas Statement read by Isma'il Haniyyah, member of the political leadership of Hamas, in a press conference held in GS, 13/05/2005, PIC, http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/statements/2005/13_8_05.htm (in Arabic)

⁵² Hamas Statement on Participation in the PLC elections, 12/3/2005, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, <http://www.alzaytouna.net/permalink/4743.html>
See document no. 8 in the appendix of this book, p. 574.

⁵³ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

elections appeared, with Hamas winning 74 out of 132 seats, and independents affiliated to Hamas received 4 more seats.⁵⁴

Hamas's political conduct was different from the stereotypical image of the movement. It managed, for example, to forge many alliances (in the PLC elections and the municipal elections that preceded it) with Christian figures (in the municipality of Ramallah and Al-Bireh), and its lists included or supported Christian figures (e.g., Jamal al-Taweel in GS).

As soon as the election results appeared, a torrent of questions emerged and statements calling on Hamas to recognize the philosophy of the political system and its requirements. Hamas, which participated in the elections, stated that it did not agree with the philosophy of the existing political system on the basis of the Oslo Accords, saying that it had charted its own philosophy to rebuild the system and its institutions. However, it wanted these reforms to come from within the system and by peaceful means, and this new methodology was first met with external opposition and then an internal one.

On the eve of the election results, the Quartet⁵⁵ and Israel called on Hamas to recognize the Oslo Accords and their methodology in reaching an end to the occupation, and to continue to support the PA.⁵⁶ Hamas tried to form internal blocks to help it defeat Israeli and international positions, and to form a coalition government with different Palestinian factions. Fatah rejected this, and was followed by the rest of the Palestinian factions.

Hamis took a different path, to find channels for its positive interaction with the Palestinian system, and to circumvent the international position rejecting its presence in authority or seeking to thwart it. Hamas thus appointed technocrats in its government in order to separate between Hamas's performance as a movement and as a government.

⁵⁴ Second Legislative Elections of 2006, Final Distribution of Legislative Council Results, site of the Palestinian Central Election Commission, Central Bureau of elections, http://www.elections.ps/Portals/30/pdf/PLC2006-ResultsFinalDistributionOfPLCSeats_AR.pdf

⁵⁵ Fares Fa'iq Dhaher, The Quartet's position on the Palestinian Issue, Amin Media Network, <http://blog.amin.org/faresdahaher/2010/07/28>

⁵⁶ Statement by Middle East Quartet, Secretary-General, SG/2014, site of United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), 30/1/2006, <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/354568CCE5E38E5585257106007A0834>

Analyzing the PLC elections and Hamas's approach to the peace process leads to the following observations:

First: The PLC elections granted legitimacy to Hamas and the entire Palestinian political system, where the latter became a representative of the entire Palestinian political spectrum. However, the results of the PLC elections prompted Fatah to try to delegitimize some pillars of the Palestinian political system. For the acknowledgement of the election results did not result in acknowledging the right of the winners to implement their electoral platform, and their right to be represented at the national level. For this reason, some Palestinian forces, the international community and the Israeli government sought to delegitimize and destroy institutions that were among the pillars of the Oslo Accords, especially the PLC and the Palestinian government. Consequently, on one hand there was a Palestinian return to the old institutions of the political system, and on the other there was an attempt to thwart the Hamas leadership, of which it complained repeatedly.⁵⁷

Second: The PLC elections and subsequent policies meant that Palestinian society faced a backlash, which made the Palestinian people believe that they were being punished for conducting free and fair elections. All this had adverse effects on the development of the democratic process, whether at the level of political culture or building modern institutions.

Third: The legislative elections led some in Hamas to come to the conviction that the attempt to bring Hamas into the Palestinian political system was not meant to bring about changes in the system, and benefit from the contributions of the movement in supporting the democratic development of the institutions of the Palestinian political system; as much as it was meant to try to tame Hamas, to bring it more in to line with the political system of the institutions of the Oslo Accords.⁵⁸

Fourth: Hamas's reform from within, caused internal controversy. Afterwards, it dealt with every political step with extreme caution. Former debates returned to the Palestinian street over the usefulness of Hamas's political participation, whether by its members or otherwise, and even the usefulness of the elections

⁵⁷ After the PLC elections, the PA defeated Hamas by exploiting the post of vice president, and re-activating the PLO institutions, where many of the policies were being drafted by Fatah leaders and approved in the Palestinian Central Council (PCC).

⁵⁸ Ibrahim 'Alloush, Hamas and Elections... A Quick Look at Accounts of Gains and Losses, Aljazeera.net, Al-Ma'rifah, 20/1/2006, <http://www.aljazeera.net/pointofview/pages/f1e0e8ab-2489-4f98-8ae0-4fefbfb42e24> (in Arabic)

themselves; whether they are going to rehash the same previous policy of punishing the Palestinian people if it holds free and fair elections.⁵⁹

Fifth: Hamas's leadership and members became convinced that international policies in place were aimed at toppling Hamas's rule. For this reason, the general goal of the movement throughout the subsequent phase turned to proving Hamas's ability to continue being in power, regardless of the price to be paid by the Islamic resistance movement. This has had many repercussions on the political system and public institutions; for instead of being preoccupied with the institutional development of the PA and improving its democratic credentials, we find that the occupation managed to obstruct the work of the government and the legislative branch by arresting members of parliament (MPs) and ministers.

Sixth: General Palestinian political efforts sought to overcome obstacles facing the political system and the entire Palestinian society, squandering the opportunity to invest these efforts in developing a comprehensive Palestinian policy, which would be the subject of consensus among political forces in Palestine, including Hamas.

The Quartet's Conditions and the Prior "No"

Studying the dialectics of the political development of the Hamas movement towards the peace process after the election, one important detail must be born in mind; the Quartet's conditions, which remain to this day the basis of how we address the issue, its progression, and the possible scenarios for its future developments. The Quartet had three basic conditions in order to consider Hamas a natural part of the Palestinian political system, before partaking in any talks and as a fundamental requirement for financial assistance to the PA: Abiding by previous agreements signed by the PLO; renouncing violence; and recognizing Israel.⁶⁰

Many Hamas leaders realized that the Quartet knowingly created conditions which would not be accepted by Hamas. This was also the conclusion reached by many analysts studying the peace process, especially when these conditions appeared at a stage when many leaders judged the peace process to have failed as a result of not being based on solid foundations from the outset.⁶¹

⁵⁹ An exclusive interview conducted by the researcher with Khalid Abu 'Arafah, former minister from the Change and Reform Bloc, 1/10/2011.

⁶⁰ Statement by Middle East Quartet, Secretary-General, SG/2014, UNISPAL, 30/1/2006.

⁶¹ According to statements by President Mahmud 'Abbas to *The Jerusalem Post* in which he said he was thinking about announcing the failure of the peace process, quoted by many media outlets, including site of Russia Today TV, see <http://arabic.rt.com> (in Arabic)

Although the Quartet is not an official political body, its decisions, since these conditions were made, are considered rules governing the peace process. When considering whether these decisions give Hamas a chance to be an essential part of the peace process, we find that the problems of the Quartet's conditions include the following:

First: When taking a closer look at these conditions we find that they should be the results of negotiations and not preconditions for negotiations, unless they are meant to forestall any political development.⁶²

Second: Many of the Palestinian political forces reject these conditions, and believe that they are tantamount to the elimination of the peace process; some even believe them to be harsher than Israeli conditions.

Third: Clearly, the main governing condition of Quartet's conditions was prior recognition of Israel. But this is something that Hamas, along with many Palestinian political forces, do not see as a politically logical demand to make, for many reasons, including: It is not logical to ask Hamas as a movement to recognize Israel as a state; the PLO has already recognized Israel, and therefore, not every Palestinian government is necessarily required to repeat this. Most importantly, Israel has not recognized the rights of the Palestinian people, and it is therefore not logical for all political factions to recognize Israel as a state, when Israel refuses to recognize the Palestinian state.⁶³ The Netanyahu government did not recognize the two-state solution as the basis of the peace process, and yet, the world did not boycott it or impose conditions on it. Moreover, the current Israeli government (the Netanyahu government 2009–2013) includes in its ranks political parties that not only reject the peace process, but also the social and human existence of the Palestinian people, and that refuse to recognize this people's history and culture, and call for transferring them out of Palestine.⁶⁴

For the above reasons, the Quartet's conditions have been problematic within the general Palestinian political understanding, and in developing Hamas's attitudes

⁶² An exclusive interview conducted by the researcher with Nasiruddin al-Sha'ir, Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister, and former Minister of Education, 22/7/2011.

⁶³ An exclusive interview conducted by the researcher with Ibrahim Dahbour, a member of the parliament and the Change and Reform Bloc, 14/9/2010.

⁶⁴ Interview conducted by the researcher with Samir Abu Eisha, minister of planning in the tenth Palestinian government and the Government of National Unity, 20/8/2011.

toward the peace process. Practically speaking, a policy was built on the conditions laid by the peace process that toppled all the efforts that had been made during the previous years of negotiation and maneuvering.

Indeed, on one hand, the general strike in the PA institutions, which Hamas saw as a political strike par excellence, led to increased political polarization once again⁶⁵ and a return to the conditions that stood prior to the legislative elections, a period marked by political tension, undermining the ability of the Palestinian factions to unite over one general policy. Yet the more dangerous trend was the bid by the Israeli government to paralyze the work of Palestinian institutions by arresting ministers, MPs, and municipal officials.

All these challenges acted as a catalyst for Palestinian political forces to try to find a political way out to ensure the continuation of democratic growth, and give the Palestinian political experiment the opportunity for normal growth. The first of these efforts was undertaken by Palestinian prisoners, in what was later known as the National Accord Document, which was agreed on by all Palestinian factions, led by Hamas. It was considered the first attempt towards unifying Palestinian public policy.

The National Accord Document had two main parts: the first: a general framework governing Palestinian relations and Palestinian public policy; and the second: the instruments of Palestinian public policy. The instruments in this document were considered extremely important for addressing Palestinian resistance and the peace process. As regards resistance, it was agreed to concentrate resistance in the lands occupied in 1967. And as regards the peace process, the Palestinian president and the PLO were given a mandate to lead the negotiations providing that any Palestinian-Israel agreement is put to a referendum. Hamas would later say that it would accept the results of such a referendum, no matter what they may be.⁶⁶

The Peace Process and Democracy

The relationship between the peace process and democracy appears dialectical, and many political observers found hard to explain its dynamics. Certainly, the outcomes of the peace process and its mechanisms are supposed to lead to

⁶⁵ Ashraf al-'Ajrami, Employees Strike: Who is Blockading Whom, *Al-Ayyam*, 4/9/2006. (in Arabic)

⁶⁶ Text of Palestinian National Accord Adopted by President Abbas, site of Middle East Info, <http://www.middleeastinfo.org/docs/PalestinianNationalAccord.pdf>

consolidating the features and culture of democracy in Palestinian society. However, we find that the peace process, from the beginning, was built in a way that makes it difficult for it to be leverage for the democratic formula in Palestinian society, for two main reasons; first: the methodology, where the peace process was based on making peace between leaders not peoples, and continues to follow the same path.⁶⁷ The Palestinian people, who benefited somewhat from the peace process, were nevertheless the ones who paid the biggest price from the process. Second: the peace process was dealt with as a political deal with a section of the Palestinian people, and not with all Palestinians, and this manifested in political practice. In particular, the aid given to the Palestinian people is mostly political with a specific purpose, aimed at achieving specific political goals, either to form new elite, or a new culture, or to serve other as yet unknown objectives. All these are the effects of the dialectical relationship between democracy and the peace process.⁶⁸

Despite this general character of the peace process and democracy, the issue took a deeper dimension and a more complex dialectical turn after Hamas decided to participate in the PLC elections, becoming a key part of the Palestinian political body. Since Annapolis, to this day (2013), functioning democracy is a dilemma for the peace process. This dilemma only grew sharper with the onset of the Palestinian schism beginning in 2007.

Hamas saw that the division and the widening gap between Palestinian factions originated in the peace process and the conditions of the Oslo Accords that did not have room for dealing with the entire Palestinian spectrum. For this reason, discussing the development of Hamas's political attitude on the peace process is contingent upon understanding this general situation. While this does not diminish the importance of the political attitude, putting the Palestinian house in order on democratic bases and involving all Palestinians in making and implementing public

⁶⁷ An exclusive interview conducted by the researcher with Nasiruddin al-Sha'ir, 22/7/2011.

⁶⁸ For more information about the role of aid in the rebuilding thought and culture, see Khalil Nakhleh, *Filastin: Watan li al-Bai'* (Palestine: A Homeland for Sale), translated by 'Abab Murad (Ramallah: Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, 2011), p. 147, published by Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, www.alzaytouna.net/arabic/data/attachments/2011/Book_Pal_For_Sale_Nakhleh-8-11.pdf; and Sari Hanafi and Linda Tabar, *Buruz al-Nukhbah al-Filastiniyyah al-Mu'awlamah: al-Manihun, wa al-Munazzamat al-Duwaliyyah, wa al-Munazzamat Ghair al-Hukumiyyah* (The Emergence of a Palestinian Globalized Elite: Donors, International Organizations and Local NGOs) (Muwatin, 2006).

policy became a priority and Hamas's attitudes should be analyzed in isolation from these facts too. This is not only as far as Hamas alone is concerned, but even Israel and the US have taken these conditions into consideration, albeit in their own way.

Analyzing Hamas's attitude to the peace process and its developments, since the Palestinian schism, focuses on two main axes; the first: Palestinian reconciliation and restoring cohesion to the political and institutional bodies of the Palestinian people; and second: Running Palestinian politics.

For Hamas, and as was repeatedly stated by its leaders and in its literature, failing to reach real Palestinian reconciliation is due mainly to the attitudes of external actors regarding the peace process and the Palestinian issue, particularly the US and Israel. The US-Israeli position rejects any Palestinian reconciliation that makes Hamas a natural part of the Palestinian political system. Hamas attributed this to the fact that any reconciliation agreement that would be signed would be either directly rejected by the US, or indirectly thwarted and its provisions obstructed.⁶⁹

This dilemma sums up the current predicament, in which the Israeli position and US policy see achieving intra-Palestinian reconciliation as an obstacle to the peace process. At the same time, the Palestinian elite and decision-makers have questioned the possibility of achieving the objectives of the peace process and the aspirations for an independent Palestinian state, without first securing Palestinian reconciliation and unifying Palestinian political institutions, whether through the PLO or the PA. The Palestinian elite and public recognize that achieving Palestinian reconciliation today is one of the foremost priorities of the Palestinian people.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ See interview with Khalid Mish'al, head of Hamas political bureau, entitled: US Pressure on the PA Hinder Reconciliation, Russia Today, 10/2/2010, <http://arabic.rt.com/prg/telecast/42029> (in Arabic)

⁷⁰ For more information, see Document: Statement to the Public Opinion Refusing Resumed Negotiations Without Binding Reference, signed by 274 Palestinian figures and addressed to the public opinion and the PA. The Commission of Accord and Reconciliation, 14/2/2010, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, Documents, <http://www.alzaytouna.net/permalink/4937.html> See also March 15 Youth, and the movement to end schism, where the Palestinian Youth Movement called for ending the intra-Palestinian schism and unifying the Palestinian people, whether in GS or the WB.

Hamis presented the outline of its stances vis-à-vis the peace process and all governance relations in the Palestinian arena. The most notable points of this outline included:

First: Stressed that Hamis is not against peace, providing that this peace achieves the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people.⁷¹

Second: Agreed to establish a fully sovereign Palestinian state within the borders of 4 June 1967, whose capital is East Jerusalem; a state that does not include any Israeli settlements. In return, Hamis agrees to a long-term truce. However, Hamis categorically rejected recognition of Israel. For Hamis, acknowledging the existence of Israel as a de facto reality did not mean recognizing it, because acknowledging the existence of the occupation did not mean accepting its legitimacy, and the legitimacy of the usurping of large areas of Palestine. Instead, what it meant for Hamis was that it had to work on liberating Palestine from this occupation. Indeed, the fundamentals of the ideology and policies of Hamis include two main issues: First: Any tactic must not undermine the Palestinian strategy based on liberation and fulfilling the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people; and second: Not recognizing the legitimacy of the occupation on any part of Palestinian land.⁷²

Third: Putting the Palestinian political house in order on democratic and widely representative bases, whether through the PLO or the PA. Hamis considered this a priority and an internal matter, and believed that the PLO issue could not be bypassed; this had been an obstacle in most of its dialogues with the PA.⁷³

The vision of Hamis regarding the instruments and mechanisms of Palestinian political action, or “conflict management,” include several broad outlines:

First: The right of the Palestinian people to resist and get rid of the occupation is a legitimate and ethical right that is consistent with international law and norms governing peoples under occupation.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Hamis Movement: A Brief History, PIC.

⁷² An Important Document by Khalid Mish'al: Hamis Political Thought and Stances in Light of the Arab Uprisings, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2012.

⁷³ Document: A Memorandum on the Position of the Hamis Movement and its Efforts to Achieve Palestinian Reconciliation, 24/10/2009, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, Documents, <http://www.alzaytouna.net/arabic/?c=129&a=101545> (in Arabic)

⁷⁴ Khalid Mish'al, Resistance is the Real Choice, *Alghad*, 3/11/2010.

Second: The PLO is authorized to manage political action and negotiations, and to give the peace process sufficient time to produce results that can fulfill the aspirations of the Palestinian people to freedom and independence, within an Arab and Palestinian consensus over a unified strategy at all levels, political and diplomatic.⁷⁵

Third: Elections and the recognition of their results are the democratic path towards putting the Palestinian political house in order. Dialogue is the mechanism to resolve internal Palestinian disputes. Hamas thus emphasized the value of elections, whether in the PLO or for the PA.⁷⁶

Fourth: Referendum is the methodology to fulfill the right of the Palestinian people to approve or reject any agreement reached as a result of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. This mechanism is considered one of the most significant developments in Hamas's position regarding the outcomes of the peace process, whether, Hamas is party to it or not.⁷⁷

Fifth: The long-term truce: The truce in Hamas's ideology is not a new concept. Since the early 1990s, the truce has been a possible mechanism for Hamas to manage the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.⁷⁸ It remained linked to a timeframe; should the truce be temporary or permanent? Is it linked to short-term periods or long-term periods that could reach up to 20 years?

All these questions were the subject of many political-ideological debates within Hamas. However, during the last several years and especially after Hamas's military takeover of GS, Hamas's ideology witnessed an evolution concerning this mechanism. Thus, we find that the concept of a truce turned into a political project

⁷⁵ See speech by Khalid Mish'al, during the signing ceremony of the Palestinian reconciliation in Cairo, 4/5/2011, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 22, issue 87, p. 200. (in Arabic)

⁷⁶ See Usamah Hamdan, "The Thirteenth Paper: Rebuilding and enacting the Palestine Liberation Organization: Vision of Hamas Movement," in Mohsen Mohammad Saleh (ed.), *Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyyah: Taqyyim al-Tajrubah wa I'adat al-Bina'* (Palestinian Liberation Organization: Evaluating the Experience and Restructuring) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2007).

⁷⁷ The official text of Hamas response to the Carter paper, *Al-Hayat*, 22/4/2008. (in Arabic)

⁷⁸ Khaled Hroub, *Hammas: Political Thought and Practice*, 2nd edition (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2002), pp. 73–77.

in Hamas's thought, as presented in the document of Ahmad Yusuf,⁷⁹ which Hamas and its leaders rejected officially. But it is believed that the rejection came because the truce promoted the "state with temporary borders," which is entirely refused by Hamas. The rest of the issues, meanwhile, such as a long-term truce, have indeed been confirmed by successive statements from leaders of the movement.⁸⁰

Sixth: The dialectic of liberation and the state. Indeed, Hamas is today focused on the idea that liberation must precede the state, because there can be no sovereignty under the occupation. Hence, an autonomous authority and the state are two different things.⁸¹ This is now acknowledged by most forces in Palestinian society. Even the PA itself is no longer able to bring about development under the occupation whether democratic, economic development, or institution building development.

Conclusion

By looking carefully at the evolution of Hamas's political stances vis-à-vis the peace process, we can reach the following conclusions:

First: The political position of Hamas regarding the peace process evolved, in theory, in ideology, and in its actual practice since it took over GS.

Second: The evolution of Hamas's political position on the peace process has kept pace with the surrounding changes. Thus, Hamas's practical conduct is considered compatible with what it believes the supreme interests of the Palestinian people, and with its ideological Islamist commitments.

Third: The major problem today in the study of Hamas's relationship to the peace process, is that the latter is considered a fixed component to which the other parties have to adapt. This should be fully reconsidered because it is not an

⁷⁹ For more information, see the text of the document by Dr. Ahmed Yusuf, an adviser to Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah, which was reached with some envoys from Norway and Switzerland, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, Documents, 24/12/2006, citing *Al-Hayat al-Jadidah* newspaper, Ramallah, 24/12/2006.

⁸⁰ *Asharq Alawsat*, 11/1/2007.

⁸¹ An Important Document by Khalid Mish'al: Hamas Political Thought and Stances in Light of the Arab Uprisings, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2012.

approach that is consistent with reality, not only with regard to Hamas, but also with respect to the rest of the parties of the conflict.

Fourth: Various facts indicate that Hamas has not had a real opportunity to be a normal political player, and the opposite has been true. Indeed, one may observe that the leadership of the peace process and the parties to it do not want Hamas to be a political player, which is something that has to do with the philosophy of the peace process itself. To be sure, the latter imposes preconditions that force outcomes that only serve Israeli policies, and undermine the rights of the Palestinian people, which is something impossible for Hamas and several other Palestinian factions to accept.

Fifth: Today, it is not practical or realistic to speak of a peace process without Hamas, particularly if the peace process is addressed from the standpoint of managing the conflict, which is something recognized today. Indeed, the peace process does not promise a solution to the conflict as much as a way of managing the conflict. Consequently, we find that Hamas has the theoretical and practical framework that would allow it to be a key player in managing the conflict.

Chapter Seven

Hamas's Vision for Political and Social Reform in Palestine

Dr. Hafez al-Karmi

Hamas's Vision for Political and Social Reform in Palestine

Introduction

The Hamas movement, according to its literature,¹ considers itself a jihadi movement in the broad sense of the term jihad. It is part of the Islamic revival movement aiming to reform various aspects of the nation, especially politically and socially, as it believes that revival and reform are the essential gateways to the liberation of Palestine.

Hamas frequently emphasizes its vision aimed at building a developed Palestinian civil society, and reform its social and political systems. It wants to fulfill the Palestinian national rights, taking into account the Israeli occupation of the land and its oppression of the people, and its direct meddling in all the details of Palestinians' life.

The researcher investigating this topic must dig deep into a number of important sources, to gain a clear image of Hamas's reformist vision. Perhaps one of the most important of these sources that realistically and honestly express this vision is the movement's Charter, in addition to various other Hamas documents and statements. The experience of the movement in union elections, municipal elections, and parliamentary elections, and then in forming the cabinet after its victory in the 2006 general elections—and what it published in this regard, including the electoral programs and practical policies—all constitute a rich source to shed light on all pieces of the puzzle. However, one must also not forget that Hamas is part of the global MB movement, as stated in its Charter.² Therefore, it

¹ See *Charter of Hamas*.

² *Ibid.*, Article 2, which states, "The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the wings of Moslem Brotherhood in Palestine. Moslem Brotherhood Movement is a universal organization, which constitutes the largest Islamic movement in modern times. It is characterised by its deep understanding, accurate comprehension and its complete embrace of all Islamic concepts of all aspects of life, culture, creed, politics, economics, education, society, justice and judgment, the spreading of Islam, education, art, information, science of the occult and conversion to Islam," and the rest of life's ways.

ultimately draws inspiration for its reformist vision on political and social affairs from the movement's thought and approach.

First: Hamas's Vision for Political Reform

1. Hamas's Vision of the Concept of Political Action

Defining Hamas's vision of the concept of political action first requires: Determining the meaning of this term, because politics (*Siyasah*) in Arabic means linguistically: "Overseeing an affair in a matter that befits it."³ As a term politics means "The art of practicing leadership and power, and science of authority... which regulates public life, safeguards security, and maintains balance and harmony, through the power of legitimacy and sovereignty among individuals and groups..."⁴

Hamás does not deviate in its vision of political work from this definition. Indeed, in addition to being a national liberation movement, it is also an Islamic political movement: "The Movement's programme is Islam. From it, it draws its ideas, ways of thinking and understanding of the universe, life and man. It resorts to it for judgement in all its conduct, and it is inspired by it for guidance of its steps."⁵

Hamás, since its inception, has not overlooked or steered away from political action. Hamás is an offshoot of the MB movement in Palestine. In addition to its advocacy work, educational projects, and resistance activities, Hamás engaged in political work in different ways, moving smoothly from holding political seminars and rallies, to issuing statements and publications expressing its political views, to organizing demonstrations, strikes, and other forms of protests. Hamás became involved in student, syndicate, and various youth elections, which were another

³ See Murtada al-Zubaidi, *Taj al-'Arous fi Madat Sous* (Bride's Tiara in a Liquorice Material) (Beirut: Dar Sader, 1980), vol. 4, p. 164.

⁴ 'Alial-Sawwa, "The Movement and Political Work," in Jawad al-Hamad and Iyyad al-Barghouthi (eds.), *Dirasah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah: Hamas: 1987-1996* (A Study on the Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement: Hamas: 1987-1996) (Amman: MESC, 1997), pp. 185-186.

⁵ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 1.

facet of political action, amid Israeli prohibition and repression of Palestinian movements in general and Hamas in particular.⁶

To express its political views, Hamas relied on issuing statements, publications, and internal memos, which were the most important political means to Hamas for mass mobilization. This has also contributed significantly in raising awareness, education, mentoring, and developing the spirit of resistance, and was established as an indispensable bridge between the resistance movement and the masses, boosting confidence between the two sides.⁷ Hamas also sought to gain popular support for its vision of the Palestinian issue, and thus took part in syndicate elections in various sectors, where its position there became one of Hamas's most important means for political action in the WB and GS.

Rapid political developments imposed different modes of political action, according to circumstances and needs. The 1991 Madrid Peace Conference, led Hamas to build a political alliance comprising several Palestinian factions, which was a striking development in Hamas's political work. For it was able to come out into the open, from exclusively addressing its supporters in the Palestinian arena, to addressing the outside sphere and build local, regional, and international political relations.⁸ Hamas also emerged from the mentality of declaring its attitudes and political vision in statements and publications, to establishing an overt political bureau and going public with political symbols who spoke on behalf of Hamas, and who dealt in a daily manner with successive Palestinian developments.

Hamas has realized early on, that its work in resistance must be backed and furthered by political action and a strategic vision. It needs intellectual, social, cultural, educational, and civil institutions to support resistance activities and ensure their continuity and endurance... not to mention the need to show the size and political weight of the movement.⁹

⁶ See interview with Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, *Annahar*, Jerusalem, 30/4/1989.

⁷ Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, "Stones Are Not Everything," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 1, issue 1, Winter 1990, p. 137, <http://bit.ly/2ny4ijp> (in Arabic)

⁸ Mohsen Mohammad Saleh (ed.), *Qira'at Naqdiyyah fi Tajruba Hamas wa Hukumatih: 2006–2007* (Critical Assessments of the Experience of Hamas & its Government 2006–2007) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations 2007), pp. 85–86.

⁹ Badr al-Din Mdawwakh, *Hamas's Experience in Power... Pairing Political Action with Resistance, Felesteen*, 1/1/2011.

Hence, we found Hamas, in subsequent periods, as it was proceeding in accordance with this vision, quickening the pace of its strides in political action until it began contending in municipal and legislative elections. This is how Hamas took a decision to participate in elections in all domains, for it saw this as one of the most important means to achieve its political vision,¹⁰ maintain its presence, and propose its vision for political reform.

2. The Determinants of Hamas's Political Work

Hamis, as it delved into this arena fraught with pitfalls and since it is involved in a complex issue like the Palestinian issue, has put for itself a set of determinants. It works, within its own vision, for the interest of its people. It believes that its work must take into account the concept of "legitimacy" while accommodating priorities, so that it neither gets politically isolated, nor falls into plans that are not consistent with its policy and ideology. In its electoral program in 2006, Hamas expressed this idea by stating that the absence of national fundamentals, or their ambiguity, lead our people into polarization and contradiction, consume their energy and efforts, squander their opportunities and time, damage their compass, and entice their enemies... It added that Hamas is governed by a number of specific fundamentals, that not only most of the Palestinian people agree on, but also the Arab and Muslim nation.¹¹

Hamis abides by a set of principles for its political action. It is well aware of the need to fully cling on to Islamic fundamentals based on the notions of "halal and haram," or what is prohibited and what is permissible.¹² This was expressed within the electoral program of the Change and Reform bloc affiliated to Hamas, which stated that Islam and its cultural achievements is its reference and way of life, with all its political, economic, social, and legal components.¹³ The movement

¹⁰ Mohammed Barhoma, "The Movement's Objectives and Methods," in Jawad al-Hamad and Iyyad al-Barghouthi (eds.), *Dirasah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah: Hamas: 1987-1996* (A Study on the Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement: Hamas: 1987-1996) (Amman: MESC, 1997), pp. 85-87; and see Moataz Samir Debs, *Internal Developments and Their Impact on the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) 2000-2009*, Master Thesis, School of Economics and Political Science, Al-Azhar University, Gaza, Palestine, 2010, pp. 10-12. (in Arabic)

¹¹ Change and Reform bloc, *Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006*.

¹² See 'Ali al-Sawwa, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

¹³ Change and Reform bloc, *Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006*.

was aware of the possibility of accepting partial goals that do not conflict with or detract from Islamic fundamentals. One example of this is that Hamas believes that Palestine is a land that should never be compromised in any part of it, and considers this one of the fundamentals, or core principles. In its electoral program, we read that historic Palestine is part of the Arab and Muslim land, the right of Palestinian people to their land has no statute of limitation, and that no military or so-called legal measures can change this.¹⁴ Furthermore, moving in accordance with what is unequivocally obligatory in Islamic law does not prevent balancing priorities.¹⁵

Hamas has believed in political freedoms for all, and stressed the principle of pluralism and resorting to the ballot box and peaceful power transfer. Hamas considered this the best framework to govern Palestinian political action, guarantee reform and fight corruption, and build a developed Palestinian civil society.¹⁶ Since resistance against the occupation is essential in Hamas's methodology, consenting to a temporary truce in order to hold political elections does not mean abandoning that methodology. For this reason, Hamas stated in its Charter:

The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the links in the chain of the struggle against the Zionist invaders. It goes back to 1936, to the emergence of the martyr Izz al-Din al Kissam [al-Qassam] and his brethren the fighters, members of Moslem Brotherhood. It goes on to reach out and become one with another chain that includes the struggle of the Palestinians and Moslem Brotherhood in the 1948 war and the Jihad operations of the Moslem Brotherhood in 1968 and after.¹⁷

Hence, Hamas decided to rely on its previous principles in making its decisions. However, it is considered flexible when balancing its interests and priorities with the internal and external political equation, making what's best for the project of liberation.¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ 'Ali al-Sawwa, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

¹⁶ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

¹⁷ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 7.

¹⁸ See Ibrahim Abu al-Haija, Hamas's Political Thought... Approaches to the Constant and Variable, site of OnIslam, 19/3/2007, <http://www.onislam.net/arabic/newsanalysis/analysis-opinions/palestine/89271-2007-03-19%2017-08-42.html> (in Arabic)

Hence, Hamas's concept of political reform falls within the parameters set in its Charter and in the 2006 electoral program of the Change and Reform bloc, and it is implemented directly and indirectly. Hamas sought by all possible means to take its reformist vision to all political institutions that influence Palestinian political work.

3. Hamas's Vision of Political Reform Through the Political Institutions in the WB and GS

Hamas set out by participating in civil society elections, including syndicates, municipal, student, and youth elections a long time ago as we mentioned earlier, because elections are an important means for political reform in Hamas's political thinking. Hamas's leaders and figures often refer to the role undertaken by Hamas's student bodies since the 1970s and 1980s and until the eruption of the first *Intifadah* in 1987 in founding and shaping the political action of the movement, as these student bodies represented the early vessel for the political presence of the Islamic movement in Palestine. These elections took on special significance after that, amid the intense competition with the PLO¹⁹ over gaining supporters in the Palestinian arena. Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, founder of the movement, had explained the importance of elections by saying:

One of the issues being debated on the Palestinian arena today is the issue of elections, which the Islamists are hesitant about, between those who approve of participating in them and those who oppose. But I believe that participating in elections is better than not participating, because we object to what is happening in the street, so why not object at the heart of the legislative institution?²⁰

This shows that Hamas's vision of an effective political reform in the Palestinian arena focuses on working within the institutions. Nevertheless, a closer look at Hamas's ideology and its participation in these elections shows that it has different stances according to the type of elections. While it participated enthusiastically in student, union, and municipal elections, to demonstrate its weight in the street, it was clearly cautious about the legislative ones. For they are linked to peace settlement projects such as the autonomous rule or the Oslo Accords, which Hamas considered against the interests of the Palestinian people.²¹

¹⁹ Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasah al-Siyasiyyah*, p. 239.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

Hamas refrained from contending in the 1996 elections, and the presidential elections in 2005. When subjective and objective circumstances were deemed suitable by Hamas, the movement participated in the PLC elections in 2006. It announced that its goal behind the move was

to fight corruption that has spread among the people, and which has become a major phenomenon that needs to be addressed quickly and effectively, because all our people in the WB and GS are harmed by these corrupt practices. The fight against corruption is the duty of the movement, and ending wastage in public funds, reinforcing the principle of accountability and transparency, and helping those who have been wronged are all part of the movement's missions.²²

For this reason, Hamas engaged itself in the Palestinian political project from its official and internationally recognized inlets, contending in four local and municipal elections in WB and GS in 2005. It stated, "It is the right of our people to live a decent life, and not to see their rights squandered, and to have equal opportunities; the movement will seek for the Legislative Council to become a platform for protecting people and their rights, and expose the corrupt and their corruption."²³

It won seats in the important populous municipalities, which demonstrated that Hamas is an important partner, if not the most important partner in the Palestinian arena. Hamas proved flexibility when it formed joint and alliance-type lists with other forces, even those that differ with it ideologically, but not with its reformist vision for Palestinian political institutions. These alliances gave Hamas an important wide popularity that extended beyond its own ranks.²⁴

The municipal elections did not force Hamas to pay political prices, while legislative and presidential elections that take place on political bases could push

²² *Al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2006*, Document no. 4, p. 34.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ 'Adnan Abu 'Amer, *Qira'at fi Fawz Hamas fi al-Intikhabat al-Tashri'iyyah* (Overview Over Hamas's Victory in the Legislative Elections) (Gaza: Al-Yaman for Information and Training, 2006), vol. 1, press excerpts on the successes of the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas in the municipal elections, p. 2.

for offering these kinds of prices to serve Palestinian society, especially in what regards compulsory relations with the Israeli authorities in the daily dealings related to a people under occupation.²⁵

The popular support obtained by Hamas in syndicate and municipal elections since the 1980s was a motive for Hamas to participate in the PLC elections in 2006. It comes as a result of a strategy based on research and effective and gradual participation in power.

Entering the realm of direct political action with a great momentum was not easy for Hamas, because its supporters were clearly mobilized against the Oslo Accords and all their outcomes (the PLC and the Palestinian government). Hamas's reformist vision for the Palestinian establishment was important, but not as important as protecting its ranks against fragmentation and collapse, if its participation were to take place in an unsound and rushed manner. Thus, Hamas was keen on having its decision to enter legislative elections reflect the opinion of the majority of its institutions, leaders, and cadres on the ground. Hamas therefore worked on expanding its consultations at all levels and everywhere; in the WB, GS, and the Diaspora. It lobbied for the prisoners and detainees in Israeli jails to have their say and express their opinion. Hamas backed this with in-depth Islamic law and political studies, balancing the pros and cons of participating in the elections.²⁶ The opinion of the majority was clearly in favor of participating in PLC elections held on 25/1/2006.

Thus, after Hamas fortified its internal ranks and completed its internal preparations, it began reassuring its national partners to the fact that its reformist vision for Palestinian political action did not mean the marginalization or exclusion of the other. Hamas considered the responsibility is great and hence emphasized the principle of true and effective political partnership to maintain national unity and put the Palestinian house in order. Thus, holding on to the aspirations, goals, and concerns of the Palestinian people. Isma'il Haniyyah elaborated on this by saying that no person or faction, no matter how powerful and influential, has the right to monopolize managing the conflict or the project for liberation. The

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁶ See Islamic Movement, Ruling on Participation in the Palestinian Legislative Council (Islamic law study), PIC, it was published and distributed by Hamas to its cadres and members before the legislative elections in 2006. (in Arabic)

movement would remain faithful to Jerusalem and the right of return for Palestine refugees, and to liberating all prisoners from Israeli jails who are a great “symbol of jihad.”²⁷

It was clear that the movement's history of resistance operations against Israeli occupation had given Hamas great popularity, but political action does not live only on history. There must be a reform program to convince people to hand over the helm of political leadership to Hamas. For this reason, Hamas advanced the slogan “Change and Reform” in its campaign for the 2006 PLC elections.²⁸ Hamas pledged to crack down on corruption, an issue supported by the Palestinian public, who had long suffered from endemic corruption and its dangerous repercussions on the society. For Israel uses it to dominate and control the Palestinian people, undermine their unity, corrupt their resistance, and shatter their dreams of liberty and independence. This was the right time — in Hamas's view — to be by the people, through political and legislative work, in order to confront these challenges. Hamas also adopted a special slogan for the elections, “One Hand Builds and the Other Resists,”²⁹ which reached deeply into the consciousness of the Palestinian people and carried a lot of meanings and connotations.

By entering the political game, Hamas sought to reform the Palestinian political situation, protect the resistance program and implement it. Particularly so when the movement has suffered the PA's ill treatment, arresting Hamas cadres, seeking to disarm them, and labeling the movement a terrorist group, especially after the 11/9/2001 attacks.³⁰ Hamas also sought to advance the Palestinian society, achieve its aspirations, and preserve its fundamentals,³¹ and also reform the institutions. Hamas thus bore this slogan to combat corruption³² and express dissatisfaction with the internal Palestinian situation, which was mired in lawlessness, political stalemate, and weak government, and the failure of the security forces. This

²⁷ Press statement by Isma‘il Haniyyah, at the press conference declaring the launch of Hamas's electoral campaign, *Al-Risalah*, 5/1/2006.

²⁸ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

²⁹ Hamas PLC electoral campaign slogan on 25/1/2006. See *Ibid.*

³⁰ Interview with Ahmad Bahr, Hamas leader, *Al-Risalah*, 5/1/2006.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Interview with Mohammad Abdul-Hadi Shehab, Hamas leader, *Al-Risalah*, 5/1/2006.

prompted Hamas to participate in the elections with the aim of bringing about comprehensive reform in various aspects of Palestinian life.³³

If we delve directly into Hamas's vision of political reform by entering the PLC, we will find that the electoral program of Hamas's Change and Reform bloc focuses directly on combatting corruption in all its forms, and considering it a main cause behind weakening the internal Palestinian front and undermining the foundations of national unity.³⁴

This was repeated in the program of the 11th government dubbed the National Unity Government. It called for combatting corruption and promoting the values of integrity and transparency and preventing the misappropriation of public funds, in addition to formulating a strategy for administrative development.³⁵ To be sure, Hamas along with a large part of the Palestinian people believe that corruption in the PA institutions had reached a stage that threatens the entire Palestinian national project. Hence, it focused in its program on the need to "enhance transparency, oversight, and accountability..."³⁶ This required urgently "to update legislation and administrative systems to increase the effectiveness of administrative bodies, and contribute to the provision of services with ease at all levels." Since Hamas and other factions were marginalized over appointments to public posts, which were mainly monopolized by Fatah, the program focused on the need to "re-formulate the policy of public employment to ensure equal opportunities for all Palestinians on the basis of competence, and to prevent the use of office to serve private interests." It was thus necessary for Hamas to emphasize the need to "crackdown on favoritism, nepotism, and factionalism in appointments and promotions in all public institutions." This corruption was also manifested in the presence of an army of employees who were crammed into ministries without having actual work. The program thus called for "restructuring ministries and public institutions in proportion to the size of the public sector." The program also stressed the indispensability of "fighting idleness in the government and wastage of public money, and working to strengthen the sense of responsibility among all civil servants..."³⁷

³³ Interview with Ghazi Hamad, Hamas leader, *Al-Risalah*, 5/1/2006.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2007*, Document no. 81, p. 173.

³⁶ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

The Change and Reform bloc campaign focused on the average Palestinian, to hear about his opinions, suffering, and complaints. It adopted a clear policy that cares for the human element through the development of the workforce, achieving job security, and psychological stability for employees. In order to advance this goal in a systematic way, the program emphasized, “guaranteeing the right of citizens to lodge complaints with the concerned private or public bodies.”³⁸

This ambitious program, which the Palestinian people in WB and GS have been anxiously waiting for, could not be achieved in the framework of Hamas's vision of reform except by it entering the PLC, in order to enact legislation that would initiate a promising project for political reform.

The bloc thus affirmed in its program that *Shari'ah*-based laws had to be enacted, calling for having *Shari'ah* the main source of legislation in Palestine. This is consistent with Hamas's Charter that clearly expresses the movement's ideological and operational attitudes and its Islamic frame of reference. The bloc's program affirmed that change and reform need “the separation of the three branches of powers, legislative, executive, and judicial, and the activation of the Constitutional Court.” In turn, the separation of the three branches requires, according to the program, “radical constitutional reforms, which would be a gateway for further reforms and comprehensive political development.” It requires also “putting an end to the executive authority's breaches of the Constitution, which issues provisional laws or frequent amendments, and delays the enforcement of laws, in addition to other infringements.”³⁹

Hamas believes that the peaceful transfer of power is the real guarantee to maintain stability, fight occupation, and avert devastating internal conflict. Therefore, it emphasized the strengthening of *shura* [consultation] and perpetuating it in various fields and posts, while achieving effective participation, the adoption of the principle of rotation of power in practice, and the involvement of all Palestinian human resources in the comprehensive development program. However, this requires directly enacting legislation and laws that enables it. Therefore it was necessary “to seek to enact a new electoral law, to achieve justice and ensure producing a Council representing our people in the WB and the GS a truly and

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

honestly.” To ensure this, it was necessary to “fully reform the judicial system, to improve its impartiality, independence, effectiveness, and development.”⁴⁰

Hamas reckoned that no real political reforms could be made without safeguarding the public freedoms of the people, being the prerequisite of well-developed political institutions. Hamas thus called for “fulfilling the principle of equality of citizens before the law, and equality in regard to rights and duties.” This right requires “protection and providing security for every citizen, who should not be subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture, or reprisals.” In turn, this requires “protecting the public freedoms of citizens, and the citizen’s right to the freedom of expression.” Furthermore, “the principle of justice and equal opportunities for all citizens in hiring, employment, and promotion” should be the basis that must be emphasized and ensured.

Therefore, it was necessary “to stop interventions by the security forces in the granting of licenses for publishing, research centers, publications, and polling companies,” and to “establish a culture of dialogue and respect for all opinions, in a way that does not contradict with the beliefs of the people and their cultural heritage.” It was also necessary to build “a media policy based on the principles of freedom of thought and expression, integrity, respect for diversity and pluralism, and the right of choice.”⁴¹ All these public rights should be protected by specialized human rights organizations, under the supervision of the media, while ensuring freedoms for syndicates. Political forces must be recognized and encouraged, while taking advantage of their role to support the institutions of civil society. Thus, Hamas focused in its electoral platform on these principles.

The electoral program of the Change and Reform bloc, the program of the 10th government formed by Hamas in 2006, and the program of the National Unity Government led by Hamas in 2007, all emphasized these ideas, which together formed the foundations of Hamas’s vision of political reform in WB and GS. The Palestinian people expected Hamas to implement them, after giving the movement a vote of confidence in the legislative elections in 2006 and with Hamas’s formation of the cabinet. However, there existed some internal circumstances, Fatah, the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

rival faction, cling on to its position by not handing over power to Hamas, Israel arrested MPs and ministers in WB, and the Quartet imposed conditions for dealing with Hamas. These led to successive internal frictions and tensions culminating with a political split between WB and GS, on 14/6/2007. Clearly, it prevented a reasonable verdict on Hamas's implementation of its vision, as it took the internal situation in Palestine into the dark tunnel of schism.

4. Hamas's Vision of Political Reform in Foreign Relations

Hamas's vision of political reform was not limited to institutions in the Palestinian interior. Hamas also put forward a project to reform Palestinian foreign policy, especially as regards the Arab and Muslim world. The electoral program thus focused on "improving relations with the Arab and Muslim world in all areas, being the strategic depth of Palestine, and opening up to the rest of the world..."

Given the fact that Hamas is essentially a popular movement, it also focused on the peoples. It called in its program for "enhancing the role of Arab and Islamic masses to support our people's resistance against the occupation, and rejection of normalization with it..." Furthermore, Hamas has always aspired for the unity of the *Ummah*, something that is part of its ideology and attitudes. For this reason, Hamas "encourages any endeavor for unity between any two or more Arab or Muslim countries, up to total unity..." and "rejecting ethnic, regionalist, or sectarian calls seeking to fragment the nation."⁴²

As regards international policy, Hamas decided that it did not mind establishing balanced political relations with all countries, pledging to "build balanced political relations with the international community, maintain the nation's unity and its progress, and safeguard its rights, protect its cause, and repel aggression against it..." These relations aim essentially to "emphasize, on all international levels and in all international forums, the illegality of the occupation and all its outcomes..."

The matter went beyond the governments of the countries in question to calling their peoples to promote world peace that does not protect injustice. Hamas thus called "on all people and the forces of good in the world to unite to achieve a just world, based on eliminating all kinds of occupation and colonialism, and preventing foreign intervention in internal affairs..."

⁴² Ibid.

As regards international institutions such as the UN Security Council, the UN, and its subordinate bodies, Hamas believes in the need to “uphold Palestinian rights in Arab and international forums, especially liberation from occupation, the return of refugees, the establishment of a full sovereign Palestinian state, and securing stances and resolutions that support them.”⁴³

Hamis has been put under siege regionally and locally. Its ministers were barred from movement, and Quartet conditions were imposed on it. Local and regional parties colluded to thwart Hamas’s. This makes a verdict on the implementation of the ideas and visions of Hamas, and its electoral program, extremely difficult if not impossible.

5. Hamas’s Vision of Reforming the PLO

The PLO is considered the most important vessel for the Palestinian political movement. The PLO gained considerable momentum as it was officially deemed the representative of the Palestinian people before regional and international institutions and organizations. Although Hamas and other factions did not join the PLO for various reasons, it has always proposed its own vision to reform the organization, on the basis that its representation of the Palestinian people is not full, because it does not represent all popular factions nor does it represent the various spectra of the people.

There were many references in Hamas’s Charter alluding to the PLO, including some that sought to reassure the latter that Hamas did not intend to undermine its representation or clash with it. In Article 27, Hamas states:

The PLO is the closest to the heart of the Islamic Resistance Movement. It contains the father and the brother, the next of kin and the friend. The Moslem does not estrange himself from his father, brother, next of kin or friend. Our homeland is one, our situation is one, our fate is one and the enemy is a joint enemy to all of us.⁴⁴

However, it reproached the PLO for its secularism and its adoption of a non-Islamic approach.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 27.

Hamás raised early on the issue of developing the PLO. The Charter states:

with all our appreciation for The Palestinian Liberation Organization—and what it can develop into—and without belittling its role in the Arab-Israeli conflict, we are unable to exchange the present or future Islamic Palestine with the secular idea. The Islamic nature of Palestine is part of our religion.⁴⁵

Indeed, the secularism adopted by the PLO contradicts with the Islamic ideals adopted by Hamás, something that the latter noted by stating, “The Organization adopted the idea of the secular state. And that is how we view it. Secularism completely contradicts religious ideology. Attitudes, conduct and decisions stem from ideologies.”⁴⁶

For this reason, Hamás did not recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, sparking fears among the organization’s leadership that Hamás could become a real competitor to the PLO. The PLO invited Hamás several times to join its ranks, but Hamás sent a memo in April 1990 to the PNC President, setting several conditions to accept joining the PLO. They include: For the PNC members to be instated on the basis of election rather than appointment, or if this is not possible, then representation should reflect the proportional size of the factions in the PLO in Palestinian society. Hamás asked 40–45% of the total number of the council’s seats, and to be given its share in appointments in the PLO institutions and agencies. Hamás also asked the PLO to withdraw its recognition of Israel, and to reject UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338.⁴⁷ These conditions were referenced in Hamás’s Charter, stating that the day the PLO adopts “Islam as its way of life, we will become its soldiers, and fuel for its fire that will burn the enemies.”⁴⁸

Since 1990, various attempts were made so Hamás joins the PLO, but the relationship between Hamás and the PLO took on multiple forms of rivalry in their proposals and visions. After many years with the PLO and its leading party Fatah monopolizing the Palestinian political scene without a rival to speak of, a political

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Article 27.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Article 27.

⁴⁷ Khaled Hroub, *Hamás: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasah al-Siyasiyyah*, pp. 318–321.

⁴⁸ *Charter of Hamás*, Article 27.

movement with an Islamist project emerged, threatening the PLO's monopoly over representation of the Palestinian street. With the increased popularity of the movement in the street, it was necessary to recognize its existence and its strength. Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyyad), one of the most prominent leaders of Fatah, was even prompted to acknowledge, "Hamis is an Islamic movement strongly present in the occupied territories, and it has one of the most sincere fighting bases at large."⁴⁹ But this does not mean that voices calling for excluding, besieging, and snubbing Hamas in the PLO became completely absent.

The best possible option for Hamas was to seek to correct the path of the PLO, and to accede to the organization after reaching an agreement among its main factions to rebuild and reactivate it. This direction appeared early in the official statements and documents issued by Hamas.

In a memorandum issued by the movement in 1993, Hamas stated:

Hamis is not a substitute for anyone, and believes that the PLO is a national achievement that should be maintained. [Hamis] does not mind acceding to the PLO framework on the basis of the PLO's commitment to the liberation of Palestine, and the non-recognition of the Zionist enemy or giving it legitimacy to exist on any part of Palestine.⁵⁰

It is clear that Hamas's vision of PLO reform is that it is based on the need to be built on political, institutional, and democratic bases, where everyone would be involved, and no one would be excluded. No party should be given the right to refuse the participation of any other Palestinian party in the rebuilding process, while selecting the representatives of the Palestinian people in this organization must take place through direct elections. The freedom of choice and of exercising oversight should belong to the Palestinian people, and the PLO should not become a hotbed for securing quotas and engaging in one-upmanship, which previously led to the spread of corruption and the subsequent collapse in the institutions of the organization...⁵¹

Accordingly, Hamas's demand was not to accede to the PLO in its present form, but to first restructure it, reform it, and rebuild it. Usamah Hamdan said, that after

⁴⁹ Hamas and the PLO, site of Islam Story, 11/2/2008, www.islamstory.com

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Press statement by Usamah Hamdan, Quds Press, 7/5/2007.

the abolition of the Palestinian National Charter in 1998, a new one would require an agreement and must be adopted by the elected PNC. The political program of the PLO should stem from this Charter, and must be also approved by the PNC, which will be concerned with monitoring the implementation of this program.⁵²

Hamas also came out with a clear vision of reforming the PLO Executive Committee. Hamdan said:

The Executive Committee, which represents the executive pyramid in the organization, is lacking a legal quorum, as most of its elected members have either died or resigned, which means that most of its decisions are not lawful. This means that we need to fully rebuild the institutions of the PLO...⁵³

On March 2005, the Hamas and PLO leaders agreed in Cairo to rebuild the PLO. But the agreement suffered a serious blow when the PLO leadership backtracked on its commitment to its provisions, when Hamas achieved stellar results in the PLC elections on 25/1/2006.

Today, it seems that Palestinian reconciliation focuses mainly on rebuilding the organization on a new basis. But in spite of the signing of an agreement on 3/5/2011,⁵⁴ the agreement has not been implemented as of the time of print. This indicates that many actors in the region and the world do not want the Palestinians to unite under one strong institution that represents them, and carries their national and political project, to achieve their aspirations to liberty, dignity, and freedom from occupation.

Thus, it is clear to us that Hamas, in order to achieve its vision for political reform in Palestine, trod all political means possible. It began by mobilizing the masses to inform them of its vision through statements and publications. Then, it got engaged in advocacy in universities and syndicates, before entering into political alliances to resist certain policies and directions that the PLO leadership adopted. It participated in municipal elections, making considerable gains. Then the biggest event happened when Hamas entered the PLC elections winning a majority, and went on to form the Palestinian government in WB and GS. It tried repeatedly to join the PLO and reform it from the inside according to its political

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ See document no. 17 in the appendix of this book, p. 656.

vision. Hamas sometimes succeeded in achieving some of its objectives, and failed at other times amid various internal and external circumstances and obstacles.

Second: Hamas's Vision of Social Reform

1. Hamas's Vision of the Concept of Social Reform

Hamis considers Islam its ideological and intellectual reference point for its understanding of social reform. This concept has been defined through the verses of the Holy Quran,⁵⁵ which called for the adoption of this approach explicitly, and focused on the furtherance of this concept, in order to achieve for people a happy life based on tolerance and coexistence, progress, nobleness, pride, and greatness. This would in turn lead to a strong cohesive society able to confront challenges.

Hamis adopted in its Charter this concept, focusing on the need for a cohesive and tolerant society, away from hatred and social frivolity. Hamis thus stressed the need to

follow Islamic orientation in educating the Islamic generations in our region by teaching the religious duties, comprehensive study of the Koran, the study of the Prophet's Sunna (his sayings and doings), and learning about Islamic history and heritage from their authentic sources...⁵⁶

The spread of bookstores specializing in Islamic thought in Palestine helped achieve these goals, as the sale of books related to other subjects declined, which made Islamic books more popular as booksellers themselves confirm.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ See the following verses in the Holy Quran:

"If two parties among the Believers fall into a quarrel, make ye peace between them." Surat al-Hujurat (The Inner Apartments): 9.

"The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy." Surat al-Hujurat (The Inner Apartments): 10.

"So fear Allah, and keep straight the relations between yourselves: Obey Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe." Surat al-Anfal (Spoils Of War): 1.

In general, if a person wants reform sincerely, Allah will help him make this real among people.

"if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation." Surat al-Nisa' (Women): 35.

⁵⁶ Charter of Hamas, Article 16.

⁵⁷ Iyyad al-Barghouthi, *Al-Aslamah wa al-Siyasah fi al-Arabi al-Filastiniyyah al-Muhtallah*, p. 99; and see Mohammed Barhoma, *op. cit.*, pp. 65–66.

But what is striking is the extent of focus Hamas placed on the role of women as stated in Article 17 of the Charter, which reads, "The Moslem woman has a role no less important than that of the Moslem man in the battle of liberation. She is the maker of men. Her role in guiding and educating the new generations is great..."⁵⁸

In order for women to undertake this role, they must be armed with awareness and understanding of their vital role in the family and society. The Charter stated:

They have to be of sufficient knowledge and understanding where the performance of housekeeping matters are concerned, because economy and avoidance of waste of the family budget, is one of the requirements for the ability to continue moving forward in the difficult conditions surrounding us. She should put before her eyes the fact that the money available to her is just like blood which should never flow except through the veins so that both children and grown-ups could continue to live.⁵⁹

Hamas's vision for social reform focuses as well on the Palestinian society, which must be cooperative. The Charter reads, "Moslem society is a mutually responsible society."⁶⁰ The Charter quoted the Prophet (SAAWS) as saying, "When the Ash'ariyun run short of food in the Jihad or when they are at home in Al-Madinah, they collect all the provisions they have in a sheet and then divide it equally among themselves."⁶¹ This solidarity is a "guarantee to achieve political and economic stability and strengthen the elements of steadfastness."⁶² Hamas's electoral program for 2006 stated that it is imperative to "maintain the social fabric of the Palestinian people and public morality, ensure that no violation of social fundamentals takes place, and preclude any actions or legislation that undermine them."⁶³

⁵⁸ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 17.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Article 18.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Article 20.

⁶¹ Abu Musa (May *Allah* be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet (SAAWS) said, "When the Ash'ariyun run short of food in the Jihad or when they are at home in Al-Madinah, they collect all the provisions they have in a sheet and then divide it equally among themselves. They are of me and I am of them." (Al-Bukhari and Muslim), site of Muslim Ummah of North America (MUNA), <http://www.muslimummah.org/hadith/displyAllhadith.php?caption=Riyad-us-Saliheen%C2%A0568&&HadithNo=568%20&&hadithBookID=1003&&itemno=653&&hadithBookID2=1003&&subjectcode=sesy>

⁶² Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

Given the special character of the Palestinian society that lives under occupation, these meanings were reaffirmed clearly. The society in Palestine must have these qualities, because it “confronts a vicious enemy which acts in a way similar to Nazism, making no differentiation between man and woman, between children and old people, such a society is entitled to this Islamic spirit.”⁶⁴ It is a society that is subjected to oppressive tactics by the Israeli occupier who uses “methods of collective punishment. He has deprived people of their homeland and properties, pursued them in their places of exile and gathering.”⁶⁵

Because of the brutality of the enemy in dealing with the Palestinian people, sparing no one, the enemy must be confronted by a society that behaves like a single body, when one of its organs falls ill, the rest of the body responds with fever and sleeplessness. The Charter identified some aspects of this solidarity, and stated, “extending assistance, financial or moral, to all those who are in need and joining in the execution of some of the work.” Hamas called on its members to “consider the interests of the masses as their own personal interests. They must spare no effort in achieving and preserving them. They must prevent any foul play with the future of the upcoming generations and anything that could cause loss to society.”⁶⁶

Hamis strategic vision of social work is based on the fact that it is not just a relief to the needy, or to gain reward (*Ajr*) from *Allah*, but also as being an effort to reach out to people and interact with their concerns. “The masses are part of them and they are part of the masses. Their strength is theirs, and their future is theirs.” Therefore, it was required of Hamas members to “share the people’s joy and grief, adopt the demands of the public and whatever means by which they could be realized.” Then, to fulfill the ultimate goal of its vision, namely, “the day that such a spirit prevails, brotherliness would deepen, cooperation, sympathy and unity will be enhanced and the ranks will be solidified to confront the enemies.”⁶⁷

Hamis stressed this several times; in a statement declaring its intention to participate in the legislative elections, Hamas said:

⁶⁴ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 20.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Article 20.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Article 21.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 21.

It is the right of our people to live a decent life, not to lose their rights, and to have access to equal opportunities... It [Hamas] adopts a comprehensive program for the renaissance of the Palestinian people. Caring for and serving the interests of the people, and alleviating their suffering, is one of its most important programs.⁶⁸

Hamas's literature, early on, consistently made references to its vision for social reform in various areas. In its statements during the first *Intifadah*, Hamas addressed social affairs. Its fifth statement issued in January 1988 spoke of some of its social goals, including: "Rejecting the spread of vice, corruption, and traps that lead to collaboration with Zionist intelligence."⁶⁹ Hamas sought to achieve its vision of reform in several areas that the Palestinian people needed urgently, considering it a prelude for the main battle with the occupation to obtain freedom and restore the dignity, land and holy places.

2. Hamas's Vision of Social Reform in Various Fields

Hamas's vision of social reform focused on the need to combat poverty as an entry point for development and comprehensive reform. Hamas election manifesto emphasized "combatting poverty by imposing justice and redistributing wealth, encouraging charities and lifting restrictions on them, and allowing them to contribute to community building and poverty alleviation."⁷⁰

The program of the Hamas-led 10th government re-emphasized the poverty issue when it stated that "the rights of the poor and the weak must be protected, the rights of people with disabilities should be cared for, and the institutions that care for them must be supported."⁷¹ The program stressed the need to "work to improve the living conditions of citizens, promote social solidarity, encourage the social, healthcare, and educational safety net, and develop various kinds of services provided to the citizens."⁷² Hamas was keen on extending help to the needy, those with disabilities, the families of the killed and wounded, prisoners, the poor, and

⁶⁸ *Al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2006*, Document no. 4, p. 34.

⁶⁹ Statement by Hamas, no. 5, issued during the first *Intifadah* 1987–1992, 5/1/1988. See Media Office – Hamas, Hamas Documents, Hamas Statements, first year of the *Intifadah*.

⁷⁰ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

⁷¹ *Al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2006*, Document no. 69, p. 162.

⁷² *Ibid.*

those with social needs, and alleviate their burdens against the Israeli occupation, which seeks to subjugate them, and break their will.

Hamas considers social work, volunteering, and helping the needy are fundamental pillars in building up the Palestinian community, with its special circumstances under occupation and sustained aggression. The harsh conditions of the Palestinian society bolstered the concept of volunteer work, and brought together groups of people, regardless of their religious, sectarian, ideological, political, or social backgrounds. Consequently, the sense of belonging and loyalty to the Palestinian society in general was enhanced.

Accordingly, Hamas proceeded to build social institutions through which it wanted to fulfill its vision for social reform, and influence large segments of the Palestinian people, creating charities, sports clubs, Zakat committees, and libraries. For example, the Islamic Complex (*al-Mujamma' al-Islami*) established by Sheikh Ahmad Yasin in GS, became one of the most important Islamic centers of social activity.⁷³ The movement's social institutions sponsored tens of thousands of needy families, giving Hamas a heavy presence among segments of society that no other organization was able to rival it over.

These institutions had a significant impact after the first *Intifadah*. The broad network built by Hamas, an offshoot of the MB movement in Palestine, helped entrench the movement and win it many supporters. Hamas's institutions were characterized by "low costs on the one hand, and the good manners of those working in them on the other hand compared to others, which have greatly impacted the spread of the movement and its approach to reforming society."⁷⁴

Mobilization and guidance in mosques were another means pursued by Hamas for fulfilling its vision for social reform. Mosques became a place for social networking and distribution of aid. Indeed, for Hamas, the mosque "is the most important mechanism to achieve the movement's reformist vision socially and

⁷³ Abdul Sattar Qassem and Usama Abu Irshaid, "Preface," in Jawad al-Hamad and Iyyad al-Barghouthi (eds.), *Dirasah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah: Hamas: 1987–1996* (A Study on the Political Thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement: Hamas: 1987–1996) (Amman: Middle East Studies Center (MESC), 1997), p. 37.

⁷⁴ See *Ibid.*; and 'Ali al-Jarbawi, "Hamis, the Muslim Brotherhood's Gateway to Political Legitimacy," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, issue 13, 1993, p. 94. (in Arabic)

politically. It provided a meeting point and a regular mechanism for various forms of activities, in addition to being a house of worship...⁷⁵

For a national liberation movement, the mosques have an imperative role, because performing religious duties in mosques provides the generations with a jihadi education. Indeed they were and continue to be

the starting point for Hamas to gain the sympathy of the Palestinian street, being the incubator of revolutions against all types of occupation since the beginning of the century [i.e., the 20th century], and one of the most important pillars of the independence of the Palestinian civil society.⁷⁶

Hamas-affiliated preachers, scholars, and advocates undertook this role through the mosques, becoming the most important symbols of community reform. Islamic weddings⁷⁷ were also another mechanism that supported mosques in mass mobilization. This social occasion represented a fertile ground to advance Hamas's vision and ideology, gaining new supporters and mobilizing another sector of the Palestinian people including some who do not attend mosques.

Hamas also focused in its vision on education and educational institutions. It established a number of schools and kindergartens, in different parts of GS and WB, and even in the refugee camps in the Diaspora. For one thing, Hamas's vision is based on the premise that the movement has a responsibility towards building its society languishing under the occupation, especially since "occupation and neglect are twins."⁷⁸ Hamas placed all the institutions established by the MB movement in the service of its reformist project. These proved to be "high-standard and effective organizations... giving a vivid example of how ideas can be translated into awareness and committed action. They were able to be dynamically and actively present in Palestinian society and influence wide sectors."⁷⁹

Hamas expanded its educational efforts by founding higher education institutions, such as universities and specialized educational institutes, including

⁷⁵ Mohammed Barhoma, *op. cit.*, pp. 80–81.

⁷⁶ See *Ibid.*, p. 79; and *Alrai*, Amman, 8/6/1992.

⁷⁷ Ziad Abu 'Amr, Hamas: A Historical Background, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, issue 13, 1993, p. 95 (in Arabic); and see 'Ali al-Sawwa, *op. cit.*, pp. 192–193.

⁷⁸ Abdul Jabbar al-'Idwan, This Peace is Destroying Palestinian Society, *Asharq Alawsat*, 17/4/1995.

⁷⁹ 'Ali al-Jarbawi, "Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood's Gateway to Political Legitimacy," p. 80.

the Islamic University-Gaza, the University College of Applied Sciences, and other cultural institutions. It also pledged to establish more of these institutions in case it took power and formed a government, and called for the “creation and development of educational, training, and qualifying centers...”⁸⁰ The 10th government’s program focused on education, too. It urged

the promotion of the role of education, higher education, and the development and diversification of their institutions, as well as improving quality and efficiency, encouraging and supporting scientific research, taking advantage of its outcomes, caring for graduates, and taking interest in vocational education and applied research.⁸¹

Islamic student groups affiliated to Hamas were established at other Palestinian universities and institutes, becoming an important advocacy medium for Islamists to move through. The first time an Islamist bloc was established in Palestinian universities dates back to the end of the 1978/1979 academic year in Birzeit University.⁸² This gave Hamas a new platform to present its vision and influence a broad segment of educated and active Palestinian youths, whom Hamas depends on for carrying the future resistance program of the movement and influencing various segments of Palestinian society.

Hamas’s reformist vision included the establishment of health institutions, such as hospitals and mobile and fixed clinics. Thus a number of health centers and mobile clinics were built in the cities, villages, and refugee camps that provide quasi-free services for the Palestinian people. The electoral program of the Change and Reform bloc stated, “social services [education, healthcare, and social security] and other public services are a right for all, without discrimination or favoritism or partisanship...”⁸³ The tenth government committed itself to “developing healthcare facilities and their public and specialist services...”⁸⁴

Hamas interests also included the establishment of institutions that focused on the education, awareness and care of women and children. The 2006 electoral

⁸⁰ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

⁸¹ *Al-Watha’iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2006*, Document no. 69, p. 163.

⁸² See Dalal Bajes, *Al-Harakah al-Tullabiyyah al-Islamiyyah fi Filastin: Al-Kutlah al-Islamiyyah Namudhajan* (The Islamic Student Movement in Palestine: The Islamic Bloc: A Case Study) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations, 2012), p. 19.

⁸³ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

⁸⁴ *Al-Watha’iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2006*, Document no. 69, p. 163.

program promised Hamas voters it would safeguard “the Palestinian family and its cohesion...,” because it is “the solid foundation that preserves our social values and ethical ideals.” It also promised to support social institutions that sponsor women, children, orphans, the poor and those with disabilities. It would protect and take care of children, while supporting their right to education, nutrition, and mental and physical guidance. For Hamas considers Palestinian women “partners in the jihad, resistance, and construction and development; and their civil and legal rights are guaranteed.” For this reason, it was important to “guarantee the rights of women, and complete the legislative framework that promotes their rights, and to work to enable them to contribute to social, economic, and political development.” This is achieved by “empowering women through Islamic education, making them aware of their legal rights, and confirming their identity based on chastity, modesty, and commitment.”⁸⁵

Hamás's vision for social reform, and attention to Palestinian women, goes together hand in hand, because reforming women's affairs is the key to reforming society in its view. Thus, Hamas's interest was genuine and not contingent or a reaction, and was linked to its efforts to reinvigorate Islamic advocacy after the Israeli occupation of the WB and GS.

Huda Na'im, women's rights activist in Hamas, said, “Sheikh Yasin, May *Allah* have mercy on him, continued in the early years to personally follow up this nucleus, educationally and in terms of advocacy, and did not accept to entrust this task to someone else, despite his huge problems and health condition.”⁸⁶ Na'im noted that it was Sheikh Yasin who created a good seed for true Islamic upbringing, dedicating a lot of effort for women activism to which he assigned special care and which he followed up on an almost daily basis.⁸⁷ Na'im added, “Hamás's vision for women and their participation in its program was based on the premise that any community work has to have women as part of it, and that any building that excludes women is incomplete, because society is based on men and women equally.”⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

⁸⁶ Women and Women's Agenda in Hamas, Muslim Brothers Movement Wikipedia, 16/12/2009, <http://www.ikhwanwiki.com> (in Arabic)

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Hamas, as part of its vision for social reform, proceeded to create local reconciliation committees (especially after the Hamas takeover of GS in 2007) to help resolve disputes and rivalries between members of the community. This fell under the category of maintaining the cohesion of society, and strengthening its unity to remain steadfast in front of the Israeli plans aimed at dismantling it, by feeding differences between its members to weaken and undermine its foundations. Hamas created these committees that “people turn to, to try to resolve disputes—of all kinds—because it would otherwise take a long time in regular courts because of their lengthy proceedings.” These committees worked on solving “many complex issues and problems with the help of the police and the Ministry of the Interior [of the Hamas government in Gaza] using to achieve solutions procedures from *Shari‘ah* and [civil] law...”⁸⁹

These committees were characterized as being quick to resolve problems, and as being credible and impartial. Head of the Reconciliation Department of the Palestine Scholars League Nasim Yasin said that the reconciliation committees were set up by the Palestine Scholars League after careful selection and according to specific standards for the arbitrators. They are appointed to committees distributed across all GS governorates, numbering 34, and employing more than 500 arbitrators. They are chosen after inquiries about their persons, their moral qualities, their behavior, the extent of their commitment, and their ability to moderate dialogue and engage others.⁹⁰

These arbitrators should enjoy the following qualities: “patience, forbearance, powerful logic, persuasion skills, and wisdom to be able to reconcile people to produce decisions on a sound footing, as stipulated in Islamic law...” Subsequently, the arbitrators must have “Islamic culture, and be prominent figures in their areas of residence.”⁹¹

This conflict-resolution system, explained by ‘Abdul ‘Aziz al-Kojok (a prominent arbitrator in GS) is divided into two parts, a *Shari‘ah*-based one and a tribal one. Arbitration according to *Shari‘ah* is undertaken by scholars who have knowledge of the provisions of the Islamic *Shari‘ah*, while tribal elders implement

⁸⁹ Asmaa Sarsour, Reconciliation Committees Use Shari‘ah to Close Rifts, Felesteen Online, 12/9/2011, <http://www.felesteen.ps>

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

tribal arbitration, under the umbrella of the Ministry of Interior. This, al-Kojok said, does not contradict the work of the court system but complements it. He also pointed out that many cases are considered over several hearings without reaching a verdict, and these are then referred to tribal arbitration, because tribal law focuses on bringing divergent views together and usually ends a case by mutual consent between the two parties. Al-Kojok said that tribal reconciliation committees deal with intractable cases and disputes, especially those related to bloodshed and clashes...⁹²

This clear focus on social reform and the establishment of institutions that enable this goal is no stranger to Hamas and its approach. To be sure, the MB movement in Palestine, since its beginnings, focused on change through social reform and prioritized it.

Hamas believes that social reform leads to social change and political reform, helping in the resistance against the occupiers and the preservation of society.⁹³ It argues that without social institutions that deal with people's concerns and needs under the occupation, hardship on them would increase. Consequently, political reform would be more difficult, because feeding the needy and the poor, and caring for the children of the "martyrs" and detainees are much more important in people's view than political posturing.

Hamas's interest in Palestinian people and in qualifying them educationally, ideologically, and religiously, created—according to Hamas's vision—a strong basis for the steadfastness of the people, and gave a vivid example of putting thought into action. Hamas was able thus to influence various events and confront the Israeli occupation, prompting the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (WB and GS) Unit (COGAT) to say that the assistance provided by Hamas to the Palestinians of the occupied territories since 1991–1994 outweigh the assistance provided by the PLO. Hamas has replaced the PLO as a primary provider of assistance to the population, he added.⁹⁴

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ See an interview with Muhammad Nazzal, Amman, 8/12/1995, in Abdul Sattar Qassem and Usama Abu Irshaid, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁹⁴ See News Report, *Qadaya Duwaleyah* magazine, issue 238, 25/7/1994 (in Arabic); and see Mohammed Barhoma, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

After winning the elections and forming the government, Hamas sought to apply its reform program that it promised its people, but was faced by obstacles and a tight siege. In its statements, it frequently and bitterly referred to these obstacles, including a one issued a year after being elected, in which Hamas said that it “still insists on the implementation of the reform program in Palestinian society, despite the stifling siege and the huge obstacles...”⁹⁵ It added that it had indeed tried to implement its vision and promises, but “many programs and goals, which the movement proceeded to implement, were obstructed and thwarted through the external blockade... and attempts to block them and forestall them internally, with political and media incitement and deliberate security incidents...”⁹⁶ But Hamas insisted on its program and vision, because, despite everything, Hamas saw that its program was still feasible while the various complications forced it to implement it gradually and gently. In its statement, Hamas said:

The reform program that [Hamas] proposed and promoted remains on top of the agenda of the movement’s government... and it is subject to the considerations of gradual application, and objective solution, which is based on the special circumstances, sensitivity, and complexity of Palestinian reality.⁹⁷

After Hamas settled matters to its advantage in GS on 14/6/2007, taking over all institutions, the social activities of the movement gained a strong new momentum that had a positive impact in gaining new popular bases of support. All what Hamas called for through its various reform programs and statements now became within reach. It took several practical measures in this context.⁹⁸ A report issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) stated that the GS economy was in continuous collapse with unemployment sometimes exceeding 60%, in addition to higher poverty rates among families that live on less than \$1⁹⁹ per day per person.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ *Al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2007*, Document no. 22, p. 73.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁹⁸ See Sara Roy, *Hamis and Civil Society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamists Social Sector* (US: Princeton University press, 2011).

⁹⁹ US Dollar.

¹⁰⁰ See Palestinian National Authority (PA), Presidency of the Council of Ministers, General Directorate for the Quality Government Performance, “Report of the Achievements of the 11th Palestinian government During the First Quarter 2012,” June 2012, site of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the General Secretariat, Gaza, http://www.pmo.gov.ps/images/stories/qgp/2012_1.pdf (in Arabic)

Within its limited capabilities, the Hamas-led government made financial allocations for the needy, unemployed, and the families of the “martyrs,” and travel allocations for the treatment of incurable disease cases, educational aid, and other aid. The Hamas-led government also provided in-kind assistance and food and medical supplies to the needy, providing aid to purchase medicines, and aid rations as part of the World Food Program. The government also provided quick relief in emergencies such as the flood mitigation campaign, and also provided assistance for support and rehabilitation such as electric wheelchairs for those with special needs. Employment opportunities were also offered to disabled individuals in the category of temporarily employment to non-beneficiaries of Social Affairs, for different periods of time.¹⁰¹

One of most important features of social reform implemented by Hamas in GS was attention to the working class and fishermen. Sustaining more than two-thirds of the population, this the largest social group is most affected by the occupation measures and the brutal blockade. Hamas distributed financial allocations to a large number of them, especially to those who Hamas was not able to provide jobs to.¹⁰²

Given how important the issues of detainees and liberated prisoners are for the Palestinian people, Hamas sought to embrace these issues and get the detainees released from Israeli jails.¹⁰³ It held meetings with foreign solidarity activists to stage campaigns to put pressure on public opinion to embrace their cause, contacted the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to discuss the issue of prisoners and organizing visits to their relatives, especially those from GS, and communicated with Doctors of the World to visit ill prisoners held by the occupation. In addition, it communicated with foreign institutions and dignitaries,

¹⁰¹ See Ibid.

See also Ahmad Muhammad al-Sa'ati, *The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) 1987–1994* (20), Felesteen Online, 14/1/2013. (in Arabic)

¹⁰² See *Paying Salaries to Workers Under the Temporary Employment Clause*, site of Ministry of Labor, PA, Gaza, 21/3/2013. (in Arabic)

¹⁰³ Hamas captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in 2006 after winning the elections and forming the tenth government, and kept him for five years until the famous prisoner exchange deal “Devotion of the Free,” on 11/10/2011, took place. It liberated more than a thousand Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons from all Palestinian factions. See *Gilad Shalit: The Thousand Prisoner Deal*, Aljazeera.net, 12/10/2011, www.aljazeera.net (in Arabic)

providing them with information concerning the prisoners and developments related to them.

Hamas also extended assistance to the families of the detainees, diverting monthly financial allocations to them, in addition to providing social, educational, and other services to these families. It provided adequate housing to liberated detainees, helped in marrying the bachelors among them, diverted monthly allocations for each liberated prisoner, and exempted them from national health insurance fees. In addition, it reduced their electricity fees, and provided them with various vocational training sessions (e.g. in social service, or as preachers), to help the liberated prisoners rely on themselves.¹⁰⁴

Within the prisons, Hamas disbursed financial aid funds to prisoners to buy clothes, food, and medicines from prison canteens. It helped appoint lawyers to defend them, expressed solidarity with them through sit-ins, strikes, and retaliation against the occupation, to protest the conditions of their detention. It kept contact with their families, visiting them in religious and national occasions, and offering them solace and gifts.¹⁰⁵

As regards women and youths, the government and Hamas launched a number of projects to reform society targeting women and youths.¹⁰⁶ Hamas organized comprehensive training courses for a large number of women in the Palestinian society on “reinforcing positive habits and confronting negative habits towards women,” as part of a campaign to improve societal culture towards women and enhancing their role in society. Hamas also organized art competitions under the title “Princess of Literature,” for writings on women’s issues in categories including poetry, scripts, serialized stories, and short stories.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ See PA, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, General Directorate for the Quality Government Performance, “Report of the Achievements of the 11th Palestinian government During the First Quarter 2012.”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, more than thirty youth project posted on: Ministry of Labor, PA, Gaza.

¹⁰⁷ See PA, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, General Directorate for the Quality Government Performance, “Report of the Achievements of the 11th Palestinian government During the First Quarter 2012.”

The government was keen to commemorate special occasions for women such as the International Women's Day, Mother's Day, Family Day, and other occasions. Hamas also established the International Committee for Solidarity with the Palestinian Woman, and held sustained events to care for elderly women, including sessions to offer them care at the expense of the government. Hamas also founded a large number of women's societies focusing on community work, fulfilling its duty towards Palestinian women in GS.¹⁰⁸

In the area of youth correction and rehabilitation, Hamas government founded a wide range of social programs for young people, and issued a special law for them. Hamas also held seminars with youth organizations and universities in all GS governorates, as part of its campaign to educate young people about their rights and introduce them to the law. Media outlets, television interviews, and a series of introductory workshops in the newspapers contributed to this effort, in addition to the launch of a short message service, distribution of flyers, and the dedication of a website for this purpose.¹⁰⁹

Sports projects for youths also received special attention, despite the GS siege and the lack of resources. The Hamas-led government did not neglect this aspect, establishing a number of sports projects. It announced the Palestine Award for Youth Creativity covering 16 categories.¹¹⁰ Considering families as the basis of society's righteousness and development, it launched projects to hold weddings for Palestinian youths, offering loans to those intending to get married, and securing dozens of gifts from private-sector institutions.¹¹¹

In order to implement its reformist approach, Hamas sought to attract young people to its side by channeling their energies and promoting high Islamic morals. It implemented the athletic principles and concepts contained in the Islamic education curriculum, established various sports teams at mosques and held tournaments among them.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.; and see Ahmad Muhammad al-Sa'ati, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ See site of Portal for Palestinian Youth and Sports, Ministry of Youth and Sports, GS, <http://www.mys.gov.ps>, where the ministry has sponsored such weddings. On 8/3/2012, for example, weddings were held for a thousand men and women, with each groom receiving \$2,000 as a loan and other amounts as gifts.

¹¹² See 'Imad Afaneh, *Hamas Between a Virtuous Society and Good Governance*, PIC, 19/7/2009.

After Fatah-affiliated PA employees withdrew and refrained from going to courts, Hamas worked on disseminating the culture of social peace, conflict-resolution, doing justice by those who were wronged, serving justice, and encouraging reform through special committees established to assist the official judiciary. This is especially important in light of the people's need for alternative ways to resolve their problems, after the PA in Ramallah tried to disrupt the work of courts and police departments it controlled in GS after Hamas's takeover.¹¹³ Hamas relied on a large number of its symbols who were appreciated and respected by the community for their active and successful reform they've done.

Hamis also considers health services one of the most important means for social reform. The Ministry of Health staff underwent a number of training courses and workshops, and it held many health-related education activities. It established more than 32 health projects, most notably the Al-Yasin Hospital, the Indonesian Hospital, and the Children's Hospital in Deir al-Balah, in addition to the implementation of many projects in various health sectors.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

Hamis sought to achieve its vision for political and social reform, and was able to penetrate the diverse Palestinian civil society. It succeeded in bringing the community closer into the ideas in which it believes, in spite of difficulties and obstacles. It sought to translate these achievements into a tangible political reality that serves the public interests, hopes and aspirations. This enabled Hamas to achieve a strong political presence, based on a wide popular base that is difficult to undermine, marginalize, or ignore.

¹¹³ See details of these committees and their working methods on the site of the Palestine Scholars League in Gaza, www.rapeta.ps/Rapta

¹¹⁴ See PA, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, General Directorate for the Quality Government Performance, "Report of the Achievements of the 11th Palestinian government During the First Quarter 2012."

Chapter Eight

Hamas Relations with the Arab World

Dr. 'Adnan Abu 'Amer

Hamas Relations with the Arab World

Introduction

Nearly 25 years after the establishment of Hamas, and its overcoming of many tests at the level of political relations, home and abroad, evaluating its experience in managing these relations has become a matter of great importance. Of particular significance is Hamas's relationship with its Arab surroundings, with both regimes and populations equally.

This study tackles the most important broad outlines of Hamas's policies in its Arab political relations, although these are subject to change with circumstances. Indeed, these relations might see convergence or divergence depending on goals and interests. This requires a number of questions to be answered, including:

- On what basis does Hamas establish its Arab relations?
- What are the policies and objectives behind these relations?
- What is fixed and what is variable? And are there shifts in its political practices in the context of those relations?
- Are there any conditions and concessions required from Hamas to establish relations with a given party, and are there any Arab parties that Hamas shuns, and rejects any relationship of any kind with?

First: The Determinants of Hamas's Arab Relations

Hamas proceeded to build its pan-Arab relations on the basis of its Charter, which states that the liberation of Palestine is linked to three main spheres, including the Arab sphere, and its role in the conflict and the duties that fall on this sphere. Hamas has considered that the

Arab countries surrounding Israel are requested to open their borders for the *Mujahidin* of the Arab and Islamic countries so they can take their role and join their efforts with their Muslim brothers of Palestine. As for the other Arabic and Islamic countries, they are asked to ease the movement of *Mujahidin* from it and to it.¹

¹ *Charter of Hamas*, Article 28.

Hamas sought to have official Arab parties stand by its side for

supporting it on all levels, taking up its position, pushing forth its activities and movements, and working to gain support... so the Islamic people can be its support and its victors—a strategic dimension on all levels: human, material, media, historical, and geographical. It works through holding supportive conferences, producing clarifying statements, supportive articles, purposeful pamphlets, and keeping the public aware of the Palestinian situation and what is facing it and what is being plotted against it, through educating the Islamic people ideologically, morally, and culturally in order to play its role in the battle for liberation.²

Perhaps what drove Hamas to seek this from Arab states and peoples was its conviction that the Zionist project posed a threat to the entire Arab nation. Given the religious and national dimension Palestine represents, the role of the Arab sphere in its liberation is pivotal and central, and constitutes the primary force upon which it is relied to undertake the burden of liberation, and is considered the parallel strategic depth assisting the Palestinian people in the liberation of Palestine and the removal of the Zionist entity from its land.³

Hamas benefited from the experiences of Palestinian factions in their pan-Arab relations by refraining from advancing any radical slogans against Arab regimes, such as the ones that permeated the Palestinian revolutionary climate in the late 1960s and early 1970s; for example the slogans that claimed that the “train of liberation” passed through this or that Arab capital! Hamas saw that Arab countries had to be kept on the Palestinians’ side, despite all difficulties and despite concerted Israeli efforts to isolate the Palestinian issue from the Arab dimension.⁴

To understand the nature of the relations Hamas has built with the Arab sphere, and evaluate whether they can be sustained and stabilized, it is necessary to consider the foundations and principles upon which they were established, and the political groundwork laid for them, as follows:

² *Ibid.*, Article 29.

³ Site of Encyclopedia Palestina, <http://bit.ly/2oBwstm>

⁴ Ahmad Fahmy, *Limadha Yakrahun Hamas?* (Why Do They Hate Hamas?) (Riyadh: Al-Bayan magazine, 2009), p. 19.

1. Reaching out to Various Arab Parties

Hamas was keen on establishing positive relations with Arab regimes, regardless of their political orientations and ideological affiliations, declaring its willingness to deal with the following forces: Islamic, Christian, Socialist, Leftist, and Liberal, to encourage them to do their duties and responsibilities toward the Palestinian people, support their just cause, and mobilize Arab public opinion.

Hamas was also keen on communicating with the League of Arab States and its secretary general in all events and summits. Hamas always sought to find common ground with the regimes, to increase coordination and collaboration. Hamas also sought ties with Arab organizations and institutions, based on the principle of “Giving priority to common grounds and areas of agreement over differences,” and establishing relations of full partnership among all Arab components. But Hamas believed that this joint Arab action must be based on commitment to the liberation of Palestine, and not recognizing the enemy or give it the right to exist on any part of it.⁵

Soon it became clear to Hamas that the progress and prominence it has achieved, both on the ground and among the public opinion, politically and militarily, increased the Arab parties’ interest in it. The stronger Hamas became, the more urgent it became for others to reach out to it, and to establish regional, strong, and mutual relations.⁶

2. Refusing to Intervene in Internal Affairs

Because Hamas is not part of the “internal” Arab political order, or the internal interactions in any Arab countries, it treads very carefully in a way that serves Palestinian goals. Indeed, the experience of the PLO is still something to avoid in the eyes of Hamas’s leaders, because the PLO’s leap into the arms of alliances and axes proved to be detrimental, having denied the PLO its will and identity. Meanwhile, its intervention in the internal affairs of other Arab countries,

⁵ Samir Sa’id, *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah Hamas* (The Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas) (Al-Mansoura: Dar al-Wafaa for Printing, Publication, and Distribution, 2002), p. 19.

⁶ Khaled Hroub, Nationalism and Islamism in Palestine: Unity or Division?, *Al-Hayat*, 3/10/2009. (in Arabic)

and alienating Arab regimes, only brought further losses and setbacks to the Palestinians and their cause.⁷

Thus, Hamas had a momentous task before it; to take advantage of overt and covert contradictions among the Arab countries and the disparity between their interests on the one hand, and on the other hand its ability to avoid being exploited by the regimes.

Over the years, Hamas was able to build parallel relations with both Arab governments and opposition. Many cite the example of strong relations with the Syrian government, despite the enmity between the latter and the MB movement, which reached bloody confrontations in 1982. Another example is Hamas's keenness on not provoking the Egyptian government under the regime of Hosni Mubarak, especially between 2000 and 2011, given Hamas's ties to the MB movement in neighboring Egypt.⁸

At the same time, Hamas refused to intervene in Arab countries in their policies, stances, and private affairs. It asserts its independence in taking "national Palestinian" decisions as directed by its leadership.⁹

However, some have condemned Hamas's flexible positions vis-à-vis the Arab regimes—easily recognizing them, and not participating in changing them—especially as it considers itself an Islamic movement that adopts supranational slogans, and realizes that the burden of liberation cannot be undertaken by the Palestinian people alone, nor by a fragmented Arab population.¹⁰

3. Not Starting Any Side Battles with Any Arab Party

Hamis has not pursued a hostile policy, but has expressed in an objective and committed manner its reservations and criticism of the positions of the various parties on the conflict with the occupation. It sought to find balance in its pan-Arab

⁷ Zaki Chehab, *Hamis min al-Dakhil* (Hamis from the Inside) (Beirut: The Arab Scientific Publishers, 2008), p. 187.

⁸ 'Adnan Abu 'Amer, *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi Qita' Gazzah bayna al-Da'wah wa al-Siyasah* (The Islamic Movement in Gaza Between Preaching and Politics) (Cairo: The Arab Information Center, 2006), p. 75.

⁹ Interview with Khalid Mish'al, Al Jazeera Channel, Doha, 5/3/2006. (in Arabic)

¹⁰ Iyyad al-Barghouthi, *Al-Islam al-Siyasi fi Filastin, ma Wara' al-Siyasah* (Political Islam in Palestine, Behind Politics) (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, 2000), p. 65.

political relations, while refusing to have its relations with any party to be at the expense of another, as long as they stand alongside the Palestinian people.¹¹

In the same vein, Hamas tackled its disputes with Arab countries with a lot of patience and prudence, avoiding accusation and defamation. It relied on objective criticism, advice, and appeal, without severing relations even in the darkest circumstances. Hamas never accused Egypt, opened a front with Jordan, or had its media outlets target the Gulf States.¹²

One may state that Hamas's pan-Arab relations were built on a clear strategic vision. Hamas was convinced that the Arab countries, which are growing weaker, are more prone to cave in to the American project. This means more restrictions against Hamas, which is indeed what happened after it won the legislative elections and became even clearer after it took control of GS in mid-2007.

Despite this, Hamas's discourse of mobilization called for Arab and Islamic unity, albeit it did not go into detailed ideological and intellectual aspects, contenting itself with broad slogans. For Hamas remained preoccupied with the resistance project, and there existed an extensive literature that covered unity issues. It is still worth bearing in mind that Hamas, in its literature and statements, has always expressed its interest in Arab unity, confirming that differences in opinion never justify infighting and divisions. Hamas believes that the arena of national and Arab work accommodates all visions and views on resisting the "Zionist project," and is convinced that the unity of the Arab and Muslim worlds is an objective that all Palestinian and Arab forces and personalities must work on to achieve.

At certain times, major Arab countries sought to antagonize, provoke, or instigate tension with Hamas, while the latter dealt with this prudently, and did not seek escalation in the media. Instead, Hamas limited itself to denying accusations, and tried to stay away from anything that could exacerbate these situation further in the media. It was patient despite the boycott of some Arab countries and their complete collaboration with US demands to limit financial and political relations.¹³

¹¹ Jawad al-Hamad and Iyyad al-Barghouthi, *Dirasah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah: Hamas: 1987–1996*, p. 225.

¹² Ahmad Fahmy, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹³ Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarah al-Siyasiyyah*, p. 159.

Hamas provided an example in suppressing anger against those who ignored its role and stature. It did not seek to defame them publicly, an important indication of its flexibility, and ability to prioritize higher interests over its own. Meanwhile, Hamas openly welcomed stances that were warm and cordial towards it, thus maintaining good ties and coordination with certain Arab countries.¹⁴

4. Limiting Armed Resistance to Palestine

Hamas adopts the strategy of using Palestine as the only arena for the armed confrontation with the occupation, and has refused to expand the geographical scope of its activities, despite the assaults it was subjected to abroad. In 1997, in Jordan, Khalid Mish'al, the head of Hamas's political bureau, survived an assassination attempt by the Israelis, who also assassinated 'Ezzedein al-Sheikh Khalil, a Hamas operative in Syria, by detonating his car in 2004. Nevertheless, Hamas had a firm resolve not to move the theater of its operations outside the occupied territories.¹⁵ Hamas's vision and the stands it took reduced the fears of some Arab regimes, which always saw armed resistance as a destabilizing element of concern.

5. Calling for the Unity of Arab Forces and Rejecting Axes

Hamas has encouraged all efforts for Arab unity, coordination and joint action, which lie in the interest of the Arab nation and the Palestinian issue. Indeed, the Palestinian people will pay the price of Arab division. Hamas has looked warily upon the emergence of rival axes and alliances, refusing to become part of any of them, given its openness to all sides. Hamas is not affiliated to any party against another, and deals with everyone, not classing itself as being with one party against another. Despite this, Hamas is close to certain countries and distant from others.¹⁶

Unlike the experience of PLO, Hamas was able to remain outside the Arab axes. Despite the sharp disputes between the countries of the region regarding the relationship with Israel, Hamas benefited relatively from these contradictions, but

¹⁴ See Jawad al-Hamad and Iyyad al-Barghouthi, *Dirasah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah: Hamas: 1987–1996*, p. 229.

¹⁵ Ghassan Charbel, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹⁶ Jawad al-Hamad and Iyyad al-Barghouthi, *Dirasah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah: Hamas: 1987–1996*, p. 235.

without becoming mired in them. Hamas's realism, and its keenness to not veer away from the Palestinian and pan-Arab paths, was a source of Arab relief towards its policies. Hamas maintained its character, identity, and national agenda, showing on more than one occasion that it stood alongside the "Resistance Axis" opposed to the American-Israeli project, while maintaining good relations with other countries in the region. Perhaps its continuous contact with Gulf countries, its acceptance to go to the KSA in 2007 to sign the Mecca Agreement with Fatah, and its acceptance of Cairo's role as a mediator in Palestinian reconciliation and the prisoner swap deal with Israel in 2011, are all evidence of its openness to the "Moderate" axis.

Moreover, Hamas sought to build good relations with the countries of both axes, in spite of their differences. Hamas had no choice but to maintain balance in the relationship with them both. To be sure, Syria, until 2011, hosted Hamas's leadership abroad, while Egypt remained the only crossing for its leadership in Palestine to enter and leave GS. Meanwhile, both Egypt and Syria have been crucial players in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and for this reason, Hamas was keen on not excluding them from this conflict's equation.¹⁷

Hamas believed that the difference in positions with the Arab countries over political developments should not preclude contact and cooperation with them, especially those who are always ready to support the Palestinian people in their resistance against occupation. Hamas understood the importance of dialogue with all governments, parties, and forces, regardless of their political systems. It has had no qualms about cooperating with any side for the benefit of the just cause of the people of Palestine and their bid to obtain their legitimate right, or showing to the public the practices of the occupation and its inhumane measures against the Palestinian people.¹⁸

In the context of the axes, Hamas still walks a tightrope with the Arab countries. Neither did these countries fully open up to Hamas, nor did they close doors in its face. Stances that were unequivocal include those issued by some countries shortly after Hamas won the legislative elections as follows:

¹⁷ Khalid Fayyad, *Hamas and the Future of Political Developments in Palestine*, unpublished study, the Saudi Ministry of Culture and Information, 2007, p. 15. (in Arabic)

¹⁸ See Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, "Hamas 1987–2005, an Account of an Experience," in Turki al-Dakhil et al., *Harakat Hamas* (Hamas Movement), Book Series 20 (Dubai: Al-Misbar Center for Studies and Research, 2008), p. 67.

- a. The Syrian position saw Hamas's win as a victory for Syria's approach, with Damascus becoming the host of Palestinian legitimacy after being long accused of backing the opposition.
- b. The Qatari position truly welcomed the win, Hamas and Doha maintained warm relations for years.
- c. As for Sudan, the third Arab country to host Hamas, it is not easy for its leadership to ignore its Islamist roots.¹⁹
- d. On the other hand, the positions of Egypt and Jordan regarding the major Palestinian development seemed "cagey," albeit they could not conceal the anxiety they felt. These countries tried to combine their respect for the will of the Palestinian people with their tendency to support President 'Abbas and the leadership of the PLO, as a representative of Palestinian legitimacy. Egypt and Jordan did not abandon their broad and extensive Palestinian involvement, but they could not impose their vision on Hamas's leadership. However, Hamas, for many reasons, could not convince Egypt and Jordan that its new government was a qualitatively new addition to the Arab position, and that the time had come to conduct a real review of Arab policies, as the two sides had no choice but to coexist.
- e. As for the KSA, its relationship with Hamas is marked by overlap and some complexity. The KSA supports the head of the PA, President 'Abbas, and maintains close ties with Egypt (the axis of moderation), and there was always coordination between the two countries (until the end of the Mubarak regime) on various Arab affairs. The KSA also maintains strong ties with the Western powers, especially the US. On the other hand, KSA does not recognize Israel, and has no relations with it, and cannot put pressure on Hamas to accept American-Israeli conditions. It would also find itself in an extremely embarrassing position before Saudi public opinion should it cut off official or popular aid to Hamas in response to American demands, which means that its dealings with Hamas are smoother when compared to other capitals.²⁰

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

²⁰ Zaki Shehab, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

Second: The Arab Determinants of the Relationship with Hamas

Relations between Arab countries and Hamas were like a game of tug of war, despite Hamas's desire for these relations to be warm and friendly. Hamas based its bid on political realism and it sought to achieve the best possible breakthroughs. Meanwhile, official Arab attitudes towards Hamas depended on overlapping factors, including:

1. The nature of the Arab regimes and their ideological and political backgrounds.
2. The geographical distance between these regimes and Palestine, and the geopolitical effect of the Palestinian issue on them.
3. Arab public opinion that must be brought back strongly to the heart of the Palestinian issue.
4. Hamas's ideological rigidity and the significant popular Palestinian support for its policies at home and in the Diaspora.
5. American and European pressure that targets Hamas in the Arab world.

All this has required Hamas to restore the link between Palestine and the Arab sphere, so that Palestine may become a permanent Arab responsibility, and the countries in question seeing that the new Palestinian position is conducive to Arab policies, rather than incompatible with them.

On the other hand, official Arab attitudes vis-à-vis Hamas varied between the following degrees:

1. Completely ignoring its existence, especially during the early phase that followed Hamas's establishment, which corresponded chronologically with the first *Intifadah* in 1987.
2. Accusing it of operating outside the framework of Palestinian legitimacy, with the consequence of thwarting the national Palestinian project and the peace process, which are adopted by the Arab regimes, especially Egypt.
3. Direct and explicit recognition of its strength, and formally inviting it to join the PLO, which is considered the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians.
4. Trying to contain it, weaken it, and marginalize it, especially by backing rival factions, mainly Fatah.

Arab stances towards Hamas differed. Some sought to preoccupy Hamas with side meetings tempting Hamas with promises of restoring relations and ending

tension, while others encouraged advancing some prominent members within it who had different attitudes and visions for a solution. A third faction sought to tie Hamas to a chain of support, trying to convince it of adopting prudence and calm, while a fourth faction adopted cruelty and inflexibility towards Hamas, perhaps to show it what would happen in the event of rebellion or objection.²¹

In the same vein, Hamas's pan-Arab relations underwent the three following historical phases:

First Phase: Between the time Hamas was founded, in December 1987, until late 1990, Hamas did not have official representatives or spokespeople abroad to express its views and platform. During this period, Hamas focused its work and efforts on the Palestinian arena, resisting the occupation, and maintaining the *Intifadah*, in addition to arranging relations with various resistance factions.²²

Second Phase: This began when Hamas appointed Ibrahim Ghushah as its official spokesperson outside Palestine, and when it was represented in the Islamic Popular Delegation comprising the leaders of Islamist movements, which visited Iraq, KSA, Jordan and Iran, shortly before the Gulf War, in January 1991, in an effort to reach a peaceful settlement between Iraq and Kuwait.²³

Hamas, in the aftermath of this crisis, launched itself into the external political and media sphere that now paid attention to the Islamic Resistance Movement, after its balanced attitude on the war had been met with much appreciation by most Arab countries.²⁴

²¹ See Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, "Hamis 1987–2005, an Account of an Experience," p. 87.

²² Yassir Qaddoura, Hamas's Relations in the Arab Region, *Filisteen Almuslima*, December 2007, p. 28. (in Arabic)

²³ 'Imad al-Falujji, *Darb al-Ashwak: Hamas-al-Intifadah-al-Sultah* (The Path of Thorns: Hamas-the Intifadah-the Authority) (Ramallah: Dar al-Shuruq, 2002), p. 70.

²⁴ Faisal Hourani, *Khuburat al-Harakah al-Siyasiyyah al-Filastiniyyah fi al-Qarn al-'Ishreen* (The Experience of the Palestinian Political Movement in the Twentieth Century) (Gaza: the National Center for Studies and Documentation, 2000), p. 422. It can be said that the First Gulf War in 1990/1991 impacted the political conduct of all Islamic movements in the Arab world, including Hamas. Indeed, these movements saw Iraq's invasion of Kuwait as reprehensible, but the invasion of foreign forces of an Arab country is also unacceptable. This attitude was detailed in the book: *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi Zill Azmat al-Khaleej* (The Islamic Movement in Light of the Gulf Crisis), authored by 25 leaders of Islamic movements, published by the United Association for Studies and Research (UASR), Chicago, 1991.

In the 1990s, Hamas's leadership settled in Jordan, with a spokesperson based in Amman, followed by a state of ebb and flow in the relations between the two sides. Hamas also strengthened its ties with Sudan, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Qatar, and Iran, opening both declared and non-declared offices in a number of these countries.

Third Phase: The eruption of the second *Intifadah* in September 2000, which saw a stronger Hamas presence in leading the uprising, with Fatah and the Arab regimes reaching the conclusion that Hamas could no longer be sidestepped when it comes to Palestinian decision making.

Fourth Phase: After the legislative elections in January 2006, with Hamas winning the majority of seats and going on to form the government, new trends in its pan-Arab political relations emerged. Hamas became a major pole in shaping Palestinian-Arab relations, where many factors pushed it in different directions and axes.

In this historical phase in particular, one can speak about the role of Hamas's political bureau abroad, and the tangible, strong support it provided Hamas, securing financial and political support, as well as popular and official backing.²⁵

Third: Hamas's Goals of Its Pan-Arab Relations

1. Expanding the sphere of Arab interest and participation in bearing the burdens of the Palestinian issue.
2. Affirming Hamas's presence in the Arab political arena.
3. Give the Arab parties clear briefings on its views.
4. Achieving political and media engagement, regionally and internationally, and facilitating its political activities in various countries.
5. Achieving convergence between Arab and Hamas's political attitudes.
6. Obtaining official recognition from Arab countries, resolving the problems facing the Palestinians living there, and securing various forms of moral and material support to help them.²⁶

²⁵ *Alittihad* newspaper, Abu Dhabi, 1/3/2006.

²⁶ Jawad al-Hamad and Iyyad al-Barghouthi, *Dirasah fi al-Fikr al-Siyasi li Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah: Hamas: 1987–1996*, p. 287.

Hammas did not seek more than it thought was attainable from its Arab surrounding, because it was aware of the hidden and open aspects of Arab attitudes towards it, and it understood clearly the importance of the Arab factor in determining the legitimacy of the Palestinian regime. Although it was keen on extending its hand to forge strong and serious Arab relations, the real question was: To what extent were the Arab countries serious in engaging Hammas and establishing relations with it? For how long would Hammas have to work to break the thick ice to activate, develop, and strengthen its pan-Arab relations?²⁷

After taking power, Hammas had a number of new interests with the Arab countries, including:

1. Maintaining a stable level of Arab support, especially financial support, in light of American and European threats to suspend aid. This constituted a major early challenge especially as the PA had a near complete reliance on aid and grants. Therefore, it is in its interests not to antagonize any side, but instead to seek to build good relations with everyone.²⁸
2. Strengthening its ties with Damascus, which supported it, welcomed its election win and was a major party in the Refusal Front. The rationale was that this would certainly ease local, regional, and international pressure on Hammas. Hammas also benefited from the presence of influential forces that back the resistance in Lebanon, led by Hizbullah and Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah.
3. Resolving to obtain "Arab legitimacy" after obtaining resistance-based and constitutional legitimacy, so that Hammas may be dealt with without maneuvering or caginess. This required boosting and developing relations.²⁹

To achieve these goals, Hammas set specific policies for its pan-Arab relations, based on the notion that the Palestinian issue is an Arab and Islamic issue, and not

²⁷ Fahmi Huwaidi, Look for the Conspiracy in the Tension Between Hammas and Arab countries, *Al-Khaleej*, 6/2/2006. (in Arabic)

²⁸ Iyyad al-Barghouthi, *Al-Aslamah wa al-Siyasah fi al-Arabi al-Filastiniyyah al-Muhtallah* (Islamization and Politics in the Occupied Palestinian Territories) (Ramallah: Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies, 2003), p. 42.

²⁹ Anwar 'Abdul Hadi Abu Taha, Faisal Darraj, and Jamal Barout, *Al-Ahزاب wa al-Harakat wa al-Jama'at al-Islamiyyah* (Islamic Parties, Movements, and Groups) (Beirut: Arab Center for Strategic Studies, 2000), vol. 1, p. 235.

the concern of the Palestinian people alone, and that the Israeli threat endangers the entire nation, making Arabs responsible before their peoples for supporting the issue. Hamas also realized that it had to take into account the most prominent features of Arab reality, as follows:

1. The state of division, alignment into axes, and polarization dominating the Arab world, since the Second Gulf War and its ongoing negative effects on the policies and attitudes of the Arab countries.
2. The majority of Arab regimes have engaged in the peace process, while governments opposing the peace process are unable to influence things in the direction of an opposite policy, because of the magnitude of international support for the process.
3. The preoccupation of some Arab countries with internal, regional, and international disputes and conflicts, including: Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Algeria, Somalia, and Lebanon, which comes at the expense of combating the Israeli threat and the liberation of Palestine.
4. Weak material capabilities and heavy debts weighing down on many Arab countries.³⁰

Hamas drafted its policies based on the above, seeking to emphasize positive aspects, and limit negative ones, while clinging on to the fundamentals and inalienable rights of the Palestinians, and mobilizing forces to support the steadfastness of the Palestinian people until victory and liberation. Hamas succeeded in obtaining pan-Arab legitimacy, as a crucial step to become a key regional player, though it showed some flexibility in its political discourse and actions on the ground, causing controversy within its ranks over whether its concessions and flexibility were in vain or not.³¹

³⁰ Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarah al-Siyasiyyah*, p. 171.

³¹ Muhammad Jum'a, "Hamas and the Arab Sphere," in Mohseh Mohammad Saleh (ed.), *Qira'at Naqdiyyah fi Tajruba Hamas wa Hukumatih: 2006–2007* (Critical Assessments of the Experience of Hamas & its Government 2006–2007) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations, 2007), p. 84.

Fourth: Obstacles Facing Hamas's Pan-Arab Relations

After Hamas's engagement in governmental and parliamentary political action, its relations with Arab countries faced a number of ideological issues and practical obstacles. Before that phase, its political discourse did not contain "diplomatic terms, accommodating interests, and mandatory formalities."³²

These obstacles and problems may be summarized as follows:

1. The Political And Historical Legacy of the MB Movement

This legacy has had its impact on Hamas's pan-Arab relations, where there are concerns as to the nature of Hamas's ties with the parent movement. Allowing Hamas to operate in certain Arab countries directly and publicly, may serve the platform of the Islamist movements in these countries, something that is inconsistent with the existing political situation. For this reason, it was not easy for these countries to fully open the door to Hamas, even if the latter declared that it would not intervene in their internal affairs.³³

Hamis tried to prove that it was not linked to the Islamist groups in these Arab countries, and ward off the suspicion of seeking to hurt the interests of existing regimes, which in turn considered Hamas an ideological movement inconsistent with their political structure. These regimes are influenced by their longstanding disputes with the MB movement, and need time to change their preconceptions. It was not easy for most Arab countries to feel relieved by Hamas's election victory, with the MB being Hamas's parent movement, which compelled Hamas to never stop for a moment in attempting to improve its situation.³⁴

A number of Arab countries, especially those surrounding Palestine, dealt with Hamas on the basis of their traditional hostility to the Islamists, and fear that the success of Hamas's model may affect their internal situation by strengthening the MB movement. That's why the rising popularity of Hamas and its win in the PLC elections was not welcomed by many Arab countries. However, the requirements

³² Bashir Nafi', The Mecca Agreement is an Indication of the Self-Abilities of Arab Policies, *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, 15/2/2007. (in Arabic)

³³ 'Ali al-Jarbawi, "Hamis, the Muslim Brotherhood's Gateway to Political Legitimacy," p. 72. (in Arabic)

³⁴ Bashir Nafi', *op. cit.*

of Arab action in the Palestinian arena pushed them to avoid open conflict with Hamas. For its part, Hamas sought to reassure Arab countries that it was interested only in the internal Palestinian arena, and that it would not be dragged into the discourse of Islamist movements in the Arab countries, something that was to Hamas's advantage in its pan-Arab dialogues. This was reflected in Egypt and KSA's mediation in Palestinian crises, to reach common ground.³⁵

2. Arab Recognition of the PLO Legitimacy

Hamas's discourse engendered indirect competition with the PLO, by refraining from explicitly recognizing it as the sole representative of the Palestinians. This hampered the expansion of Hamas's relations with Arab regimes because some of them believe that dealing with some of the factions, albeit with limited influence, is easier than dealing with Hamas, the influential group that competes with the PLO.

For years the PLO monopolized control over national struggle, entrenching the PLO in its Arab surrounding, while Palestinian Islamists were absent from political and military action. Hamas clashed with the parties who disapproved its proposal to consider it as an alternative to the PLO, or to recognize it as such.³⁶ However, Hamas, which fully understands this reality, never proposed itself as an alternative and focused on rebuilding the PLO and activating its institutions based on new foundations.

3. Projects of Peace Settlement

Starting with the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, followed by Oslo Accords in 1993, and the Treaty of Peace between The State of Israel and The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (aka Wadi 'Araba) in 1994, and then official and unofficial Arab-Israeli relations, and the spread of normalization, the Arab climate thus gradually moved away from the path and slogans of resistance. Although Hamas sought to revive and build its Arab relations on their bases, it found itself swimming against the tide, for everyone else was going towards a peaceful settlement.³⁷

³⁵ Muhammad al-Sa'id Idris, Hamas, the Arabs, and the Fifth Way, *Al-Khaleej*, 1/7/2007. (in Arabic)

³⁶ Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarah al-Siyasiyyah*, p. 166.

³⁷ 'Ali al-Jarbawi, The Position of the Palestinian Islamic Movements on the Palestinian-Israeli Agreement, *Al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi* newspaper, Amman, February 1994, p. 53. (in Arabic)

Thus, commitment to the liberation of Palestine, and not recognizing the Israeli occupier, remained one of the biggest obstacles facing Hamas's pan-Arab relations. For there was a vast divergence in ideology and platform between Hamas, which rejected any negotiations or recognition of Israel whatsoever the justification or price is, and the Arab regimes engaged in the peace process, and which have made huge steps towards negotiations and recognizing Israel.³⁸

4. The Western Campaign Against Islamic Movements

The campaign accused them of terrorism, cracked down on them and persecuted them, while drying up the sources of their funding. Further adding to Hamas's suffering was the fact that this campaign intensified at the same time as Hamas was growing in strength and influence, with the eruption of the second *Intifadah* in 2000. The attacks of September 2001, and the serious consequences in the aftermath, with Hamas designated as a terror group, deterred many Arab countries from going far in the relationship with Hamas. Even a mere meeting with Hamas became a source of suspicion and perhaps even direct pressure, and the failure to condemn the armed operations carried out by Hamas in the occupied territories became a source of embarrassment vis-à-vis the West in general, and the US in particular.

5. Disentangling Hamas From Iran

With the increasing regional influence of Tehran, and the clamoring of Arab regimes over the "risks of the Shiite crescent," the region appeared to be divided between two axes. Hamas was classed as part of the Iranian-Syrian axis, bearing in mind that Hamas was aware that the challenges of the Palestinian interior required it to steer clear as far as possible from many regional entanglements that could turn its Arab backers against it, lose it their support, or at least, cause it to lose its neutral position.³⁹

As much as Iran bet on using Hamas to boost its regional influence, other Arab parties such as KSA and Egypt sought to disentangle Hamas from Iran, or curb the level of the latter's influence. This was something that Hamas was aware of, dealing with it with realism.⁴⁰

³⁸ Muhammad Jum'a, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³⁹ 'Adnan Abu 'Amer, *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi Qita' Gazzah bayna al-Da'wah wa al-Siyasah*, p. 78.

⁴⁰ Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

Having listed the five obstacles facing Hamas's pan-Arab relations, the following remarks have been noted:

- a. Hamas did not give enough detail about its notion of Arab relations, limiting itself to making references in its Charter in warning of the danger of the Zionist invasion, and calling on Arab countries surrounding Israel to open up their borders to the "*Mujahidin*." Even its electoral program for 2006 did not dedicate a broad space for pan-Arab relations, listing them under the theme of foreign policy and the international community.⁴¹
- b. Visits of Hamas leaders to Arab countries are scarce, whether at the official or popular level, and the same leaders conduct these visits.
- c. There was a failure to establish an organizational structure outside Palestine, and Hamas has only adopted a select number of political and media cadres to act as the equivalent of the basic operations existing inside the occupied territories. This has led to a lack of supply lines that provide the required cadres through the establishment of a normal popular base, and a limited scope to Hamas's administrative and political apparatus abroad. This was addressed later.

Actually, Hamas's commitment not to establish an organization outside Palestine (until 2011) was the subject of much debate. This basic principle was motivated by the need to avoid repeating the experience of the Palestinian factions that managed the affairs of the Palestinians in their host countries, but which soon clashed with the regimes, such as Jordan and Lebanon.⁴² However, the decision of the Guidance Bureau of the MB movement (in November 2011) approving the establishment of a special organization for the Palestinian Muslim Brothers, separate from the organization in the *Bilad al-Sham*, (under which both the Palestinian and Jordanian branches of the MB movement had been united), and merging the Gulf-based offices with the Palestinian MB movement, were a qualitative leap forward in the work of the Hamas movement abroad.

Although Hamas frames the Palestinian issue within an Arab and Islamic framework, to expand the struggle front, it has focused on the popular framework

⁴¹ Change and Reform Bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

⁴² When Hamas settled in Syria in early 2000, it established there organizational structures and activist bases that were nearly tantamount to a full organization comprising political, military, security, and media divisions, constituting a huge burden on Hamas, in terms of both security matters and finances.

and civil society institutions more than official institutions, after most regimes closed their doors in its face. However, Hamas sought to be more effective in building ties with official regimes after its election win, and forming the tenth Palestinian government in 2006, and after facing a series of challenges particularly with the European-American threat to suspend aid and funding to its government in April/ May 2006. The attitudes of those capitals over the election results varied from welcome and support, to reservation, and outright wagering on Hamas's failure. Despite the fact that some countries received Hamas's leaders and responded by providing financial support, they could not (or did not want to) grant the kind of Arab legitimacy to Hamas that backed its positions.

Fifth: The Popular Dimension in Hamas's Pan-Arab Relations

Due to the evolution of Hamas's work experience, and accurate interpretation of reality, its interest in the Arab public, represented by grassroots organizations and political forces, especially Islamic movements, evolved. Indeed, Hamas's perception of this level is different from that of the official level, where its Charter spoke about national and religious groups and Arab associations, urging them to support Hamas and act as a strategic dimension for it at all levels; human, material and media-related.⁴³

The official level has its own set of necessities that Hamas understands and from where it seeks the best available backing for the Palestinian issue, while engaging the regimes to expand this support. The links with the popular level remained open and Hamas sought to develop and be open with them, focusing the majority of its outreach work on it, because certain policies and pressures govern Arab regimes.⁴⁴

Therefore, Hamas drafted a number of general policies regarding its political relations with popular Arab parties, which can be identified as following:

1. Establishing relations with various popular segments, and making sure to win their support and sympathy, without ignoring or neglecting any of them, while accommodating priorities accordance to importance. Furthermore, Hamas is

⁴³ *Charter of Hamas.*

⁴⁴ Anwar 'Abdul-Hadi Abu Taha, Faisal Darraj, and Jamal Barout, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

- keen to mobilize these segments' support for the cause and win their support and sympathy, and enlist their capabilities, each according to its abilities and position.
2. Strengthening its relations with various popular parties, regardless of their ideological or political affiliations, based on the premise that Palestine is a cause that concerns the entire nation, and everyone has the right to contribute in its battle, while giving precedence to Islamist movements and popular associations with an Islamic background.
 3. Avoiding entering into ethnic, regional, and sectarian divisions in the Arab nation, and steering clear of differences related to Islamic jurisprudence in sensitive matters, in contrast to clarity when it comes to its ideological affiliation.
 4. Adopting the just causes of the Arab peoples and movements, standing with righteousness against evil, justice against oppression, and showing solidarity with human principles and human rights. In the event of strong embarrassment and incapacity, Hamas would remain silent, but has never adopted a position that contradicted its principles.⁴⁵
 5. Calling for unity, accord, cooperation, and coordination among various Arab forces and popular associations, and encouraging rapprochement and unity over doing good and reconciliation, while snubbing all forms of division and infighting.⁴⁶
 6. Patience and continuous follow up in mobilizing popular associations and groups, and soliciting the required level of support. Hamas avoided severing ties with them, or overlooking them, because time and persistent efforts were considered necessary to mobilize the energies of the nation to confront the Israeli threat.
 7. Focusing on key leaders, such as senior scholars, intellectuals, journalists, and media figures, because this achieves quicker and bigger gains for Hamas.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ One can talk in detail about Hamas's position on the Arab Spring and its silence regarding them, despite its full support of peoples, and what this cost Hamas in terms of criticism by the regimes, but Hamas realized that stating a clear and explicit position might have a bigger cost.

⁴⁶ 'Abdul Sattar Qassim, Hamas and Orbiting the Arab Regimes, *OnIslam*, 18/3/2007, <http://ww2.onislam.net/arabic/newsanalysis/analysis-opinions/palestine/89083-2007-03-18%2016-57-23.html> (in Arabic)

⁴⁷ 'Abdul Ilah Belkiz, Weakness in the Relations Between the Palestinian Decision With Moving Forward in the Arab Situation, *Al-Akhbar* newspaper, Beirut, 30/10/2006, <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/161160> (in Arabic)

The above is indicative of a high dose of political realism and an intricate engagement in a complex Arab situation, where the popular dimension is one of the most major yet sensitive issues. This was clear from the participation of Hamas's senior figures in popular conferences, meetings, and rallies as key speakers. Hamas also relied on national associations in every country, albeit their functions and celebrations different between one country and another, according to their specific circumstances and internal conditions, while Arab popular support for it differed between one association and another.⁴⁸

Hamás's reliance primarily on the interaction of Islamist movements and popular groups in the Arab countries helped it avoid collision with government policies in those countries. However, it deprived it of the benefits of direct contact and building lasting relationships, especially since many solidarity activities were organized under general slogans such as supporting the resistance of the Palestinian people.⁴⁹

It could be argued that the general reading of Hamas's policies in dealing at the grassroots level, confirms that it has succeeded to a large extent in dealing with the complex situation in the Arab world and its popular environments. Hamas was keen on issuing statements on various Arab events at the grassroots level, and developing active contacts to strengthen its popular relations, given what it can provide in terms of cover and legitimacy. This is while bearing in mind that Hamas's track record in relation to its ties to Arab political parties and movements is rife with messages of support, solidarity, and blessing, especially during fateful events, giving it a fertile ground to strengthen its grassroots Arab relations.⁵⁰

Sixth: The Arab Stances Towards Hamas

The change of positions in Arab policymaking imposed on Hamas and Arab regimes the need to reassess a number of issues. Therefore, it was natural for their relations to develop, exchanging points of view face to face, or having a mutual partial acceptance, at least temporarily.

⁴⁸ *Al-Quds* magazine, Arab Media Center, Cairo, April 2004, p. 16. (in Arabic)

⁴⁹ Khaled Hroub, *Hamás: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasah al-Siyasiyyah*, p. 194.

⁵⁰ Hamas issued many statements directed at the popular Arab level, including: A statement against the sanctions on Libya in 1992, and another in the same year expressing condolences to the Egyptian people following the earthquake that struck Egypt, and many other statements on myriad issues and crises that the Iraqi people was subjected to in 2006.

While Hamas's Arab relations are concerned with four main countries: KSA, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt, the leaders of the movement in GS favor the relationship with Egypt by virtue of geography, history, and social bonds. Hamas leaders in the WB prefer to open up to Jordan for the same reasons. Therefore, it is not surprising that Egypt and Jordan, alongside KSA and Syria, are the linchpins of Arab reality for Hamas.⁵¹

It is worth noting that the Maghreb countries have not received from Hamas the necessary attention and serious keenness to establish relationships and conversely it did not receive from these countries an initiative to establish such relations. Hamas leaders, representatives, and ministers did not visit their capitals as frequently as other Arab capitals, although Hamas has increasingly reached out to Tunisia after its revolution in 2011.

This can be explained by two factors:

1. Hamas, in its pan-Arab relations, focused on the countries surrounding Palestine, as these directly impacted and were impacted by the events and developments of the Palestinian issue, such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.
2. It had been the policy of Maghreb countries to crackdown on and prevent any role by Islamists. In addition, Hamas's experience with these countries is not encouraging, and can be considered a failure, such as with Tunisia and Algeria.

Subsequently, Hamas did not find it necessary to appoint representatives and spokespeople in those countries, also because the latter had strong relations to the PLO. It seems that Hamas did not want to compete with the latter and kept its distance with Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Mauritania. At the same time, it is worth bearing in mind that the grassroots level in these countries deserves attention from the movement, especially in light of the activities there supporting the Palestinians in general, and Hamas in particular. Furthermore, Maghreb governments, at the official level, have a long record of positions in support of the Palestinian issue.

To elaborate further, it is necessary to look at the most important axes of Hamas's pan-Arab relations with the following countries:

⁵¹ 'Adnan Melhem, Hamas: A Reading of Its Organizational, Ideological, and Political Instruments, *Al-Ayyam*, 21/2/2006. (in Arabic)

1. Relations with Egypt

This is the most important and largest Arab state that has a political, military, and demographic weight, with a long record in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is politically obvious for Hamas to pursue ties with Egypt, owing to their inescapable bonds of Arabism, Islam, language, history, and geography. Regardless of any disputes between Egypt and Hamas, Egypt can never sever ties completely with Hamas, because this would mean losing its “paternal” role, and its ability to influence the Palestinian situation.⁵² While Hamas is aware that Egypt is not just a name, a number, or a geographical expanse, and is nothing fleeting, and a national necessity for the Palestinians, relations between the two sides have regularly been “lukewarm.” In truth, this is not a special case in the history of their relationship, as relations between them have been lackluster in most cases, and always accompanied by mutual suspicion. Relations between Hamas and Egypt have thus always vacillated.

Egypt realized that its national security extends to GS, where a “mysterious”—in the Egyptian view—Islamist project is growing, and that getting there necessitates a direct relationship with Hamas, even when disputes with it reach a dramatic level. Conversely, the deputy head of Hamas’s political bureau Musa Abu Marzuq confirmed that relations with Egypt are not governed by temporary current circumstances, because they are much bigger than that.⁵³

For this reason, Hamas’s positions in dealing with Egypt have been flexible and dynamic. It was keen on maintaining smooth ties with Egypt, even during the worst circumstances during the Israeli war on GS. It sought to take advantage of common ground with Egypt to reassure the latter, while being responsible towards Palestinian and Egyptian interests. Meanwhile, Cairo sought to systematically and cautiously keep Hamas in check, by maintaining a margin of relationship that allowed Egypt to influence the Palestinian groups, developing into a form of assimilation and “taming.” For this reason, Egypt sought to maintain good ties with Hamas.⁵⁴

⁵² Hasan Naf’ah, Egypt and Hamas... and the Need for a New Formulation of the Bases of the Relationship, *Al-Hayat*, 27/12/2006. (in Arabic)

⁵³ ‘Ali Badawan, Egypt, Hamas, and the Problems in Their Relations, *Aljazeera.net*, 6/11/2009, <http://bit.ly/2nCILrs> (in Arabic)

⁵⁴ Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, Egypt and Hamas... the Nature of the Relationship and Its Progression, *Aljazeera.net*, 15/1/2009, <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/B4CB7A98-CB61-44C3-A2AE-465AEC8EAC13.htm> (in Arabic)

As Hamas continued to impose political facts on the ground in the 1967 occupied territories, especially after *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, this had a positive reflection in Cairo, giving Hamas a prestigious position that it had not enjoyed before, with Hamas's delegates receiving repeated invitations for talks in Egypt. This is a position that even major Islamic groups like the MB movement did not attain (until 2011).⁵⁵

Egypt's relation with Hamas was based on a variety of factors, including:

- a. Perceiving the Palestinian issue from the standpoint of Egypt's regional and pan-Arab role.
- b. Commitment to the peace process with Israel, which further tips the balance of power in Israel's favor.
- c. Discomfort for dealing with an MB-affiliated group, yet being compelled to do so given Hamas's popularity and performance.
- d. Awareness of Israel's desire to dump the burden of managing the GS on Egypt's shoulders, and the threat this poses on the future Palestinian state.
- e. No matter how sharp the dispute between Hamas and Egypt might be, the latter's massive human and material resources keeps Egypt an asset for the Palestinian issue, and an acceptable and indispensable umbrella for the oversight of internal Palestinian relations.⁵⁶

The previous factors continued to govern the relationship with Egypt until the eruption of the revolution of 25 January 2011. Egypt then entered a phase of changes and fluctuations, whose repercussions continue to interact by the time of writing. The period that followed the ouster of the regime of Hosni Mubarak, during which the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took power, witnessed a relative improvement in relations between the regime and Hamas, resulting from the climate of the revolution that was supportive of Palestinian rights and resistance, and hostile to Israel. Furthermore, the subsequent victory of the Islamists (specifically the MB movement) in the legislative and presidential elections gave impetus to the relationship with Hamas. The period during which

⁵⁵ Mohammad Yaghi and David Schenker, Hamas-Egyptian Relations Deteriorate, site of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2/1/2009, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hamas-egyptian-relations-deteriorate>

⁵⁶ Information Department, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *Misr wa Hamas* (Egypt and Hamas), Information Report (7) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations, 2009), p. 45.

Muhammad Morsi was president, between 30/6/2012 until a military coup toppled him on 3/7/2013, saw a marked improvement in official relations with Hamas. In addition, Egypt began receiving Hamas leaders, and holding broad-based grassroots events supporting resistance and the Palestinian issue in coordination with Hamas and affiliated activists.

The Egyptian presidency faced real difficulties in implementing its programs on the ground. It encountered a wave of obstruction because of the non-cooperation of the “Deep State” holding on to the institutions of the government, and the judiciary’s obstruction of the legislative institution... However, the presidency and the government supported GS and the Hamas government during the Israeli aggression in November 2012, and adopted Hamas’s demands to end the aggression and the blockade. The Egyptian prime minister visited GS during the war, while the Egyptian government organized a visit of a number of foreign ministers to GS. Restrictions at the Rafah Crossing were reduced from the Egyptian side, and Hamas convened its central council, electing new leaders, in the Spring of 2013 with the consent of the Egyptian leadership.

However, the military coup sought to rearrange the situation in Egypt in a way that uproots or marginalizes “political Islam” and decimate the MB movement, which was designated as a terror group. Subsequently, Egypt’s government adopted a hostile position towards Hamas, closing its doors in its face. It tightened the GS blockade and destroyed tunnels leading to it. The Egyptian judiciary issued a politicized ruling, banning Hamas’s activities in Egypt and confiscating its assets. Hamas, especially after the coup, came under fierce attacks in the media, rife with unsubstantiated allegations. Nevertheless, because of their frequency and intensity, without Hamas being given the chance to respond, the media campaign painted a dark and distorted image of Hamas among ordinary Egyptians.

Nevertheless, stability in Egypt will encourage more moderate policies towards Hamas, if the Egyptian regime wants to restore its central role in the Palestinian issue, and deal reasonably with the main parties in the Palestinian political equation, of which Hamas is a key component.

2. Relations with Syria

Several factors played a key role in the development and continuation of the relationship between the two parties, including:

- a. The existence of common denominators between them, such as non-recognition of Israel.
- b. Accord over the resistance as a strategic choice, and the right of the Palestinian people to resist occupation, while refusing to designate this as “terrorism.”
- c. Syria refused to participate in the Sharm el-Sheikh conference, held in March 1996, attended by more than 30 countries, and which launched an international campaign against the Palestinian resistance.

In 1995, Damascus received Musa Abu Marzuq, the head of Hamas’s political bureau at the time, and Engineer ‘Imad al-‘Alami, member of the political bureau, after their expulsion from Jordan. Damascus did this again in 1999, when it received four Hamas leaders, led by Khalid Mish‘al, head of the political bureau, after being deported by the Jordanian authorities. Hamas’s conduct helped smooth relations with Syria, as it adopted a transparent and straightforward attitude, and refrained from interfering in Syria’s internal affairs or attack Damascus when it held direct talks with Israel. Nevertheless, Hamas has clearly expressed its position opposed to the negotiations, and perhaps something that has helped strengthen relations between Syria and Hamas is that the former did not put pressure on the latter to recognize Israel.⁵⁷

In late 2005, Khalid Mish‘al expressed the relationship with Syria by saying that the latter has powerful allies. For it became clear that the real motive of US policy towards Syria was to punish it for its nationalistic positions opposed to US and Zionist policies in Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq, and subdue it into subscribing to US policies, plans, and priorities in the region. Mish‘al pointed out that the resistance forces in Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq, stood alongside Syria, in the trench of resistance, steadfastness, and defiance. He added that Syria was not alone in the battle, they are all with Syria, and they will not allow anyone to singe out and attack Syria or any of the parties of the extended front of resistance and defiance.⁵⁸

Hamas overcame a number of pitfalls in its relationship with Syria, most notably the fact that it is an Islamic group affiliated to the MB movement, which

⁵⁷ Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (Washington: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 136.

⁵⁸ Radwan al-Sayyid, Hamas, the Arabs, and the Future, *Almustaqbal* newspaper, Beirut, 3/2/2006. (in Arabic)

fought a bloody conflict with the Syrian regime in the early 1980s. Then, the manifestations of its growing alliance with Damascus began taking various forms, including:

- a. Syria became the semi-permanent headquarters of Hamas's leadership, after it was expelled from Jordan.
- b. It welcomed the victory of Hamas in the legislative elections, with President Bashar al-Assad saying that the victory would ease the pressure on Syria.
- c. It received a number of officials and ministers from the Hamas government in the GS, most notably Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah, and Interior and Foreign Ministers Sa'id Siyam and Mahmud al-Zahhar.
- d. Syria promised to provide financial and logistical support to the Palestinian government, raise the level of diplomatic representation, and grant entry to holders of PA passports into its territory, while admitting 400 Palestinians who were stranded on the Syrian-Iraqi border.⁵⁹

Observers have split the characterization of the Hamas-Syria relationship as follows:

- a. Calling it a relationship of subordination and dependence. But Hamas is convinced that these accusations are based on illogical arguments and false premises. They are intended to claim that Hamas is subservient to external parties to discredit its patriotism by claiming that Hamas is a proxy of the Syrian regime. This prompted its former representative in Damascus 'Imad al-'Alami to say, "Hamas's vision is clear. The international attitudes hostile to Hamas are not on account of its relations with Syria, but rather its refusal to recognize Israel, its rejection of the agreements signed with it, and its adherence to the path of jihad and obstruction of the Oslo Accords and the Roadmap."
- b. Placing both Hamas and Syria in the same box as one strategic political alliance. Indeed, while Hamas found in Syria a geographical political incubator when other capitals closed their doors, Syria benefited from a close relationship with Hamas, for demonstrating that it is concerned with the Palestinian issue from pan-Arab and national perspectives. Thus, reaping many popular, Arab, and Islamic gains. In the context of its conflict with Israel, Syria benefited from

⁵⁹ Raafat Murrah, Hamas and Iran and Syria.. Interests in Tense Climates, in Turki al-Dakhil et al., *Harakat Hamas* (Hamas Movement), Book Series 20 (Dubai: Al-Misbar Center for Studies and Research, 2008).

supporting Hamas by improving its political position against Israeli greed and threats, in a way that befitted its geopolitical and historical position.⁶⁰

- c. A strategic relationship based on objectivity, mutual interests, and equilibrium based on common denominators.

As proof of the latter characterization, there have been substantial differences in the positions of Hamas and Syria, including:

- a. Hamas opposed the Syrian approach, which sees peace with Israel as a strategic choice, and which accepts recognition of Israel up to signing a peace agreement with it. It also accepts a final Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, as part of the official Arab vision of the conflict. But Hamas's vision is based on ending the conflict after Palestine is liberated, from the River to the Sea.
- b. Hamas to this date has not recognized the Arab Peace Initiative adopted at the Arab Summit in Beirut in March/ April 2002. This is contrary to the Syrian view, which adopted the Arab position, up until the Annapolis meeting in the US in 2007.
- c. The views of Hamas and Syria over the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 diverged. Syria took part alongside the US and Western powers in the same alliance, when the US fleets came to strike the Iraqi army. Even though Hamas opposed the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, its position stemmed from its care for the nation's strengths and to prevent internal Arab differences.
- d. The two sides had different positions over the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Hamas saw that the US invasion weakened the nation and targeted the entire region, while the Syrians focused on removing the threat represented by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Damascus's historic enemy in the region.⁶¹

This prompted Israeli researcher Anat Kurz to say that Hamas is first and foremost a national Palestinian movement, and any excessive rapprochement with Syria could cause it to lose its solid position in the Palestinian arena. For his part,

⁶⁰ Salman Salman, The Confused Relationship Between Hamas and Syria, site of the Green Corner, 9/9/2011, http://www.grenc.com/show_article_main.cfm?id=23837 (in Arabic)

⁶¹ Shakir al-Jawhari, What's Behind the Developments in the Ties Between Damascus and Washington?, site of Al-Safsaf, 17/9/2006, <http://www.safsaf.org/01-09-06news/articels+news/shakerjuhari.htm> (in Arabic)

former Israeli intelligence operative Amos Gilboa questioned claims about Hamas's subservience to Syria, saying that Hamas had maintained its independence, and that its program had completely contradicted that of Syria.⁶²

On the other hand, Syria has had to pay exorbitant prices for its relationship with Hamas, as follows:

- a. After the outbreak of the second *Intifadah* in September 2000, there was a dramatic increase in "self-immolation"⁶³ operations carried out by the Palestinian resistance forces within the 1948 Palestinian territories, which were led by Hamas. Israel stepped up its threats against Syria, holding it responsible for harboring the leaders of Palestinian organizations. It claimed that the orders to carry out resistance operations came from Damascus.
- b. In a clear bid to put pressure on Syria, Israel carried out airstrikes there, in response to its support and protection of Hamas. Israel also assassinated 'Ezzedeen al-Sheikh Khalil, one of Hamas's key military officials, in Syria.
- c. American and European threats and pressure on Syria increased. In May 2003, then-US Secretary of State Collin Powell visited Damascus to demand the closure of Hamas's offices there.
- d. Demands amounting to more than an international resolution were issued to boycott Syria over several issues, including supporting Hamas. Then US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice criticized Syria, saying that Syria was not just a problem for Iraq, but also for Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. She stepped up her belligerent rhetoric against Damascus, calling it to end its support for Islamic militants who want to destroy the peace process in the Middle East, as she claimed, if Syria wanted to avoid becoming isolated.⁶⁴

The tension in the relationship between Hamas and Syria, on the one hand, and the US, on the other, increased, as the Israeli threats to wage a new war in the region escalated, and the siege and isolation imposed on Hamas and Syria

⁶² *Haaretz*, 22/12/2009.

⁶³ The overwhelming majority of Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims consider these operations to be "martyrdom operations" while most Israelis and western writers and media describe them as "suicide operations." We used the word "self-immolation" in this report to be as neutral as possible. However, such terms may need more discussion.

⁶⁴ Jamil al-Nemri, A Humanitarian Initiative Opens a Political Window... Why Not?, *Alghad*, 25/7/2011. (in Arabic)

were tightened. Thus, both sides found that their interests still lie in mutual understanding, cooperation and coordination, with the lack of any sign of change in Western attitudes towards Syria.⁶⁵

The uprising in Syria in March 2011 disrupted relations between Hamas and the Syrian regime. Hamas is a popular movement that expresses what the Arab and Muslim person aspires to, whether freedom, integrity or liberty. At the same time, no one can deny what the Syrian state had offered the Palestinian resistance in general, and Hamas in particular in the form of logistic and political protection. Syria had represented the resistance forces' position, especially during the war on GS. But, despite that, Hamas considered that the depth of its relationship with Syrian regime must not undermine the strength of its relationship with the Syrian people, who were a great example of nationalism and defense of the Palestinian issue, and who supported resistance to liberate the Arab land. Hamas is still convinced that whether the Assad regime survives or overthrown, the Palestinian issue will remain in the Syrian conscience.

For this reason, Hamas dealt with extreme caution with the Syrian issue, and was keen to have a balanced attitude towards it. In general, Hamas's position was in short that while it appreciated for the Syrian regime its reception and support of the resistance line, Hamas also supports the right of the Syrian people to express their free will, and establish the political system that truly represents their aspirations. Hamas also condemned the security crackdown and massacres against the Syrian people, while rejecting foreign intervention. In the first few months of the revolution, Hamas leaders made concerted efforts to mediate towards resolving the crisis, away from foreign intervention and military and security approaches. However, the regime insisted on pressing ahead with the security crackdown against the opposition. Hamas refused for the regime to exploit its presence to suggest it was under its wing or that it backed its actions. For this reason, Hamas began a gradual exit from Syria without antagonizing the regime, a few months after the revolution began in Syria. Hamas's exit was completed nearly with the exit of Khalid Mish'al from Damascus in January 2012.

⁶⁵ Hamas's Relationship with Syria, Why?, site of Shabakat Filastin li al-Hiwar (The Palestine Dialogue Forum), 3/2/2003, <http://www.paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=7423> (in Arabic)

Practically speaking, Hamas's links to the Syrian regime were cut since that time, and Hamas faced the ire of the Syrian regime, Iran, and Hizbullah as a result. There were also accusations that Hamas fighters were taking part in the Syrian revolution against the regime. However, Hamas has always maintained its non-interference in Syria's internal affairs, and that any Hamas affiliated fighters were there individually and not under orders from the movement.

Hamis opted to pay a heavy price for leaving Syria, for the sake of preserving its principles and convictions that peoples have the right to attain their freedoms and build the political system that represents them. Hamas lost its logistical base and headquarters. Its leaders became scattered in Qatar, Lebanon, Egypt, and Turkey, and it lost most of Iran's support. It paid the price of its attitudes before it received any fruits from the "Arab Spring," which reinforces the credibility of Hamas and its genuine belonging to its nation and the aspiration of its peoples.

3. Relations with Jordan⁶⁶

Jordan is one of the most vulnerable Arab countries to the twists and turns of the Palestinian issue, and to Israeli pressure and American pressure, especially after the distance between the Jordanian perspective and the American vision narrowed. However, Jordan's policies towards Hamas in most cases reflected the balance of power in the Arab region. When Jordan found that Egypt, KSA, and Syria cohesively faced US pressure, it was difficult for it to pursue a different policy alone. Furthermore, the Islamic movement in Jordan, represented by the MB movement, played a prominent role in protecting Hamas and its political positions, before the historical decision to expel Hamas from the country.⁶⁷

The most significant historical development in the relations between the two, is what happened with Khalid Mish'al in 1997, when Israel tried to poison him in revenge for his involvement in activities hostile to Israel. Jordan under King Hussein threatened to cut ties with Israel, forcing the latter to provide the

⁶⁶ Perhaps the book "*Kill Khalid*," by Canadian journalist Paul McGeough, provided the best diagnosis of the relationship between Hamas and Jordan, especially when he tackled the attempt to assassinate Khalid Mish'al in Amman, see *Uqtul Khalid: 'Amaliyyat al-Musad al-Fashilah li Ightiyal Khalid Mish'al wa Su'ud Hamas* (Kill Khalid: The Failed Mossad Assassination of Khalid Mishal and the Rise of Hamas) (Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, Inc., 2009), pp. 181–199.

⁶⁷ Muhammad Khalid al-Az'ar, Hamas and the Arabs... A Relationship on the Edge of a Sword, *Al Bayan*, 30/6/2007. (in Arabic)

antidote to save his life. Israel also released Hamas's leader Sheikh Ahmad Yasin in exchange for the release of the two Mossad agents who tried to poison Mish'al, and were returned to Israel.⁶⁸

Without delving deep into the details of historical developments, and the states of tension and semi-estrangement that has surrounded the relationship between the two sides, Hamas was not the only one benefiting from the previous dynamic in the relationship with the Jordanian government, because the latter also benefited. Therefore, it was not in its interests to squander all that it had gained from its relationship with Hamas.⁶⁹

At the same time, there are a number of obstacles that could hinder the restoration of the Hamas-Jordan relationship to its previous state, including:

- a. Jordan's sponsorship of the peace process between the Palestinians and the Israelis, at the behest of the US, with a view to giving Jordan a regional role as post-Mubarak Egypt finds itself preoccupied with putting its house in order, despite its success in brokering the prisoner exchange deal between Israel and Hamas.
- b. The attempt to contain Hamas according to the new regional post-Arab Spring era, specifically the post-Syrian regime phase, and in light of US and regional wagers that by losing the alliance with Damascus, Hamas might be forced to engage in the peace process.
- c. Warm relations between Jordan and the PA, show the depth of Amman's involvement in rearranging the Palestinian arena, using Hamas as a bargaining chip in its battle against the Israeli proposal regarding Jordan as an alternative homeland for the Palestinians, and countering the Islamist rise at home. All these calculations pushed Jordan to seek to open a new chapter with Hamas, dealing with it in the logic of calculations and interests.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ahmad Mansur, *Sheikh Ahmad Yasin: Shahid 'ala 'Asr al-Intifadah* (Sheikh Ahmad Yasin: A Witness to the Age of Intifadah) (Cairo: Modern Egyptian Bureau, 2004). The book's episodes were broadcasted on Al Jazeera Channel in April and May 1999. The eight episodes are available on <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/3FFE7011-6735-40DB-968A-8F8F2B78C4BE> (in Arabic)

⁶⁹ Khalid Thouwaib, *The Relationship Between Hamas and Jordan 1987–2007*, p. 142. (in Arabic)

⁷⁰ 'Umar Kayid, *Hamas and Jordan.. Calculations and Interests*, site of Elaph.com, 15/1/2012, <http://www.elaph.com/Web/opinion/2012/1/709371.html> (in Arabic)

Jordanian and Palestinian voices arguing for the need to restore relations between Jordan and Hamas on a strategic basis imposed by mutual interests, never stopped. These were in light of pressing developments, most notably:

- a. The developments of the Arab Spring.
- b. Strong and influential Turkish presence in the region.
- c. The failure of the peace process, and persistent Israeli intransigence.⁷¹
- d. The emergence of a significant change in the regional balance of power and influence in the Middle East, and the effects of global economic conditions.
- e. The presence of Hamas as a political force with considerable popular presence in the WB and GS, and what it was able to establish on the ground as a governing body in the GS since 2007.
- f. The growing crisis in the ranks of the Fatah movement, its decline, and the weakness of its influence in GS.⁷²

What makes the relationship between Jordan and Hamas even more important is their inability to develop strategies alone for dealing with the Palestinian issue, away from the other party and without consensus on common denominators. For this reason, it is not in the interest of Jordan to marginalize or be hostile to Hamas given the amount of common ground they share.

Therefore, maintaining the state of estrangement between the two that has been ongoing since 1999 would be harmful to Jordan's interests, and the Palestinian issue as well. It must be noted here that the nature of Hamas's political program, and its vision of the conflict with Israel fulfill Jordan's interests. It rejects the alternative homeland and the transfer of Palestinians into its territory, and any other solution that would take place at the expense of its strategic interests, and

⁷¹ Since the issuance of the Charter in 1988 and until the moment of writing, Hamas's position did not differ much in the rejection of peaceful solutions despite multiple demands by various parties for Hamas to accept it. With regard to negotiations with Israel, Hamas still rejects it, albeit its position shifted from one based on principle, religious considerations, and ideology, to one that focuses on political infeasibility. Thabet al-'Ammour, *Mustaqbal al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah fi Filastin.. Hamas Namudhajan* (The Future of the Islamic Resistance in Palestine... The Hamas Model) (Cairo: Arab Media Center, 2009), p. 220.

⁷² Rami Melhem, Towards a Strategic Relationship Between Jordan and Hamas... an exploratory study, *Alarab Alyawm* newspaper, Amman, 30/10/2011. (in Arabic)

would pose a threat to its future, stability and order. Restoring the relationship would also serve Jordan's political and security goals.⁷³

On the other hand, Hamas has great popularity among Jordanians, and the regime ought to be interested in understanding and keeping up with popular attitudes in the country, especially as Hamas was never at odds with Jordan, or interfered with its internal affairs, albeit there are some reservations, though they can be overcome.

The future relationship between Jordan and Hamas could follow one of the following scenarios:

a. Developing a Strategic Relationship: In a way that achieves and furthers their mutual strategic interests. There are several factors that this scenario relies upon, most notably:

- Hamas's ability to maintain the stability of Palestinians in Jordan, and maintain its representative position among them.
- Achieving breakthroughs in its international and pan-Arab relations in favor of its program, and changing Jordan's old negative perception of Hamas.
- The possibility of mutual openness, the seriousness of dialogue to make progress for stable relations, overlooking minor mistakes, and prioritizing the most important interests.⁷⁴

b. Reaching Interim Understandings: which constitutes a low ceiling for the size, nature, and style of relationship between them, within current dynamics and political developments, in light of intersections in political vision, and especially with regard to the issues of an alternative homeland and the right of return.

c. Communication Over Interests: The minimum reasonable level of the relationship between the two should be engaging in dialogue and consultation on issues of mutual interests.

d. Steering Clear of Differences: based on respect between two parties having joint interests. At the very least, this would maintain a relationship that respects the other, and understand its decisions, avoiding friction and confrontation, or to

⁷³ Milestones in the History of the Relation Between Hamas and Jordan, Aljazeera.net, 14/6/2001, <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/archive/archive?ArchiveId=10346> (in Arabic)

⁷⁴ Muhannad Mabideen, Dialogue with Hamas and the Urgency of Change, *Alghad*, 25/7/2011. (in Arabic)

entering into axes or establishing relations that harm the interests of the other. It may show bias in favor of a rival party for one of the two sides, such as with Jordan supporting Fatah, the PA, and the PLO.

e. Failure and Hostility: This would be one of the most dangerous directions to pursue, because it would fail to emphasize shared interests, and could encourage parties to go towards the worst option, namely, enmity and rivalry. This would be the same recipe for the relationship that has continued for a length of time, where the above was the main characteristic of their relationship. This is despite the Jordanian conviction that it is not conducive to Amman's interests, reputation, and internal stability to go too far in boycotting a national liberation movement like Hamas, given the respect and popular support it has among Arab and Islamic parties, and the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples.⁷⁵

Hamas-Jordan relations have witnessed positive development, particularly since the Arab change and uprisings in 2011. Jordanian Prime Minister 'Awni al-Khasawneh admitted that alienating Hamas was a "political and constitutional mistake," and that Jordan's relation with all Palestinian factions must be normal, whether with the PA or Hamas.⁷⁶ A Hamas delegation headed by Khalid Mish'al formally visited Jordan and met with the King on 29/1/2012, which ended a 12-year official political boycott. Yet, this openness remained limited and was slow and cold. It became colder still after the military coup in Egypt, the attempts to marginalize "political Islam" in the region, and the diminishing force of the popular Jordanian protest movement. Thus, the year 2014 came without Hamas having any declared activity in Jordan.

4. Relations with Lebanon

In the 1970s and 1980s, Lebanon was the site of a fierce civil war between various Lebanese sects, in which the Palestinians became entangled for a variety of reasons. This forced Hamas to be cautious in its Lebanese relations, and mindful of not being drawn into internal Lebanese crises, which tend to be open-ended.

⁷⁵ Muhammad Abu Rumman, The Crisis Between Jordan and Hamas: Its Dimensions and Consequences, Aljazeera.net, 25/4/2006, <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/00548C78-FD89-42C7-9C4D-A0356F3401E6.htm> (in Arabic)

⁷⁶ *Assabeel*, 1 and 3/11/2011.

Hamas maintained an official presence in Lebanon early on, with the end of the 1980s, specifically in 1989, when Israel expelled a number of its leaders to south Lebanon. There, they intermingled with the Palestinians living in Lebanon, forging strong relationships with the various Palestinian and Lebanese factions.

Israel soon deported more than 400 of the movement’s leaders in mid-December 1992. While the bulk of them returned later to WB and GS, a number of them remained in Lebanon, and began to establish an infrastructure for the movement, attracting Palestinians in Lebanon. Hamas managed to establish relations that can be said to be, at the very least, “satisfactory,” with Lebanese factions of various ideological, political, and sectarian affiliations. Its meetings with the representatives of the Lebanese government and political forces focused on the following important issues:

- a. Safeguarding the right of return for Palestine refugees in Lebanon.
- b. Safeguarding peace, security, and stability in Lebanon.
- c. The future of Palestinian weapons through Palestinian-Lebanese accord, as part of a comprehensive political framework.⁷⁷

In Lebanon, where internal conflict regularly deteriorates dramatically, because of sectarian differences and sensitivities, Hamas managed to stay at the same distance with all sides, yet made it clear that it was on the side of the resistance to confront US-Israeli plan in the region. Hamas kept the lines of communication open with both the opposition and the government, and contributed to fortifying the internal arena against Lebanese-Palestinian conflict that could pose a real threat to civil peace in the country.⁷⁸

Hamas in Lebanon also made a serious and responsible step in conveying the demands of the Palestinian refugees there and their suffering to the Lebanese government. It was committed to make the Lebanese-Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC) succeed, in order to advance relations between the two peoples and support the rights of the refugees, up to enacting laws that allow the latter to work and own property. Hamas also sought to remind the Lebanese government of its responsibility to Nahr al-Bared Refugee Camp, and of providing the necessary

⁷⁷ Interview with Usamah Hamdan, PIC, 8/10/2010,

<http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/hamas/hewar/2005/7amdan05.htm> (in Arabic)

⁷⁸ *Al-Hayat*, 26/10/2006.

funds for its reconstruction, as well as removing the militarized buffer zone around it. Hamas also asked the Lebanese government to recognize official PA documents, to facilitate for Palestinian refugees the registration of births and deaths, as well as residence papers for their spouses or children born in the PA areas.⁷⁹

Seventh: Hamas and the Arab Spring

Hamis watched the popular uprisings in late 2010 and early 2011 closely. Hamas sensed that it would definitely be affected by these uprisings, because the rivalry that marked its relations with most Arab regimes did not apply to populations and it had maintained its position among them.

Hamis was affected by the Arab Spring through the so-called “power of the model,” with Islamists winning landslide victories, especially in the elections of Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. This bolstered Hamas, and gave it an opportunity to benefit from the success of the Islamists in the Arab region, since their victory created a good climate for the launching of a comprehensive and contiguous Islamist project of which the GS could be part. This could be a project in the Arab region that would be sufficient to defeat Israel.⁸⁰

Some political figures in Hamas even felt relieved after the Arab uprisings and the transformations in the region, most notably the ouster of the previous Egyptian regime that was hostile to the Palestinian group, worked constantly to undermine its rule, and tried to crush Hamas in collaboration with Israel and the PA.

The ousted Egyptian regime had a key role in the siege of GS, and in the aggression on it in 2008/2009. This regime thus became the equivalent of a heavy boulder obstructing Hamas’s path and undercutting its achievements, and posing a real threat to its existence. So when this regime was removed, Hamas felt more flexibility and mobility was now possible.

Regarding the change in Tunisia, Hamas felt this was in its interest, because Tunisia under Zein al-‘Abideen Bin ‘Ali had all but banned Islamists, and dealt with Hamas with apathy as though it did not exist. Bin ‘Ali’s regime was the one

⁷⁹ *Al-‘Awda* magazine, Beirut, January 2012, p. 24.

⁸⁰ Mohammad Hijazi, Hamas and the Arab Spring, and the Bases of Political Partnership, *Assafir*, 18/2/2012. (in Arabic)

to neglect Hamas the most, and throughout his tenure, no Hamas leader set foot in Tunisia. Even during the harshest times, there was no official contact between Bin ‘Ali’s regime and Hamas, such as during the war on GS. But today (After the Tunisian revolution and the ouster of Bin ‘Ali), Tunisia has received Hamas with open arms, welcoming its leaders on its soil. The Tunisians have also proven to be among the most pro-Palestinian, pro-resistance peoples.

As regards the Gaddafi regime, Hamas saw it as extremely fickle when it came to the Palestinian issue, confusing its national calculations. He did not deal with it with a clear vision, and had many demands and complicated psychological considerations, making him a heavy burden on the resistance and the Palestinian issue as a whole.

After the success of the revolution in Libya, Hamas hoped that Libya would establish a regime that supported Palestinian resistance and deal with it positively. It also hoped that it would represent an important strategic depth, especially that since day one, it had raised slogans supporting the rights of the Palestinians to liberate the land and determine their fate. Some Libyan revolutionary brigades had even Palestinian names.

Hamas hoped that the “Arab Spring” would produce a new regional order different from the previous one which would create a climate that supported the Palestinian movement and greatly influence the Palestinian issue. This would open the door wide for Hamas to engage in this new order in an effective and positive manner. The preliminary indications prior to the military coup in Egypt inched towards forming a nurturing regional environment for Hamas in the near future, slowly ending its political isolation. Thus integrating it as a movement with a popular resistant extension on the one hand, and as a representative of the Palestinian people emanating from the ballot boxes, on the other hand.⁸¹

Meanwhile, the new Arab regimes began raising the level of their engagement with Hamas, dealing positively with its government in GS, and extending a helping hand to rebuild infrastructure and boost the economy there. These regimes also supported Hamas against the Israeli aggression and siege, for example during the historic visits of the Arab foreign ministers at the height of the war on GS in late 2012.

⁸¹ Ibrahim al-Madhoun, Hamas and the Arab Spring, site of Filastin Alaam, 19/12/2011, <http://paltimes.net/details/news> (in Arabic)

In the first two years, Hamas thought that the new Arab order would open its closed doors before it, and that it might see a real breakthrough in its relationship with the West, over issues like recognition, improving its role in any future arrangements, and removing it from “terrorist” lists. For it was no longer possible to continue “vetoing” Hamas when the MB movement or “political Islam” was being welcomed in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Morocco. But the counter attack against the “Arab Spring” which reached its peak with the military coup in Egypt on 3/7/2013, made Hamas less hopeful about the future. The suffering of the movement increased when the military state in Egypt insisted on strangling GS and destroying the tunnels concurrently with the Israeli siege. All of this was in tandem with a fierce media campaign against Hamas, launched by the Egyptians and some Gulf related media outlets.

In general, Arab conditions are unstable, where some Arab regimes are still forming. They are witnessing a conflict between the public’s aspiration, the will of tyrannical regimes and foreign intervention.

Eighth: Hamas’s Popular Relations

1. The Islamic National Conference and the Conference of Arab Parties

Hamas sought to be an integral part of these conferences and their regular summits and press communiqués. This was been reflected in the major situations experienced by the movement, during military confrontations with Israel, the siege imposed on it and during elections.

This effort reached such an advanced degree that the Islamic National Conference named its seventh session held in the Lebanese capital Beirut on 5–6/2/2009 “The Gaza Session,” and saluted the people of GS for their patience and sacrifice, and the historical victory of their resistance in the war waged by Israel in late 2008 and early 2009 on GS.⁸²

In its statements, the Islamic National Conference also consistently sent warm salutes to the heroic resistance in GS, especially Hamas and other armed factions, which thwarted the objectives of the “US-International conspiracy,” and fought

⁸² *Al-Hayat*, 11/2/2009.

the “Zionist army” and stopped it from invading Gaza, dealing it an unprecedented military failure on the “land of free Palestine.”⁸³

Hamis’s efforts with the organizers of these conferences succeeded in enlisting their help to break the siege of GS and open all border crossings, especially the Rafah crossing, without conditions or Israeli dictates, continue sending ships to Gaza carrying building and other materials, and adopt the idea of a Popular Congress to support GS, opening its membership to all international supporters.

2. Normalization Campaigns

Hamis believes that the most dangerous project for the Palestinian issue, in addition to peace accords with Israel, involves Israeli efforts to boost normalization with the Arab peoples, and not just governments, of which many did not sever ties with Tel Aviv, even after the second *Intifadah*, whether these ties are overt or covert. But what Israel wants goes beyond events, meetings, and covert economic exchanges, because it wants normalization to wipe out “anti-Israel hatred,” which increased during the *al-Aqsa Intifadah*.⁸⁴

Hamis called on the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to shoulder their responsibilities and stop the bid by some Arab and Muslim countries for normalization with Israel. It expressed its surprise at the PA’s weak position on the matter, for normalization with the enemy undermines the resistance of the Palestinian people. Hamis cautioned that everyone must realize the danger normalization poses to the Palestinian people, and demanded resolute actions and decisions against it.

During its participation in popular Arab and Islamic anti-normalization events, it pointed out that experience has shown that all diplomatic ties and normalization with the enemy have not benefited any Arab or Muslim country, but that they harmed the Palestinian issue and the interests of the Palestinian people. Hamis expressed its surprise over these normalization trends, at a time when Palestinian land remains under occupation, Palestinian prisoners remain incarcerated, and all forms of aggression continue to be visited upon the Palestinians.⁸⁵

⁸³ Final Communiqué of the 2009 Seventh Session of the Islamic National Conference, Beirut, 5–6/2/2009, <http://www.islamicnational.org/Home/material.php?id=314&s=1> (in Arabic)

⁸⁴ Yasir al-Za’atra, Hamas and Arab Normalization, *Addustour*, 2/12/2007. (in Arabic)

⁸⁵ *Al-Risalah*, 17/10/2005.

3. Campaigns to Break the Siege

From the first moment following its victory in the legislative elections in early 2006, Hamas saw that the international embargo imposed on the Palestinians was an unjust measure subject to Israeli pressure. Hamas thus encouraged Palestinian, Arab, and international campaigns to break the siege amid international silence over the blockade, and the intensifying humanitarian suffering of over 1.5 million Palestinians who live in GS.

Hamas kept pace with the early beginnings of international solidarity campaigns, which later on would organize land and sea convoys to break the siege, rejecting Israel's collective punishment, and shedding light on the Gazans' suffering, while trying to ease it by bringing in aid. Hamas was interested primarily in receiving land solidarity convoys, as the most successful way to arrive to GS and bring in aid. However, maritime convoys were better able to shed political and media light on the blockade, especially as they included parliamentarians and political figures from a large number of countries around the world.

Although campaigns to break the siege did not all succeed in reaching GS, they were able to make several achievements, benefiting Hamas greatly, as follows:

- a. Rejecting Israel's collective punishment policy against GS, expressing solidarity with them, removing any ethical and political legitimacy for the blockade, and rejecting official international silence over it.
- b. Exposing the magnitude of Israel's violations against the Palestinians and the extent of its disregard for international law.
- c. Establishing a coordinated campaign of solidarity with the Palestinians in GS, and the Palestinian issue as a whole, through the broad participation of solidarity activists from all around the world.
- d. Bringing in quantities of relief, food, and medical aid and supplies sorely needed by GS.⁸⁶

Thus, being the party politically targeted by the blockade, Hamas welcomed the attempts to break the siege, and sought to benefit from them politically and in the media. It contributed to exposing the suffering of the Gazans and the ugliness

⁸⁶ Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, "Attempts to Break the Siege on Gaza... To Where?," Strategic Assessment series (37), September 2011, www.alzaytouna.net/permalink/4348.html (in Arabic)

of the Israeli collective punishment. Hamas also supported and encouraged these attempts, where its high-level figures honored solidarity activists reaching GS.

4. Hamas and Charity Work

Hamas, since its inception, sought to reach out to social institutions, within its strategy to reach out to the masses. It benefited from the financial support provided by Arab official and non-official sources, to build a complex network of welfare institutions focusing on many areas, such as health, education, and kindergartens. They provided a highly organized and effective alternative to governmental institutions, providing low cost high quality services, while focusing on educational and behavioral aspects that promoted the Islamic and national spirit.

In its relations with donor Arab, Islamic, and international institutions, Hamas sought to make charities and popular donations a key method for spreading out in society. Thus, establishing kindergartens, schools, libraries, blood banks, and clinics, as well as vocational training centers for women and sports club, not to mention collecting donations and charity to help the needy and expand the activities of charitable groups.

Hamas also focused in its appeals for funding and aid from those official and popular institutions on building clinics and daily shelters providing free meals, as well as on providing assistance to repair thousands of homes in the refugee camps damaged as a result of storms and Israeli demolitions. This is addition to establishing funds to help poor students complete their studies in and outside Palestine, and offering urgent assistance to families that suffer from calamities such as bombardment of homes, or the detention of their sole breadwinner, leaving a good impact on people's hearts and minds.

Conclusion

This study did not focus on narrating the history of Hamas's pan-Arab relations and their developments over the past years, but chose instead to shed light on their foundations and on evaluating their future. This is especially important after Hamas's position shifted from the opposition in the Palestinian political system to being power, even if only on part of the Palestinian territories in GS.

The study confirmed that Hamas has expressed its vision of its relations with Arab official and popular parties, explaining the foundations and Hamas's bid to establish good, strong and sound relations with all sides, thus hoping these parties would side with the Palestinian people in confronting the Israeli occupation. At the same time, Hamas was careful not to interfere in these countries' affairs, seeking to improve relations with important actors vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue, without having to pay prices like abandoning core beliefs, principles, ideas, and rights.

The climate of change and uprisings in the Arab world continues to cast its shadow on Hamas's relations with the Arab regimes. The state of flux and instability continues to impose itself in the region, creating opportunities and broad horizons for Hamas, but also new challenges and dangers, such as the ones that started to emerge in the aftermath of the military coup in Egypt.

Chapter Nine

Hamas and the Muslim World *Case Studies of Turkey and Iran*

Prof. Dr. Talal 'Atrissi

Hamas and the Muslim World

Case Studies of Turkey and Iran

Introduction

The announcement of Hamas's launch in 1987 as an Islamic resistance movement fighting against the Israeli occupation coincided with the first Palestinian *Intifadah*. This *Intifadah* would last around seven years, and through its participation, Hamas gained prominence and a reputation for effectiveness. However, events did not take place in a vacuum and we cannot ignore the influence of the Arab and Muslim world on the Palestinian issue. Hamas would thus attempt to forge ties across the Arab world, though it was not in its best shape during that period. Indeed, it was a period of unrest and apprehension in most Arab and Muslim countries, and the wager on a political settlement to the Palestinian question had grown following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which drove out the PLO and Palestinian fighters from the country.

During that period, the Iraqi-Iranian war, which broke out in 1980, was still raging for its seventh year. Arab-Iranian relations had deteriorated severely because of that conflict. A year after the founding of Hamas, in 1988, Syrian-Turkish tensions escalated, because of Syria's sheltering of the leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan—PKK*) Abdullah Öcalan. Turkey even mobilized its troops along the Syrian border, before the two countries managed to reach a settlement. During the same period, Turkish-Israeli relations developed from mutual visits to joint military and economic cooperation. It may not be a coincidence at all that the Turkish President Turgut Özal, in the same period, called for building a "Water for Peace" project, where Israel and Arab countries would share water resources with Turkey. In 1987, Israel was still occupying large parts of southern Lebanon and the western Beqaa', in spite of its partial withdrawal in 1985.

Not far from Iran and Turkey, Afghanistan in 1987 had already been under a seven-year old Soviet occupation, and its people were fighting to repel the invaders. Strikingly, Muslim youths from Arab and Muslim countries, including even Palestinians, flocked to fight in Afghanistan. Afghanistan took all the

limelight, and the “*jihad*” called by many Arab and Islamic media outlets was a call to fight the Soviets.

The establishment of Hamas was declared in 1987, in this Arab-Islamic environment, preoccupied with the Soviet invasion, the Iraq-Iran war, and Syrian-Turkish brinksmanship, as well as Iranian-Saudi tensions and evolving Turkish-Israeli ties. In other words, there was nothing in this regional environment that allowed Hamas to receive the proper attention it needed in its early days.

But the ability of the *Intifadah* to continue and be sustained, despite all the Israeli pressure, and the prominent role Hamas played in it, would transform the Islamic Resistance Movement into a major Palestinian actor, and at the center of pan-Arab and pan-Islamic attention. This would allow it later to forge ties with most Muslim and Arab countries. But the nature of these relations would differ between one country and another, and so would the support Hamas would receive from them, depending on the attitudes of a given country on the conflict with Israel, resistance movements, and the *Intifadah*.

The doors to regional regimes would not stay closed in Hamas’s face. In 1988, the Iraq-Iran war ended, and the normalization of Arab-Iranian relations ensued. The Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1988, after which the Afghans began a bitter internal conflict over power. In Lebanon, from 1988 onwards, a significant new phase of resistance against Israeli occupation began.

Since its inception, Hamas faced the effects of important strategic shifts in Arab and Muslim countries, especially the Madrid Peace Conference, which sought to turn the page not only on the *Intifadah*, but the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole. After the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in early August 1990, and the ensuing international drive to push Iraq out of Kuwait by force (Operation Desert Storm), the US convened the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, to “solve the Palestinian question and end the Arab-Israeli conflict.” Washington and Europe rallied support for the conference from various Arab and Muslim countries, where most of them would participate in its sessions... For this reason, Hamas faced a tough equation from the outset: its need for support and backing from its Arab-Islamic surrounding versus its fears that these countries would recognize the enemy and end the conflict. As a result, Hamas sought to express its desire for independence on the one hand, but also its need for support and backing on the other, through its founding document, which states:

1. Hamas seeks to establish contact with various Arab and Islamic stakeholders (countries, organizations, parties, and individuals) and establish positive relations with them, regardless of their orientations, or ideological, political, sectarian, or ethnic affiliations, to encourage them to do their duty towards the Palestinian people and support their just cause. Hamas is keen on sustaining relations and contacts with various Arab and Islamic stakeholders, as long as they serve the Palestinian cause.
2. Hamas does not interfere in the internal affairs of Arab and Muslim countries, but refuses at the same time for these countries to interfere in its own policies, attitudes, and affairs.
3. Hamas has no battle to fight with any Arab or Islamic party. For this reason, it does not adopt a policy of attacking any Arab or Islamic side, but instead expresses objectively and in a way that is compliant with the ethics of Islam in criticizing various sides and their attitudes toward the conflict with Israel.
4. Hamas considers Palestine the first and foremost battlefield with the Israeli enemy, and is keen on not taking the battle outside occupied Palestine. However, it does not denounce any military action against the Israeli occupation launched from any place outside of Palestine.
5. Hamas explains to various stakeholders that the aim of its relations with them is to find support for its work against the Israeli occupation, and that they are not aimed against any regime or organization.
6. Hamas calls for unity among the Arab and Muslim countries, blesses all related efforts that serve the interests of these countries, as well as the Palestinian issue, and attempts to help reconcile disputes.
7. Hamas looks with apprehension at the emergence of conflicting alliances and axes among the Arab and Muslim countries, and refuses to be part of any of them.
8. Hamas seeks to find balance in its political relations with the Arab and Muslim countries, and refuses for them to be at the expense of any other Arab or Islamic party.¹

Based on this founding political-ideological vision, Hamas worked to forge relations with various Arab and Muslim countries.

¹ Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasah al-Siyasiyyah*; and Hamas Charter, see site of OnIslam, documents and statements, <http://www.onislam.net> (in Arabic)

First: Hamas and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

This organization, which was rebranded as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on 28/6/2011, did not have any special relations with Hamas or any other resistance movement. The OIC, as regards the conflict with Israel, rejected any Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, denounced Israeli policies that obstructed negotiations with the Palestinians, and called for the establishment of a Palestinian state. However, the OIC at the same time reflected the attitudes of the political regimes of its member states, and not the peoples of these states. Consequently, the OIC generally backed the strategy of peace with Israel, and was more consistent with the positions of moderate Arab countries. These states also adopt the notion of establishing a Palestinian state in the WB and GS, in return for recognizing and normalizing relations with Israel. When negotiations stop or the Israelis continue the construction of settlements, the OIC addresses the US and the international community to pressure Israel to stop or to return to negotiations. In other words, the OIC does not call for resistance in the face of Israeli intransigence.

For this reason, with the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, the OIC issued a statement of clear support and “reassurance by the ongoing peace process to achieve a just peace based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338... with an emphasis on the unconditional withdrawal to pre-1967 borders, and the respect of the principle of land for peace.” In another example the OIC, during an emergency meeting held in Malaysia, called on the US to withdraw its support from then-Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s plan to withdraw from GS, saying that it “damaged the peace process.” The call was made in the final statement of an emergency meeting that brought together 13 out of 57 members of the OIC at the request of the PA, after then-US President George W. Bush backed the disengagement plan where the Israeli army would unilaterally withdraw from GS.

Then, Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, whose country was holding the OIC presidency, stated that the US president’s support for Sharon’s plan for unilateral disengagement was regrettable, and was incompatible with the roadmap for peace. He said that the US must play the role of an “honest broker.”² When Saudi King ‘Abdullah met with then Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf,

² *Almustaqbal*, 23/4/2004.

following Hamas's victory in the Palestinian general election, they said that they hoped "Hamas would form a government that works to advance peace."³

When Malaysia welcomed Hamas's victory in the elections, it stated that the goal for peace in the Middle East could only be achieved through dialogue and negotiations.⁴ Even Afghan President Hamid Karzai, when he in turn welcomed Hamas's victory, said that statements that cast doubt on Israel's right to exist are not in the interest of the Palestinian people. Karzai advised Hamas to deal with Israel as "a nation and a people." He said that Afghanistan wants a sovereign Palestinian state, but it fully recognizes the right of Israel to exist as a state representing a nation, stressing that Afghanistan sees this a matter of principle. The Afghan president did not rule out establishing diplomatic relations with Israel.⁵

The representatives of the OIC do not separate their keenness on achieving Palestinian reconciliation and achieving peace with Israel. When Indonesian Foreign Minister Hasan Wirajuda wanted an end to the fighting between Fatah and Hamas, he said that he was making efforts with other Western mediators to persuade the Islamic Resistance Movement to participate with a high-level delegation in an international conference in Jakarta. It was dedicated to pushing Hamas towards more moderate positions close to international conditions, with the idea that Indonesia is a moderate Islamic country and it would push Hamas toward more moderation.⁶

The OIC did not issue statements supporting resistance operations, in effect, the OIC rejected "martyrdom operations"⁷ carried out by Hamas and other Palestinian factions, such as the one Hamas orchestrated in Jerusalem. OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu wrote on the organization's website that he felt concerned

³ *Al-Hayat*, 3/2/2006.

⁴ Malaysian National News Agency-Bernama, 27/1/2006, <http://www.bernama.com/arabic/v2/> (in Arabic)

⁵ *Addustour*, 28/1/2006.

⁶ *Al-Hayat*, 1/2/2007.

⁷ The overwhelming majority of Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims consider these operations to be "martyrdom operations" while most Israelis and western writers and media describe them as "suicide operations." We used the word "self-immolation" in this report to be as neutral as possible. However, such terms may need more discussion.

by the killing of (Israeli) students in West Jerusalem.⁸ A Hamas spokesman responded, on 8/3/2008, by expressing his deep resentment of these statements as they provided a pretext for the occupation to justify its crimes, and called on Arabs and Muslims to continue to support the cause of the Palestinian people.⁹

The OIC supported dialogue between Fatah and Hamas, encouraging reconciliation between them, and tried to play a direct role in this effort. The OIC secretary general called for ending strife and for holding a national Palestinian dialogue, and also appealed to all Palestinian factions to deal positively with Mahmud ‘Abbas’s call for dialogue. But the OIC rejected calls for sending international troops to GS to prevent infighting. The OIC secretary general stated that what was required was not an external force but the promotion of understanding between internal forces.¹⁰

The secretary general of the OIC also mediated between Fatah and Hamas, as tension and armed clashes between the two sides escalated in GS. He made several visits to Arab and Muslim countries for this purpose. Ihsanoğlu also visited GS and WB, and met with officials from Fatah and Hamas... After that visit, the OIC published the terms of the “truce agreement” between Fatah and Hamas, which included three items: comprehensive de-escalation in the Palestinian territories; the withdrawal of all armed manifestations and an end to protests; and the formation of an independent judicial committee. The OIC called for the resumption of national dialogue between all factions, especially Fatah and Hamas, without any preconditions. The statement said that the Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas and Prime Minister Isma‘il Haniyyah had agreed for the OIC and its Secretary General to play a key role in the implementation of this agreement and the achievement of its objectives. The OIC condemned all acts of violence in the GS and WB, no matter which party was responsible for them.¹¹

In the context of the OIC’s bid to broker dialogue between Fatah and Hamas, the President of Senegal and the OIC Chairman Abdoulaye Wade called for hosting delegates from Fatah and Hamas to start a fraternal dialogue. According to the

⁸ Al Arabiya news, 7/3/2008; and *Asharq Alawsat*, 8/3/2008.

⁹ *Al-Hayat*, 9/3/2008.

¹⁰ *Asharq Alawsat*, 15/6/2007.

¹¹ *Al-Khaleej*, 28/6/2007.

spokesperson for the Senegalese president, the first phase of the dialogue would be intra-Palestinian, while the second would involve peace talks with Israel.¹² After the Israeli assault on GS, the OIC Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu visited GS, and met with officials from Hamas, “in a message of solidarity with the people of Gaza.”¹³

The foreign ministers of seven Muslim countries—KSA, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Indonesia, and Malaysia, at the invitation of Pakistan—met to endorse the “Mecca Agreement” between Fatah and Hamas, and discuss Muslim world issues, especially the Palestinian issue. Diplomats familiar with what took place behind the scenes said that the summit was designed to support the Mecca Agreement, persuade the US to work on the resumption of the peace process, and pressure Hamas to accept the conditions of the Middle East Quartet to resolve the conflict.¹⁴

Therefore, it is possible to say that the most prominent relationship Hamas had with some member states of the OIC included Turkey and Iran. While Hamas’s ties to other member states were strictly within the framework of the OIC, ranging from visits, gestures of solidarity, attempts at mediation, or opposition to Israeli assaults. Hamas’s relationship with Turkey and Iran had a different political and strategic nature, given the role these two countries play in the Middle East, and given their different strategies regarding the Palestinian issue and Israel, and the means of confrontation with the latter.

Second: Hamas and Turkey

Since the creation of the state of Israel, Turkey has established full diplomatic ties with it, and has not aided the Palestinian people against the Israeli occupation. Rather, Turkey and its neighbor Iran were part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) strategy to counter and limit Soviet influence in the Middle East. This alliance favored the establishment of Israel and defended the latter. Enunciated by David Ben-Gurion, the “periphery doctrine,” as a strategic approach to the Middle East, derived from the perception that Israel was surrounded by a

¹² *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 8/6/2006.

¹³ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 16/3/2009.

¹⁴ *Assafir*, 22/7/2007.

wall of Arab states. Accordingly, Israel set out to establish relations with supportive countries, like Turkey and Iran, on the periphery of these states.¹⁵ This means that in line with its Western alliance and its secular military junta, Turkey sided with Israeli policies. But a gradual change in the policies of “Islamic” Turkey began in the mid-1990s, after the leader of the Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) Necmettin Erbakan came to power in 1996. This would later pave the way for a different Turkish approach to the issues of the Muslim world, led by the Palestinian question. Later on, this would develop into direct ties between the ruling Islamic party the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi—AKP*) and Hamas.

The AKP was founded on 14/8/2001, after splitting from the Islamic Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*) and its leader Necmettin Erbakan. The AKP took power in 2002. The party classes itself as a moderate conservative party, not hostile to the West and adopting the free market economic model, it seeks Turkey’s accession to the European Union (EU). The AKP is keen not to use religious slogans in its political discourse.¹⁶ Perhaps this is due to the AKP’s acceptance of the secular state and its founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and its unwillingness to provoke the army and the military, “the protector of the Constitution and secularism” in Turkey.

The AKP wanted Turkey to have an active and influential role in the region. This was the gist of the thesis advanced by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, in his famous book “The Strategic Depth.”¹⁷ Davutoğlu emphasized Turkey’s ability to strengthen relations with the leaders of countries in the region and their peoples through a “zero problem policy with neighbors,” allowing Turkey to play an active role in its surroundings and turn into a central country that everyone needs.

¹⁵ Yossi Alpher, “Israel’s Troubled Relationship with Turkey and Iran: The “Periphery” Dimension,” site of Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution–NOREF, 20/12/2010, p. 2, http://peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/69654c7bac7e39cea38bb20c7ea7efd5.pdf

¹⁶ Information Department, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *Turkya wa al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah* (Turkey and the Palestinian Issue), Information Report (17) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Center for Studies and Consultations, 2010), pp. 32–33.

¹⁷ Ahmet Davutoglu, *Al-'Umq al-Istratiji, Mauqi' Turkya wa Dawruha fi al-Saha al-Duwaliyyah* (The Strategic Depth, Turkey’s Position and Role in the International Arena) (Qatar: Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2010).

This new strategic direction for Turkey towards the Arab and Muslim surrounding would allow the AKP to play new roles vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue. These roles would become the subject of much interest for the region's governments, and of hope for their peoples, political forces, and resistance movements. Thus under the AKP, especially from 2006 onwards, there was broad popular Turkish participation in solidarity with and support for the Palestinian people, from fundraising, to protests against assaults on GS following the capture of Gilad Shalit in late June 2006, and then the resignation of a group of Turkish MPs from the Turkey-Israel Interparliamentary Friendship Group.¹⁸

1. The Determinants of Turkish Policy Towards Hamas

The main determinants of Turkish policy toward Hamas, and toward the question of Palestine in general, under the AKP, can be summarized as follows:

- a. Responding to the sentiment of Islamic belonging, heritage, and the popular will of the Turkish people in supporting the Palestinian issue. Consequently, this means supporting the political and humanitarian issues related to Palestine and rallying broad segments of pro-Palestinian anti-Israeli Turks.
- b. The Islamic and conservative background of the party, provided that this does not adversely affect its program and internal conditions, or its regional and international ties.
- c. Dealing with the issue of Palestine as the gateway to the issues of the Arab region and the Middle East, to play an active role in the regional environment around Turkey.
- d. Adopting a gradual approach, whereby the ability of the ruling party to provide support and adopt political stances is commensurate with its internal strength and resilience.
- e. Turkey's membership in the US-led NATO, and taking into account the desire of the ruling party in Turkey to accede into the EU, and therefore not exceeding the ceiling of policies or red lines that could lead to a crisis in the relations with these powers.
- f. Turkey's official relations with Israel, economic, political and military ties. A gradual approach is therefore needed to scale back or dismantle the relationship, or to take strong positions towards Israel, without shaking up the status of the ruling party internally, or putting it in direct confrontation with the West.

¹⁸ Information Department, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *Turkya wa al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah*, p. 33.

g. The AKP is aware that it has to operate under a secular political system, in an environment governed by democracy and the ballot box, and that it has many rivals on the domestic scene, and that the Western world has various modes of influence through which it can defeat the AKP an elections by distorting its image or fabricating crises. Thus, the AKP has to take into account the terms of the political game, the robustness of the front, and its popular base.

Accordingly, the AKP would adhere to the general Arab and Islamic ceiling in supporting the peace process in Palestine, back the Arab peace initiative, and refrain from engaging in open support for the Palestinian resistance or openly defy Western powers and Israel. Instead, the AKP would stick to the “gray area,” and would gradually raise its ceiling by as much as its internal, regional, and international position allows. However, the AKP would remain far below the open Iranian ceiling in support of the Palestinian resistance, and calling for the dismantlement of the state of Israel.

2. Support for Hamas’s Legitimacy

Despite the shifts in Turkey’s foreign policy toward the Arab-Islamic arena, and growing Turkish interest in the Palestinian question under the AKP, there have been no direct relations between the latter, which has been in power since 2002, and Hamas, except after the latter won in the general election in January 2006. Turkey thus established early contacts with Hamas, despite Western and Israeli objections. The government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s official position was to call for dialogue with Hamas and for its inclusion to political and diplomatic efforts to find a solution to the Palestinian issue.

On 28/3/2006, two months after the Palestinian general election, the Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement urging “the international community to adopt an unprejudiced approach towards the new Hamas-led Palestinian government and called for it to be offered the opportunity to fulfill its responsibilities.” The statement hoped that “the Palestinian government will address the urgent problems on its agenda with a sense of responsibility and in a constructive manner and that violence and bloodshed in the region will come to an end.”¹⁹

¹⁹ *Hürriyet Daily News* newspaper, Istanbul, 31/3/2006, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/ankara-urges-giving-a-chance-to-hamas-led-govt.aspx?pageID=438&n=ankara-urges-giving-a-chance-to-hamas-led-gov8217t-2006-03-31>

In March 2006, Khalid Mish'al was invited to visit Ankara for talks with senior officials at the Turkish Foreign Ministry. His delegation, which included Usamah Hamdan, the representative of the movement in Lebanon, met with Turkey's Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül. In an interview with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 2/2/2006, he said, "Hamas won the Palestinian election and we must respect the decision of the Palestinian people..." Turkey saw that one of the most important conditions for the success of Turkish mediation between the Palestinians and Israel is inclusion of all Palestinian forces, including Hamas, which won a majority of parliamentary seats.

On 12/5/2010, President Gül reiterated that because Hamas had won the elections they could not be ignored.²⁰ To emphasize Turkey's recognition of Hamas's popularity and legitimacy and influence, and in order to give Hamas a place in the peace process, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu met with Hamas's political bureau chief Khalid Mish'al in Damascus on 23/7/2010. Turkey continued to defend Hamas as a political movement and not a terrorist movement; Erdoğan stated, "Hamas are resistance fighters who are struggling to defend their land. They have won an election," and "I have told this to US officials... I do not accept Hamas as a terrorist organization. I think the same today. They are defending their land."²¹

3. Supporting the Peace Process and the Inclusion of Hamas in it

Despite Turkey's support for the Palestinian people, and its denunciation of Israeli assaults on this people, the leaders of the AKP do not reject the principle of negotiations and peaceful settlement between the Palestinians and Israelis. At state level, Turkey would choose the peace process, and AKP leaders would work on achieving balance in the country's relations with the Israelis and the Palestinians.

When Abdullah Gül, the Turkish foreign minister, visited the headquarters the PA in Ramallah on 4/1/2005, he said that the methods used by Israel against the Palestinian people... will not bring security and comfort for it. Gül added that Israel should arrange the withdrawal from GS with the PA, and place it in the context of the implementation of the Road Map, as this would represent a serious chance to relaunch the peace process and return to the negotiating table, noting

²⁰ *Asharq Alawsat*, 13/5/2010.

²¹ Hamas is not terrorist group: Turkey's Erdogan, site of Al Arabiya English, 4/6/2010, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/06/04/110434.html>

that Turkey was ready to help both sides in order to reach a peace agreement.²² For Gül, the “only way” to achieve peace would be a comprehensive agreement based on co-existence between the states of Palestine and Israel, while reaching a peace agreement in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council and the UN is the ideal solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict.²³

Through this vision of Turkey, which emphasizes the priority of peace and negotiation to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan believes that it is not possible to achieve this peace without the involvement of Hamas as a key party in the equation. In other words, Erdoğan wants Hamas to be a partner in the negotiation process, after receiving the recognition of Israel and the US. Erdoğan announced this on 15/6/2005 after his meeting with the US Envoy to the Middle East, George Mitchell.²⁴

Hamas’s victory in PLC elections on 25/1/2006 did not alter the main features of Turkish policy regarding the priority of peace and negotiations. Instead, this victory encouraged the Turkish government to defend the legitimacy of Hamas’s participation in the peace process and in the negotiations over this process, in return for Hamas’s renouncement of armed resistance. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a few weeks after Hamas’s victory, declared that he had discussed with Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf a joint initiative, in which the OIC would take up a role, mediating between Israel and the Palestinians. The most important thing about this initiative, which Erdoğan planned with the Pakistani president, came from the bid to explain to Hamas that its non-recognition of Israel will not help in this process. In return for recognizing Israel, the latter must not declare that it would not recognize the results of the elections or Hamas in the government. Erdoğan did not stop at that, but addressed Hamas directly, saying that Hamas must leave violent tactics in the past. They must enter a new world with a new outlook, now that they have practically become part of the government. Then, in what appeared to be a kind of congruence with PA discourse, Erdoğan stressed that arms should be solely in the hands of the armed forces of any country. He said that in this regard, he was convinced that Hamas would move toward the center,

²² Information Department, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *Turkya wa al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah*, p. 36.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

because extremism would not help in anything, and this applied to Israel as well. Erdoğan then called for distinguishing Hamas now from Hamas of yesterday.²⁵

The declared AKP policy wanted Hamas to move away from violence and to recognize Israel to achieve peace in the Middle East. For this reason, when the AKP-led government's welcoming of a Hamas delegation to visit Ankara on 16/2/2006, sparked controversy and objection in the corridors of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Erdoğan defended the visit by saying that Ankara was seeking a greater role in the Middle East. Erdoğan said that Turkey could not sit idly by, and that Turkish officials had told Hamas's delegation the position of the international community regarding the need to abandon violence and recognize Israel. He said that they had sent the right message at the right time.²⁶

Following the Israeli assault on GS in late 2008 and early 2009, Turkey re-stressed that its vision for a solution was identical to the Arab peace initiative, which would lead to a Palestinian state. This was expressed explicitly by Abdullah Gül, who said that they supported the Arab peace initiative, and they believe it is the best solution to the problems of the region.²⁷ Erdoğan stressed that he was not biased in favor of Hamas when he criticized strongly the Israeli government for its war on GS. He said that those who think that Ankara is with Hamas against Israel are mistaken... Turkey wants peace.²⁸ Prior to that, Foreign Minister Ali Babacan called on Hamas, only a month after the GS war, to pursue a peaceful policy to achieve its objectives, rather than armed struggle.²⁹

The Turkish condemnation of the Israeli aggression on GS and the unjust siege did not change the stated Turkish strategy of pursuing peace. Therefore, when Turkey presented its vision for a ceasefire through a political initiative, the Turkish *Sabah* newspaper reported on 3/1/2009 that the initiative would see an immediate ceasefire in GS, prepare the ground for the resumption of peace negotiations through the deployment of peacekeeping forces in GS, and restore the truce between Hamas and Israel.³⁰

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁷ *Assafir*, 6/2/2009.

²⁸ *Asharq Alawsat*, 15/2/2009.

²⁹ *Addustour*, 28/1/2009.

³⁰ Muhammad Nouredine, "The Bases of Turkish Policy Towards the Palestinian Issue," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, issue 82, Spring 2010, p. 46. (in Arabic)

Turkey's calls for Hamas to engage in the political process continued even after the Israeli aggression on GS. These calls even became more explicit and overt after that aggression. Spokesman of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Burak Özügergin stated that "Ankara believed that Hamas was at a crossroads and must choose between taking up arms and engaging in the political process." Babacan had told the Turkish newspaper *Milliyet* and other 'papers on 27/1/2009, "Hamas must clearly specify its position regarding the conflict in the Middle East. Hamas must decide whether it wants to be an armed group or a political movement. Our proposal is for Hamas to operate within the framework of the Palestinian political system."³¹

In the same context, some reports indicated that there was a two-stage Turkish plan to address the situation in GS after the Israeli assault:

- a. Achieve a cease-fire, with international peacekeepers with the participation of Turkish and Arab forces.
- b. Achieve accord among the Palestinian factions in preparation for peace talks with Israel.³²

When Erdoğan attended as a guest in the regular session of the 22nd Arab summit, which was held in the Libyan city of Sirte on 27–28/3/2010, he said that one of the most crucial problems that require speedy solutions in our region, is the Palestinian problem... Today, the international community faces a difficult, new test in reviving the peace process... the responsibility of the parties at this stage is to give peace an honest chance....³³

Even when Ankara's relations with Tel Aviv deteriorated, following the Israeli raid on the Mavi Marmara boat, killing nine Turkish activists, with Israel rejecting Turkey's demand to apologize for the massacre, Erdoğan saw that the problem was the aggressiveness of the Israeli government, rather than with the Israelis themselves. He said:

³¹ *Asharq Alawsat*, 18/1/2009.

³² *The Daily Star* newspaper, Beirut, 16/2/2009.

³³ Information Department, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *Turkya wa al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah*, p. 38.

We have always been in a historical friendship and collaboration with the Israeli and Jewish people... [But] to make an operation on a civil ship, even the capture of the passengers is itself a crime. Attacking innocent people with arms, to shed blood, and to massacre is clearly state terrorism.³⁴

Contrary to the prevailing impressions that Turkey, after its dispute with Israel, moved to become completely at odds with Israel and on the side of the “Refusal Front,” it maintained its relationship with Hamas within sensitive calculations, which do not seek to sever the relationship with Israel completely, or enter into conflict with the US and Europe. Turkish Deputy Prime Minister and AKP leader, Hüseyin Çelik, flatly rejected alignment with Hamas in an interview with the Turkish newspaper *Milliyet*, “because we are protecting the Palestinian People. The name could be Hamas or the PLO.”

On the other hand, some believe that Hamas’s relations with Turkey have evolved considerably, with the Turkish perception of Hamas being a favorable one; indeed, Hamas [until 2010] was received seven times in Istanbul, establishing multiple contacts with the government. For this reason, no one should expect the Turks to oppose the vision of Hamas or its policies. Many Hamas and MB movement meetings in Istanbul reveal the efforts of the AKP to link the participants in those meetings with Turkey, which shows that all those people belong to what is politically known as the “new Muslim world,” which seeks to confront Israel and oppose its policies and presence in the Middle East.

4. Supporting Hamas Against Aggression and the Blockade

AKP leaders stood repeatedly against Israeli practices in GS or in other cities and condemned Israeli attacks. Turkey denounced the assassination of Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, founder of Hamas, who was assassinated by Israel in 2004, calling it “a terrorist act” and the Israeli policy in GS “state-terrorism.”³⁵ But even under the rule of the AKP, Turkey remained cautious in declaring its support to the resistance against Israel.

³⁴ Full Text of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Speech on Israel’s Attack on Aid Flotilla, site of Dissident Voice, 2/6/2010, <http://dissidentvoice.org/2010/06/full-text-of-recep-tayyip-erdogans-speech-on-israels-attack-on-aid-flotilla/>

³⁵ *Alghad*, 25/7/2007.

After the 2006 PLC elections and the 2007 Hamas's takeover of GS, It became the main force in the strip, pitted against the PA led by Mahmud 'Abbas in Ramallah. It was now difficult for any country dealing with the Palestinian issue, the peace process, or the negotiations, to ignore Hamas. The latter had become key "player" whose views and reservations had to be heeded and taken into account, whether in the internal Palestinian equation, or in the conflict or negotiations with Israel.

The positions of the ruling AKP vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue became more pronounced following Israel's imposition of its blockade on GS. It called for its abolition repeatedly. The AKP also denounced the Israeli assault on GS in the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009, and the "crimes" the Israeli army committed during the conflict. With Turkey's strategy of "zero problems," the Turkish role became acceptable to all sides, not just Hamas, which doesn't reject any support from any Arab or Muslim country to begin with, but also from Israel itself. Especially so since Turkey, through its relations with Hamas, would convey the latter's views to international and Western parties.³⁶

Erdoğan held Israel responsible for the assault on GS, arguing that Israel did not respect the terms of the truce despite Hamas's commitment to them. However, Erdoğan also held Hamas partly responsible, for firing rockets on Israeli settlements and fueling tensions. Furthermore, Turkey's efforts with Hamas during the assault on GS stressed the need to "not give Israel pretexts, and stop firing rockets from Gaza on Israel because they are 'useless'" as Abdullah Gül, stated more than once.³⁷ For his part, Erdoğan said that what happened was a blow to the Arab peace initiative.³⁸ Erdoğan deemed the Israeli assault "a humanitarian crime" that Israel had to stop. Erdoğan went on a wide tour to Arab countries to work on a joint Arab-Turkish position on the war.

After Erdoğan visited the Egyptian president on 1/1/2009, he called on Israel to announce an immediate ceasefire and end the blockade, and on Hamas to stop firing rockets.³⁹ He also dispatched his Foreign Policy Advisor Ahmet Davutoğlu, to participate in the negotiations between the Egyptian mediator on one hand and Hamas and the Arab states on the other hand.

³⁶ Information Department, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *Turkya wa al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah*, p. 44.

³⁷ Muhammad Nouredine, "The Bases of Turkish Policy Towards the Palestinian Issue," p. 28.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Turkey also became the scene of many pro-Palestinian Islamic activities, which denounced Israel “for punishing an entire people.” Turkey consistently called for an end to the inhumane siege on GS. Turkey saw that defending the GS, and calling for aid, was tantamount to indirect support for Hamas, which has controlled GS since 2007.

Hamas’s relations with Turkey saw remarkable developments between 2012 and 2013, with numerous meetings taking place between the two sides. This helped achieve convergence between their views regarding the uprisings in the Arab world, and ensured political tension between Turkey and Israel continued. Early in 2012, Haniyyah met with Turkish officials and the leaders of all Turkish political parties without exception. One interesting statement in this regard was made by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, who said that Haniyyah’s visit was proof that the road to Palestine passes through Turkey.⁴⁰ However, Haniyyah’s second tour, 30/1–16/2/2012, included Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iran, UAE, and Egypt, gave out the impression that Hamas wanted to be independent and not bound by any particular party.

On 18/3/2012, Khalid Mish‘al, head of Hamas’s political bureau, started a regional tour, where he met Turkish President ‘Abdullah Gül and updated him on the latest developments of the Palestinian issue, the conditions of the Palestinian people, hostile Israeli practices, as well as the situation in Jerusalem, *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the holy sites and Judaization process. On 21/04/2012, Mish‘al met Davutoğlu in the Qatari capital Doha, and discussed the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the latest developments in the Palestinian arena, including Palestinian national reconciliation.

A Hamas delegation headed by Khalid Mish‘al and Isma‘il Haniyyah visited Turkey and met Prime Minister Erdoğan on 18/6/2013 to discuss the major Palestinian issues. The Turkish government pledged to work on ending Israeli settlement activities in the WB, oppose the Judaization of Jerusalem, and work on lifting the GS siege, while promoting Palestinian reconciliation. Meanwhile, Erdoğan reaffirmed his wish to visit GS, mentioning that he may pay a surprise visit to the Strip at any time, and clarifying that his visit had been delayed due to incidents in his country (the Taksim protests).

⁴⁰ *Zaman* newspaper, Istanbul, 6/1/2012. (in Turkish)

Turkish diplomacy was considerably active in its support for Hamas and GS during the Israeli war, 14–21/11/2012, applying pressure in regional and international venues, and in cooperation with Egypt and Qatar, to end the attack and lift the siege. As a result, the GS received broad official and public support, forcing the Israelis to comply with the resistance’s conditions to end the assault, which the Israelis dubbed Operation Pillar of Defense, and Hamas dubbed Operation Stones of Baked Clay.

Erdoğan arrived in Egypt on 17/11/2012 as Hamas and Israel engaged in a fervent war, and met Egyptian President Muhammad Morsi, as well as the Prince of Qatar and Khalid Mish‘al, who demanded an end to the war and the siege. Such government diplomatic initiatives were active regionally and internationally to support the demands of the resistance. Erdoğan accused Israel of “ethnic cleansing by ignoring peace in this region and violating international law,” stating that it is “occupying the Palestinian territories step by step.” He added, “Israel will answer for the innocent blood it has shed so far,” and said the UN had “turned a blind eye” on Israeli attacks against Palestinians; referring to the UN failure to impose sanctions on Israel despite the resolutions issued against it.⁴¹

The Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu visited Gaza during the Israeli aggression on 20/11/2012, part of a delegation of Arab foreign ministers. He said there that Turkey would continue to support the Palestinian people in GS, WB and Jerusalem, to end the Israeli occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state with its capital Jerusalem. Addressing the Palestinians in GS, he said, “Your pain is our pain,” he declared. “Your destiny is our destiny and your future is our future.”⁴²

The visit saw a number of symbolic expressions such as Davutoğlu kissing the hand of the mother of Ahmad Ja‘bari, deputy commander of the Ezzedein al-Qassam Brigades, whose assassination by Israel was the spark to the 2012 Israeli war.⁴³ In another moving scene, Davutoğlu burst into tears at Al-Shifa’ hospital in GS, when he saw the dead and wounded there.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Site of Al Jazeera, 21/11/2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/2012112012739934900.html> (in English)

⁴² Will the Ceasefire Lead to Peace?, *The Economist* newspaper, London, 24/11/2012, <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21567140-after-week-long-war-between-israel-and-palestinians-temporary-cessation>

⁴³ *Asharq Alawsat*, 21/11/2012.

⁴⁴ *Assafir*, 21/11/2012.

On other levels, Turkish support to GS continued in different forms. The President of the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), Serdar Çam, met the mayors of GS municipalities on 28/3/2012 to take a closer look at the suffering caused by the Israeli siege. He also examined a number of important strategic projects funded previously by the Turkish government. Furthermore, the Interior Minister Fathi Hammad met his Turkish counterpart in Turkey in April 2013, and the Minister of Justice ‘Atallah Abu al-Sabah visited Turkey in June 2013 and discussed with his Turkish counterpart Sadullah Ergin the means of joint cooperation in the judiciary sector and supporting the Palestinian issue with regards to Israeli violations and ways to press international charges against Israeli crimes.

The medical authorities in GS received a medical delegation from the Filbel White Hands Association in April 2012, who performed the largest possible number of surgeries during one week. Moreover, the GS Ministry of Health signed a memorandum of understanding with the Turkish Red Crescent on 1/7/2013 to implement a resumption of furnishing and equipping the Shuhada al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah, funded by the Program of the Gulf Cooperation Council for the Reconstruction of Gaza and managed by the Islamic Development Bank.

5. Supporting Palestinian Reconciliation

Turkey believed that it was not possible to achieve progress in resolving the Palestinian issue without Palestinian reconciliation.⁴⁵ To be consistent with Turkish efforts for achieving reconciliation between Hamas and the Palestinian president, Turkey called on Hamas to renounce violence and recognize Israel. This was consistent with Turkey’s stance that Hamas should participate in the political process, linked to the continuation of the cease-fire with Israel, and then reconciliation with the Palestinian president. Turkey considers itself at the same distance from ‘Abbas and Hamas.⁴⁶ When Hamas took control of GS in June 2007, Erdoğan, on 23/7/2007 offered Haniyyah assistance in achieving Palestinian reconciliation. He told him that Turkey was ready to take action to heal the rift

⁴⁵ Muhammad Noureddine, “The Bases of Turkish Policy Towards the Palestinian Issue,” p. 28.

⁴⁶ Information Department, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *Turkya wa al-Qadiyyah al-Filastiniyyah*, p. 42.

and restore unity to the Palestinian ranks and that the continuation of the dispute adversely affects the establishment of a Palestinian state.⁴⁷

The Turkish offer did not receive the expected response for several reasons related to various Palestinian factions, Hamas and the PA were not prepared for this reconciliation. Regional parties, notably Egypt, also did not desire reconciliation at that stage, especially after Hamas's takeover of GS. Furthermore, Egypt did not want Turkey to play this leading role at the expense of its historical and strategic relationship with GS. Even the PA itself believed that no negotiation should take place with Hamas before it first backed down and ceded control of the GS, and re-admitted the PA's security forces—a stance that lasted until the second half of 2008. Cairo rejected an unofficial Turkish proposal to hold a meeting that included 'Amr Musa, the secretary-general of the League of Arab States, 'Omar Suleiman, director of the Egyptian General Intelligence Services (EGIS), and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, in addition to representatives of Fatah and Hamas in Egypt or in Turkey, in order to put pressure on the Palestinian parties to sign a reconciliation agreement. The Egyptian response was expressed by Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu al-Ghait, who said that the Egyptian role was limited to convincing Hamas to accept the Egyptian reconciliation document, and that there was no room to return to re-negotiate.⁴⁸

The Turkish interest in GS and reconciliation proved to be a sensitive issue for the Egyptian leadership, which saw it a boost for the MB movement in Egypt. This was anathema to the Egyptian regime, which saw it as interference in a sensitive issue that concerned Egypt. As a result, Egypt decided not to facilitate Turkish mediation between Fatah and Hamas, especially after the assault on GS.⁴⁹ For this reason Suleiman 'Awwad, spokesperson for the Egyptian presidency, stated that the Turkish role in the Palestinian reconciliation complemented and supported the Egyptian role, and Turkish President Abdullah Gül and his Foreign Minister reiterated this during their talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on 21/7/2010.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.43.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Muhammad Nouredine, "The Bases of Turkish Policy Towards the Palestinian Issue," p. 29.

The issue of Palestinian reconciliation remained unresolved. Turkey failed to play a direct role in this issue as it had hoped. But the shifts that took place in Egypt following the revolution of January 25, 2011, which deposed President Hosni Mubarak, propelled reconciliation efforts forward. Egypt was able to accomplish this in a surprising way, since it was itself still undergoing transition to a new regime. Thus, the two sides, Fatah and Hamas, signed a reconciliation agreement with direct Egyptian sponsorship on 4/5/2011, with support from Turkey, Iran, and the rest of the Arab and Muslim countries.

6. The Freedom Flotilla Incident and the Implications for Relations with Israel

Tensions between Turkey and Israel reached an unprecedented peak with the Israeli raid on the Freedom Flotilla on 31/5/2010, in which nine Turkish civilians on board the Mavi Marmara vessel were killed by Israel. This assault was the first manifestation of violent friction between Turkey and Israel, drawing a furious Turkish backlash against Israel in addition to an international outcry. Erdoğan and Davutoğlu dealt with the shock of the incident by demanding that Israel:

- a. Return the vessels to Turkey.
- b. Release all detained passengers of all nationalities.
- c. Issue an official apology to Turkey.
- d. Compensate the victims.
- e. Accept an international commission of inquiry.
- f. End the GS blockade.⁵⁰

Davutoğlu described the attack on the Freedom Flotilla as “Turkey’s 9/11.”⁵¹ Turkish PM Erdoğan made an impassioned speech at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on the afternoon of Tuesday 1/6/2010. He condemned Israeli piracy stating that “Turkey’s hostility is as strong as its friendship is valuable,” and that this attack “must be punished by all means,” and that “no one should test Turkey’s patience.”⁵²

⁵⁰ *Al-Hayat*, 2/6/2010.

⁵¹ *Milliyet* newspaper, Istanbul, 1/6/2010. (in Turkish)

⁵² *Today’s Zaman* newspaper, Istanbul, 1/6/2010, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-211844-no-one-should-test-turkeys-patience-pm-erdogan-warns.html>

The Freedom Flotilla incident was a turning point in Turkish-Israeli relations. Anti-Israeli statements reached a peak with quotes attributed to Ahmet Davutođlu, in which he said that Israel was an illegitimate state and doomed to extinction. Eli Bernstein, in a report for the Israeli newspaper *Maariv*, reporting from Ankara, quoted Davutođlu as saying in some interviews that “Israel cannot survive for a long time as an independent state, and a bi-national state shall be established between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan where Jews and Palestinians live together.”⁵³ During a visit to Lebanon on 24–25/11/2010, Erdoğan made strong statements against Israel, saying “We will not be silent and we will support justice by all means available to us.”⁵⁴

Davutođlu, in a meeting with Palestinian reporters in Ankara, said that the Turkish government and people were worried about the situation in Palestine. Palestine is not an ordinary issue, he added, it’s a sacred task on the Turks’ shoulders, Muslims and representatives of the nation that has sought to defend Jerusalem for more than four centuries.⁵⁵ For his part, President Gül declared that the issue of Jerusalem does not concern the Palestinians alone, but all Arabs and all Muslims.⁵⁶ Similarly, Erdoğan said, “Palestine is our problem, it has never been removed even for a day from our agenda.”⁵⁷ He also described Jerusalem as “the apple of the eye of each and every Muslim... and we cannot accept any Israeli violation in Jerusalem or in Muslim sites.”⁵⁸ On 10/5/2010, while addressing the second extraordinary meeting of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC, Erdoğan said, “If Jerusalem burns, the Middle East burns. If Jerusalem burns, the world burns.”⁵⁹

⁵³ *Assafir*, 29/12/2010.

⁵⁴ *Hürriyet Daily News*, 25/11/2010, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=turkey-will-not-remain-silent-if-israel-attacks-lebanon-2010-11-25>; and *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper, 25/11/2010, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3989901,00.html>

⁵⁵ *Al-Watan* newspaper, Abha (Saudi Arabia), 3/3/2010.

⁵⁶ *Al-Rai* newspaper, Kuwait, 4/3/2010.

⁵⁷ *Today’s Zaman*, 9/3/2010, <http://www.todayzaman.com/news-203771-erdogan-harsh-on-israel-heritage-move.html>; and *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 7/3/2010, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3858980,00.html>

⁵⁸ *Hürriyet Daily News*, 28/3/2010, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/n.php?n=israel-stand-on-united-jerusalem-madness-turkish-pm-2010-03-28>

⁵⁹ Site of Xinhua News Agency, 11/5/2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-05/11/c_13286314.htm

Despite all efforts that were made to reach a mutually acceptable settlement, Israel continued to stonewall Turkish demands for an apology and an end to the GS blockade, though Israel expressed willingness to give compensation to the families of the nine Turkish victims killed during the Israeli raid.

The Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Inquiry on the 31 May 2010 Flotilla Incident became known as the Palmer Report. But the findings infuriated the Turkish side; the report, which was prepared by a majority biased towards Israel, mentioned that Israel committed "an excessive reaction to the situation" but the report did not demand Tel Aviv apologize as it described the Israeli maritime siege imposed on GS as being both "legitimate" and compliant with the "requirements of international law." However, the report stated that Israel "should offer payment for the benefit of the deceased and injured victims and their families." On 2/9/2011, a day after the publication of the Palmer Report in *The New York Times*,⁶⁰ Davutoğlu announced the Turkish Government has decided to take the following measures:⁶¹

- a. "Diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel will be downgraded to the Second Secretary level. All personnel starting with the Ambassador above the Second Secretary level will return to their countries on Wednesday [7/9/2011] at the latest."
- b. "Military agreements between Turkey and Israel have been suspended."
- c. "As a littoral state which has the longest coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey will take whatever measures it deems necessary in order to ensure the freedom of navigation in the Eastern Mediterranean," without giving any clarifications.
- d. "Turkey does not recognize the blockade imposed on GS by Israel."
- e. "We will extend all possible support to Turkish and foreign victims of Israel's attack in their initiatives to seek their rights before courts."

Davutoğlu stated that "neither the Israeli Government who ordered the attack against the Mavi Marmara ship, nor the ones that actually carried out the attack

⁶⁰ *The New York Times* newspaper, 1/9/2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/02/world/middleeast/02flotilla.html?_r=3&smid=tw-nytimes&seid=auto

⁶¹ Press Statement by H.E. Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Regarding Turkish-Israeli relations, site of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey, 2/9/2011, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/press-statement-by-h_e_-mr_-ahmet-davutoglu_-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-turkey_-regarding-turkish-israeli-re.en.mfa

are above or immune from the law” vowing to hold them accountable. He stated: “Now, the Government of Israel must face the consequences of its unlawful acts, which it considers above the law and are in full disregard of the conscience of humanity.” He affirmed that “The time has come for it to pay a price for its actions. This price is, above all, deprivation of Turkey’s friendship.” Moreover, Davutoğlu noted that “Israel has wasted all the opportunities it was presented with” to repair relations with Turkey.⁶²

Erdoğan escalated the situation by declaring that “[t]rade ties, military ties, regarding defense industry ties” were completely suspended with Israel, referring to it as “a spoiled child.” Davutoğlu announced in mid-December 2011 that Turkey’s policy was to isolate Israel and force it to back down in the region.⁶³

While Hamas welcomed the Turkish measures, it considered the move a natural reaction to the Israeli crime against the Freedom Flotilla, and to Israel’s refusal to take responsibility for the crime or lift the siege of GS. Hamas also declared its condemnation of the Palmer Report, which the movement described as “unjust” and lacking balance.⁶⁴

Given Turkish persistence, and in view of the changes in the region, Israel was obliged to apologize to Turkey on 22/3/2013 for the assault the Mavi Marmara. Erdoğan accepted Netanyahu’s apology. In a phone call Netanyahu claimed that “the tragic consequences of the Mavi Marmara flotilla were unintentional, and Israel regrets any injury or loss of life,” and also “agreed to complete an agreement to provide compensation to the families of the victims,” and added that “Israel had removed a number of restrictions upon the movement of citizens and goods in all the Palestinian territories, including the Gaza Strip.” Erdoğan said that his country would await concrete actions from Israel and would take practical steps during this stage. Netanyahu declared that the unravelling situation in Syria, and fears of

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ AlJazeera, 6/9/2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/09/2011969483323665.html> (in English); and *Milliyet*, 15/12/2011.

⁶⁴ AlJazeera, 2/9/2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/09/2011927226423902.html> (in English).

Al-Qaeda-affiliated militant groups resorting to the use of chemical weapons were the catalysts for such an apology in addition to the normalization of Israeli-Turkish relations.⁶⁵

Up to the end of 2013, the general Turkish stance was dissatisfaction with the Israeli failure to fulfil its commitments. Turkish President Abdullah Gül clarified in an interview with Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* on 6/10/2013 that “Israel apologized too late [and] some of our expectations were not yet met.” A senior diplomatic advisor in Ankara told the same newspaper that “even though Israel agreed to pay, an agreement still has not been reached regarding how the payment will be implemented.” It is noteworthy that another condition for the normalization of relations was not fulfilled, i.e., the removal of the Israeli blockade on GS. Hence, a breakthrough is not expected in the near future.⁶⁶

Despite all this, relations between Turkey and Israel were not severed. The relationship with Hamas as a resistance movement, meanwhile, did not go beyond Turkish calculations related to what was tolerable to the US and Western powers, or its position in NATO and its efforts to join the EU. For example, there was a decision by the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (*İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı—IHH*), headed by Fehmi Bülent Yıldırım, not to participate with the Turkish Mavi Marmara (Freedom Flotilla), nor any Turkish ship again, in future expeditions of the Freedom Flotilla, whose organizers were preparing for a second campaign to break the GS siege. The decision was made amid significant governmental pressure on the Turkish organizations that were participating. Erdoğan seems to have complied with a US desire to prevent the Marmara from participating in the Freedom Flotilla 2.

As for the evolution of the Turkish relationship with Hamas, Turkish officials acted as mediators in order to release the Israeli soldier captured by Hamas. This fact came to light when Shimon Peres thanked Turkey for its role in securing the prisoner swap deal, in addition to France and Germany, as the Turkish newspaper *Milliyet* reported. The newspaper *Hürriyet* corroborated this, after reporting in detail about the Turkish role in securing Shalit’s release. Following the failure

⁶⁵ *Haaretz*, 22/3/2013, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/netanyahu-phones-erdogan-to-apologize-for-deaths-of-turkish-citizens-on-gaza-flotilla.premium-1.511394>; and Aljazeera.net, 23/3/2013. (in Arabic)

⁶⁶ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 6/10/2013, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4437193,00.html>

of its assault on GS, Israel asked Turkey to mediate. Though relations between the two countries were in bad shape, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu spoke about the issue with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who gave his firm approval, because he considered the issue humanitarian and unrelated to Turkish relations with Israel. Turkish intelligence thus contacted the Mossad and Egyptian intelligence, and the meetings led to substantial progress on this issue.⁶⁷ Even Turkey's hosting of a number of deported prisoners released by Israel as part of the deal was, for the Turks, inseparable from their desire to see "comprehensive peace in the region," and their efforts to encourage Hamas to adopt "the democratic choice." A senior Turkish official explained Turkey's hosting of those deportees to *Milliyet*, saying that it would create a new climate in the Middle East and would de-escalate the tensions. After the exchange, he claimed that calmer positions on the Israeli-Palestinian front would be seen, which would create a new dynamic for the peace process. He added that it was for this reason that Turkey became involved in the process, hoping to achieve Palestinian reconciliation, which would reassure Mahmud 'Abbas, and bring GS and WB closer together.

7. Economic Relations Between Turkey and Israel

It is of note that the Turkish government under the leadership of the AKP was pragmatic concerning its commercial ties with Israel. These ties were not affected much by Turkey's inclination to improve relations with the Arab and Muslim world, support the Palestinian issue, and develop relations with Hamas. Economic ties did not suffer much either because of the major political crisis in the wake of the Israeli raid on Turkish vessel *Mavi Marmara* on 31/5/2010. In general, the Turkish government managed its trade relations with Israel to a large degree, in isolation from its political positions and measures. This apparent contradiction between tension in the political relationship and improved trade relations could be attributed in part to a network of mutual interests. The AKP government could not impose its influence and control over these networks in a secular and economically open environment, while trying to adhere to the EU requirements for trade relations. Furthermore, some forms of the relationship take into account the Turkish army's need for Israeli military equipment and technology.

⁶⁷ Muhammad Nouredine, "What Role Did Turkey Play in the Prisoner Swap Deal?," *Assafir*, 15/10/2011. (in Arabic)

According to official Israeli data, the trade volume between Turkey and Israel doubled from about \$1,197 million in 2002 to about \$4,858 million in 2013, an increase of 305.9%. In the period 2002–2013, Turkish imports from Israel grew from \$383 million to about \$2,504 million, an increase of 553.5%, while Turkish exports to Israel doubled from about \$814 million to about \$2,354 million, an increase of 189.3%. Statistics do not show a significant change in the year during which the Israeli attack took place on the Turkish vessel (2010) or in the following year. However, there was a 13% drop in trade in 2012, though it quickly recovered in 2013, when trade volume grew by 38.6% compared to 2012 and 20.6% compared to 2011.

Table (1): Volume of Trade Between Turkey and Israel According to Israeli Statistics for Selected Years (\$millions)⁶⁸

Year	2000	2002	2006	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Israeli Exports	434.4	383.1	821.2	1,086	1,310.7	1,855.7	1,421.4	2,503.5
Israeli Imports	586.5	813.7	1,272.7	1,387.7	1,800.1	2,171.1	2,082.7	2,354.1
Trade Volume	1,020.9	1,196.8	2,093.9	2,473.7	3,110.8	4,026.8	3,504.1	4,857.6

Meanwhile, official Turkish data gives bigger indications on the volume of trade, showing trade between Turkey and Israel doubling from around \$1,406 million in 2002 to about \$5,068 million in 2013, an increase of 260.5%. Between 2002 and 2013, Turkish imports from Israel grew from \$545 million to about \$2,418 million, an increase of 344.1%. Meanwhile, Turkish exports to Israel grew from about \$861 million to about \$2,650 million, an increase of 207.6%. The data does not show a significant change in the year during which the Israeli attack took place on the Turkish vessel (2010) or in the following year; However, there is a drop in trade by 9.12% in 2012, though trade levels quickly recovered in 2013, when the trade volume increased by 25.4% from 2012, and by 13.9% compared to 2011.

⁶⁸ See Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), http://www1.cbs.gov.il/shnaton55/st16_05x.pdf 66
http://www.cbs.gov.il/archive/201002/yarhon/h5_e.htm
www1.cbs.gov.il/publications13/yarhon0213/pdf/h8.pdf
<http://www1.cbs.gov.il/publications14/yarhon0214/pdf/h8.pdf>

Table (2): Volume of Trade Between Turkey and Israel According to Turkish Statistics for Selected Years (\$millions)⁶⁹

Year	2000	2002	2006	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Turkish Exports	650.1	861.4	1,529.2	1,522.4	2,080.1	2,391.1	2,329.5	2,649.7
Turkish Imports	505.5	544.5	782.1	1,074.7	1,359.6	2,057.3	1,710.4	2,418
Trade Volume	1,155.6	1,405.9	2,311.3	2,597.1	3,439.7	4,448.4	4,039.9	5,067.7

Third: Hamas and Iran

Hamás’s relations with Iran differ markedly from its relations with Turkey on many levels: history, the extent of their development, and the shared goals between the two sides. To be sure, Iran considers itself not only a supporter of the Palestinian people from a humanitarian point of view, but also rejects Israel’s very existence, considering it an illegitimate entity that must be removed. Iran declares explicitly that it supports resistance movements in Palestine, and receives the leaders of Palestinian political parties publicly, as well as resistance leaders of the PIJ and Hamas, and other Palestinian factions.

Iran has held many international conferences hosting hundreds of dignitaries entitled to support the *Intifadah* or the resistance in Palestine against the Israeli occupation, including a conference held on 2–3/10/2011, which hundreds of Palestinian and Arab figures attended. Iran believes that supporting the Palestinian people and resistance is a part of its core religious principles and its revolutionary legitimacy, as well as its foreign policy of “supporting all the oppressed peoples around the world.”

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in Chapter 10, under the heading of foreign policy, Article 154, states, “The Islamic Republic of Iran... while scrupulously refraining from all forms of interference in the internal affairs

⁶⁹ See Foreign Trade by Countries, Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1046

of other nations... supports the just struggles of the *mustad'afun* [oppressed] against the *mustakbirun* [oppressors] in every corner of the globe.”⁷⁰

Since the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the new republic has shown a clear position on the Palestinian issue. The new religious leadership closed down the Israeli embassy in the capital Tehran and replaced it with the “Embassy of Palestine.”

Hamas’s relations with Iran did not go beyond the goals of the Islamic resistance movement, most notable its interest in reaching out to the Islamic sphere in its official and popular dimensions, and establishing direct relations with them.⁷¹ But Hamas’s relationship with Iran seems at the same time the most prominent among its relations with Muslim countries, and the most sensitive and controversial, due to Iran’s unstable and often tense relations with several Arab countries, such as the KSA and other Gulf States, which Hamas is keen on maintaining friendly relations with. It is noted that Hamas is sometimes accused of subservience to Iran, but not to any other Islamic or Arab state.

1. Developments in the Relationship Between Hamas and Iran

The Iraq-Iran war soon became the main concern of the new Islamic regime in Tehran. For years, this war became a priority that took precedence over other issues in the Middle East, including the Palestinian issue. But the outbreak of the *Intifadah* in 1987, one year before the cessation of the Iraq-Iran war in 1988, marked the beginning of a new trend in Iranian-Palestinian relations, especially with Hamas, which would become the one of the most prominent Palestinian factions in the early nineties.

This was the stage during which Iranian relations with Hamas grew dramatically, on the basis of rejection of negotiations and a peace settlement with Israel by both parties. Tehran also held a conference to support the “revolution of the Palestinian people” on 22/10/1991, a few days before the Madrid Peace Conference, a clear signal of Iran’s position. The Tehran conference brought together Palestinian factions opposed to the peace process, in addition to Palestinian and Arab figures and parties that support resistance and reject the Madrid Peace Conference. The

⁷⁰ Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, site of Foundation for Iranian Studies, <http://fis-iran.org/en/resources/legaldoc/constitutionislamic>

⁷¹ Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa al-Mumarah al-Siyasiyyah*, p. 196.

Madrid Peace Conference was held at the beginning of November 1991 under the direct auspices of the US, following the “liberation” of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, in which all the Arab countries and representatives of the PLO participated.

The appointment of a representative of Hamas in Iran in October 1990 marked the beginning of the official relationship between the two sides. This was followed by opening an official office for Hamas in the Iranian capital in February 1992, two months after the Madrid Peace Conference was held. It was Iran’s way of saying that it recognized Hamas’s central role in the Palestinian opposition.⁷²

In line with the principle of seeking balance in its relations with the Arab and Islamic parties, Hamas sees Iran, in the words of the Hamas representative in Tehran, as “a strategic ally... because the convergence in the strategic vision in its Islamic dimension is what makes Iran a strategic ally.”⁷³ Because the relationship Hamas maintains with Iran is clear and public, based on mobilizing the greatest possible amount of support for the Palestinian issue as an Islamic issue, Hamas has made it clear to Iran that “the relationship is based on mutual respect, solidarity in positions, political views, and strategic views regarding the [peace] settlement, without any dictates.”⁷⁴ However, this “strategic relationship” with Tehran must not prejudice the balance of relations that Hamas maintains with Arab parties, which do not all have good relations with Tehran, because this would force Hamas to pay a heavy price in its Arab relations, particularly with the Gulf countries. This is a political price first and foremost, and also a popular price, because of the sectarian sensitivities that cannot be ignored in the Gulf region toward Iran. Nevertheless, Hamas did not move away from Iran, but engaged Tehran to a large extent, because it was not logical for Hamas not to appreciate Iran’s strong position and opposition to the peace process,⁷⁵ which Hamas also opposes.

Head of Hamas’s Political Bureau Khalid Mish‘al, after years of good relations between his movement and Iran, stressed the independence of Palestinian decision. He said, “Hamas’s decision stems from the Palestinian reality and is not subservient

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 199–200.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

to anyone. This is a fact known to everyone, as reality and practice attest.” Mish‘al added, “But Hamas, as an integral part of its nation, takes into account the overall situation in Arab and Muslim world, away from dependency and subservience, and conflict and tension.” Mish‘al also remarked, “Hamas succeeded in establishing a balanced equation in its Arab and Islamic relations, and in making the Palestinian issue and the confrontation with the Zionist project an element that brings together the nation.” While answering another question, Mish‘al rejected considering his movement’s program part of the Syrian or Iranian agenda, saying, “Our good relationship with Syria and Iran does not mean we are part of their program. But rather, this relationship is part of the effort for strengthening the Arab and Muslim depth of the Palestinian issue.”

Mish‘al refused implementing any Syrian or Iranian scenario to thwart peace or topple the government of Shimon Peres. He said, “Hamas would never go down this path, nor would it accept such assumptions about it. [Hamas] bases its stances on pure Palestinian considerations, and its policies stem from the interests and rights of our people.” Mish‘al denies the hypothesis of “paying a price” in return for a “safe haven,” saying, “If we did this, then we would have had different stances that the ones you see. Our presence in this or that Arab country is part of what the nation owes us, and also part of the reality of Palestinian Diaspora.”⁷⁶

Even after the Mecca Agreement between Hamas and the PA, brokered by KSA, Mish‘al stressed this independence, saying, “Our relationship with KSA is not at the expense of Iran, and that our relationship with Syria is not at the expense of Egypt.”⁷⁷ Mish‘al repeated this again when reconciliation between Hamas and the PA, brokered by Egypt, faltered, because of conditions, threats, or trials, as Prime Minister Isma‘il Haniyyah of Hamas said. Mish‘al remarked, in response to a question about Hamas’s bias to Iranian policy in the region in return for Tehran’s political and material support for the movement, said, “Hamas, despite its close relationship with Iran, is not in the pocket of Iran as it is not in the pocket of Syria. Our relationship with everyone is based on mutual respect. We are keen on their balance and on Arab interests.” Mish‘al added, “We have knocked on the doors of

⁷⁶ Interview with Khalid Mish‘al, *Al-Hayat*, 9/12/2003.

⁷⁷ *Alray Alaam* newspaper, Kuwait, 25/2/2007.

all our brothers out of need for our Arab depth... but what can we do if some do not respond... love cannot be one sided.”⁷⁸

Various Iranian stances in support of Hamas contributed directly to the rapprochement between the two parties.⁷⁹ Iran worked to prevent the encirclement of Hamas after its victory in the legislative elections, especially as the rival party (PA) had broad Arab and international support. Hamas came under a cruel financial and political blockade from the same Arab and international actors after its 2006 PLC elections victory, and then its takeover of GS in 2007. Iran was accused of encouraging Hamas to carry out its “coup,” as Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu al-Ghait claimed.⁸⁰

At the Israeli and international (and even Arab) levels, Hamas was a permanent target of harassment or even elimination. For this reason, Hamas needed Iranian support at all levels. For example, in late 2006 the Palestinian Cabinet announced that the visit by Prime Minister Isma‘il Haniyyah to Iran yielded \$250 million in aid to the Palestinian people.⁸¹

During reconciliation talks with Fatah and the PA, Hamas came under intense Arab pressure. Only Iran and Syria supported Hamas, while Qatar, Yemen, and

⁷⁸ *Assafir*, 27/9/2008.

⁷⁹ L'Iran et le Hamas: des relations solides qui se renforcent, site of JSS News, 27/1/2010, <http://jssnews.com/2010/01/27/liran-et-le-hamas-des-relations-solides-qui-se-renforcent>

⁸⁰ *Al-Hayat*, 21/6/2007.

⁸¹ Site of Al-Arab al-Yawm, 12/12/2006. According to the same source, the break down of the \$250 million aid package was as follows: Iran provided financial support in order to break the siege an amount of money estimated at \$100 million for the year 2007 in support of the Palestinian people. It pledged to cover the salaries of the employees of the Ministries of Social Affairs, Labor and Detainees for six months to come, and the payment of entitlements to prisoners and their families for six months to come, with the total amount offered to the three ministries and the prisoners was in the vicinity of \$45 million. The Palestinian Cabinet also said that the aid package included providing assistance to unemployed Palestinian workers, who number 100 thousand to the tune of \$100 per worker per month for a period of six months, with a total of up to \$60 million. It would also provide urgent assistance to fishermen in GS, who number three thousand with \$100 per fisherman for a period of six months, a total of up to \$1.8 million. The Cabinet's statement said that the Iranian aid package covered the costs of building the Cultural Palace and National Library to the tune of \$15 million, and the costs of rebuilding one thousand houses to the tune of \$10 thousand per house, reaching a total of \$20 million. It would cover the difference in buying Palestinian olive oil with a sum of \$5 million, and the cost of 300 cars for the Palestinian government with a sum of \$3 million. Thus, the visit provided total Iranian aid of \$250 million.

Sudan sympathized with it, and understood its positions, in varying degrees. This lasted until the situation changed after the Egyptian “revolution,” and reconciliation was achieved without any Egyptian pressure or conditions imposed on Hamas as would have been the case under the former Mubarak regime.

Hamas’s relations with Iran caused concerns between Palestinian and Arab actors, related essentially to the differences between the latter with Hamas and Iran over the peace process. But Hamas would always stress its independence from Iran. For example, Hamas’s spokesperson in GS, Sami Abu Zuhri asked, “Why is there focus only on our good relations with Syria and Iran? We also have relations with Qatar, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. Is it because the rest of the countries have good relations with the United States? What is important for us is to defend the Palestinian people.”⁸² For his part, Musa Abu Marzuq, after affirming Hamas’s good relations with all parties, distinguishes between the attitudes of various countries vis-à-vis the resistance saying, “When a country is more positive toward us this does not mean that we favor it...”⁸³

Hamas denies it is subservient to any of the countries that back it, in order to balance its relations with Arab and Muslim countries, and to mobilize support and defend the Palestinian people. Whereas, the Iranian leaders do not hide their relationship with Hamas, and regularly stress their support for this movement in particular, and the Palestinian issue and the choice of resistance against the Israeli occupation in general. For this reason, the chairman of the Iranian Shura Council denies US and Western accusations that Iran supports Hizbullah secretly, and says, “We are proud of supporting Hizbullah and Hamas as well. It is the United States that must answer the question: Why is it hostile to Hamas and Hizbullah?”⁸⁴

Iranian leaders often reiterate their support for Hamas as a resistance movement against the occupation. Regarding the GS siege, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, for example, called on Muslim countries to break the blockade, saying, “Resistance is the only option to save the Palestinian people” and called on the Palestinians to safeguard their unity and rally around their elected government, meaning the government of Hamas.⁸⁵

⁸² *Financial Times* newspaper, 1/2/2006.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Almustaqbal*, 5/1/2011.

⁸⁵ *Al-Khaleej*, 9/2/2008

During a meeting in Tehran with the Head of the Hamas Political Bureau, Khaled Mish'al, the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Saeed Jalili said that the resistance and the comprehensive conscious steadfastness of the Palestinian people is worthy of respect. He added that the secret of Hamas's success was that it has fought in earnest for the rights of the Palestinian people. The Supreme Leader, on the same occasion, remarked that Israel was not able to crush the Palestinian people, calling for continued resistance. Khamenei described the positions taken by the leadership of Hamas and Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah as courageous, and a cause for hope, joy, and reassurance. He condemned the inhumane blockade imposed on GS and the daily killings of children. In a remarkable statement, Khamenei then declared direct support for Hamas, saying that Iran stood on its side in GS. This served as a response to the other Arab and non-Arab forces besieging Hamas, undermining its rule in GS.

In his sermon for Eid al-Fitr on 2/10/2008, after stressing that the Israelis were on their way to collapse, Khamenei said, "Iran will stand by the Hamas government in Gaza," and calling Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah as "mujahid." Khamenei called for concerted efforts and greater solidarity to support the Palestinian people.⁸⁶ During a meeting with Khalid Mish'al, in Tehran, Khamenei had called for "developing a plan that enables all Muslims to offer annual financial assistance to the Palestinians."

The then Secretary-General of the Supreme National Security Council in Iran, Ali Larijani, after a meeting with Mish'al as well, said, "Hamas is popular and authentic. It has long sought to guarantee the rights of the oppressed Palestinian people." Larijani then added that Iran would help the Hamas government financially, so it can cope with US pressures. He then continued, "We hope that the new Palestinian government will overcome its current problems with the help of Muslim countries, including Iran."⁸⁷

President Mahmud Ahmadinejad reiterated this clearly by saying that his country would continue to support the Islamic resistance movement Hamas "until Israel collapses," and that Iran considers its support to the Palestinians a national and religious duty, and would stand with the Palestinians until a great victory, the

⁸⁶ *Asharq Alawsat*, 2/10/2008.

⁸⁷ *Assafir*, 23/2/2006.

“collapse of the Zionist regime,” is achieved. The Israeli paper *Maariv* pointed out that the Republic of Iran provided, before Hamas’s takeover of GS, important assistance to Hamas including funds and weapons, sending military experts and Hizbullah members into GS. The paper added that the most important item in Iranian aid is training given to hundreds of Hamas members on Iranian territory. Some of them returned to GS afterwards. Ali Larijani admitted his country’s support for Hamas, denying at the same time providing them with weapons.⁸⁸

Iran also confirmed Hamas’s independence, and denied the movement was subservient to it. Iran’s Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Muhammad Ali Hosseini, in response to comments by King Abdullah II, in which he said that the Hamas leaders were at Iran’s beck and call, said:

Hamas’ decisions are not subject to the orders of any state. It is unfortunate that some Arab countries in the region are sometimes affected by the policies of the US and Israel, but turn a blind eye to the interests of the Palestinian people. This is the kind of orientation is a kind of blaming others and does not match with the facts on the Palestinian arena.⁸⁹

The website OnIslam.net, on 26/12/2007, summed up the reasons that make the claim that Hamas was subservient to Iran illogical. These include:⁹⁰

First: Hamas has close ties with various Arab states, in a way that is generally at odds with Iranian foreign policy. This applies to its ties to Egypt, the Gulf countries, Yemen, and Iraq.

Second: The media affiliated to Hamas (Al-Aqsa TV and the Palestinian Information Center and many other outlets) adopts policy that is completely different from the policies, attitudes, and analyses of the Iranian media regarding the issue of Iraq and Afghanistan, and resistance operations in the two countries.

Third: The declaration of the founding of Hamas in 1987 did not carry any references to the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a matter of fact, major Hamas figures like Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, ‘Abdul ‘Aziz al-Rantisi, Isma‘il Abu Shanab, Ibrahim

⁸⁸ *Al-Akhbar*, 23/6/2007.

⁸⁹ *Al-Watan*, Abha, 13/2/2008.

⁹⁰ Jihad al-Sa’di, “Hamis and Iran... Differences and Motives for the Relationship,” OnIslam, 26/12/2007, <http://www.onislam.net/arabic/islamyoon/observatory/103399-2007-12-26%2015-53-39.html> (in Arabic)

Maqadmah, and Salah Shehadeh, who founded the movement in Palestine, did not meet any Iranian officials during their lives.

Forth: Hamas is an integral branch of the Sunni MB movement, whose founding predates the Iranian revolution in 1979 by more than half a century. Outside of Palestine, countries such as Kuwait, the UAE, and Jordan were the home of current members of Hamas's political bureau, and none of them were influenced in their formative years by Iran or their relations to the Islamic Republic.

Iran's strategy in support of Hamas and resistance did not change throughout the various attacks that Hamas was subjected to. After the war on GS, for example, Iran Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki declared that the Israeli invasion of GS was a strategic mistake, and that Israel could never destroy Hamas.⁹¹

After the war ended, and to confront international schemes that would impose a blockade on GS and prevent Hamas from resupplying, Iran was prompted to defend the "natural right of those fighting colonialists to obtain arms."⁹² Tehran also held an international conference to support GS, during which Supreme Leader 'Ali Khamenei reiterated that steadfastness and resistance are the only way to save Palestine. Khamenei stated that Hamas's resistance was the "most important bright spot in the last one hundred years of Palestine's history."⁹³

Iran believed that relations with Hamas and other Islamic forces were the beginning of a new phase, which Iran dubbed "the Islamic Middle East." Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei criticized some Arab governments, which he did not name, for having failed the Palestinians, and for emphasizing the Arab identity of the Palestinian issue but without doing anything practical to support the Palestinians during the Israeli war on GS.⁹⁴

On another level, Israel accused Iran of smuggling weapons into GS and supplying Hamas with strategic rockets. Israel linked the relationship between Hamas and Iran to the Iranian nuclear program, claiming that Iran could instruct Hamas to launch rockets at Israel to protect this program. For instance, the Israeli Army

⁹¹ *Al-Khaleej*, 18/1/2009.

⁹² *Assafir*, 22/1/2009.

⁹³ *Arab News* newspaper, 5/3/2009, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/51199>

⁹⁴ Interview with Khamenei before The Fifth International Conference to Support the Palestinian *Intifadah*, 3/10/2011.

Radio quoted Israeli military sources as saying that Iran had provided the Palestinian factions in GS with long-range missiles capable of hitting strategic targets inside Israel, including Tel Aviv and its suburbs. The sources pointed out that Iranian missiles like Fajr and Fateh-110 (300 km range), had reached the parties allied to Iran in the region, and were capable of carrying warheads weighing 500 kg. The military sources warned that Hizbullah could launch pre-emptive attacks accompanied by intense attacks from GS, claiming that the main reason for any future war involving Iran's allies Syria, Hizbullah, and GS would be to respond to attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities.⁹⁵

In the same context of incitement on the back of the relationship between Hamas and Iran, the Israeli paper *Haaretz* reported that Hamas succeeded in smuggling anti-aircraft missiles into GS, and that Iran and Syria were the suppliers. The newspaper said that the assessment in Israel was that SA-7 Grail Surface to Air anti-aircraft missiles known as Strela-2 were now in the possession of Hamas and the PIJ in GS. The newspaper pointed out that this type of missile was not advanced, but that the Palestinian factions possession of hundreds of units would affect the flight of Israeli warplanes over GS. The newspaper also said that in the event security conditions deteriorated in GS, the Palestinian factions could fire these missiles at Israeli warplanes.

Israeli media reported that experts from both Iran and Syria arrived at GS to improve various military capabilities of resistance factions there, a claim denied by Nafez 'Azzam, member of the political bureau of PIJ, as reported by Sama News Agency. *Haaretz* also reported that members of Hamas left GS, via the Sinai tunnels, to attend training camps in Syria and Iran, with foreign experts also entering GS. It said that the Israeli army believes that Hamas is still trying to rearm and restore its military capabilities, damaged in operation Cast Lead, and is therefore not interested in provoking too harsh an Israeli response.⁹⁶

Iran encouraged reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, and did not object to the Egyptian role in this process, both before and after the ouster of the Egyptian regime, when this reconciliation was accomplished. Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, in the summer of 2009, confirmed the support his country

⁹⁵ *Asharq Alawsat*, 20/4/2010.

⁹⁶ Mohsen Mohammad Saleh (ed.), *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2010/11* (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations, 2012), pp. 209-210.

to the unity of Palestinian factions.⁹⁷ The then Head of Iranian Shura Council, Ali Larijani, repeated the same position on 20/12/2009, declaring his support for Egypt's efforts to achieve reconciliation.⁹⁸

When it was announced that a reconciliation deal had been reached after the fall of Hosni Mubarak, Iran restated its support for this reconciliation. The day after the agreement was signed, the Iranian foreign minister, Ali Akbar Salehi, said it was a positive step towards achieving the historic goals of the Palestinian people, and expressed hope that the agreement would lay down "the bases of major victories against the Israeli occupier." Salehi praised Egyptian mediation efforts.⁹⁹

Iran also supported the prisoner swap deal between Hamas and Israel in October 2011, and congratulated the Palestinian people for this achievement. Isma'il Haniyyah telephoned Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad and explained to him the details of the prisoner exchange deal between Hamas and Israel.

President Ahmadinejad and Isma'il Haniyyah agreed that patience and resilience remained key elements to defeat Israel and the oppressors, and bring victory for the Palestinian people and other free peoples calling for justice in the world. Ahmadinejad said that the Islamic Republic of Iran stands always on the side of the oppressed Palestinian people and the resistance, and will defend the rights of this free and proud people... There is no doubt that this issue is a major achievement for the Palestinian people and all Muslims and lovers of justice and freedom in the world, and that independent-minded peoples are pleased with this achievement. For his part, Isma'il Haniyyah said that Iran had supported and continued to support the Palestinian people, and is a partner in its victories.¹⁰⁰ The spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Ramin Mehmanparast, congratulated the Palestinian people on the release of Palestinian prisoners held by the Israel, saying "We hope one day all the land of Palestine will return to its rightful owners."¹⁰¹

In February 2012, Isma'il Haniyyah visited Iran for talks. Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, during his meeting with Haniyyah, stressed that the issue of

⁹⁷ Mehr News Agency, 12/7/2009, <http://www.mehrnews.com/> (in Arabic)

⁹⁸ *Al-Arab*, 21/12/2009.

⁹⁹ *Al-Masry al-Youm* newspaper, Cairo, 29/4/2011.

¹⁰⁰ Site of Al-Alam TV, 17/10/2011, <http://www.alalam.ir/news/769484> (in Arabic)

¹⁰¹ *Al-Hayat*, 19/10/2011.

Palestine is an Islamic cause and a central cause for Iran, saying, “We will remain on the side of the Palestinian people and their valiant resistance. Iran is committed and sincere towards the Palestinian issue and will never fail it.”¹⁰²

In Tehran, Haniyyah said that there was no change in the “firm and honorable” position of Iran in support of the Palestinian resistance. In an exclusive interview with Al-Alam TV, Haniyyah said that Iran’s position on the Palestinian issue was “a strategic position,” and that Iran’s support for the resistance and the Palestinian people along with their steadfastness stemmed from Iran’s Islamic faith and commitment, as well as moral values and political vision. Haniyyah said that Iran’s support for the Palestinians was unconditional, and welcomed by his government and Hamas, just like the latter would welcome it from any other party under the same conditions.

Haniyyah refused to accept the view of some that the Palestinian resistance is a bargaining chip in Iran’s hands, saying that the reality was that “the Palestinian people are under occupation, and Iran has responded to their call and was faithful to them, and did not ask once for something in return, as Iran saw it as a matter of Islamic commitment towards a Muslim people, Jerusalem, and *al-Aqsa*.” Haniyyah also stressed the unity of the Muslim nation, and that the main argument should not be within it, but between it and the Israeli occupation and US imperialism. Regarding the attempts to portray Iran as the main enemy of the Arabs in the region instead of Israel, Haniyyah said that Israel would remain the “main enemy of the nation,” and that the main conflict would continue to be with this “cancerous project.”¹⁰³

On the other hand, certain Palestinian and Arab parties saw Hamas’s relationship with Iran as a liability, because of what they perceive as “sectarian” or “pan-Persian” Iranian policies, and viewed Iran’s relationship with the resistance and Hamas as a cover for Iranian conduct and “ambitions” in the region. Meanwhile, Iranian parties believed that Iran was paying a heavy price for its support of the resistance, suffering American and Western economic sanctions, while Palestinian parties did not appreciate Iran’s support and some Arab parties scrambled to hold peace treaties with Israel. Thus, Hamas came under criticism, especially from the “moderate”

¹⁰² Fars News Agency, 12/2/2012, <http://arabic.farsnews.com> (in Arabic)

¹⁰³ Site of Al-Alam TV, 12/2/2012.

Arab regimes, Fatah and PLO leaderships, which accused Hamas of subservience to Iran and receiving cash from Tehran.

This relationship later came under criticism and accusations from the Iranian side itself, especially by reformist leaders. For they were at the peak of their conflict with the hardliners and the Supreme Leader over the results of the 2009 presidential elections, when the opposition accused the regime of rigging the results to secure a second term victory for Mahmud Ahmadinejad. The wife of opposition candidate Mir Hossein Musavi, in a television interview with *Al-Arabiya* on 11/6/2009, said that Ahmadinejad's foreign policy is the policy of chaos and that Mir Hossein Musavi would instead pursue a foreign policy of regional and world peace, based on the national interests of Iran. She added that Iranian interests would have priority.

We do not want to enter into costly alliances... Concerning Palestine, it is our slogan as well. But we will seek to be friends with the whole world and especially in the region and around us and our neighboring countries. We do not want to have tension and terrorism... we want to maintain our wealth for our people.

The slogans of Musavi supporters, when they took to the streets on the day of 'Ashura, were clearer than Musavi's wife's insinuations regarding "the priority of national interests." The protesters disavowed the burden of supporting resistance in Lebanon and Palestine, chanting: "Neither Gaza nor Lebanon... we are martyrs only for Iran."¹⁰⁴ Activists in Musavi's Green Movement launched an electronic attack on Hamas, and the funding sources that it relies on.¹⁰⁵

However, the general line in Iran and Hamas insisted on maintaining the relationship, based on the strategic convergence over hostility to Israel and the bid to liberate all of Palestine.

2. The Relationship After the Arab Revolutions

Some analysts thought that what happened in Syria in the context of the Arab revolutions drove a wedge between Hamas and Tehran, as Iran supported the regime in Syria, while Hamas was more reserved in expressing support for the

¹⁰⁴ *Alrai*, Amman, 19/9/2009.

¹⁰⁵ *Al-Hayat*, 10/9/2009. Also see article by Al-Faizi, A Photo Op with the Looters of the Iranian Nation's Money, site of *Al-Gharraf News*, 3/10/2011. (in Arabic)

regime, especially since the MB movement was part of the opposition in Syria. Rumors spread about estrangement between the two sides, with reports that Hamas wanted to move its offices from Syria to Qatar or Cairo. Some also assumed that Hamas would move its offices from Damascus to Turkey.¹⁰⁶

No changes appeared in Iran's policies vis-à-vis Hamas because of the position over the Syrian regime. Nor was there any indication that Hamas wanted to move from Damascus to another Arab capital or Turkey. The Head of the Media Department and prominent Hamas leader, Salah al-Bardawil told Aljazeera.net on 25/9/2011, "Differences over any event or issue does not spoil a relationship between two sides," pointing out that Iran was a country that opposed US hegemony and aggression on GS, which intersects with what Hamas wanted from all Arab and Muslims countries.

Al-Bardawil stressed that Iran had not backed down from its positions towards American hegemony and Zionism, saying that Hamas had not severed relations with Iran, and that the friendship had not turned sour as some had been claiming, further stressing Hamas's desire to maintain good relations with all sides. Al-Bardawil drew attention to the fact that Iran did not dictate terms to Hamas, and that Hamas does not accept any diktats, stressing that the joint interest was based on respecting one another's views and allowing room for divergent views over some issues.

Al-Bardawil said the sectarian concerns of some about the relationship were a non-starter, saying that those who stress this issue are affiliated to the US and Israel. He also said that Hamas was not a sectarian bridge for anyone, and was not interested in any sectarian conflicts.

On 25/9/2011, the Director of the Mustaqbal Research Center Ibrahim al-Madhoun also told Aljazeera.net that the relationship between Hamas and Iran was mutually complementary, that their political relationship is based on the achievement of the mutual short-term and strategic objectives. He added that the nature of the relationship remained too profound to be shaken or diverted by obstacles, and that he believed that Hamas and Iran were capable of overcoming historic and sectarian differences, and accumulated psychological complexes. However, he believed that the uncertainty at the time accounted for the many rumors.

¹⁰⁶ Rajab Abu Sariyeh, Aljazeera.net, 25/9/2011. (in Arabic)

Despite the lukewarm relationship between Hamas and Iran after the revolutions and changes in the Arab world, Hamas remained an important part of the so-called “Refusal Front,” which Tehran sees as the axis that opposes the US and Israel in the Middle East. Iran believes that support for Hamas is in line with its principles in supporting the resistance movements and the oppressed in the world. For Iran, supporting Hamas also rebuts accusations against it of pursuing sectarian policies. Whenever Hamas or resistance movements in Palestine were able to hold their ground and weaken Israel, this served as a strategic boost for Iran, which sees itself in a confrontation on the security, military, and psychological levels with Israel. This is especially so since Iran’s senior leaders have stressed the illegitimacy of Israel, Iran’s opposition to the peace process, and its non-recognition of peace treaties between the Palestinians and Israel.

But despite this convergence between the principles and interests of Hamas and Iran, Hamas remained committed to its Charter and shunning alignment to this or that Arab or Muslim side. While Hamas at times declared its support for Iran in any possible confrontation with Israel or even the US,¹⁰⁷ it did not voice any position against any Arab or Muslim country that had differences with Iran, such as KSA, Egypt, Turkey, or any Gulf country. Hamas did not commit itself to all Iranian positions or policies either. Regarding the Palestinian bid to join the UN as a member state, for example, Iran rejected the bid, considering it a betrayal of Palestinian rights.¹⁰⁸ The Supreme Leader also said it was “the end of the right of return and the Palestinians’ claim to the territory [occupied in] 1948.”¹⁰⁹ However, Khalid Mish‘al, during the same conference that brought him with the Iranian leadership in Tehran, said the bid was an “undeniable symbolic and moral victory.”¹¹⁰

Some even see that Hamas’s participation in the 2006 election was against Tehran’s wishes. Hamas’s positions in support of establishing a Palestinian state

¹⁰⁷ “The Islamic Republic defends the rights of the Palestinians and we defend the rights of Islamic Iran. We are in the same front against the enemies of Islam... Hamas would fight alongside Iran if America militarily attacks it,” said Khalid Mish‘al during a visit to Iran. See *The Daily Star*, 21/3/2007.

¹⁰⁸ *Assafir*, 24/9/2011.

¹⁰⁹ *Al-Akhabar*, 3/10/2011.

¹¹⁰ The Fifth International Conference to Support the Palestinian *Intifadah*, 2–3/10/2011.

within “the 1967 borders,” or a long-term truce with Israel, did not conform to Iran’s policies or its Palestine strategy, which does not encourage any negotiations, truce, or recognition.

Although the relationship between Hamas and its GS government and Iran cooled down, with a decline in financial and logistical support in 2012–2013 as a result of their differences, especially over Syria, the relationship continued even if was at a minimal level. Iran’s qualitative support for Hamas and resistance groups emerged clearly during the Israeli assault on GS in November 2012, when the Palestinian resistance reached a new milestone with its rockets hitting Tel Aviv and other areas deeper into Israel, and prevented the enemy from achieving its military and security objectives. The role of Iranian weapons was important in achieving this. Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said, “We do not conceal our support to Palestine... the Israeli entity is a cancerous tumor. We provide assistance to the Palestinian people including armament. In the 8-day war, the people of Gaza, with this assistance, were able to defend against and rout the Israeli entity.”¹¹¹

Relations chilled again after that, but, despite the differences that could no longer be concealed, Iranian and Hamas attitudes confirmed that there was no estrangement and that contacts between the two sides continued.¹¹²

In a confirmation of the decline in Hamas-Iran relations, Mahmud al-Zahhar, a prominent Hamas leader, said that the relations between the movement and Iran resumed again after a lull due to the latter’s position on Syria. Al-Zahhar then stressed, “Our relationship with Iran has not been severed, and we do not want to sever it with any of the Arab countries, even those that are fighting us.”¹¹³

To promote this mutual commitment to restore bilateral relations, a member of Hamas Political Bureau, Muhammad Nasr, visited Iran. Haniyyah’s advisor Yusuf Rizqa commented on the visit by saying that the issues that brought Hamas and Iran together are Jerusalem and liberation, both being shared objectives that are bigger than the points of contention. Rizqa added that there remained lots of common grounds with Iran, which was facing American and Israeli threats, just like Hamas.

¹¹¹ Sama News Agency, 13/2/2013.

¹¹² Mehr News Agency, 23/7/2013.

¹¹³ *Almustaqbal*, 10/12/2013.

Rizqa then pointed out, “ Hamas did not meddle in Iran’s internal affairs, and even in the Syrian issues, Hamas did not intervene, but only voiced positions in support of the Syrian people’s right to be free.”¹¹⁴

Musa Abu Marzuq, member of Hamas’s political bureau, summarized the position on Syria and differences with Iran in an editorial in *Al-Quds al-Arabi* titled “ Hamas’s Crisis and Its National Fundamentals.” He wrote:

The relationship with Iran was influenced by what happened in Syria. We tried to isolate positions on Syria from other issues, and maintain the relationship with Iran at its known level, but the relationship was affected. We are trying to restore what was broken, to serve our people and our cause.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

The OIC has not developed any special relations with Hamas or any other resistance movement. It has reflected the attitudes of the political regimes of its member states, and not the peoples of these states. Consequently, the OIC has generally backed the strategy of peace with Israel, denouncing Israeli policies that have obstructed negotiations with the Palestinians, and calling for the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state in WB and GS. It acknowledged Hamas’s victory in the PLC elections, supported the inter-Palestinian dialogue, encouraging reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, and it even tried to play a direct role in this effort, but to no avail.

As for the relationship between Hamas and Turkey, it is possible to say that four historic events on the Palestinian level have helped in the development of an effective Turkish role in Palestine, and opened up the prospect for the bi-lateral relations. These events were: the legislative elections in 2006 which was won by Hamas; and intra-Palestinian clashes in GS between Hamas and Fatah; the Israel assault on GS in late 2008 and early 2009 aimed at the elimination of Hamas; and the Israeli raid on the Turkish vessel Mavi Marmara on 31/5/2010. Turkey played roles in these three situations, in terms of the recognition of election results and

¹¹⁴ *Al-Hayat*, 10/10/2013.

¹¹⁵ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 18/12/2013.

encouraging Hamas to “renounce violence,” in terms of mediation between Fatah and Hamas, or in terms of denouncing the Israeli aggression on GS. However, its options with the AKP remained under the “Arab Peace Initiative” ceiling, calling for a negotiated settlement, recognition and normalization with Israel if the latter agrees to withdraw to the 1967 borders.

In other words, the Turkish dispute with Israel over the issues mentioned above did not alter Turkey’s core attitudes drawn from those of NATO and the EU concerning Israel’s existence and the need to recognize it and negotiate with it for a peaceful settlement to the conflict. The Arab uprisings that broke out at the beginning of 2011 in Tunisia and Egypt, and moved to other countries in the Arab region, reinforced the Turkish role and its effectiveness but did not change Turkey’s Palestine strategy. It is difficult for Turkey to be part of the structure of Western policies in the region, and at the same time pursue a policy hostile to Israel. Therefore, it is not probable in the current circumstances that Turkish-Israeli relations could be severed. Turkey will therefore most probably continue its policy of “calculated support” for Hamas.

Iran continued to declare support for Hamas, a relationship that has lasted a quarter of a century. Iran continued to flatly reject negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis, and continued to stress its fixed positions on the legitimacy of resistance and the illegitimacy of Israel.

Contrary to the logic of other Muslim countries (including Turkey), Tehran stressed the demise of the “Zionist entity,” and its officials often expressed optimism about this imminent demise. Iran went as far as to question the legitimacy of the Palestinian negotiator, and condemned the policies of Judaization pursued by Israel, while renewing support for the resistance and stressing its confidence that this was the only way to eliminate Israel and achieve victory.

Hamas still needs support from Iran as a major Islamic power, as long as it continues to be a resistance movement against the Israeli occupation, and as long as the prospect for a peaceful settlement remains blocked with no light at the end of the tunnel. For this reason, Hamas will need to maintain ties not only with Iran, but also Turkey, and all Muslim and Arab countries, especially in the post-Arab uprisings phase, which remains rife with uncertainty. This does not permit any change in strategic choices in the foreseeable future.

Iran will maintain its close relationship with Hamas, as long as Iran remains committed to a strategy of confrontation with Israel and US. For Iran, Hamas is a resistance movement that fits into this strategy. Thus, Iran diverges in its strategic view of the relationship with Hamas and its support for it on many levels, from the orientations and policies of other Muslim countries such as Turkey or other member states of the OIC. It is expected that the relationship between Hamas and Iran will improve, if the chances of a political settlement in Syria improve, or if Israel launches any new aggression on the Palestinian people in GS.

Chapter Ten

Hamas in Power

A Study of Its Ideology and Policies, 2006–2012

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Hamas in Power

A Study of Its Ideology and Policies, 2006–2012

Introduction

When Islamic movements began to operate openly as political parties competing with other parties, questions were raised about their ability to operate within democratic political environments, win elections, form governments and rule. These questions are no longer being raised today, after Islamic movements took power in several countries. Instead, the questions now center on the extent to which these movements can coexist with the democratic structure of political systems, because the ideological background of these movements raises questions about their ability to operate in a democratic environment, whose outputs could contradict the principles adopted by these movements.

With Hamas having been in power in Palestine (in GS) since 2006, it faces the same questions, regarding the extent of its ability to reconcile its Islamic frame of reference with accepting operating within democratic institutions, and by extension, questions about the problem of combining ideological principles and democratic political work in general. Combining resistance action and governance is a challenge for the movement. Indeed, one of the things that set Hamas apart from other groups was that it was able to combine social activities with military action, so how would Hamas be able to add the new dimension embodied in political governance and official political action? To be sure, social movements are able to turn into political parties, but military movements face many obstacles if they want to operate as a political party, not least in operating with the transparency required for political parties, in a legal democratic environment, something that is not commensurate with the secretive nature of resistance work.

There was extensive interest in Hamas and in following up its activities in the West. Hamas was once described by American President George W. Bush as “one of the deadliest terror organizations in the world.”¹ His view has been

¹ Michael Irving Jensen, *The Political Ideology of Hamas: A Grassroots Perspective* (New York: I. B. Taurus & Co. Ltd, 2009), p. 2.

shared by Israel, Western Europe, Canada, amongst others. But Hamas's decision to participate in the 2006 elections was a game-changer. These elections marked the entrance of Hamas into international politics and made it a player that cannot be ignored.² Hamas not only contested the Palestinian elections in 2006, but won 74 out of 132 seats in the PLC. Four independent candidates supported by Hamas also won seats. The results of that election will be discussed later in this chapter.

After this, Hamas formed the tenth government by itself, and then the eleventh government in the framework of a national unity cabinet, which lasted until the GS-WB split with the Hamas takeover of GS, and Fatah controlling the PA-administered areas of WB.

Hamis consists of three broad sub-divisions: civil society (charitable and educational institutions), political (the Political Bureau), and a military (Ezzedeem al-Qassam Brigades). This chapter focuses solely on Hamas's political party.

There is a belief, especially in the West that Hamas has many contradictions, which are best described by Francis Robinson in the following comment while reviewing Jeroen Gunning's *Hamis in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence*, where he said:

To observers Hamas has many apparent contradictions: it has used political violence against both Israel and its Palestinian political rival, Fatah, but it fought the 2006 election on a law, order and social welfare platform; it aims to create an Islamic state but holds elections and champions democracy; it supports the sharia yet its leaders are mainly secular professionals; it calls for the destruction of Israel, but has shown some willingness to honour previous peace agreements.³

However, Robinson apparently fell victim to generalization and oversimplification in his characterizations of Hamas. Indeed, that resistance movements, in their fight against occupation, have used military resistance or political methods is a general phenomenon seen with resistance movements in their confrontation with all forms of occupation and colonialism around the world. This is what Fatah itself did, as

² Baudouin Long, "The Hamas Agenda: How Has it Changed?" *Middle East Policy* journal, vol. 17, no. 4, Winter 2010, p. 131,

<http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/hamas-agenda-how-has-it-changed>

³ Jeroen Gunning, "Hamis in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Cambridge University Press, vol. 20, issue 2, April 2010, p. 226.

well as resistance movements in Nazi-occupied Europe and Ireland, and others. Meanwhile, the quest to establish an Islamic state, in the vision of most political Islamic groups, is not incompatible with democratic electoral competition. Also, in Islam, advocating Shari'ah is not the work of clerics and scholars alone, but could also involve broad segments of society and from all scientific specialties that believe that Islam is a comprehensive religion, and believe Islam is applicable in every time and place. Such people should not be described as "secular," just because they are not Shari'ah scholars or "clerics" in the Western sense of the term.

Concerning Hamas's declaration of its respect for previous agreements and its assent to the establishment of a Palestinian state on the lands occupied in 1967, this is for Hamas and many other factions something that is in line with the necessities of interim action, alongside Hamas's insistence on not recognizing Israel. This is something that Hamas has adhered to despite all the pressures and the severity of the blockade.

Hamas came to power in 2006, faced with the challenge of not only reconciling their Islamic ideology with a democratic political order, but also the challenge of managing the relationship with Palestinian political forces and international actors, in addition to the challenge of preserving itself as a resistance movement and a ruling political party.

Keeping these facts in view, this chapter aims to:

1. Discuss the problems of the Palestinian political system and explain the ways Hamas has tried to deal with those problems since its election in 2006.
2. Analyze the challenges faced by Hamas, such as that of harmonization between its Islamic ideology and democracy and combining resistance with governance.
3. Evaluate Hamas' political performance since 2006.

With the above-mentioned aims in mind, this chapter is divided into the following sections: Section One provides an analysis of the 2006 PLC Elections in Palestine, because this was a milestone in the political history of Palestine; Section Two presents and analyzes the main problems of the Palestinian political system and explains how Hamas worked within that system once it was elected in 2006; Section Three of this chapter discusses the challenges of Hamas, such as the harmonization between its Islamic ideology and democracy and also the challenge of combining resistance with governance; and finally, in Section Four of this chapter, an assessment is made of Hamas's political performance.

First: The 2006 PLC Elections in Palestine

The first PLC elections since the signing of the Oslo Accords (1993) were organized in the Palestinian territories in 1996. It was not until 2006 that PLC elections were held for the second time. Mahjoob Zweiri points out that the significance of these elections was apparent even before announcement of the results, for the following three reasons:

1. These elections were the first parliamentary elections since the death of Yasir ‘Arafat.
2. They came after the Israeli withdrawal from GS.
3. Hamas decided to participate in the elections, whereas it had boycotted the previous elections in 1996.⁴

Beginning with the 9/1/2005 vote to fill the PA presidency after Yasir ‘Arafat’s death in November, 2004, moving through local elections that began in stages at around the same time, and culminating in Hamas’s surprise win over Fatah in the 25/1/2006 parliamentary election, international observers confirmed the transparency, freedom, and fairness of elections whose successful conduct suggested that a new era in Middle Eastern political life might be on the way.⁵

When Hamas’s decision to participate in the 2006 PLC elections was announced in Nablus by Muhammad Ghazal, a member of the Political Bureau, most of Hamas’s political rivals like Fatah did not think that the Islamic movement could win the elections. This was because, at the time of Hamas’s announcement, various polls conducted in the occupied territories had clearly shown that Fatah was ahead of Hamas. This helps explain why many actors consented to Hamas’s participation in the legislative elections. Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak, expressed the view that was perhaps the opinion of those opposed to Hamas and the Islamists in general, saying to an Israeli newspaper that Hamas’s participation should be approved by the Israelis, because after the election Hamas would turn into a party whose role would not exceed being an electorally ineffective opposition faction.

⁴ Mahjoob Zweiri, “The Hamas Victory: Shifting Sands or Major Earthquake?” *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 4, 2006, p. 675.

⁵ Riad Malki, “The Palestinian Elections: Beyond Hamas and Fatah,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 17, no. 3, July 2006, pp. 131–132.

Like President Hosni Mubarak, the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, was also convinced that Hamas would not be able to win the elections. However, she said:

I tend to believe that when people start getting elected and have to start worrying about constituencies and have to start worrying not about whether their fire-breathing rhetoric against Israel is being heard, but about whether or not that person's child down the street is able to go to a good school or that road has been fixed or life is getting better, that things start to change.⁶

Rice's statement showed her complete understanding of the PA's financial situation, and of the donors' capabilities of pressuring it. However, Rice's statement did not indicate that the US expected Hamas to win the PLC elections. For it believed that the elections would serve to contain Hamas in the PA's institutions and would diminish its military capabilities.

On the Palestinian side, the Fatah movement was not yet ready for the idea of being dislodged from its leadership of the PA. Although Hamas had won in the local elections before the legislative elections, observers attributed this to the fact that local elections essentially rely on tribal and religious groups and charity work, something that was Hamas's strong suit. Victory at the national elections was a different matter altogether. Among many things, a Hamas victory at the legislative elections depended on the overall national political situation and the party's policies for governing the occupied territories. There was a widespread belief that Hamas would not be able to govern except for carrying out its social and charitable works through mosques and charities.

The Hamas leadership did not provide any public indication that they were serious in winning the elections. Indeed, most Hamas leaders did not expect to win at all, and their focus was on forming a strong opposition to protect the resistance program, fight against corruption, and monitor the performance of the PA's executive branch.

Following Hamas's victory in the elections, on 25/1/2006, political observers tried to fathom the reasons for the surprise. Some of them considered the religious

⁶ Interview With Washington Times Editorial Board, US Department of State, 11/3/2005, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/43341.htm>; and see Daniel Pipes, "Can Hamas and Hezbollah be Democratic?," *New York Sun* newspaper, 22/3/2005, <http://www.freemuslims.org/news/article.php?article=526>

angle a major contributing factor toward Hamas's victory at the polls. According to this analysis, the leaders of Hamas used mosques to organize their supporters through religious sermons. But this explanation may be too simplistic. The point may be made here that the same tactics were used by at least two other Islamic movements—the PIJ and Hizb ut-Tahrir Party, appealing to the electorate not to vote in the upcoming elections. Many others, however, considered the Hamas victory as the Palestinian voters' support to the Hamas call to weed out corruption considered widespread in PA institutions under the Fatah leadership. This anti-corruption message was certainly popular but alone cannot explain such a sweeping victory. If it had been the case, the popular votes would have been also distributed among other movements such as the National Initiative, the Third Way and other leftist movements who had also pointed out the rampant corruption affecting the PA institutions.

Given the above-mentioned factors, and Hamas's strong social and charitable networks, it is more credible to claim that Hamas's election victory at the 2006 Legislative Council elections can be attributed to Hamas's election campaigns on daily economic and social issues affecting the population. Going back to the polls at the time regarding the priorities of Palestinian citizens, it is possible to infer that Hamas's electoral program recast what was implicit in those polls in the form of a government policy that Hamas would seek to implement if it won the elections.⁷ Studying the poll from the Development Studies Programme of Birzeit University in 2004,⁸ it is possible to say that the priorities of Palestinian citizens in WB and GS focused on security stability, improving the economic situation, and the rule of law.

Other polls conducted by some Palestinian think tanks reinforced the same conclusions, and clearly pointed to a widespread restlessness over the corruption prevalent in WB and GS. Among the most important conclusions that can be made from an analysis of the surveys, are:

- The ability to fight corruption came first among the eight criterions in the selection of the lists participating in the upcoming (2006) legislative elections (30%).⁹

⁷ Development Studies Programme (DSP)-Birzeit University, "An Opinion Poll Concerning Living Conditions, Emigration, the Palestinian Government, Security Conditions and Reform," Poll no. 19, 5/10/2004, <http://sites.birzeit.edu/cds/opinionpolls/poll19/>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR), Poll no. (18), 6–8/12/2005, <http://www.pcpsr.org/arabic/survey/polls/2005/p18apressrelease.html> (in Arabic)

- 21% of the respondents said that fighting corruption in public institutions was one of the most important priorities at the domestic level.¹⁰
- The key issue that the respondents in the sample hoped for the members of the Legislative Council to focus on was combatting corruption (53%). One of the most important qualities that the respondents thought candidates in the legislative elections should have is not to be corrupt (92%).¹¹
- When voting for parties and movements in the legislative elections, the first consideration was the ability to fight corruption (24%).¹²
- The most important criterion on which the respondents would choose to vote for individual candidates was integrity and distance from corruption.¹³

A comparison in Hamas's theoretical framework suggests that there was clear convergence between what was proposed in its modern literature and the priorities of the street identified by polls and experts. Hamas's slogans in the elections were based on this congruence, showing a qualitative shift in its discourse directed at the masses. Traditionally, Hamas's discourse often focused on its attitudes towards Israel. However, ahead of the elections, Hamas produced new slogans away from the relationship with the Israeli occupation, instead focusing as much as possible on issues of Palestinian official institutions.

In addition to the title of Hamas's project at the time (Change and Reform), the program itself contained several items that emphasized the institutionalization of the PA in a way that would ensure sound management of the Palestinian people's resources and the integrity and transparency of institutional work. In addition, it would fight corruption in all its forms, while stressing the need to find a sound administrative mechanism for appointments to the PA's positions in all sectors. Despite the many reservations on the program, which will be discussed later in this chapter, the program as an indicator of a new phase was indeed in line with the wishes of Palestinian public opinion.

¹⁰ "The Importance of the 'Corruption' Issue for the Voter and Candidate," site of Transparency Palestine, citing Opinion Polls and Survey Studies Unit, An-Najah National University, 25/12/2005. (in Arabic)

¹¹ "The Importance of the 'Corruption' Issue for the Voter and Candidate," Transparency Palestine, citing Opinion Polls and Survey Studies Unit, 16–18/11/2005. (in Arabic)

¹² PCPSR, Poll no. (17), 7–9/9/2005, <http://www.pcpsr.org/arabic/survey/polls/2005/p17a1.pdf> (in Arabic)

¹³ "The Importance of the 'Corruption' Issue for the Voter and Candidate," Transparency Palestine, citing Opinion Polls and Survey Studies Unit, 9–11/6/2005. (in Arabic)

According to the program of Change and Reform, in the section on the policy of administrative reform and the fight against corruption, the program stated that good governance was the key factor for the success and progress of countries, and, therefore, the Change and Reform bloc would work towards:

1. The elimination of all forms of corruption, in all areas as quickly as possible, seeing it as a major cause behind weakening the internal Palestinian front and undermining the foundations of national unity.

(...)

3. Adopting an accommodative policy and distributing the labor force in a balanced manner according to clear plans and the needs of the administrative organs for various competences, and fighting favoritism and nepotism.¹⁴

Regarding legislative policy, the Change and Reform list stressed the need for constitutional reform, and for working on reforming the judicial system to bolster its integrity, independence, dynamism and development. Hamas wanted to put an end to the dominance of the executive branch over various other branches, in addition to reactivating the principles of accountability to which all members of the PA should be subjected to, with full transparency.¹⁵

Many of Hamas's 2006 candidates had distinguished themselves academically, compared to Fatah's candidates. Of 74 Hamas MPs, 19 were holders of PhDs (25.7%) and 22 were holders of Master's Degrees (29.7%), while 89.2% of Hamas's MPs were university graduates. By comparison, with the Fatah movement, which won 45 seats, 10 (22.2%) held PhDs, and seven (15.6%) held Master's Degrees, while university graduates accounted for 77.8%.¹⁶ However, Shari'ah was the most prominent discipline of specialty among the Hamas members in the legislature.

Hamas PLC members were also younger than Fatah's representatives. For instance, 12 (16.2%) of Hamas's MPs were under 40 years of age. 34 (45.9%) MPs were between 40 and 50 years old, 25 (33.8%) MPs were between 50 and 60

¹⁴ See "The Importance of the 'Corruption' Issue for the Voter and Candidate," Transparency Palestine. (in Arabic)

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Samar Jawdat al-Barghouthi, *Simat al-Nukhbah al-Siyasiyyah al-Filastiniyyah Qabla wa Ba'da Qiyam al-Sultah al-Wataniyyah al-Filastiniyyah* (The Characteristics of the Palestinian Political Elite Before and After the Establishment of the Palestinian National Authority) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2009), pp. 202 and 257.

and three (4.1%) members were over 60 years old. Fatah, however, had three MPs below 40 years of age, just 6.7%, 24 MPs between 50 and 60 years of age (53.3%) and seven MPs over 60 (15.6%).¹⁷ The average age of Hamas's MPs in the Council was 47.7 years compared to 49.2 years for Fatah's MPs.¹⁸

There are also notes on the mechanism followed by Hamas in the selection of its MPs. Hamas relied primarily on the popularity of certain personalities, and not necessarily on diversifying skills and competencies. This meant that Hamas lawmakers had similar backgrounds in some WB areas, in terms of specialty or line of work. A large proportion of the Hamas PLC candidates were imams, Shari'ah graduates, or Shari'ah workers. One example of this was in Bethlehem, where three out of four candidates were specialized in Islamic law,¹⁹ and in the Qalqiliya governorate all candidates were imams or teachers of Islamic sciences, including some who did not hold degrees.²⁰

These matters are not discussed to undermine the capabilities of those in Shari'ah, rather it is to point out that the PLC does not discuss only religious matters, it is also concerned with other technical issues. This is evident when PLC committees are formed, covering law, politics, economy, financial sciences, communication, transportation, health, technology, power, etc.

It would be fair to note however that, despite the existence of many teachers and imams in the Change and Reform bloc, it also included other distinguished competencies and specialties that compared favorably to other blocs. Our assessment here is not in relation to other parliamentary blocs, but rather of Hamas's ambition to bring about change and reform in all aspects of the Palestinian situation in all aspects, which required qualified and competent individuals in all community issues. For more information, consideration could be given to table (1), which gives a detailed, in-the-numbers breakdown of the academic level of the PLC members of the Change and Reform bloc, and their specialties.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹⁹ To view the resumes of Hamas candidates in Bethlehem, see PIC, http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/palestoday/reports/report2006_1/entkhabat06/entkhabat_tashre3i_06/bet_lahem/22_1_06.htm (in Arabic)

²⁰ PIC, http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/palestoday/reports/report2006_1/entkhabat06/entkhabat_tashre3i_06/kalkelyah/5_1_06.htm (in Arabic)

Hamas won the legislative elections and theoretically could have formed a government and implemented its program comfortably, but the reality of Palestinian political life undermined the democratic mandate secured by Hamas. Instead of having the victory of the movement usher in a new phase, in which Hamas enjoyed privileges at the local, regional, and international levels, things looked tragic for the movement in terms of internal and external relationships. In any case, before delving into Hamas’s political performance, it is informative to examine the context in which Hamas operated in the Palestinian political system.

Table (1): Specialties of Change and Reform Bloc PLC Members²¹

Specialty	WB & GS	Percentage (%)	WB	Percentage (%)	GS	Percentage (%)
Shari’ah Sciences	32	47.8	23	53.5	9	37.5
Literature and Education	12	17.9	4	9.3	8	33.3
Medicine, Pharmacology and Nursing	6	9	3	7	3	12.5
Law	1	1.5	1	2.3	-	0
Economics and Administrative Sciences	7	10.5	6	14	1	4.2
Sciences and Engineering	7	10.5	5	11.7	2	8.3
Political Sciences	2	3	1	2.3	1	4.2

Second: Problems of the Palestinian Political System and How Hamas Has Dealt with Them

One of the most important problems of the Palestinian political system has involved the overlap between the PLO and the PA. There is redundancy in the Palestinian political system resulting from the absence of a boundary between the functions of the PA and the functions of the PLO. Although there may be a theoretical boundary, actual political practice reflects an ambiguity in the roles, in addition to the weakness of both institutions in terms of infrastructure and programs, which hampers their work. Mamdouh Nawfal has emphasized the lack of capacity the PLO has to effectively carry out the struggle against the occupation and blamed

²¹ This table is exclusive to the study, prepared by the researcher, based on the biographies of the members of the Change and Reform bloc in the Palestinian Legislative Council.

this on the failure of the PLO to carry out reforms in the organization. He therefore pointed out the need for reinvigorating and reactivating the role of the PLO. As part of reforming the PLO, Mamdouh calls for stopping the mix-up between the roles of the ministries and that of the Executive Committee, and working on correcting the conditions of many PLO staff. He also calls for the reconsideration of the system of representation and factional quota systems. Mamdouh's call for reform was not limited to the PLO, as he also called for reforming the PA, in relation to many cases similar to those mentioned above, in terms of institution building and programs.²²

When the PA was established, and the traditional leaderships of the PLO returned to Palestine, establishing a political system based on the idea of self-rule, there were some organizations that had popular support that refused to participate in the new political system, preferring instead to try to influence it from the outside. This highlighted the issue of the presence of other political forces that do not deal with the PLO or the PA as representative of the Palestinians. In other words, as George Jaqman explains, transferring the comprehensive model of the PLO and applying it onto the nascent political system in Palestine threatened to swallow the whole society, in the absence of organized civil society organizations, parties, unions, or popular movements capable of mounting real opposition.²³

The problem of the Palestinian system is not limited to the PLO, where there is a lack of democracy in its institutions, no elections are held, and not all Palestinian parties are represented. It also includes the problems of the Palestinian political system and the critical relations between the PLO and the PA. Before Hamas came to power, there were no critical relations, because Fatah controlled the PLO and the PA, and it marginalized the role of the PLO. However, after Hamas's election victory, Fatah revived the role of the PLO, creating a problem of representation in the Palestinian political system.

The fact of the matter is that the Palestinian factions realize the need to reform the PLO, and have signed joint agreements calling for changes, reflecting their

²² Mamdouh Nawfal, *The Palestinian Political System, Between Palestine and the Diaspora: The Structural Changes in the Palestinian Political Life*, The Fourth Annual Conference of The Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy—Muwatin, 22–23/10/1998 (Ramallah: Muwatin, 1999).

²³ George Jaqman, *The Danger Posed by the Past to the Future, a Critique of the Model of the Palestine Liberation Organization* (Ramallah: Muwatin, 1999).

consensus on the existence of problems within the organization. But agreeing on the need for reform is insufficient if there is no more precise definition of said reform, and agreeing that the partisan lineup within the PLO is no longer consistent with the political landscape,²⁴ given the growing popularity of some movements, the decline of others, and the emergence or demise of others still. If the dispute revolves around the nature and form of the reform, the agreement on the principle remains empty rhetoric meant for media consumption. To date, the Palestinian factions have yet to agree on the details of the reform to be implemented in the PLO.²⁵

Hamas has a clear stand on the PLO, not denying the fact that the PLO is the legitimate representative of the Palestinians, but viewing it as not the only representative of the Palestinian people. Hamas, PIJ and the National Initiative maintain that in order to be accepted as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, the PLO has to carry out an overall reform of the organization and hold free and fair elections of the National Council. The elected National Council could then decide on the policies, positions, and the charter of the new PLO. However, the Fatah movement disrupted the process of reforming the PLO to ensure its continued control over the latter, though the reform of the organization is an item on the talks for Palestinian reconciliation.

Internal power struggles in the PA especially between its president and the prime minister existed even before the participation of Hamas in the political system. The political conflict between Abu Mazen and Yasir ‘Arafat was well-known, and the intra-PA conflict continued even after the dismissal of the Hamas government in the WB. There were disagreements between Salam Fayyad and many Fatah leaders, and later disagreements between Fayyad and Mahmud ‘Abbas himself. This problem weakened the ability of Hamas to implement its program, because the president had a completely different program, and he, in cooperation with foreign donors, was able to stop funds from arriving to the Hamas-led government, instead

²⁴ Jawad al-Hamad (ed.), *Munazamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyyah Nahwa Mashru' li Islah Buniawy Siasy* (Palestine Liberation Organization Towards a Structural Political Reform) (Amman: MESC, 2006).

²⁵ Mohsen Mohammad Saleh (ed.), *Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyyah: Taqyim al-Tajrubah wa I'adat al-Bina'* (Palestinian Liberation Organization: Evaluating the Experience and Restructuring) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2007).

diverting funds to the president's office, something that aggravated tensions within the institutions of the PA.

Hamas's boycott of the 2005 Palestinian presidential election might have contributed to this problem. Perhaps Hamas did not expect to win both the presidential and PLC elections. But in their view, this absolves Hamas of responsibility for non-participation in the vote in the presidential elections in favor of another independent candidate, because there were candidates who were willing to cooperate with Hamas, such as 'Abdul Sattar al-Qassem and Mustafa al-Barghouthi.

After the legislative elections, Hamas dealt democratically with the conflict with the president and Fatah, and engaged in dialogue. It was able to reach a solution through National Conciliation Document of 2006, and other agreements, most notably the Mecca Agreement of 2007. However, the unity government did not last long because of actions by some corrupt Fatah leaders. For example, they prepared for overturning the election results and were accused of contributing to internal dissension. Muhammad Dahlan is one such leader facing multiple charges in the Palestinian court in Ramallah filed by the President Mahmud 'Abbas. In 2007, Hamas took a decision to use force against those groups,²⁶ after incitement against Hamas and its government reached a peak. Hamas succeeded in wresting full control over GS, but the result was the collapse of the unity government, and Fatah's seizure of control of WB and the beginning of a new phase of the conflict.

The other problem that Hamas faced was that governments are usually governed by the Constitution or Basic Law. The Palestinian political system is also governed by the agreements signed between the PLO and Israel. Various PA-Israel agreements reduced the PA's control over key areas like security, economics and politics. Therefore, Hamas had to look for harmony between its programs and the President's programs, which are based on those agreements. Through the Mecca Agreement,²⁷ Hamas tried to overcome that problem but did not solve it completely. Hamas announced its respect for the signed agreements, but as a separate movement said it would not abide by them. However, it acknowledged that a Palestinian government that includes all parties would not breach those agreements.

²⁶ *Asharq Alawsat*, 4/1/2011.

²⁷ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/2/2007.

Another important problem faced by Hamas was the situation concerning the PLC after the elections in 2006. The previous Legislative Council held a final session following the Legislative Elections in 2006, and took many decisions that restricted the work of the newly elected Council.²⁸ The actions of the former PLC in its last meeting diverted the efforts of the elected council, from its first moment after taking office, towards addressing the new problem, instead of embarking on the tasks of Change and Reform pledged in their program. Furthermore, the PLC, since its inception, continued to suffer from some administrative problems caused by flaws in its administrative structure in relation to the distribution of tasks, especially between the secretary general and speaker, over issues such as staffing and transportation.²⁹

Third: Subjective and Objective Challenges

Hamas faced a fundamental dilemma in the immediate aftermath of its victory in the 2006 PLC elections, related to the attempts of some internal and external parties to pressure it to make a choice, either to remain as a resistance movement or to transform itself quickly from a resistance movement to a full-fledged political party. This was a serious issue because if the movement had wanted to continue with resistance it would have meant withdrawing from politics altogether. Hamas had played a significant role in the second *Intifadah*, and in forcing Israel to withdraw from GS. Therefore, a full transition into a political party shorn of its resistance activities represented an existential threat to Hamas. In addition to this, Hamas faced the challenges of proving its ability to combine an Islamic ideology with the requirements of democracy. On the other hand, there were substantive challenges for Hamas to face, namely the occupation and the institutional imbalance in the Palestinian political system. This chapter will discuss these challenges as follows:

²⁸ Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development (Panorama), *Taqrir al-Ada' al-Barlamani (1)* (The Parliamentary Performance Report (1)) (Ramallah: Panorama, 2007), p. 25.

²⁹ Ahmad Abu Dayyah, *The Administrative Construction and the Supporting Units of the Legislative Council*, Transparency Palestine, 2004, www.aman-palestine.org/Documents/Publication/ManagBuild.doc (in Arabic)

1. The Ability to Achieve Harmonization Between Islamic Ideology and Democracy

Doubts were expressed that Hamas's ideology based on Islamic principles may hinder the establishment of democratic institutions, or may not help Hamas pursue realistic policies. This may not be a real challenge, or more precisely, it is a theoretical challenge that did not materialize on the ground, especially since Hamas's first step towards entering power was undertaken in a democratic way, without violating any of its ideological principles. Elections were Hamas's path. It should be noted here that a number of Islamic thinkers do not find any contradiction between Islam and democracy.³⁰ In any case, the differences between the foundations of the Islamic political system and democracy do not negate compatibility and harmony between the two.³¹

The newness of the experience has prompted many people, especially liberals, to argue that democratization is a challenge not only for Hamas, but also for the Palestinian people. There are expectations in certain quarters that the ideology of Hamas would put the organization against democratization and push it towards a policy to Islamize Palestinian society. In addition, the lack of precise separation between what is political and what is ideological makes it impractical to pause at each position or policy followed by the movement, and analyze whether it is motivated by ideology or politics. Indeed, there is no doubt that the reality in which Hamas lives is not compatible with its principles, but logically speaking, we cannot negate the possibility that Hamas's policies could be consistent with reality without violating its principles.

Immediately following its electoral victory, Hamas was keen to disprove the assumptions mentioned above, making the case that it had a comprehensive program to run society, derived from Islamic law, but that it would not seek to force anyone to adopt its programs.³² Hamas as a movement with essentially the

³⁰ Muhammad Jalal Sharaf, *Nash'at al-Fikr al-Siyasi wa Tatawwuruhi fi al-Islam* (The Emergence of Political Thought and its Evolution in Islam) (Beirut: Dar al-Nahdah al-Arabiyyah, 1982), pp. 33–83.

³¹ Magdi Hammad et al., *Al-Harakat al-Islamiyyah wa al-Dimuqratiyyah: Dirasat fi al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasah* (Islamic and Democratic Movemnets: Studies on Thought and Practice) (Beirut: Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1999).

³² An interview with 'Atallah Abu al-Sabah, Palestinian Minister of Education in the 10th government, OnIslam, 11/3/2007. (in Arabic)

same ideology as the MB movement, does not have revolutionary social change on its agenda.³³ Furthermore, its new position meant that it had to implement the program of “Hamis government” that adapted to reality and the political context within which it operated, and not the program of “Hamis the resistance,” which rejected political reality and sought to change it, and which did not care for the calculations of the factions that support the Oslo Accords.

In the beginning, statements like these were seen as an attempt to appease concerned parties. The Change and Reform bloc was elected by a majority in the Palestinian street, and hence, democracy required that this Bloc’s programs be present in all domains. Beyond the claims of those who spoke about this challenge, and those who deny its existence, there were a number of indicators showing that Hamas’s entry to the PA’s institutions through elections was not the first step on the road to democracy. Hamas’s victory was followed by long rounds of dialogue to form a National Unity Government. Despite the failure of these early attempts, this serves as a clear indication that Hamas approves of pluralism and political partnership.

Subsequent steps confirmed this. The steps were related to the rounds of dialogue about the PLO and participation within it, and the National Unity Government and its format. Although dialogue took place amidst a crisis, a political partnership a preference for Hamas. A year after entering the institutions of the PA, Hamas succeeded in perpetuating political partnership as a concrete reality, forming the first National Unity Government in the PA.

The political partnership that Hamas formed sought to change reality from mere slogans to practice in PA institutions, and not only in the political domain. Indeed, Hamas was keen on having ministers in its government from the Christian community in the country, reflecting a deeper grasp of the notion of partnership and acceptance of others. This categorically invalidates the claim that Hamas’s religious ideology may prevent it from dealing in harmony with the others, politically or religiously.

The challenge faced by Hamas was not from a single source. The fear that a dominant Hamas political ideology would produce a limited program unable to

³³ Khaled Hroub, Manifestations of Pragmatism Among Moderate Islamists, *OnIslam*, 22/3/2007, <http://www.onislam.net/arabic/newsanalysis/analysis-opinions/palestine/89779-2007-03-22%2001-45-57.html> (in Arabic)

deal with reality and the prevailing environment, was matched by fears from the opposite direction, perhaps from supporters and members of Hamas themselves. The fear stems from their doubts about the ability of the movement to preserve its ideology in the context of the prevailing environment. Therefore, one of the achievements of Hamas was that it overcame this concern during the various milestones it underwent, showing flexibility in dealing with the harsh demands of reality, without losing sight of its intellectual and ideological references. The Mecca Agreement was a practical indication of Hamas's ability to overcome the aforementioned challenge.

The tight scope of what is politically permissible is the natural focus of ideological movements. Hamas, being part of the ideological Islamic movement, shares distinctive characteristics with similar organizations, different to other movements that operate in the political arena. What is meant here by the scope of what is politically permissible is that political movements in general determine their policies in accordance with the principle of profit and loss, depending on circumstances, where the ceiling of what is allowed and permitted is high. But in the case of ideological movements like Hamas, the ceiling of what is permissible and allowed will be determined, above the calculations of profit and loss and circumstances, by principles and ideology.

Therefore, any assessment of the Hamas movement must consider the fact that the determinants of Hamas's experience include dimensions other than those related to political expediency. The Islamic frame of reference is evident in the literature of the movement and its programs. But despite this, the movement declared on more than one occasion that its ideology does not undermine its political effectiveness or how it deals with circumstances, and that it is able to reconcile its intellectual and ideological principles with the policies demanded by reality.³⁴

So far, reconciling these issues remains under question, especially regarding Hamas's position on the Israeli occupation expressed in its Charter. This question was raised more than once, even by senior Hamas leaders. But another aspect of Palestinian political action showed the extent of Hamas's ability to find a formula that is consistent with its ideological origins, namely, internal politics. This meant reconciling ideology with democracy. While this dialectic is still under discussion,

³⁴ An interview with 'Atallah Abu al-Sabah, OnIslam, 11/3/2007; and Khaled Hroub, Manifestations of Pragmatism Among Moderate Islamists.

in this study it is sufficient to note that the practical dimension of Hamas's participation in elections and the formation of governments is an indicator of its adoption of the idea of differentiation between Islam and democracy, rather than contradiction. Hamas doesn't consider any contradiction between its ideology and political participation in a democratic process. Khaled Hroub discusses the idea of synchronization between Islamization and liberalization in Hamas. According to him, for Hamas, the Islamization of the society is no longer considered a precondition for liberation, rather it is a considered a process that runs parallel with liberation.³⁵

The Charter of Hamas issued in 1988 is controversial issue because it contains provisions that are inconsistent with the role of Hamas as a political party that participates in elections and power, whether in terms of the Islamization of the Palestinian society or in terms of relations with Israel. Two points are mentioned here:

First: Evaluating Hamas as a political party shouldn't depend on the Charter of "Hamas the movement." This Charter was drawn up when it was a resistance movement in 1988. It is only fair that Hamas be assessed (after 25 years) based on the political, social and economic programs it developed through its parliament bloc. Hamas's membership of the PLC and forming a government was based on the electoral and government programs but not on the Charter.

Second: It should be remembered that although Hamas has not amended its Charter, it has been marginalized by the Hamas leadership and Hamas does not consider the Charter as a source of its policies. Hamas has signaled that its Charter is no longer binding, and can be modified. One example is that Hamas has accepted Mecca Agreement that requires all states to respect all the previous agreements signed by the PLO. Prominent Hamas leaders like 'Aziz Dwaik, and Nasiruddin al-Sha'ir, have said that the Hamas Charter is not sacred and therefore, can be changed. Perhaps the reason for not amending the Charter of Hamas until the moment is fear of losing some popular support.

In short, it can be argued that the history of Hamas suggests that it did not want to impose Islamic law on society, a view that is reinforced by its participation in the 2006 elections and then the government, which reflected its acceptance of political

³⁵ Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide* (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

and religious pluralism, through the appointment of Christian ministers in the government. Then the caretaker government led by Hamas in GS did not impose Shari'ah, and an idea prevails among large segments in Hamas that this should be done gradually, and that society should be prepared and reality accommodated in doing so. Although Hamas was rejected internationally and domestically, it kept open the option of dialogue with all parties and did not use violence apart from in self-defense.

2. Hamas' Policy of Combining Resistance with Governance

The mixed record of Fatah's journey from armed struggle to a political settlement and establishing an authority under occupation reinforces the argument that combining resistance and governance is extremely difficult, if not impossible. Some political observers wondered whether Hamas would meet the same fate. Skepticism about Hamas's ability to combine resistance and governance also came from Hamas members. For example, for some Hamas members, it was possible to combine resistance and governance but they were unsure of Hamas's ability to do so. On the other hand, Hamas's rivals hoped the movement would fail to combine resistance and governance thereby strengthening their own political positions.

This chapter highlights this dialectic and discusses the ways Hamas has combined resistance and governance since taking power. Based on its literature and political behavior, we can say that what Hamas did after its political participation in 2006 showed that reconciling the two is possible. While Hamas could not partake effectively in military resistance, due to its participation in government, this did not mean that Hamas waived its right to resist, and perhaps its participation in the government was an opportunity to review the concept of resistance, so that it becomes more comprehensive.

3. Resistance Through Reform

Traditionally in Palestinian society, resistance means military action against occupation despite its modest forces compared to regular armies; this idea was reinforced as a result of violent clashes in the Palestinian territories following the start of the occupation. Nowadays, this concept has become a subject for discussion indicating the existence of a wide interpretation of what resistance is. There is now an understanding that resistance shouldn't be limited to military action only and that it may include a variety of actions including the military option.

One of the most important issues that can be referred to in this area, is that both political education that serves national goals, and building Palestinian capacities in both its individual and social frameworks, cannot be taken out of the scope of resistance. Furthermore, contributing to building institutions on professional and legal bases, fighting corruption, and managing and investing in Palestinian resources in light of the liberation project, are all a crucial part of the overall project of Resistance. In effect, this part of resistance is considered a prerequisite to the other forms of resistance, including armed resistance. Indeed, good governance, and building the institutions of the government in a way that serves national goals and spare it from economic and political subservience, lays the foundations for effective resistance, and one that would be efficient and durable, and enjoys official and popular support.

If Hamas adopts this approach, Hamas's political rivals will try to portray it as a retreat from Hamas's resistance path, even though they themselves do not adopt military resistance. This is an attempt to show that Hamas is impotent and lacking credibility in its proposals. But what is convenient for Hamas is that its electoral program, which focused on issues of reform in society, was in line with the priorities of Palestinian public opinion. This has facilitated Hamas pressing ahead with its program, with a poll conducted by the Development Studies Programme in Ramallah on 5/10/2004, that the respondents feel that the main priority that the government should focus on is improving the economic situation, as stated by 35% of respondents. The next priority for the respondents was internal security with 18%, followed by the need to address unemployment at 8%, and the fight against corruption at 8%, strengthening the rule of law, 3%, and solving the problem of the proliferation of arms, 2%. This means that 72% of respondents were mainly concerned with reforming the internal situation.³⁶

Hamis was wise in choosing Change and Reform as its program, on the basis of which it contested the legislative elections. Therefore, we can say that the movement took a step forward in expanding the concept of resistance. The concept begins first with self-jihad and self-development, which is commensurate with Hamas's ideology and belief system, if we invoke the concept of the jihad of the soul to express the same idea. It is also commensurate with its new position as a parliamentary bloc and a political party participating in power. The late Sheikh

³⁶ DSP–Birzeit University, Poll no. 19, 5/10/2004.

Ahmad Yasin expressed this approach in not separating good governance and resistance, with a statement that summed up the previous stage. Sheikh Ahmad Yasin clearly said during the second *Intifadah*: “The current stage is a stage where liberation mingled together with construction.”³⁷

The emphasis by Hamas on the need to adopt transparency, integrity, accountability and financial control strengthened Hamas’s appeal to the population of Palestine, after the failure of previous governments to gain credibility with the public. What contributed to giving an image closer to the pulse of the street was linking the electoral program to modern concepts and visions that are accepted in the Western world, and at the same time, consistent with Islamic heritage. This was perhaps a message from Hamas that there was no contradiction between global calls for institutional reform and an Islamic frame of reference.³⁸

However, Hamas did not ignore the other interpretations of resistance, including the traditional military one. Throughout the election manifesto of the Change and Reform bloc, Hamas expressed its desire to direct the Palestinian political system towards resistance, but Hamas also made it clear that it would also seek to be part of official institutions, especially the legislature, and this was aimed to “support the program of resistance and uprising which was favored by the Palestinian people as a strategic choice to end the occupation.”³⁹ Hamas demonstrated its ability to combine resistance and governance, a good example of which was the capture and holding prisoner of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit at a time when the Palestinian government was busy managing the Palestinian institutions.

However, although indicative of Hamas’s insistence on combining military action with the governance, the capture of Shalit also proved that embarking on military action hinders the application of reform programs by virtue of Israel’s ability to intervene, disrupt PA institutions, arrest its ministers and PLC members, and choke the Authority financially and economically, as well as its ability to prevent the movement of officials and individuals... This has created a growing conviction

³⁷ Khalid al-Hindi, ‘*Amaliyyat al-Bina’ al-Watani al-Filastini Wijhat Nazar Islamiyyah* (The National Palestinian Building Process From an Islamic Perspective) (Nablus: Palestinian Research and Studies Center, 1999), p. 73.

³⁸ Belal Shobaki, In its Twenty First Anniversary: Hamas and the Dialectic Between the Resistance and Governance, *Filisteen Almuslima*, January 2009, www.fm-m.com/2009/jan/9-2.php (in Arabic)

³⁹ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

within Hamas that it is extremely difficult to combine managing the Authority and resistance under occupation. This requires an in-depth study by the movement for its next electoral programs and what is expected from its opponents and enemies. It is that a platform of sensitizing the Palestinian street to the priority of ending corruption internally as well as resistance against Israel, could prove popular.

4. Hamas and the Transition from Reaction to Initiative

Hamis has found itself facing military conflicts with Israel since its election in 2006. Hamas was able at all times to endure without the collapse of its GS rule. But resilience in every round with the occupation was not enough, and Hamas needed to create a new approach to safeguard its ability to take initiative and not to leave things under Israel's control. It can be said that Hamas's proposal for a truce represented a first step on the road to the political investment of its armed resistance. Some tried to interpret the truce as a setback for Hamas's resistance by being unable to engage in resistance and power simultaneously, but this claim fades in light of the following facts: First, Hamas did not recognize Israel and yet won the last PLC elections, giving it popular legitimacy. Second, henceforth, military resistance would be conducted by Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas. Third, Hamas, in recent years, has been the only Palestinian movement able to influence the Arab and Islamic street⁴⁰ especially in the post-Arab revolutions.

Hamis's truce proposal was not new, theoretically speaking. Hamas's view in putting forward the idea of a truce was based on the idea of breaking down the solution of the Palestinian issue to two stages: the first stage of the solution is brought forward, and encompasses a truce with a specific timeframe, in return for an Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967. The second stage of the solution is deferred, the stage of liberating Palestine from the sea to the river, with Palestinian, Arab, and Islamic efforts.⁴¹ This gives Hamas the ability to adapt to changes, and the flexibility to reap benefits in the stage between the accelerated and deferred solutions.⁴²

⁴⁰ Belal Shobaki, *op. cit.*

⁴¹ Musa Zaid al-Kilani, *Al-Harakat al-Islamiyyah fi al-Urdun wa Filastin* (The Islamic Movements in Jordan and Palestine) (Beirut: Al-Risalah Foundation for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, and Amman: Dar al-Furqan for Publishing and Distribution, 2000), pp. 201–202.

⁴² See the Arabic translation 'Asr Hamas (Hamas Era) of Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Hamas Wind-Violence and Coexistence* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 1999) (in Hebrew), in "Talks Under Oslo Between Careful Rejection and Reserved Acceptance," Episode 13, Chapter 4, pp. 144–152, PIC, http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/books/aser_hamas/aser_hamas14.htm

Activating the idea and proposing it officially took place in 2003, and just like Hamas's electoral discourse was in line with the priorities of Palestinian citizens at the time, its political discourse related to the relationship with the occupation was consistent with Palestinian public opinion. In a public opinion poll conducted on 3–6/7/2003, 68.8% of respondents were satisfied with the decision of the truce declared by Hamas and various other Palestinian factions, and 56.8% of the respondents believed that the truce was in general the national interest, whereas 67.8% believed that the Palestinian people were in need for such a truce.⁴³

Based on the above, it can be stated that Hamas's policy of combining resistance and governance consists of three different dimensions:

First: Focusing on reform and fighting corruption. According to the Islamic principles Hamas follows, this is considered as a part of *Jihad* (the struggle to achieve goodness against oneself), and is linked to the concept of the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice, and reforming the self, the family, and society.

Second: Continuation of military resistance through Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades. The capture of Israeli soldier Shalit and resisting the Israeli aggression on GS in 2008 and 2012, were part of that policy.

Third: Enhancing resilience and maintaining governance without abandoning resistance through the truce.

5. Israeli Occupation as a Challenge for Hamas's Rule

The special experience of the PA, stemming mainly from being under occupation; the policies of occupation and its attacks limit the PA's work, whoever is formally in control of the Authority. So, what if Hamas became the leader of the PA? It would inevitably lead to increasing Israeli restrictions on Palestinian institutions.

Israel's policies that restricted Hamas's governmental work, and therefore, any assessment of its experience, can be summarized as follows:

- Arresting PLC members, who belong to the Change and Reform bloc. Following the legislative elections, Israel arrested 64 Hamas leaders in the WB, including

⁴³ Department of Information, Surveys and Public Opinion Polls, Results of Palestinian Public Opinion Polls on Truce Decision Between Palestinian Factions, Ramallah, 3–6/7/2003, <http://www.sis.gov.ps/arabic/polls/archive/hodna.html> (in Arabic)

44 PLC members (and Speaker ‘Aziz Dwaik), affecting the equilibrium inside the Council and the real outcome of the elections.⁴⁴

- Arresting 10 ministers of the tenth Palestinian government from the WB.⁴⁵
- Arresting leaders and members of Hamas in WB, and bombing the headquarters of the government and the authority in GS. The number of prisoners detained following the capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit on 25/6/2006 until the end of the year was 3,500 Palestinians,⁴⁶ mostly people affiliated to Hamas.
- Freezing and confiscating funds owed to the PA from customs and import and export revenues, which severely debilitated the PA economically. The value of the funds withheld by Israel was approximately \$500–600 million, about a year and three months after the formation of the Hamas government (i.e., June 2007).⁴⁷
- Successive military campaigns against GS, most notably Operation Summer Rain, which lasted from 26/6–31/10/2006,⁴⁸ killing 400 Palestinians and wounding 1,852 others, and Operation Autumn Clouds in November, which claimed the lives of 105 Palestinians and wounded 353.⁴⁹
- Israeli authorities banned the movement of the government and popular leaders of Hamas, disrupting their ability to work.

6. The International Boycott of Hamas Government

Added to the above, the Palestinian tenth and eleventh governments worked under economic and political blockade by some international actors. The US and EU member-states continue to refuse to recognize Hamas or send financial aid to a government that Hamas led or was a partner in. Those countries insist that before they could do so Hamas first must recognize Israel as a state, renounce

⁴⁴ *Addustour*, and *Al-Hayat*, 29/6/2006; *Asharq Alawsat*, 7/8/2006; and *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/8/2006.

⁴⁵ See Ministry of Detainees and ex-Detainees Affairs, A Comprehensive Statistical Report Discussing Prisoners’ Conditions in General and the Most Prominent Events in 2006 in Particular, site of Palestinian National Information Center, <http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/social/prisoners/prisoners19.html>

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Los Angeles Times* newspaper, 25/6/2007, articles.latimes.com/2007/jun/25/world/fg-mideast25

⁴⁸ See Hani al-Masri, “Summer Rain: Bigger than a Prisoner Soldier and Bigger than a Legal Vacuum in the Authority,” *Al-Hayat*, 7/7/2006. (in Arabic)

⁴⁹ See Wafa Report, 23/11/2006, citing Mu’awiyah Hassanein, the director of ambulance and emergency services in the Ministry of Health; *Al Bayan*, 23/11/2006; and Report of Palestinian Information Center on Beit Hanoun Massacre, 8/11/2006. (in Arabic)

the use of violence as a policy, and abide by the agreements the PLO had signed previously with Israel.

Following the refusal by Hamas to accede to those demands, the international embargo imposed on the Palestinians continues. The official position of the Arab and Muslim countries on the embargoing of Palestine is not coherent enough to ensure the alleviation of the conditions. The public waited to see the ability of the government to lift the blockade and bring in funds instead of waiting for the implementation of the Change and Reform projects, which had formed the basis of Hamas's election.

Therefore, the objective evaluation of Hamas's political performance must consider the impact of the blockade on the movement's experience in power, as the benchmark of success under siege is different to that of a comparatively free government. For some, the benchmark of success shifted from being a measure of Hamas's ability to carry out its promises to its ability to lift the siege and endure. However, this assessment will still evaluate Hamas's performance forensically, as the movement was aware of the obstacles before it when it drafted its electoral and governmental manifesto.

7. Performance of Hamas in Governance

a. The Tenth and Eleventh Government Stages

As mentioned above, some people were not convinced that Hamas would have the ability to combine Islamic ideology and democratic ideals. Following its election victory, Hamas was accused of being in power based democratic principles only and neglecting its Islamic ideology. Hamas rejected such accusations, pointing out that participating in the political processes in Palestine is not against its Islamic principles.⁵⁰ The participation of Hamas in the elections meant that it had to co-exist with other Palestinian parties with very different ideologies within the

⁵⁰ Mushir al-Masri, *Al-Musharakah fi al-Hayat al-Siyasiyyah fi Zill Anzimat al-Hukm al-Mu'asirah* (Participation in Political Life in Light of Contemporary Governance Systems) (Cairo: Dar al-Kalimah Library, 2006), in PIC, <http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/books/2006/musheer/musheer1.htm>

See also Amr Hamzawy, "The Key to Arab Reform: Moderate Islamists," Policy Brief, no. 40, August 2005, site of Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <http://carnegieendowment.org/files/pb40.hamzawy.FINAL.pdf>

Palestinian political system. Some thought that Hamas made a number of mistakes while trying to adjust to a pluralistic political system.

b. An Ideal Platform

Idealism here does not necessarily mean a positive assessment for Hamas. Indeed, part of the success of any group or political figure is measured by the extent of their ability to read reality and formulate objectives in line with it, and not by the extent of the nobility of its goals. The idealism of a given proposal could turn overnight into a burden on those who drafted it, because it will become the standard by which they will be assessed. Some of the items were unrealistic in Hamas's electoral program, and even the wording of the electoral program was detached from how Hamas behaved after the election, suggesting that Hamas may not have expected to win, or that it expected to win but did not anticipate the extent of the implications. The problems that existed in the electoral program were as follows:

1. Hamas was not required in its electoral program to respond to strategic issues. Indeed, solving all the issues requires decades, while its electoral cycle is only four years. According to some views, Hamas, at a time when it was participating in elections for the PA, most of whose activities fall under the services category, was not required to import an ideological and political stance into the Change and Reform bloc, turning Hamas's goals into an obstacle that needed to be overcome in order to implement change and reform. Nevertheless, some saw that it would be extremely difficult for the Change and Reform bloc not to have a clear political program, because the Palestinian people are politicized, and because large numbers of them vote for a specific political program and not just a services program. Therefore, ignoring the fundamental issues would be extremely contentious for the Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims, and would harm Hamas more than it would benefit it.

No one can deny the practical correlation between Hamas and the Change and Reform bloc, and we are not among those who exaggerate in calling for separating them, because it is a parliamentary bloc affiliated to Hamas. But it was wise not to bring everything that Hamas has into the framework of the PA. Here, Hamas must answer the following question: Is the self-governing authority able to accommodate Hamas? If we as researchers were to answer this, we must say that the PA, which was created in accordance with the Oslo Accords,

cannot accommodate any program for liberation. Since Hamas and several other factions see the PA as necessary in the current stage, this does not mean that the authority would be the focus of the full scope of their political activities.

2. In the introduction, Hamas's electoral program contained wording that justifies raising questions about what Hamas intended to do. While Hamas had announced that it was pro-democratic and willing to engage in political participation through elections, the first paragraphs in the program confirmed that political participation was not a fixed path for Hamas. According to Hamas's vision and Islamic frame of reference, there would be nothing wrong with this, but according to the principles of democracy and the democratic process, political participation is one of its procedural constants. Here, we are entitled to ask and answer for those who drafted those words, what the importance is of the following clause in the electoral program: "To participate or not is a matter of debate and is a means, and not a fixed ideological tenet or principle that does not change."⁵¹ It would have been possible to accept such words before Hamas declared its acceptance of entering the elections because of the ceiling imposed by Oslo, but after Hamas decided to enter the process, it was no longer acceptable to draft its words as such, as if nothing had changed.
3. Under "The Fundamentals" clause, Hamas set out in its election manifesto a set of points which would not be logical to apply to PA institutions because they are overall political issues that go beyond the ceiling set for the PA, whose existence is contingent upon a particular political stance on these issues. These fundamentals, according to Hamas, are:
 4. Emphasis on the Palestinian right to historic Palestine.
 5. Emphasis on armed resistance.
 6. The right of return of all Palestinian refugees.
 7. Prohibition of fighting and the use of force to settle internal disputes.
 8. Striving to release all prisoners.

Placing the above fundamentals in an electoral program to join the PA cannot meet any of them for several reasons: First, the PA itself is incompatible with some of the fundamentals mentioned above. Some viewed the move as propaganda to attract voters, though there are those who defend it by saying that Hamas sought to

⁵¹ Change and Reform bloc, Electoral Program for the 2nd legislative elections of 2006.

reassure the public that its participation did not mean it forfeiting its fundamentals. Including them in a provisional electoral program gives every Palestinian the right to address questions to Hamas after four years about the shores of Haifa and Acre, and prisoners of the Negev and a Nafha, and the Palestinians in Lebanon and Syria. Since Hamas included these fundamentals in its platform, then they represent the contract on the basis of which Hamas was given a mandate to lead the PA.

The problem is not in the fundamentals set by Hamas, but it may be in the framework chosen by Hamas for these fundamentals. Hamas's political project is supposed to address domestic issues in the context of the PA, and issues related to Israel in the framework of Hamas itself or the PLO after it is reformed. Otherwise, it would mean that there was no room for participation and partnership within the PA, with each Palestinian faction pushing its political agenda as the ideal agenda to determine policy. The other factions have the same problem, but they are not the focus of our discussion in this book.

Problematic partnership in the aforementioned situation prompts us to look into another item in the fundamentals of the Change and Reform bloc, which are the prohibition of fighting and the use of force in internal relations. Such an item would not be included in a platform in normal circumstances, because we are in the third millennium, internal peace is no longer a subject of debate, being a core principle. Therefore, the inclusion of core indisputable principles in any electoral program may mean for some that it has lost this fundamental quality and is questionable. Not only this, but by including this issue in its platform, Hamas appeared as though it perceived the other parties in the Palestinian arena with suspicion and fear, even before taking office. However, the inclusion of this issue by Hamas was necessary because everyone is under occupation and because of the state of polarization in the Palestinian arena. In addition, Hamas was the party that most suffered from oppression and persecution by the PA, and was never a part of the PA or a member of the PLO.

In any case, there are those who accuse Hamas of reneging on the fundamentals regarding the prohibition of infighting with its military takeover in GS. But Hamas responds by asserting that it was forced to act following deliberate attempts to thwart its rule and cause lawlessness, as well as disrupt the work of institutions by Fatah affiliates. Hamas acted while in government, and at the same time enjoying PLC support, and therefore, as Hamas holds, its measures were meant to preserve order and constitutional legitimacy, and were not just a partisan-factional measure.

c. Formation of Government

When Hamas won the majority of PLC seats in 2006, and Isma‘il Haniyyah was designated to form the government by the Palestinian president, Hamas called for the formation of a coalition government. On the surface, the issue lined with the principle of pluralism and political participation; however, it also reflected Hamas’s fear of managing the PA alone; Hamas has realized the need to ensure the flow of funds to the PA. Indeed, the issue of salaries was the effective weapon in the hands of the party’s opponents.

Hamas could not claim that the tenth government was not a Hamas government. To be sure, Hamas was forced to form a government on its own after the rest of the Palestinian factions refused to participate in its government; whether in an attempt to derail Hamas, or because they sensed that Hamas’s boat was going to inevitably sink and that there was no need to board it; or because of their tough conditions and demands for participation. In any case, Hamas selected a distinguished group of technocrats for the tenth government, which, for example, comprised 10 PhD holders out of 24 ministers. However, it might have blundered by opting for senior Hamas symbols to lead the government, because it was elected for a program focused on developmental issues and reform, which need to be undertaken by experts and qualified technocrats rather than politicians. Simultaneously, there is a strong conviction in the Palestinian arena that the nature of the Palestinian situation and the circumstances and the challenges of occupation dictate the need for strong personalities and political symbols able to make big decisions, because technocrats in the end cannot operate without political cover and support.

Practically speaking, the presence of some political leaders in the government weakened both the movement and the government. It weakened the government because it meant that it would face difficulties in foreign relations, while the movement would be more vulnerable to external pressures. In addition, Hamas appointed its members to different positions in government institutions, and in many cases there was no justification for such appointments. The appointment was not based on a professional basis in many cases. Therefore, Hamas was following the nepotism stereotype of Fatah in the eyes of some sectors of the society. Hamas justified their decisions by claiming that it was unable to implement its governmental program because of the ignorance it faced in the government institutions. This step did not derive any benefit because those who were appointed by Hamas could not implement

its program. Further, the policy made many people try to manoeuvre themselves closer to Hamas through the media to obtain prestigious government jobs.

Also, Hamas was contradicting itself; it formed the Executive Force by Sa'id Siyam. Through the election campaign, Hamas was one of the parties calling for reforming the security forces, reducing their number, and merging them. All of this affected the credibility of Hamas's electoral platform. However, Hamas believed that this move was necessary after it found that the leaders of the security forces refused to cooperate with it, and were trying to undermine it, while reporting to President 'Abbas and the leaders of Fatah, rather than the government. Hamas criticized the overlap between Fatah and the security forces, and then it made the same mistake when Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades overlapped with the Executive Force.

d. Achievements of Hamas in Power

Despite the above observations, the tenth and eleventh governments had their achievements in reform and fighting corruption. There was an increase in transparency, in line with the public desire to be informed of the administrative and financial procedures in the PA institutions, in order to curb the spread of corruption. A report issued by the UN on transparency in 2006 showed that the level of transparency in PA institutions saw a significant increase in the period that followed the victory of Hamas in the elections and its formation of the tenth Palestinian government. The government at that time also contributed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) on 13/3/2006, thus achieving a major step forward in terms of developing its statistical system.⁵²

Also as part of the fight against corruption in PA institutions, and to turn the slogan of Change and Reform to concrete facts on the ground, many legal cases involving corruption were brought, notably financial and administrative ones, in a way that international institutions were not able to overlook. Some reports, including a special UN report, referenced the fact that the judiciary received numerous cases involving senior managers especially in institutions that hold monopolies.⁵³

⁵² United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Program on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR), Democratic Governance, Financial Transparency, <http://www.pogar.org/arabic/countries/finances.asp?cid=14>

⁵³ Ibid.

This was confirmed by local civil society organizations and think tanks, where it was pointed out that Hamas's tenure at the helm of the tenth government saw investigations into dozens of corruption cases by the Public Prosecutor.⁵⁴

The reform steps Hamas embarked on in PA institutions, especially during the tenure of the tenth government, were acceptable relative to the magnitude of the pressure brought to bear on the Hamas-led government. However, they were lackluster in terms of media coverage, both because of the failure of the PA in dealing with the media and the preoccupation of the media with political issues.

The steps undertaken by Hamas for reforming PA institutions also affected one of the sensitive institutions, namely, the security institution. Hamas initiated many reforms in this area, and here we mean reform steps in the administrative side of the security establishment as well as the various PA institutions. This is what was clearly alluded to in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2006 report, which stressed very clearly that the tenth government was leading a reform campaign in the various organs of the PA, but that what was undermining the importance and relevance of this campaign was the extent of the pressures imposed on the PA.⁵⁵

Another issue that we may refer to, as a step in promoting integrity and transparency in the institutions of the Palestinian government, and which formed a precedent when implemented by the tenth government, was having ministers regularly appear on camera, in an Arabic program called "Wajih al-Sahafah" (Face the Press), where journalists would ask ministers periodical and regular questions. A step like this made public issues a topic of debate not only between leaders, but also at community level. This enhanced one of the principles of good governance in democratic systems, where governance by citizens is implemented by allowing them to examine the details of their public affairs in all sectors.⁵⁶

It may also be noted that the members of the tenth and eleventh governments believe that many other achievements were made. Samir Abu Eisha, during

⁵⁴ Jihad Harb, "The Future of Political Reform in the Palestinian Authority Under Hamas Government," PCPSR, Politics and Governance Unit, Ramallah, April 2006, <http://www.pcpsr.org/arabic/domestic/policypapers/policyjehadreform.pdf> (in Arabic)

⁵⁵ UNDP, POGAR, Democratic Governance, Financial Transparency.

⁵⁶ Site of King Abdullah II Award for Excellence in Government Performance and Transparency, <http://english.kaa.jo/Award/default.aspx>

his meeting with the researcher, detailed several achievements of the tenth and eleventh government, including:⁵⁷

1. Despite the state of tension and instability, the tenth government made contingency plans to deal with the extraordinary situation, focusing on employment and infrastructure projects.
2. Enhancing relations between ministries. The Ministry of Planning played an important role in this despite the prevailing disharmony.
3. Planning was linked to the budget, an important step to achieve a kind of harmony between potential capacities and goals.
4. Restructuring ministries on professional and scientific bases, benefiting from previous experiences.
5. Making sure that no appointments took place outside legal systems.
6. There was a ministerial-administrative committee following up issues related to arranging public posts in line with the laws in place.
7. Regular declaration of financial revenues and expenditures by ministries.
8. A computer program was developed to deal with recruitment and vacancies, completely discounting personal preferences in appointments.
9. Undertaking many social development projects to improve the lives of citizens and combat poverty, such as the empowerment project for families that lost their breadwinner, and planning to establish a bank for the poor.

It is necessary here to point out that the steps expected by Palestinian society are much deeper than some superficial reforms, which fight the symptoms of corruption rather than its causes. The steps, like those carried out by Hamas, albeit positive, did not address the roots of the problem related to the structural imbalances and flaws in the PA institutions. The reason no reform steps of this profound nature were undertaken is that these steps require a political environment that embraces the reform project.⁵⁸ The Auditing Department report on PA institutions stated that there were multiple flaws in public administration and financial management.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Interview with Samir Abu Eisha, 17/1/2009.

⁵⁸ Candidate's Integrity Criteria and its Impact on the Conduct of Palestinian Voter, Transparency Palestine, <http://www.aman-palestine.org/Arabic/Documents/Election/VoterTrans.doc> (in Arabic)

⁵⁹ Palestinian National Authority, Bureau of Financial and Administrative Control, <http://www.facb.gov.ps> (in Arabic)

Minister of Planning of the tenth and eleventh government, Samir Abu Eisha, explained in an interview the factors that prevented the achievement of many of the goals set forth by his governments:⁶⁰

1. The lack of political stability, and the preoccupation with attempts at de-escalation.
2. Lawlessness in major cities.
3. The lack of harmony within the administrative institutions of the government.
4. Overlap between the ministries and the government, especially in the eleventh government.
5. The absence of harmony and limited coordination among ministers in the unity government.
6. Strikes that paralyzed public life.
7. Failure to deliver the government's message effectively, and even when the message was delivered, the manner in which this was done undermined the importance of government achievements among citizens.
8. Severed ties with many international institutions that supported the PA.
9. Most funds that reached the PA covered current account expenses, and were not enough to pay salaries.
10. The Israeli side withheld tax revenues from the Palestinians.
11. Many government cadres needed training and development.
12. Lack of sufficient cooperation by official bodies, whether within the PA itself or the countries that had relations with the latter.
13. Lack of direct communication between the two parts of the government in GS and WB.
14. Limited coordination between the Office of the president and some ministries.

e. Ruling in GS 2007–2013

After the Palestinian factions signed the Mecca Agreement and formed the first Palestinian National Unity Government, some groups affiliated to powerful figures continued to disrupt the work of the government, prompting Hamas to resort to armed confrontation, and leading to Hamas's complete takeover of the GS. This step had negative effects on the internal Palestinian relations. It led to a complete boycott between Fatah and Hamas, the authority was split between the two parties,

⁶⁰ Interview with Samir Abu Eisha, 17/1/2009.

one in WB and the other in GS. This harmed the interests of Hamas in WB to the point of being completely uprooted as a political organization.

Hamás's solo rule in GS made things easier for the international community and Israel, and Hamas's internal opponents. GS was thus subjected to a blockade, war, and security chaos, though this did not lead to the collapse of Hamas's rule, and the movement remained steadfast. As a result, the international embargo on Hamas loosened somewhat, internal dialogue was reestablished, and the truce with the occupation was renewed. But Hamas, since its takeover of GS, was no longer able to seek to find mechanisms to implement the Change and Reform program. To be sure, that program was designed for a normal and relatively stable term in office, but under the circumstances of the blockade, threat of Israeli war, and internal security challenges, the Hamas government program focused on steadfastness almost exclusively.

In April 2008, Isma'íl Haniyyah made a decision that provoked the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah, proclaiming that the expansion of his government to include more ministers entrenched the schism.⁶¹ Despite the implications of that negative step for the relationship with Fatah, it served the government in GS, which could continue operating the Ministries of Education and Health despite the strike staged by pro-Fatah staff. Hamas thwarted the strike by hiring alternative cadres.

The government assumed its responsibilities immediately after the war. After having endured just under one month of Israeli warfare, which destroyed most of its buildings, the government resumed its functions from temporary offices, and distributed emergency financial aid packages to those affected by the war worth \$38 million.⁶² The government also enlisted support from some Arab countries to rebuild GS under its supervision or the supervision of donors.⁶³

The government continued to function in GS without being able to plan for strategic development projects. In 2009, the government was preoccupied with reconstruction, and with attempting to secure the needs of the citizens. The government benefited greatly from the tunnels along the border with Egypt.

⁶¹ See 'Azzam al-Ahmad statement to *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 29/4/2008; and 'Abdullah 'Abdullah statement to *Okaz*, 29/4/2008.

⁶² Felesteen, 13/4/2009.

⁶³ *Al-Hayat*, 22/1/2009.

Despite the security concerns these tunnels raised for the Egyptians, the tunnels maintained the continuity of life in GS through the provision of the basic needs of the population. The number of these tunnels was estimated at 500. The tunnels were also provided a boost in the performance of resistance movements, after weapons flowed to them through these tunnels. This meant that resistance movements now had a broader margin of work, and security protection under the Hamas government.

Despite the harsh conditions of the blockade, it seemed that the Haniyyah government was able to gradually achieve relative economic improvement, higher than the one achieved by the government of Salam Fayyad in Ramallah, even though the latter enjoyed Arab and international support, and relative cooperation from the Israeli side. For instance, after the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Fayyad government in WB reached 9.5% compared to 0.7% in GS under the Haniyyah government in 2009, GDP under the Fayyad government was 7.6% in 2010 compared to 15.1% in GS under Haniyyah's government. GDP under the Haniyyah government in 2011 jumped to 23% compared to 8.7% under the Fayyad government.⁶⁴ This indicates that the Haniyyah government was more competent in benefiting from its available resources as well as in combatting corruption. GS could get close to achieving self-sufficiency in vegetables and poultry, and other daily needs for the citizens. Unemployment in GS also declined to 30.3% in 2011, having reached 60% in 2007.⁶⁵

In the context of security work and the resistance factions, the GS government, though several security campaigns, managed to crack down on espionage for the Israeli occupation. The crackdown included prosecution of spies as well as preventive security awareness campaign to curb the increase in the number of collaborators with the occupation. It seems that the GS government also benefited from the war on GS in 2008/2009, in that it discovered many security breaches, spying methods, and devices used for sending information to the Israeli

⁶⁴ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Press Report, Preliminary Estimates of Quarterly National Accounts (Fourth Quarter 2012) (Ramallah: PCBS, March 2013), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_QNAQ42012E.pdf

⁶⁵ See PCBS, Labour Force Survey, (October–December, 2012) Round (Q4/2012) (Ramallah: PCBS, 21/2/2013), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Press_En_LFSQ42012E.pdf

intelligence.⁶⁶ In the context of the counter-espionage campaign, the government uncovered collaborators and executed some as a deterrence to anyone who thought about collaborating. They were tried according to the laws in place in the Palestinian justice system.⁶⁷ Security campaigns to counter espionage take place each year and are ongoing.

In short, we can say that 2008 was a year of confrontation and shoring up the foundations for the Hamas government. 2009 was a year of steadfastness. In 2010, the GS government began a new stage marked by relative stability, and began to look outward again. Hamas managed to enlist a broad segment of international public opinion on its side, and land convoys and international flotillas became active in many countries of the world in order to break the GS siege. Some succeeded in breaking through the blockade, while others had to return after being intercepted by Israeli navy ships, or were not allowed to enter through the Rafah crossing.

The Lifeline to Gaza Convoy (Viva Palestina) was one of the earliest and most important land convoys. It set out for the first time from London on 14/2/2009. The total number of buses in the convoy was 110, carrying 300 solidarity activists from 20 countries. In 2009–2010, five convoys set out to break the GS siege. There was the Miles of Smiles Convoy, which first set out on 28/9/2009, carrying 58 containers, 110 cars to transport the disabled, and 275 electric wheelchairs, as well as medicines and computers. Up to the time of writing, Miles of Smiles has launched more than 20 convoys.

The Freedom Flotilla carried on its ships around 10 thousand tons of humanitarian aid. But on the morning of Monday 31/5/2010, special forces of the Israeli navy attacked the flotilla in international waters, killing nine Turkish activists and injuring dozens of other solidarity activists.⁶⁸ Despite the obstacles they faced, these convoys were the beginning of an open wave of continuous support, albeit moral support in most cases. The GS government could take advantage of the

⁶⁶ Palestinian National Authority, Palestinian Ministers Council, General Secretariat, Gaza, 26/9/2010, http://www.pmo.gov.ps/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=564:2010-09-26-06-51-37&catid=25:news&Itemid=67 (in Arabic)

⁶⁷ *Alghad*, 16/4/2010.

⁶⁸ For more information see Archives and Information Department, Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, *Qwafil Kasr al-Hisar 'An Qita' Gazzah* (The Convoys of Breaking the Siege of Gaza Strip), Information Report (20) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2011).

aggression in the media well. But more importantly, Israeli actions profoundly hurt relations with Turkey, and caused Arab, Islamic, and international outrage over Israel's harsh treatment of foreign activists.⁶⁹

2010 was not only a year that saw the beginning of popular solidarity campaign with GS, but also saw several international political figures visiting GS and meeting with officials there, to make calls for ending the blockade. More detailed analysis of Hamas's foreign policy belongs to another chapter in this book, but it should be noted in this regard that the visitors were diverse, and included ministers, officials in international organizations, media figures and former political personalities, most notably the former Secretary General of the League of Arab States 'Amr Musa,⁷⁰ the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs Catherine Ashton,⁷¹ and the foreign ministers of Germany, Italy, and Malta, who visited the Strip in late 2010 and made a call for lifting the GS blockade.⁷²

In 2011, the GS government entered a new phase, where it now operated in a changing Arab environment. Revolutions erupted in many countries, and many regimes were toppled. Perhaps the most important event for GS was the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak. Hamas hoped that this change would be the beginning of a new stage where the blockade would become history. Hamas then became more optimistic when Muhammad Morsi won the presidential election. However, all these developments in Egypt did not live up to Palestinian aspirations, and the change was confined to moral and media support, without a fundamental change in relation to the crossings and the movement of people and goods. The new Egyptian (military) leadership, before Morsi's elections, continued to deal with Hamas and the GS government the same way Mubarak dealt with them, refusing to meet with them despite their repeated visits to Egypt. It only received them through non-official figures with the exception of the Egyptian intelligence, which indicates that Hamas was being dealt with only at a security level as had been the habit.⁷³

⁶⁹ Aljazeera.net, 31/5/2010. (in Arabic)

⁷⁰ *Asharq Alawsat*, 14/6/2010.

⁷¹ *Al-Quds*, 18/7/2010.

⁷² Aljazeera.net, 8 and 24/11/2010, and 17/12/2010. (in Arabic)

⁷³ Elaph.com, 12/1/2012, <http://www.elaph.com/publishermessage.htm>

In November 2012, a new Israeli war was waged on GS, dubbed Operation Pillar of Defense. The war coincided with major regional developments, most notably the rise of Islamists to power in Tunisia and Egypt. During the war, it became clear that Hamas had benefitted significantly from the Arab Spring, in terms of the quality and quantity of weapons it had acquired and which it used in repelling the Israeli assault. Indeed, it was clear that the smuggling of arms into GS from neighboring countries had become easier under the new variables. The war also took place on the back of a clear evolution in Qatar's position, with the Emir of Qatar visiting GS and taking it upon himself to support the Strip,⁷⁴ with the Israelis reacting with direct escalation in their attempts to thwart support for the Hamas government.

During the war, the government in GS proved its ability to manage internal affairs, and survived despite all the attacks that it was subjected to. The government emerged from the war stronger, thanks to the success of Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades and various resistance factions in hitting Israeli targets with rockets. Delegations successively visited GS coming from the countries of the Arab spring, including one led by Egyptian Prime Minister Hisham Qandil during the Israeli assault,⁷⁵ which was perhaps the strongest message to Israel after the Arab revolutions. The Tunisian Foreign Minister also conducted a solidarity visit to GS following the Israeli assault,⁷⁶ and so did Libyan First Deputy Prime Sadiq Abdulkarim.⁷⁷

Solidarity visits to GS were not only made by delegations from the countries of the Arab Spring. Many developed Muslim nations also expressed support for the Palestinian people in GS, with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu visiting the Strip in solidarity with GS, during which he voiced his country's rejection of Israeli attacks.⁷⁸ In the same vein, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak visited GS, and stressed the need to break the siege on the Strip.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Aljazeera.net, 4/11/2012. (in Arabic)

⁷⁵ Site of France 24, 16/11/2012, <http://www.france24.com/ar/> (in Arabic)

⁷⁶ Reuters, 16/11/2012. (in Arabic)

⁷⁷ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 21/11/2012.

⁷⁸ *Alghad*, 20/11/2012.

⁷⁹ Site of Anba Moscow, 22/1/2013, <http://anbamoscov.com/> (in Arabic)

It was clear that the stage that followed the Arab revolutions had increased the fortitude of Hamas's position, leading to renewed talk about internal Palestinian dialogue and the need for national reconciliation, especially given the stalemate in the peace process. However, although Palestinian factions succeeded in concluding agreements or accords in Cairo, they did not reach a fundamental, workable understanding on key issues. For this reason, the issue of Palestinian dialogue remained on hold in practice, while the Palestinian street turned increasingly cynical about any announcement claiming a National Unity Government was around the corner, in a sign of the declining confidence in Palestinian factions.

The GS government began to move in a different direction, other than steadfastness and facing aggression, a direction that sought to develop the GS internal situation. For this reason, Isma'il Haniyyah carried out a cabinet reshuffle that he stressed was not based on political motives, though it did end up provoking Fatah once again.⁸⁰

The government focused on improving the GS economic situation, putting forward many proposals to avoid continued reliance on the tunnels. Hamas took advantage of the presence of a new Egyptian administration to propose leasing a dedicated pier in the port of El-Arish to import goods to GS, but the GS government did not receive any practical response from the Egyptian leadership.⁸¹ This gave serious indications that Egypt was not yet capable of protecting or assisting GS, or even to ensuring a margin of movement for its people, at least in the short term, for the internal Egyptian situation was very complicated.

Despite the difficult situation, the GS government proposed development plans. A development plan for 2013–2014 was unveiled, to be put forth by the Ministry of Planning for discussion and implementation. The plan, according to information published by the GS Ministry of Planning, covered “productive and social sectors, infrastructure, security, and good governance.”⁸² In spite of the difficulty of implementing any development plans in GS as a result of the blockade and the worsening crisis in Egypt, culminating with the coup against

⁸⁰ Site of Albawaba, 10/3/2011, <http://www.albawaba.com/ar/> (in Arabic)

⁸¹ Quds Press, 15/5/2011, <http://www.qudspress.com/>

⁸² Felesteen Online, 3/9/2012, <http://www.felesteen.ps/>

President Muhammad Morsi and the appointment of an interim president, the quest by the Hamas government to implement development projects is indicative of a relatively stable situation.

Although at the time of writing, the picture is not yet clear in Egypt, there are voices now (Summer 2013) claiming that the end of Hamas's rule is near, in light of the collapse of Hamas's allies in Egypt. Here, it should be noted that Hamas's situation may not be much worse than it was under Mubarak. No matter what the outcome of events will be, they will not have a radical effect on Hamas. Indeed, Hamas has not drawn its power from abroad, and has not relied in its activities on direct external activities, instead limiting itself to the activities of Hamas's bureau abroad. But this does not mean that Hamas will not face any obstacles or problems. The economic situation will get worse because of the policies of closing the Rafah crossing and destroying tunnels, but the people of GS have proven over nearly a decade that no matter what pressure is exerted on GS, a popular eruption against its government is unlikely. Rather, an eruption against the occupation is more likely.

Based on the above, concerning Hamas's rule of GS since its takeover in 2007, it can be said that Hamas as a Palestinian organization has lost a lot in WB because of this move. Hamas lost all its institutions and its supporters and members were subjected to arrests and dismissal from their jobs. In WB, Hamas lost the ability to engage in recruitment and political education. The movement is also absent from schools, mosques, charities, and sports clubs, and all but absent from universities. A feeling of betrayal crept in among its supporters in the WB, who felt that the movement in GS decided to takeover the Strip without any coordination with Hamas in WB or the Diaspora, and without factoring in what would happen to its supporters in WB.

At the same time, in mid-2007 Hamas found itself faced with two bitter choices. The military takeover in GS was something that Hamas was forced to do, while the other option was caving in to the attempt to topple and thwart Hamas, with parties affiliated to Fatah in the PA seeking to put down the Palestinian democratic experience, and implement the American roadmap, requiring the liquidation of resistance forces and the imposition of security in accordance with Israeli wishes. In other words, if Hamas let things develop the way others wanted, it would have been decimated and persecuted in GS, while the program to do the same in WB would not have changed either way.

But against this political loss for Hamas as an organization, Hamas saw its move as a guarantee to protect the Palestinian national project as a whole. Indeed, its takeover of GS prevented the PA from pressing ahead with projects for accommodation with the Israeli occupation, something that Hamas sees as an achievement surpassing any loss at the organizational level. The move also helped Hamas develop its military capabilities, as evident from its showdowns with Israel when Hamas rockets hit Israeli communities in the territories occupied in 1948, at a range of 75 km, including Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Internally, the problem of “questionable legitimacy” cast a shadow on the GS caretaker government and the Hamas movement in general. To be sure, Hamas’s government in GS was dismissed, and could not deal with Arab and international countries as a legitimate government. But there was also a problem of legitimacy with the government in Ramallah, which was not endorsed by the PLC. Another problem was that the term of President ‘Abbas had expired and so did the PLC term. These problems took a toll on the political conduct of Palestinian parties. Although a reconciliation agreement was signed, the practical Palestinian reality continued to be affected by these problems.

At the security level, there is no doubt that the GS government excelled, in terms of its ability to safeguard internal security, protect citizens, and put an end to lawlessness, in addition to curbing collaboration with the occupation. The GS government also demonstrated its ability to protect resistance fighters, caring for them, and giving them a margin of movement, alongside an ability to maintain the truce with Israel.

Conclusion

The discussions in this chapter lead us to the following conclusions:

First: The challenges Hamas faced were due to the defects within the Palestinian political system. One of these was the unbalanced relationship between the PA and the PLO. In addition, the conflict of powers between the president and the prime minister was a major challenge. This defect existed even before Hamas had come to power.

Second: Criticisms of Hamas's ideology worked as pressure on Hamas. Through its policies, Hamas was careful not to appear to be Islamizing the society. By its decision to join the PA, Hamas indicated its desire to accept the principles of democracy and pluralism.

Third: Hamas's attempt to combine military resistance and political participation prevented it from implementing its electoral platform.

Fourth: The electoral platform of Hamas suffered from several major weaknesses. One such weakness was the absence of any clear strategy of action at the international level, considering the PA's financial reliance on the West.

Fifth: Hamas's decision to appoint its leaders in government positions was not beneficial to it. On the contrary, it made the movement more vulnerable to international pressure, and reduced the possibility of developing relations between the government and the international community.

Sixth: The policies of Hamas contradicted its electoral platform when it appointed its supporters in sensitive and important positions in PA regardless of their qualifications.

Seventh: The circumstances of the blockade and repeated Israeli aggression forced Hamas to focus on survival and enhancing steadfastness more than issues of development and reform.

Eighth: The Arab revolutions helped give Hamas and its government a broader margin of movement at the regional level, though did not bring about a radical change in conditions in the GS.

Ninth: The GS government had many security-related achievements in counter-espionage, tackling lawlessness, and guarding the borders, but was still unable to implement its development and economic programs.

Chapter Eleven

Hamas in Western Academic Literature

Mr. Yousef Abu Alsuood

Hamas in Western Academic Literature

Introduction

In April 1993, the US labeled the Palestinian Islamic Movement, Hamas, a “terrorist organization,” and in 2003 European countries followed suit by applying the same label too.

In January 2006, the Palestinian people in WB and GS exercised their democratic right in the elections to the PLC. Western policy makers held their breath at the unexpected triumph of Hamas, which was considered a victory to the resistance choice over the choice of the peace process and its consequences.¹ This huge change propelled Hamas in to the middle of the political game.

Between Western academics and scholars, the event signaled an important shift in academic approaches to the organization, in terms of number of studies and variety of views. Entering the elections was considered a shift in the political and strategic structure of the movement, towards more openness. Some argued that it was time to approach the movement using unconventional new techniques.

This study aims to answer the two following questions:

1. To what extent do these academic studies succeed in understanding the reality of Hamas?
2. What are the contextual factors that may affect some of the views expressed?

By studying the body of literature on Hamas, it is clear that there exist two schools of thought among academic scholars. The first considers Hamas as a violent militia group that must be cracked down on; while the other labels the movement a pragmatic, political and social movement that could be engaged by the international community. However, it is important to make clear from the outset that external factors play the dominant role in assessing the political behavior of the movement.

¹ “Ruling Palestine 1: Gaza Under Hamas,” Middle East Report no. 73, 19/3/2008, International Crisis Group, p. 21.

In this concise overview, we will not review the whole scientific body published on Hamas. Rather, we will use the most recent significant articles and studies prepared by the most prominent western scholars in the field.

Khaled Hroub,² and Azzam Tamimi,³ are the most prominent researchers to have published in-depth investigations on Hamas using the insider's approach. However, due to their Arab-Palestinian origins and to maximize the space afforded to other new western studies, their works will not be included in the scope of this overview.

First: Hamas as a Conservative Military Militia

Mathew Levitt, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy is the most prominent scholar to have listed Hamas as a violent radical group. He labels Hamas as a “terrorist” organization that it is necessary to be marginalized by the international community. He claims that Hamas uses its social welfare and religious effect to protect and market its violent actions. Levitt argues that “the battery of mosques, schools, orphanages, summer camps and sport leagues sponsored by Hamas are integral parts of an overarching apparatus of terror.”⁴

In his study, Levitt tries to convince his readers with a conclusion that Hamas employs all its political tactics in order to maintain its violent power. Furthermore, Levitt states:

Although Hamas engages in political and social activities, the main purpose of each of these tactics is the Jihadist principle of destroying Israel. Thus, relatively moderate statements by Hamas leaders, for instance by Gaza-based leaders like the late Shaykh Yasin, should not be interpreted as a disavowal of violence, but as a tactical planning based on a strategic commitment to violence.⁵

² See Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000); and Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide*.

³ See Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*; and Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within* (Northampton, Massachusetts: Olive Branch Press, 2007).

⁴ Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, p. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

In another study, Levitt says, “there is ample evidence for the role of Hamas social institutions in the terror activities directed and authorized by Hamas leaders and commanders.” He adds that the US government has also come to share this view, when the Treasury Department issued, in August 2003, an announcement “designating six senior Hamas political leaders and five charities as terrorist entities.”⁶

Eli Berman, an economist at the University of California (UC) in San Diego and Research Director for International Security Studies at UC’s Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, prepared a study entitled: *Radical, Religious and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism*. Berman uses an economic approach to describe Hamas’s behavior, arguing that all such radical groups use all the support they receive to develop their violent militias. He adds:

Beginning with the first Intifada, they forced a poor population to adhere to general strikes of commercial activity which prevented Palestinians from shopping, doing business and sometimes even from working. They even attempted a boycott on all work for Israelis, which would have resulted in sacrificing perhaps a quarter of Palestinian GNP [Gross National Product]. They worked to cripple a peace process that was returning occupied territory to Palestinian control because the process represented, in their view collaboration with the conquerors of Palestine in 1948, precisely the opposite of the patient ideology of the pre-1988 Muslim Brotherhood.⁷

The most striking remarks made by Berman are his bracketing of Hamas with the Taliban and other radical Islamic groups. Berman goes further in his analysis. He claims that global radical religious organizations are linked together. He denies the national behavior of Hamas. Berman argues that “in this front sense, Hamas as a terrorist organization uses social activities to disguise its other activities. It is better to understand that social services are used to support terrorism in order to achieve political goals.”⁸

⁶ Matthew Levitt, “Hamas from Cradle to Grave,” *The Middle East Quarterly*, vol. 11, issue 1, Winter 2004, pp. 3–15.

⁷ Eli Berman, *Hamas, Taliban, and the Jewish Underground: An Economist’s View of Radical Religious Militias* (Cambridge, Mass: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2003), p. 9.

⁸ Eli Berman, *Radical, Religious, and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism* (Milken Institute, 2010), p. 79.

Gawdat Bahgat, the professor of national security affairs at the National Defense University's Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, illustrates that Iran uses Hamas's violent actions to support its political struggle with the United States.⁹ He adds that Iran supports Hamas financially in order that it can carry out violent attacks against Israel. Bahgat claims that "Iran uses Hamas's violence to keep Israel away from it."¹⁰

With a less decisive approach in targeting Hamas as a militia group Haim Malka, deputy director and senior fellow of the Middle East program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), refers to the use of welfare charitable institutions to spread the movement ideology among Palestinians. Malka shows that Hamas's use of charitable institutions to support its military apparatus is a charge that has been well established. He reaches these conclusions through an Israeli study and goes further: "As early as 1994 in one of the first major works on Hamas, the movement was accused of diverting charity funds to what was at the time referred to as 'secret activities' or the military apparatus. Others have argued that the Hamas *da'wa* [religious speech] is the bedrock of Hamas's terrorist activities." Malka tries to send a direct message that Hamas uses its social welfare network to develop its position in the struggle not only with Israel but with the PLO and more recently the PA.¹¹

Malka uses the religious approach to explain Hamas's concentration on and employment of this welfare organization. He claims that

at the center of Hamas's charitable activity and the foundation of its community activism is the mosque. Larger mosques often have a number of associated institutions built into or around the mosque complex, including schools, health clinics, and *zakat* committees. The mosque complex is intended to provide a wide range of both physical and spiritual needs of the local population and function as a community center. Whether Hamas's services are provided in exchange for political support or simply based on

⁹ Jawdat Bahgat, "Terrorism in the Middle East," *The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, Summer 2007, pp. 174–175.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹¹ Haim Malka, "Hamas: Resistance and The Transformation of Palestinian Society," in Jon B. Alterman and Karin Von Hippel (editors), *Understanding Islamic Charities* (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007), pp. 98–126 and p. 124, <http://csis.org/publication/understanding-islamic-charities>

need is questionable. Regardless, by providing social services and caring for marginalized sectors of society, Hamas attempts to demonstrate that it cares about people's individual daily struggle as well as the national struggle. Its activities seek to make Islam relevant in every aspect of Palestinian life.¹²

Malka goes further to look at the debate between scholars about the transformation of Hamas. However, Malka points out that the movement is still committed to its Islamic Ideology while it uses all available political tactics to maintain power. He ends his study with a judgment, saying: "such political shifts, whether tactical or strategic, will not alter Hamas' ultimate goal of creating a Palestinian state based on Islamic principles."¹³

A Critique of This School of Thought

1. Academics like Bahgat, who claim that Hamas is controlled by the Iranian regime and argue that Iran uses the organization as a bulwark against Israel, fail to illustrate why the international community, and the US in particular, have opened direct and indirect contact with Iran but still keep the door closed to Hamas. Since its inception in 1987, Hamas has maintained its independence and followed an independent policy, with neighboring countries and in its international relations, sometimes in a manner that has opposed Iranian policy. In addition, Hamas participated in the PLC elections despite Iranian advice to the contrary. Prior to 2006, Iranian support concentrated on PIJ, but after Hamas won the elections the Iranian stance shifted to be more open and supportive to Hamas, without affecting the latter's independence. Furthermore, since March 2011, events in Syria (with Hamas leaving the country) show the great distance between Iran and Hamas and the independence of Hamas's political decisions. Hamas chose the people's side and refused to support the suppression of the Assad regime, a stance that totally at odds with Iran, with its strong alliance with the Assad regime.
2. Academics who assess Hamas as only a violent group tend to ignore the political activities of the organization. They have ignored the fact that Hamas has accepted the conditions of certain political games and participated in the elections that were considered a product of the Oslo Accords. This school of

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 125.

¹³ *Ibid.*

thought claims that Hamas makes violent attacks against Israel; however, they fail to explain why Hamas uses violence; not even explaining that this violence has often been a reaction to Israeli attacks.

Scholars like Levitt and Berman have neglected to mention that Hamas's decision-making is pragmatic, and does not necessarily lead to military action, except when it constitutes resisting the occupier—which is acknowledged by international law—or a reaction to Israeli aggression, or for the protection of the Palestinian people from Israeli assaults.

3. Researchers of this line ignore the deep roots of the history of the Palestinian people in their struggle for independence and freedom, which is the basis for Hamas's inception. Palestinian people are aware of the importance of retrieving their occupied lands. Since the British mandate, the Palestinians have been fighting to regain their freedom, and that is why they are often zealous in their struggle against Israel, and that is also why Hamas is popular; it has not conceded the Palestinian fundamentals. Palestinians are not satisfied with the absence of any outcome from the peace agreements. Consequently, a logical choice for them is supporting resistance forces, like Hamas.
4. Such a school of thought must not call for the isolation of Hamas, and must instead call on the international community to take real steps towards having an understanding with Hamas. Past experiences have shown that the strategy of isolation and neutralization will not weaken Hamas, rather it made it more powerful, present and entrenched.
5. Studies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has to be extremely attentive to material biases. The setting is a minefield in terms of how preconceptions and background circumstances tend to influence writer's positions. This is shown in Levitt's, Berman's and Bahgat's work, they all use Israeli documents to assess the movement. It would be better to listen to the targeted segment, i.e., Hamas and the Palestinians.
6. Concentration on the dominance of the MB movement on Hamas without noticing the latter's local efforts as a national liberation movement. Hamas has never denied its MB roots, but this has never had an impact on being a movement with national interests, working to resist the occupier and struggling to regain the rights of the Palestinian people.
7. Many works of this school of thought aim to serve political objectives, instead of serving just academic research objectives. We noticed that the American

Envoy to Middle East between 1988 and 2000, Ambassador Dennis Ross, wrote a forward for one of Levitt's studies. He summarizes the whole study thus: "Hamas must be in a position of having to choose: govern successfully by transforming itself or fail and be discredited."¹⁴ Anders Strindberg, historian and intelligence expert, claims that much scholarly research on Hamas (as well as on other Islamist organizations) is closer to "political propaganda than social science."¹⁵

Second: Hamas as a Political Pragmatic Organization

The second school of thoughts between western academic scholars claims that Hamas is a political party capable of adjusting and transforming away from violence if it finds a secure environment that enables its continued existence. Some argue that it is true that Hamas is an ideological movement rooted in the MB movement, but Hamas has shown in practical ways that it attaches a high degree of importance to Palestinian nationalism.

Andrea Nüsse, a German journalist studying Middle Eastern issues describes Hamas as "a national organization that is surprisingly pragmatic and clear-sighted in its analysis of international politics... It demonstrates an impressive ideological flexibility."¹⁶ Nüsse claims that it is true that the 1988 Charter contains violent and anti-Zionist rhetoric but the movement has since elaborated its specific ideology and has become a mass movement. She attempts to convince her reader that there is a good margin between Hamas's oral denunciation and its real politics,¹⁷ which is considered as a sign for future optimism in the organization's political response.

Studies that followed the dramatic triumph of Hamas in the 2006 election, show the movements' willingness to change is accompanied with a focus on the political rather than violent struggle with Israel. Jeroen Gunning, a Reader in

¹⁴ See Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, p. ix.

¹⁵ Elin Hellquist, "Outlawing Hamas," Lund University, Department of Political Science, <http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordOid=1326018&fileOid=1326019>

¹⁶ Andrea Nüsse, *Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas* (Harwood: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), p. 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

Middle East Politics and Conflict Studies at Durham University, has published a number of studies on Hamas. In one of his studies entitled “Peace with Hamas? The Transforming Potential of Political Participation,” Gunning argues that one of the unresolved dilemmas in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is whether peace is possible without, or feasible with, Hamas. He seeks to explain why Israeli policies have thus far failed and why inclusion of Hamas in the peace process is more likely to produce a lasting peace. Gunning succeeded in applying data drawn from interviews, fieldwork and surveys, and theoretical perspectives from peace, terrorism and social movement studies. Consequently, he analyzes the evolution that Hamas has undergone since its inception and how changes in its leadership, constituency and political culture, have affected the movement’s attitudes towards peace and compromise. Gunning described Hamas as a “limited spoiler” that will offer more resistance if kept outside of the political process.¹⁸

Gunning’s studies illustrate that Hamas certainly has the potential to transform itself whenever the circumstances dictate. According to Gunning, “since Hamas has already dropped one of its two ultimate proclaimed goals—the establishment of an Islamic state in Palestine—over time Hamas might change its attitudes towards Israel.” Gunning also argues, “Hamas’ history has shown that it is much more concerned with maintaining popular support than ‘safeguarding its ideological purity’ and that it has a ‘diminishing commitment to its core goals.’”¹⁹ However, Hamas actually did not drop its ultimate goal of liberating Historic Palestine completely, despite the fact that it has accepted the establishment of a Palestinian state in the GS and WB along with a long-term truce, albeit without recognizing Israel.

¹⁸ Marie-France Guimond, Overview: Literature on Hamas, 2000–2005, site of International Development Research Centre (IDRC), <http://web.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/11618875251Hamas-rev.doc>

¹⁹ Floor Janssen, *Hamas and its Positions Towards Israel: Understanding the Islamic Resistance Organization through the concept of framing* (The Hague, The Netherlands: Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2009), p. 33, http://www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/20090200_cscp_security_paper_jansen.pdf
Citing Jeroen Gunning, “Peace with Hamas? The Transforming Potential of Political Participation,” *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 80, issue 2, March 2004, pp. 251–252, http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/International%20Affairs/Blanket%20File%20Import/inta_381.pdf

Gunning uses an offensive approach and criticizes the international community as well as Israel in their failure of dealing with Hamas. He concludes that their

conditions can [not] be met unless the Israeli government, and external “custodians” of the peace process, accept that some of the demands made by groups like Hamas arise from genuine concerns, and necessitate concrete reform to both the content of the peace that is on offer and the process by which it is negotiated... If Israel is unwilling to pay this price, the external “custodians” may need to force it to yield as they are trying to force Hamas to yield at present - or, in the absence of any other leverage or incentives, political violence will continue to be Hamas’s method of choice.²⁰

Beverly Milton-Edwards, a professor of Middle East Politics at Queen’s University Belfast in Northern Ireland, wrote many articles about the Islamic phenomena in the Arab world. One of her studies, written with the assistance of Stephen Farrell, was entitled *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*.²¹ Based on hundreds of field interviews, the book addresses critical questions and employs both a chronological and a thematic approach. Milton-Edwards and Farrell’s approach presents “first-hand accounts of Hamas’ fighters, social activists, victims, political supporters and opponents, and by so doing to give a glimpse into how Hamas was born, grew and thrived in the mosques, and refugee camps.”²² And “the authors give voice to the interviewees whose words constitute an important part of the study and whose sharp analysis and criticism help on many occasions to emphasize, counterbalance or nuance the authors’ intended neutral and analytical description of Hamas’ frequently violent actions.”²³

All these elements help to explain the considerable Palestinian support for the movement. The study takes a chronological approach, which is necessary to understand key thematic issues like the Al-Qassam Brigades, which are the “military wing” of the movement; martyrdom; the process of Palestinian division; and the relationship between violence and politics in Hamas’s history.²⁴

²⁰ Jeroen Gunning, “Peace with Hamas?,” p. 255.

²¹ Beverly Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, reviewed by Carmen López Alonso (UK, US: Polity Press, 2010).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Shaul Mishal, a researcher of Arab and Palestinian politics at the Department of Political Science at Tel Aviv University, uses the network approach in studying Hamas. He argues that “Hamas, like other Islamic movements, tends to be reformist rather than revolutionary, generally preferring to operate overtly and legally unless forced to go underground and use subversive or violent methods in response to severe repression.”²⁵

In his study for the Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution (NOREF), Henry Siegman criticizes and highlights the contradiction in contemporary US policy towards Hamas. He claims that “it is not only Israel that has ignored significant changes in Hamas. The United States and Europe have done so as well, insisting that Hamas must first accept conditions for engagement designed by Israel expressly to preclude the possibility of their acceptance.”²⁶

Siegman goes deeper and identifies the contradictions in American policy towards Hamas in comparison to its relation with the Afghani Taliban. He argues that

there is no reason for the US to continue to support these conditions. Obama has not imposed similar conditions for talks with the Taliban. To the contrary: he is encouraging the return of the Taliban to a coalition government with President Hamid Karzai even as they are killing American forces and Afghan civilians. Is the Taliban’s ideology more congenial to Obama than that of Hamas, many of whose leaders and adherents are university graduates, and who encourage rather than forbid and punish the education of their daughters?²⁷

Sara Roy is a senior research scholar at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University. She added valuable studies to the research body on Hamas. One of her latest publication is *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist Social Sector*. Based on many field interviews with charitable institutions,

²⁵ Shaul Mishal, “The Pragmatic Dimension of the Palestinian Hamas: A Network Perspective,” *Armed Forces & Society* journal, vol. 29, no. 4, Summer 2003, p. 585.

²⁶ Henry Siegman, US Hamas Policy Blocks Middle East Peace, Noref Report no. 8, NOREF, September 2010, p. 5, http://peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/c4154e8f5a6c4e0dbc761f9ce335bf60.pdf; and see Henry Siegman, “An immodest—and dangerous—proposal,” *The Middle East Channel*, site of Foreign Policy, 9/8/2010.

²⁷ Henry Siegman, US Hamas Policy Blocks Middle East Peace, p. 5.

banks, companies and ordinary people in GS and WB, Roy claimed that fighting against Hamas charitable organization would only increase its popularity. She goes further to add: “Indeed, given the steady socioeconomic deterioration that followed the implementation of the peace process, the balance of power between social and political Islam shifted even further in favor of the former, particularly at the grassroots level, where the majority of people interacted with the movement.”²⁸ Roy’s fieldwork and her approach in listening to people’s feelings and concerns about their experience helps to explain why Hamas has gained such popularity among Palestinians.²⁹

A Critique of This School of Thought

1. This approach has succeeded in giving an “insider” point of view on the organization. Researchers assume here that

Hamas cannot be understood in isolation. It is connected with those Islamist actors who preceded the movement after the First World War who opposed both British political rule and the Zionist aim to build a Jewish homeland in Palestine. It is also connected to the ulterior processes in Palestinian history, both before and after the two crucial Arab-Israeli wars: the 1948–49 war (with the creation of the state of Israel in 1948) and the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the occupation of the Palestinian territories that followed.³⁰

2. This school approaches Hamas in a broader manner, it considers Hamas a complex social and political organization, and a national resistance movement with moderate views. It cannot be approached as only a “violent organization.” Many studies confirm the fact that Hamas cannot be studied in “a unilateral way,” outside the context of the Palestinian historical developments.³¹
3. In discussing the triumph of Hamas in 2006’s election, they argue that the organization’s “electoral victory derives from many sources. The campaign of violent resistance against Israeli military occupation and the actions of its powerful military wing are important factors, but not the only ones.” They

²⁸ Sara Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza*.

²⁹ Sara Roy, *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

³⁰ Beverly Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*

tend to say that Hamas won “Palestinian hearts and minds” as a result of its organization, close relationship with the public of its members and its efforts to defend Palestinian rights.³²

4. Depending on basic information, provided through interviews and field visits, academics from this line of thought have been able to discuss Hamas thoroughly from the inside. They even studied the movement’s surrounding environment instigating “violence.” Thus, reaching the following conclusions:
 - a. Hamas will not abandon armed resistance because a large segment of the public still deeply believe that resistance and military action are their only option in confronting Israeli occupation and aggression.
 - b. It is easy to analyze Hamas’s documents, including the 1988 Charter, and reach different conclusions. However, they could be misleading unless the development of Hamas political thought and conduct is studied thoroughly and interviews are conducted with Palestinians who are pro-Hamas.

Third: Debatable Historical Charter

The Charter of Hamas “has sparked a lot of controversy, both inside and outside the organization.” The document, which was first issued in 1988, “attempted to offer an ideology to counter Zionism.”³³ Some critics take advantage of the charter to attack Hamas, especially when they use it as the sole source by which to understand Hamas’s political thought. Some of its articles clearly show the influence of “political Islam,” especially the MB movement’s thought, on Hamas’s framework of thought. Some articles, which urge the liberation of Palestine and destruction of the Zionist Israel, have been discussed thoroughly by western academics.

In the two decades following the issuance of the Charter, Hamas dealt with various developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It dealt with the outcomes of the peace process, even when it did not officially recognize the process, and it accepted an unannounced long-term truce with Israel if the latter withdrew from

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Mohamed Nimer, Charting the Hamas Charter Changes, *Insight Turkey* journal, vol. 11, no. 4, October–December 2009, p. 115.

the 1967 territories. “Tracing the political development of Hamas since 1992,” evidence could be shown that “current political leaders of Hamas are moving the organization beyond the ideological rhetoric of the early years of the movement.”³⁴ However, some scholars still judge Hamas only by its Charter, neglecting the progress of its political approach.

Still, some scholars use the Charter as evidence to show that “violence” is the basis of Hamas’s conduct towards Israel. It is seen in the works of authors who consider Hamas a violent militant organization and in the studies of some Israeli researchers. One of these is Wim Kortenoeven a researcher at the Centre for Information and Documentation of Israel (CIDI) in The Hague. Kortenoeven argues that this Charter is considered as “an outline of the movement’s goals, tactics and strategies.” “According to Kortenoeven, it still retains its relevance, while its principles have been confirmed countless times by different Hamas officials throughout time.” According to Kortenoeven:

Hamas’s *raison d’être* continues to be the destruction of Israel based on religious precepts captured in its 1988 Charter, making a durable moderation of its ideology impossible: “there is no such thing as a moderated form of mass murder or destruction of a state.” Further, Kortenoeven argues that the Charter is so pivotal for the movement, that its abolition, or even any alterations in the Charter’s text, would mean the end for Hamas as an organization.³⁵

On the other hand, other academics are perplexed by the dichotomy between Hamas’s Charter and its political discourse. However, the document remains no more than a historical document published during the first *Intifadah* that must be treated as a document that belongs to that period of time. In 2010, Jim Zanotti, a political analyst in the Middle Eastern affairs, presented his study to the US Congress. He illustrated that

Hamas’s primary goal is to achieve the “liberation” of all of historic Palestine (comprising present-day Israel, West Bank, and Gaza Strip) for Palestinian Arabs in the name of Islam. There is vigorous debate among analysts and perhaps within Hamas regarding the essential aspects of this goal. Hamas’s Charter is explicit about the struggle for Palestine being a

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Floor Janssen, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

religious obligation. It describes the land as a *waqf*, or religious endowment, saying that no one can “abandon it or part of it.”³⁶

Zanotti claims that

those who believe that Hamas is pragmatic are less likely to believe that it considers itself bound by its Charter or by rhetoric intended to rally domestic support. Those, on the other hand, who contend that consensus exists within Hamas not to compromise on core principles believe that Hamas sees events from a different perspective than the US and other international analysts. They assert that Hamas has a vastly different concept of time, borne out by a gradual but consistent rise in the movement’s fortunes over the course of generations (within its greater Muslim Brotherhood context) in the face of significant internal challenges and external opposition.³⁷

Fourth: Hamas and International Terrorism

Hamis is often considered distant from “violent” groups that use military means to achieve their objectives. However, Israeli officials often compare Hamas to al-Qaeda, despite the fact that it limits its military action to within Palestinian territories, a fact that distinguishes Hamas from other groups such as al-Qaeda and its affiliates. Even those who consider Hamas a “violent” group, have not presented any evidence to prove that it has connections with international terrorism, and do not deny the fact that all of the movement’s operations are against Israel and within the Palestinian territories.

Despite labeling Hamas as a militia, Matthew Levitt admits that although the movement has an international presence, it “has never actually carried out a terrorist attack beyond its traditional area of operations in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip.” For example, Hamas’ decision to run in the Palestinian elections, its participation in the Palestinian National Unity Government, and its control of Gaza even after the collapse of that unity government mitigate against a Hamas decision to target Western interests. Moreover:

³⁶ Jim Zanotti, Hamas: Background and Issues for Congress, Congressional Research Service (CRS), 2/12/2010, p. 13, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R41514.pdf>

³⁷ Ibid.

Hamas believes itself to be engaged in resistance, not terrorism. Many supporters of Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups condemned the September 11 attacks in the United States (2001), the March 11 attacks in Spain (2004), and the July 7 attacks in Britain (2005). Clearly, maintaining this distinction is paramount for Hamas and its supporters. In assessing the potential threat from Palestinian groups that rely on American dollars, FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigations] officials concluded that their extensive fund raising activity itself acts as a disincentive for operational terrorist activity in the United States. Hamas leaders have verbalized this sentiment. According to an FBI summary transcript of a 1993 Hamas meeting in Philadelphia, the participants mentioned “all the [support] activities they are talking about pertain to the activities within the United States. They also mentioned it is not to this best interest [sic] to cause troubles in the American theater.”³⁸

In her study, Sherifa Zuhur, a research professor of Islamic and regional studies from 2006 to 2009 at the US Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institute, argues

that Hamas shares an acceptance of the scientific rational traditions of the West along with moderate Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood. (The fact that both groups are castigated as highly ‘fundamentalist’ and Taliban-like is a great irritant to Hamas.) Hamas accepts the legitimacy of the nation-state, as opposed to bin Laden and Zawahiri’s emphasis on the Islamic nation. The Western training or Western-style education of most Hamas leaders has much to do with the organization’s stances. The United States had not initially labeled Hamas a terrorist organization. The State Department acknowledged meetings with Hamas representatives until March 1993, when the Israelis protested. It was aware of Palestinians worldwide, who were either associated with the Ikwan [MB], or later, Hamas. Palestinian organizations that were part of the PLO, like the PFLP, remained on the terrorist list, but practically speaking, secular nationalist Palestinian groups were legitimated after Oslo despite certain factions’ rejection of Oslo. Hamas, which rejected Oslo but took a neutral stance toward the PA at the time, was increasingly treated as a dangerous terrorist threat in U.S. media

³⁸ Matthew Levitt, “Could Hamas Target the West?,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* journal, vol. 30, issue 11, November 2007, p. 931.

from that point up to its victories in the 2006 and 2007 elections. As a result of U.S. hostility to Hamas, the organization increasingly regards the U.S. administration, although not the American people, as an enemy.³⁹

Zuhur who researches middle east and international security at several universities adds that

Hamas is not interested in a global jihad like al-Qaeda, and maintains that its only foe is Israel, hoping that better communications with the United States will emerge, and recognizing that its officials' inability to travel and speak with Americans have damaged its image. The United States and Israel lobbied the EU to reject Hamas. Under this pressure, the EU decided to reject the military wing of Hamas, but not the organization as a whole; until 2003 and even later, certain European countries maintained ties with Hamas. Overall, the government-oriented or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-oriented security analysts have taken a hard line toward Hamas and seem slow to realize that backing President Abbas is a losing course.⁴⁰

Fifth: Dynamics Around & Within Hamas.

Since its victory in the PLC election in 2006, Hamas's political behavior has been under the scope of many experts. Some expected the movement to be divided into wings, based on internal reactions to issues such as the reconciliation with Fatah or the conflict with Israel. But despite the changes, the movement maintained an intact structure.

During this period, Hamas took over GS after the failure of the Mecca Agreement in 2007. The movement faced massive challenges including meeting the people's daily needs and facing Israeli aggression at the end of 2008 after a long siege on GS. However, the movement proved its strength and steadfastness during these changes, as a matter of fact its strength and presence have increased locally and regionally, especially after Israeli attacks.

³⁹ Sherifa Zuhur, *Hamis and Israel: Conflicting Strategies of Group-Based Politics* (Strategic Studies Institute (SSI)–United States Army War College, December 2008), pp. 60–61, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/pub894.pdf>

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 61.

Regional changes including the uprising in Egypt created new challenges as well as opportunities for Hamas. In his study, Evangelos Diamantopolus, a researcher at the Centre for Mediterranean, Middle East and Islamic Studies at the University of Peloponnese in Greece, claims that

the Arab Spring has significantly influenced the [Middle East and North Africa] MENA region and Hamas could not be an exception. The organization faces pressing internal and external calls to take decisions on important issues that might change its character. The rise of a moderate Muslim Brotherhood, from which Hamas originates, appearing increasingly ready to comply with democratic rules in Egypt, pushes the Islamic Resistance Movement to put down its arms and denounce terrorism. In addition, the Palestinian public opinion seems to support reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah but that requires the group to show further moderation and pragmatism as well. Finally, the option of not siding by Assad in Syria's civil war might cost Hamas' place in the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis in the future. However, that scenario appears to be less costly after the Arab revolutions since other governments seem ready to let Hamas build not only its headquarters in their soil but close ties with their states as well.⁴¹

In the light of these deep changes in the political landscape within and beyond Hamas, Nathan J. Brown, a professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University, wrote his long article "Is Hamas Mellowing?" for the think tank Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He argues that the international community should interact with the gradual shifts occurring within Hamas.⁴²

He illustrates that

while Hamas's destination is still very much uncertain, the motivation of its leaders for embarking on this path is much clearer. They seek to position the movement regionally to be able to take full advantage of the changes in Egypt and the rise of Islamists more generally—as well as to cope with the disintegration of the Syrian regime that has hosted them for so long.

⁴¹ Evangelos Diamantopoulos, "Hamas After the Arab Spring," Middle East Flashpoint, no. 27, site of Centre for Mediterranean, Middle East & Islamic Studies, University of Peloponnese, p. 3, http://www.cemmis.edu.gr/files/hamas_after_the_arab_spring.pdf

⁴² Nathan J. Brown, *Is Hamas Mellowing?*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 17/1/2012, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/01/17/is-hamas-mellowing/921a>

Reconciliation also offers the possibility of reemerging in the West Bank where much of the movement has been forced—sometimes quite harshly—into hibernation since 2007.⁴³

Brown adds:

The movement's government in Gaza—which exercises authority quite effectively on the ground but remains internationally isolated—might be able to continue the process of prying open the diplomatic and economic window that has fallen ajar over the past year. And Hamas would also gain a voice in Palestinian decision making and what might amount to a veto over international diplomacy coupled with deniability.⁴⁴

Brown wonders:

Is this something to encourage internationally? There are substantial costs to be sure. First, it would be difficult to carry on serious, conflict-ending diplomacy in a context in which Hamas was given a powerful voice. The basis for a two-state solution would not be totally removed. Hamas for its part has left the door slightly open by indicating its willingness to accept a state based on the 1967 lines. It has rejected the idea that it will recognize Israel, but, as suggested above, the relevant question is whether it would accept as binding a Palestinian decision to recognize Israel, not whether it would change its own ideology. And Israel similarly has sometimes shown a willingness to negotiate indirectly with Hamas.⁴⁵

The writer admits here:

In speaking to some officials who were involved with Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy in 2005 and 2006, I have been struck by how many—especially on the European side, but even among some U.S. officials—see the reaction to Hamas's victory as a tactical mistake. Rather than react by squeezing the movement at a moment when, for the first time, it had both a share of political responsibility and something to lose, the international reaction was to crush it.⁴⁶

Furthermore, he summarizes the issue, adding: “taking a cautious rather than a hostile stance when it comes to Palestinian reconciliation and Hamas's baby steps

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

toward evolutionary change would not erase the mistakes of the past decade. But it may lay the basis for eventually recovering from them.”⁴⁷

Benedetta Berti, a research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), conducts research on political violence and conflict in the Middle East, non-state armed groups, as well as well as Palestinian, Lebanese, and Syrian politics. The member of the faculty at Tel Aviv University wrote an article in 2012 about the changes in Hamas, entitled “Meet the ‘New’ Hamas: Strategic Shift or Temporary Deviation from a Violent Path.” She claims that

two factors will contribute specifically to determine the future development of the group: its perception of the security environment and the success of the political reconciliation project. If inter-Palestinian reconciliation does indeed achieve the normalization of Palestinian political life and result in the creation of a united political coalition, then Hamas will have a higher interest in continuing to invest in nonviolent politics—provided the group is allowed to have a significant share of political power in “post-reconciliation” Palestine. Similarly, if the group perceives the security environment as non-threatening, it may have an interest in deemphasizing its military apparatus. However three important factors stand in the way of this development: firstly, Hamas has over the past few years invested in boosting its military apparatus, suggesting that any attempt to sideline the military leadership might result in dire internal conflicts. Secondly, it is unclear whether Hamas’s “hardcore” constituency would allow a nonviolent strategic shift, or whether this would lead to additional internal conflict, deeply threatening the internal cohesion of the group. Thirdly, a resolute international and Israeli refusal to deal with any Palestinian government that includes Hamas may indeed lead to a renewed marginalization of the group, which could in turn backfire, empowering Hamas’s more radical leaders and minimizing the nonviolent discourse. In this sense, the future of Hamas’s nonviolent strategy is as promising as it is uncertain, hanging by the thread of the Palestinian reconciliation process, the internal tensions along the political-military line, the evolution of the “Arab Spring,” and international and Israeli responses to these developments.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Benedetta Berti, Meet the New Hamas: Strategic Shift or Temporary Deviation from A Violent Path, site of Open Democracy, 15/1/2012, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/benedetta-berti/meet-%E2%80%98new%E2%80%99-hamas-strategic-shift-or-temporary-deviation-from-violent-path>

As for the impact of the Arab uprisings on Hamas, it was discussed by the Middle East Report number 129, which was issued by the International Crisis Group in 2012. The report argues that

the international community has a stake in the choices Hamas ultimately makes. The movement will continue to play a vital role in Palestinian politics, affecting the prospect of renewing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations as well as their odds of success. Reuniting the West Bank and Gaza is not only desirable; it also is necessary to achieving a two-state settlement. And territorial division, coupled with Gaza's persistent economic isolation, contains the seeds of further conflict with Israel. For these and other reasons, the world—and the West in particular—must do more than merely stand on the sidelines as Hamas wrestles over its future. Instead, the US and Europe should test whether they can seize the opportunity presented by two related developments: first, the rise to power (notably in Egypt) of Islamist movements that are keen on improving relations with the West, crave stability and are signaling they do not wish to make the Israeli-Palestinian issue a priority; second, the intense internal debates taking place within Hamas over the movement's direction.⁴⁹

The report asserts the importance of not losing the chance given regionally by the Arab uprisings, investing in the chances and challenges facing Hamas, and understanding and approaching the movement in a new way. It concludes:

Twice in the past—after the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections and after the 2007 Mecca unity accord—the international community missed the boat in its approach toward Hamas, adopting policies that produced almost precisely the reverse of what it expected: Hamas consolidated its control over Gaza; a war and dangerous flare-ups have occurred with Israel; Fatah has not been strengthened; democratic institutions in the West Bank and Gaza have decayed; and a peace deal is no closer. With a third chance coming, amid dramatic improvements in relations with Islamist movements region-wide, the West should make sure it is not, once more, left stranded at the dock.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ *Light at the End of their Tunnels? Hamas & the Arab Uprisings*, Middle East Report no. 129, 14/8/2012, International Crisis Group, p. ii.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

The approach to the Islamic resistance movement, Hamas, by western researchers and experts sometimes involve differences and contradictions. This is caused by lack of direct and available information about Hamas and its leadership, or by judging the movement according to the reactions and stances of main parties affecting the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Furthermore, three important contextual factors that lead to the publication of misleading studies on Hamas could now be confined to the following three:

The first is focusing on judging the movement as a part of political Islam, regardless of its special situation as a national liberation movement.

The second is judging Hamas on the basis of items in its historical Charter of 1988, while neglecting its political pragmatism in facing changes.

The third factor that causes such contradiction lies in the approach towards Hamas as a militia embracing “violence” against Israel without paying attention to its popularity among Palestinians, the majority of whom still believe that resistance is vital in order to defend themselves and regain their rights in the absence of any valid outcomes from the peace process.

All studies that investigated the organization from within, listened to its decision makers, studied the social and political context that affects the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and observed the developments in the field, tend to be more successful in its approach to the movement. These studies contradicted those based on the analysis of documents and studies conducted by Hamas’s enemies and rivals (such as Israeli and Zionist references), and those that relied upon judging Hamas by some articles in its Charter.

While analyzing these scholarly studies, and many more, about Hamas and political Islam in Palestine, an important deep question accompanies the journey: Why do EU and US policies still embrace the conservative approach towards Hamas in spite of the huge volume of research studies that call for engaging the organization? This may open the door for future discussions on the importance of western studies of the movement, from the perspective of their impact on western policies towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Section Two

Hamas in the Eyes of Its Leaders

Chapter Twelve

Hamas: Milestones in Thought and Experience

Mr. Khalid Mish'al

Hamas: Milestones in Thought and Experience

Section One: Evaluation of the Hamas Experience in Power and National Reconciliation*

First: The Hamas Experience in the Palestinian Authority

It is important to deal with the experience of the PA, which emerged in 1994, and the legislative and government institutions stemming from the PA, both objectively and comparatively, since the Palestinian situation is not a normal one. The PA was created under the occupation and as a result of a political-security agreement, the Oslo Accords. Consequently, we cannot describe what has emerged as a normal political experience or system.

We, Hamas, from the beginning, opposed the creation of such an Authority prior to the liberation of the land. Oslo did not liberate the land. It is a political-security agreement that created an authority on a land still under occupation. Hamas viewed a sounder principle, which is to liberate the land first and then establish a state with real sovereignty and independence. When, in 2006, we decided to participate in the general elections and participate in the institutions of the PA, the goal was to help reform the Authority and change its function and role in the service of our Palestinian people, and overcome the restrictions—especially the security restrictions—imposed by the Oslo Accords.

Accordingly, any assessment of Hamas's experience or the experiences of others in participating in the PLC and the government must factor in this fundamental observation: That it is not a normal experience, and hence, it must not be assessed according to the same criteria as one would assess normal experiences and political participation in independent states. To realize the implications of this observation and what it means, we cite some features that marked the PA experience and

* Section One is the text of interviews conducted via e-mail by Mohsen Mohammad Saleh from Beirut with Khalid Mish'al in Doha, Qatar. Mish'al replied with the first part on 2/4/2014, and the second part on 11/6/2014. The questions and answers were placed here in the form of titles to facilitate the readability of the text.

impacted the participation of Hamas and other Palestinian forces, as a result of the existing occupation and the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the PA.

First Feature: When Hamas won the elections in 2006, the Palestinian people were punished by a tight siege, especially in GS, with many restrictions imposed on financial and banking transactions, and through aggressive security measures and practices. This indicates that as long as the PA remains under the occupation and its economic and security control, and its control of the crossings in GS and WB, any party governing this Authority, will pay a high price. This is true regardless of who participates, and especially if the participant is opposed to the Oslo restrictions, security commitments, and Israeli and international pressures. Anyone governing the Authority will be exposed to punitive measures that will impact their political participation, and subsequently, the effectiveness of the PA, its government, its institutions, and its legislative body.

Second Feature: Parliaments usually lose members in the event of death and other emergencies, and this is normal. But for a Legislative Council to lose a third or a quarter of its members as a result of arrest and kidnapping by Israel, as happened in WB, predominantly with Hamas MPs, and for the government to lose a large number of ministers as a result of the occupation's repressive and arbitrary practices, then this should not be considered normal. The Palestinian political experience in the context of the PA is exceptional.

This is indeed what happened with Hamas's ministers and MPs, especially after Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit was captured, and the enemy realized that Hamas's political participation did not signal the abandonment of resistance. Hamas had actually declared explicitly, and proven practically, its position in reconciling politics with resistance, and governance with resistance. Indeed, the movement does not see any conflict between them at all: they are both among the rights of the Palestinian people and resistance forces. Indeed, governance, participating in the PLC, and forming a government are part of Hamas' national responsibilities and the responsibilities of other forces and factions before their people and form part of their duty to serve the people in their daily lives. Meanwhile, resistance is Hamas' choice, national responsibility, and natural strategy against the occupation. There is no conflict between the two paths and strategies.

Third Feature: The inter-Palestinian rivalry that turned into a bloody conflict had an impact on Hamas's experience in the government and the PLC from the

beginning. This was how one Palestinian party rejected the results of the elections, even after it had accepted them verbally. This unhealthy internal Palestinian climate following the 2006 elections, which led to division in 2007, and which is ongoing [at the time of writing], has cast a dark shadow on Palestinian life, and not just on the PA, its government, and the PLC. It has paralyzed the institutions of the PA, and caused a protracted rift that remains to this day, regrettably. Subsequently, the climate of internal conflict and then the division has not been able to secure even the bare minimum conditions to make the experience of any movement or faction in the PA a success.

True, such rivalry or internal dispute could indeed happen, and it actually happened, in other countries and impact the experience of government there. However, when this happens under the circumstances of an Authority under occupation, it becomes more difficult and complex, especially in a country like Palestine, already the core of the central conflict in the region for many decades.

These features and their consequences, along with the siege and collective punishment, in addition to Israeli-international meddling in Palestine, and their security, economic and political pressure on the PA, all created a tough and unique reality that did not allow Hamas to engage in a real experience in governing the PA. This was in addition to the military pressure exerted, especially against GS, where two wars were waged on Hamas and the resistance.

This does not mean that there are no aspects of Hamas' experience and achievements in the PLC and government, both before the division that started in 2007 and after, that cannot be assessed. Indeed, there is much that can be discussed and evaluated objectively.

There are certainly achievements and successes to reflect on, and at the same time, failures and flaws were inevitable, especially that this was Hamas' first experience in power, assumed under the extremely complicated conditions outlined above. We have the courage and awareness to learn from our mistakes and benefit from our correctness, and we have the ability to improve and develop our performance in politics as well as in resistance and other areas, for the benefit of our people, our cause, and our movement's experience and credibility.

This leads us to answer the second part of the question: Can Hamas present a successful model of reform and change under the occupation?... Yes, it can, *insha'Allah* (Allah willing), despite our profound awareness that governing under

occupation is an abnormal situation. We based ourselves on a clear vision in this regard, namely, that running the PA and the daily affairs of our people, and seeking to reform and improve the situation, is a national responsibility that complements the national responsibility in managing the conflict and the battle of resistance and struggle against “Zionist” occupation. We seek to also support our people’s steadfastness on their land and their ability to confront the occupation, and strengthen their internal front, politically, security-wise, economically, and socially. This responsibility is not separate from the project of resistance and national liberation, nor is it a contradiction of it. Therefore, discussion about change and reform here is in the context of an authority leading a people in resistance against the occupation, and not the authority of an independent and stable state.

Any authority under occupation must not propagate grand slogans and illusory emotional promises, such as promising its people prosperity and investment, or that GS and WB could become like Singapore,... Such claims would be delusions, self-deception and deception of the population; we write this under occupation and we do not live in an independent state.

However, it is the right of the people that their leaders deliver a decent daily life and meet the requirements of steadfastness, and a free political life based on democracy, justice, respect for human rights, freedoms, and integrity, away from corruption in all its forms.

Accordingly, Hamas and other dedicated forces, in addition to being preoccupied with their natural project of resistance against the occupation, must at the same time build their project in national internal affairs on these bases and criteria. They can achieve for their people a tangible and realistic amount of reform and change in their daily lives, at the level of their livelihood, as well as economically, politically, socially, educationally, culturally and so on. They can promote freedom, implement equality, justice, equal opportunity, and respect for human rights, and work in earnest to liberate the national political, security, and economy from the pressures and restrictions of the occupation and dependence on donor countries. This would be a real success when governing a people still living the cause of their national liberation and resistance against occupation.

Immediately after victory in the 2006 election, we were keen to form a National Unity Government. We extended a hand to everyone, first and foremost Fatah. Fatah and most other factions declined, giving an early indication that some Palestinian

parties wanted to let Hamas undergo the experience in government alone in order to isolate it regionally and internationally. Later success came in the Mecca Agreement (February 2007) which formed a National Unity Government, which unfortunately lasted only a few months, as a result of regional and international interference. This period culminated with the regrettable schism in June 2007.

We tried both before and after the division to implement our electoral program in various areas: political, security, economic, and social, in a way that would strengthen our people's capacity for steadfastness, build an economy of endurance and resistance, promote independence, strengthen the internal national front, perpetuating democracy. However, the circumstances that were thrust upon us internally and externally prevented us from achieving full success.

Thus, we had no choice but to accept the challenge and draft a serious practical strategy to counter the siege and the collective punishment sanctions, and confront military and security challenges, and sabotage and sedition attempts. We succeeded in this—by *Allah's* grace—noticeably in GS, where the national government's role had receded after the split in 2007. We were able to overcome many risks, assaults, and challenges. At the same time, we worked hard to improve our performance in governance, and to reach out to many segments of our people seeking to provide security and a decent life for them. We were able to achieve a lot in this regard, though no human endeavor can be devoid of mistakes and pitfalls. At the same time, the application of our vision and program stalled in WB. There, the division exposed us to a range of oppression, exclusion, demonization, and persecution, in addition to security coordination [with Israel] and torture, where resistance was criminalized, disarmed, and its heroes pursued. Hundreds of arrests were made systematically against Hamas leaders and cadres, including PLC members and former ministers.

In conclusion, Hamas was and is still subjected to many punitive measures, because of its program of resistance against the occupation, and because of its participation in power and the mandate given to it through the ballot boxes, as well as its commitment to national fundamentals. Despite all of the repression, and thanks to *Allah* and to Hamas' enormous efforts and determination to endure, it was able to preserve its resistance program and develop it in GS to an advanced level, after it first fended off subversive plots. Hamas still seeks—despite all difficulties—to resume resistance in WB against the occupiers and the settlers.

As for governance, Hamas, measured in the context of exceptional circumstances, succeeded in managing the affairs of the population politically and at the level of security, providing a reasonable level of the requirements of steadfastness. Hamas sought alternatives and worked to break the siege, and developed many creative solutions to address risks and challenges, adopting a policy of self-sufficiency and unconditional support. Hamas worked hard to put forward a practical model of improved performance, effective management, integrity and setting a good example. It was also keen to reconcile strategic and tactical approaches in a way that allowed steadfastness and moving forward, while not violating principles, values, and national fundamentals.

In this harsh period, full of incidents, wars, and plots, and amid generally extraordinary circumstances, and given the nature of human endeavors, mistakes happened and shortcomings were exposed. However, these were mistakes in detail and tactics, and not in overall visions and strategies. Furthermore, Hamas has the boldness to see and admit this, with the ability to learn the lessons from mistakes to move forward, improve, and develop, and achieve more successes and partial victories. Ultimately, the steady accumulation of these will lead to the desired goal of getting rid of the occupation and liberating the land, Jerusalem, and the holy sites, restoring legitimate national rights *insha'Allah*.

Second: Hamas's Experience in National Reconciliation

Palestinian reconciliation is a national necessity yet to be completed. We must urgently emerge out of the state of division, the unnatural state that was never a choice for us. It was imposed on us as a punishment against the Palestinian people following the elections of 2006, especially with our insistence that it adheres to national fundamentals and the path of resistance, despite our presence in government and its institutions. Reconciliation is the natural state, which concerted efforts to complete and overcome all obstacles to achieving it must be made.

Over the past years, we made many efforts and held many meetings that produced numerous agreements regarding reconciliation in a number of Arab and Muslim capitals, including Cairo, Doha and Mecca. Despite this, and until now, reconciliation was never implemented on the ground. Reconciliation, despite

its vital importance and necessity, has thus become a difficult demand that we have sought but never reached, due to a number of obstacles and hindrances, including:

1. The Israeli factor: Israel wants to maintain and even deepen the division to weaken as the Palestinians. Israel most certainly benefits from the division, and uses it as a pretext for many of its positions and policies towards Palestinian people both in WB and GS.

2. Foreign intervention by the US and some European parties, especially the Quartet, which set harsh conditions on the Palestinian people to discourage reconciliation and apply pressure to force Hamas to abide by the Quartet's conditions to approve its participation in a national reconciliation government. This represents a blatant interference in internal Palestinian affairs. Reconciliation in any country or society is an internal matter, no one has the right to interfere with it. It is also a right for the people of that homeland and its political and resistance forces, and it is not acceptable for any party to appropriate it, veto it, or place conditions on it. In fact, [the international community] did not stop at placing conditions and objections in the way of reconciliation, it went beyond this to taking measures and applying serious pressure, such as threatening the PA in Ramallah with cutting off funding should it engage in reconciliation with Hamas. There was also US pressure on the PA to give precedence to negotiations with Netanyahu instead of reconciliation with Hamas, which disrupted reconciliation more than once, notably in early 2013 in Cairo under President Muhammad Morsi. This was in addition to covert interferences to poison the internal Palestinian climate whenever reconciliation efforts make progress.

3. Unfortunate internal Palestinian obstacles, which essentially stem from the non-readiness or non-availability of a political climate in Palestine and the Arab world in general for the peaceful transfer of power or real partnership in political decision-making. True, there are slogans and expressions about these concepts, but they have remained within the theoretical framework, and are mostly meant for media consumption.

Here we must again reiterate that Palestinians do not consider themselves to be in a natural state, enjoying neither sovereignty or authority. We remain under occupation. As long as we are in a stage before the reality of an existing authority, which has its constitution and laws regulating the building of institutions and the

election of leaders through the ballot boxes, and relies on democracy as the way to achieve this, then this must be respected and abided by. In addition, I have called and continue to call for working on the basis of national partnership in addition to free elections, to build national institutions in the frameworks of the PA and the PLO. This way, we can work on the basis of real partnership to manage political decision-making and shoulder the national responsibility, in addition to resorting to the ballot box.

The Palestinian situation in particular, and the current Arab situation in general, does not have the time, energy or experience to implement the principle of the rotation of power and build institutions exclusively on the basis of election results, where those who win a majority rule and the others become the opposition as happens in longstanding democracies in the world. Our Palestinian and Arab reality, which is undergoing exceptional circumstances and a difficult transition to a real democratic age, forces us to adopt the two rules together: elections and partnership. This will make us strengthen and develop the democratic experience with solid steps on the one hand, and mobilize collective Palestinian energies in our institutions, decision-making, and strategies, and bearing the burdens of our national struggle against the occupation on the other hand.

In effect, I see that the principle of elections itself, when it comes to implementation, requires consensus and measures that take into account the exceptional circumstances, and makes elections a path to consensus and national stability rather than further conflict and polarization. Here, the importance of implementing democracy with consensus and measures in cases of democratic transition like the ones the Arab region is witnessing [can be seen].

Therefore, I see that the basis of internal Palestinian obstacles hindering reconciliation stems from this flaw, the absence of conviction regarding real partnership. On the contrary, there is insistence on playing by the rules of the old political game, which may include others but only in secondary roles that do not challenge the monopolization of decision-making. This was not right in the past, and it certainly isn't right in the present, nor will it be in the future. We have no choice but real and full partnership among the children of the same homeland and the same cause, and on solid bases of democracy and political freedom. Our real strength as Palestinians stems from within, from the unity of the ranks and the robustness of our national building, and from achieving this on the bases of both

democracy and partnership where everyone believes they need each other in the framework of the same homeland.

Based on the above, we sum up our vision to achieve real and effective reconciliation as follows:

1. Abiding by what was agreed upon by our brothers in Fatah and other national forces and leaders in Cairo and Doha, and working honestly to implement it swiftly to end the black chapter of division. After that, we build together our national unity and the internal front, working side by side on the national project and its main issues.

2. Stressing democracy, elections, and partnership in building our national institutions in the framework of the PA and PLO, so that we may have unified institutions for all the people of the homeland at home and abroad.

3. Shouldering joint responsibility in managing Palestinian political decision-making, which is our collective responsibility and concerns all of us. No one should monopolize decision-making, and no one has the right to do so. The Palestinian issue with its complex circumstances, the balance of power that is tipped in favor of our enemy, and the overlap with the regional and international situation, requires full Palestinian political energy and thought. For this would allow our political decision making to be more rational, upstanding, and effective, as well as more attached to, and representative of, the Palestinian will and the majority of the people, at home and abroad.

4. Agreeing on an alternative Palestinian national strategy of resistance that we draft and build together, taking into account the lessons of the long Palestinian experience. This should be based on an accurate assessment of the situation and a profound analysis of reality, prospects, and risks. At the same time, we must be aware of our fundamentals, rights, and the essence of our national project, as well as the major goals of this national strategy, its methods, tactics, and multiple domains and arenas. These include the resistance against the occupation in all its forms led by armed resistance, to political, media, grassroots, cultural, economic, and legal work, etc. The enemy must also be pursued in various regional and international forums, while the nation should be rallied to support the cause. We must interact well and coordinate with the nation, and win over more supporters and sympathizers in the world, which has started to discover the true face of the racist “Zionist” occupation.

Section Two: Hamas's Vision and Position in Light of the Changes in the Arab World**

In the name of *Allah* Most Merciful Most Beneficent

All praise be to *Allah*, Lord of the Worlds. May *Allah* send prayers and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad, the Seal of the prophets and messengers, and upon his family, his companions, and all his brothers: the prophets and messengers.

Dear Brothers and Sisters; Ladies and Gentlemen, Assalamu 'Alaikum wa Rahmatullah wa Barakatuhuh.

I would like to begin by thanking Al-Zaytouna Centre for holding this important conference at this critical time, and I would especially like to thank the General-Manager of the Centre, Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh. I would also like to greet the attendees and wish them well. *Insha'Allah*, this conference will result in important conclusions that will guide the Arab Spring, evolve its position on the "Arab-Zionist" conflict and produce two advantages; firstly, the advantage of an internal structure based on new foundations of freedom, democracy and combating corruption; and secondly, the advantage of a strong, coherent, and independent foreign policy that maintains its decisions and improves Arab and Muslim [countries'] performance in relation to Palestine and the general issues of the nation.

The importance of this conference lies in the following:

1. Its timing; it has undoubtedly been held in light of the Arab Spring and the progress of the people's will, their political role and their control over decisions.
2. It is the result of the evolution of the role of Islamists and their rise to power in some Arab countries.
3. It has been held out of consideration for the growing role of the region's resistance movements, especially following the decline in the official [states'] role over the past decades, and in light of the growing public role, as well as the significant achievements made by resistance movements.

** Paper presented by Khalid Mish'al in Doha via satlink at the opening session of the conference "The Islamists in the Arab World and the Palestinian Issue, In Light of the Arab Uprisings," organized by Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations in Beirut on 28–29/11/2012. Mish'al agreed to include this paper in this book. Al-Zaytouna Centre would like to extend its thanks to Middle East Monitor (MEMO) for translating it.

4. It takes into account the decline of the Zionist project, despite its continued military and technological superiority in the region. This entity is undoubtedly declining and its image in the world is deteriorating. It has not achieved any victories for a long time, and perhaps what happened during the eight-day Gaza War in which the Palestinian resistance emerged victorious, is a significant indicator of this.

5. The paper we are presenting today in this conference on the vision of Hamas and its positions addresses the reality and not just an anticipation of the future. Hamas has been working for the past 25 years, working and striving, and although it may slip up sometimes, it often and usually gets it right, and we ask *Allah* to accept our deeds.

Dear colleagues, I know that my speech is not just a speech, but a paper representing Hamas's vision concerning the proposed subject [The Islamists of the Arab World and the Palestinian Issue].

First: Hamas' Vision for the Palestinian Issue

Perhaps what will be stated is closer to being the fundamentals and the axioms that are well known and recognized, but recalling principles, basics and fundamentals, at this and at any time, is a very important matter. When we speak in this context, we do not speak only of Hamas as being simply an Islamic movement, but also as a national liberation movement, as well as an Islamic movement. Some of what we will put forth would fall under the category of fundamentals and principles, and some under policies and positions. These are summed up as follows:

1. Palestine, from its river to its sea, from its north to its south, is the land of the Palestinian people; their homeland, and their legitimate right. We will not relinquish an inch or any part of it, for any reason or under any circumstances and pressures.

2. Palestine, in its entirety, is an Arab and Islamic land. It has Islamic and Arab affiliations and is considered a blessed and sacred land. Moreover, it has a special place in the heart of every Arab and Muslim, as well as standing and respect in all religions.

3. We will not, in any way, recognize the legitimacy of the occupation. This is a principled, political, and moral position. We do not recognize the legitimacy of the

Israeli occupation of Palestine, nor do we acknowledge “Israel” or the legality of its presence on any part of Palestine no matter how long it remains, and *insha’Allah*, this will not be long. All that has occurred in Palestine, including its occupation, settlements, Judaization, the changing of its landmarks and the falsification of facts in its regard is wrong and must end, *insha’Allah*.

4. The liberation of Palestine is a national, nationalist, and religious duty. It is the responsibility of the Palestinians, the Arabs, and the Muslim nation. It is also a humanitarian responsibility in accordance with the conditions of rights and justice.

5. Jihad and armed resistance are the correct and authentic means for the liberation of Palestine and the restoration of all rights. This battle must, of course, be accompanied by all forms of political, diplomatic, media, national, and legal resistance, as well as the investment of the entire nation’s energies and the summoning of all the elements of strength we possess.

6. Resistance is a means and not an end. If we had any other way to liberate the land, end the occupation, and regain our rights without the shedding of blood and other painful sacrifices, we would have taken it. However, the experiences of nations throughout history have proved that the only option available in expelling the occupiers, countering the aggression and restoring the land and rights of the people is resistance in all its forms, starting with armed resistance.

7. We are not fighting the Jewish people merely because they are Jewish. We are, however, fighting those who are “Zionist” occupiers and aggressors. We will fight anyone who tries to attack us, seize our rights or occupy our land regardless of their religion, affiliations, race or nationality.

8. The Zionist project is a racist, hostile, and expansionist project based on murder and terrorism. Hence, it is the enemy of the Palestinian people and nation and poses a real threat to them, as well as to their security and interests. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that it is a danger to the security of the humanity, its interests and its stability.

9. We hold on to Jerusalem and its Muslim and Christian holy sites. We will not give them up, nor will we relinquish any part of them. They are our right, our essence, our history, our present and our future. It [Jerusalem] is the capital of Palestine and is cherished in the hearts of Arabs and Muslims as a sign of their status and pride. “Israel” has no legitimacy or right to Jerusalem at all, nor does it

have any legitimacy or right to any part of Palestine. All Israeli actions in Jerusalem and elsewhere, including Judaization, settlements, the falsification of facts and attempts to steal out history are invalid.

10. We stand firm on the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees and displaced individuals; their right to their homes from which they were expelled or were prevented from returning to, whether from the occupied territories of 1948 or 1967, i.e., from all of Palestine. We refuse to compromise on this right in any way. At the same time, we reject all resettlement and alternative homeland projects.

Brothers and sisters, this is an opportunity to pause at the “symphony” that plays from time to time; once there was a fear of resettlement in Lebanon, once there was a fear of resettlement in Jordan or an alternative homeland, and nowadays it is the Sinai. Oh brothers, to the Palestinian, there are no compensations for Palestine but Palestine. The actions of our people in the recent Gaza War and wars of the past, as well as in the on-going *Intifadahs* and revolutions is proof of this great nation’s insistence on, and attachment to, their land.

11. The unity of the Palestinian land: The WB (including Jerusalem), the GS, and the occupied lands of 1948 is one land comprising all its geography; it is one unit, no part is separated from the other. It is, as a whole, the homeland of the Palestinian people. The current situation in Gaza, which some fear, is an exceptional case that has been imposed upon us, and not a normal situation. We cannot accept for Gaza to be separate from the WB, for they are one, and together they are a part of the Palestinian homeland.

12. The unity of the Palestinian people, both Muslims and Christians, and all its intellectual, political and ideological elements, as well as its resistance, militant, and political forces and factions.

13. The unity of the Palestinian political system and its institutions and the unity of its national authority through the PLO, which needs to be rebuilt on valid grounds to include all Palestinian forces and components. The current division does not reflect our origin, nor does it reflect reality. This division has been imposed upon us after the international and regional forces rejected the results of the 2006 Palestinian elections in which Hamas was victorious. However, the unity of the Palestinian political system is key and we are sparing no efforts to achieve this, *insha’Allah*.

14. Liberty first and then the state: a true state is the fruit of liberation, but a state that is the fruit of an agreement is merely an entity or a self-governing authority. Call it what you will, but a real state is the fruit of liberation first, and there is no alternative to establishing a Palestinian state with true sovereignty over the entire territory.

As for the PA, it is a reality we want to manage through a national partnership with others to serve our people, their rights, and their liberation project; in a manner that is consistent with their national fundamentals.

15. Independent Palestinian national decision: This is a principle that is based on non-dependency or reliance on any other country or party in the world, whether it be a friend, ally, enemy, or opponent. However, this does not mean, nor can we accept it in the context of, limiting the Palestinian issue to the Palestinians and terminating or weakening the Arab and Islamic roles. The issue of Palestine was, and will remain, not only an Arab and Islamic issue, but also a humanitarian issue.

16. The establishment of national Palestinian institutions and authorities should always be based on democracy, starting with free and fair elections with equal opportunities. Moreover, the principle of partnership and national coalition work should be present in every phase. To be sure, it is not logical to limit ourselves to elections and then allow only one side to control the decision, while the rest are bystanders or in the opposition. Partnership must be respected in all stages, regardless of the chances of success, with emphasis on the fact that opposition is a legitimate right for everyone, provided that the opposition is constructive. In addition to this, everyone must refer to the results of the ballot boxes and respect the will of the people, as well as accept the peaceful rotation of power. We must also be reminded that we are a special and unusual case since we are still living under occupation.

17. We will not intervene in the affairs of other countries, and we will not engage in axes, conflicts or alliances with other nations. We have adopted the policy of opening up to the different countries of the world, especially Arab and Muslim countries. We certainly strive to have balanced relations, the scale and standards of which will be in the interest and service of Palestine and its people and will support their steadfastness and determination. The criteria for these relations are, of course, the nation's interests and security and the rejection of dependency on any country or party in the world.

18. The unity of the nation, including all its religious, ethnic, and sectarian elements. It is a single nation in the past, present, and future, and has the same fate and interests, and we deal with it accordingly. As we acknowledge the diversity and variety in our nation, we realize the need for everyone in our nation to distance themselves from incitement and conflict, as well as to avoid taking sides on this basis. Instead, we must co-exist as we have in past centuries. Moreover, everyone in this nation must know their limits and claim their rights without violating the rights of others. The greater good of the nation must outweigh any sectarian or factional interests.

19. Any position, initiative, or political program that is provisional or tactical must be in line with the national Palestinian fundamentals that we have mentioned and may not go against or contradict them. Moreover, every partial or full judgment must be subject to this principle, and therefore, we reject any projects, agreements or peace settlements that diminish these fundamentals and principles and affect national Palestinian rights.

As you can see, this last point on the matter of fundamentals, policies, attitudes, and principles governs what precedes it or is an essential integral resolution of what has been mentioned.

Second: The Practical Application of Stances and Concepts

Some may wonder what the reality of this strong speech is? Where is its application on the ground?

We say that the movement's performance on the ground is similar to the performance of all humans; it may be right or wrong. However, in our case, as a movement, it has been mostly right, thanks be to *Allah*. Our performance is largely in line with our announced principles and values. Occasionally, there are gaps, mistakes, or sometimes ambiguous images that suggest there are contradictions or conflict with what is announced. However, we clearly say, even if we have a lapse in judgment, or if some images are misleading, the criterion remains what we stated, namely those principles, fundamentals, policies, and attitudes we have mentioned.

I will give four examples to illustrate this:

1. Resistance: This is a primary principle and our strategic choice. Some have had doubts that talk of a truce is giving up on the resistance; this is, of course, arbitrary. In short, the path of resistance, in terms of its preparation, organization, and performance for the liberation of Palestine, is something that we will never compromise. In addition to this, the management of the decision of escalation and truce, as well as diversifying our methods and manners, all fall under the process of managing the decision, and not the principle of the decision, as the principle cannot be changed.

Moreover, even if the enemy and the settlers are out of Gaza, it cannot be taken out of the circle of the conflict, even though necessity calls for the change of its role in the battle by virtue of its circumstances. Thankfully, Gaza is still a source of hope, not only for Palestine, but for the entire region. We have just emerged from an aggressive war on the GS, which was ended with a victory for the Palestinian resistance, which succeeded in ending the war on its terms.

In the case of the WB, the absence of the resistance for several years does not reflect a change in principles, but is a necessity for our people due to the massive security pressures from every direction, near and far. We consider the decline of the resisting role inevitable and a forced reality we strive to overcome by upholding our intention and preparing for a new start. *Insha'Allah*, the resistance will return to WB, reassuming its effective and essential role in every phase of the Palestinian struggle, as the enemy will not withdraw from our land without the pressure of resistance.

2. Participation in the PA: Doesn't this contradict with the movement's position on the Oslo Accords?

This is a legitimate question, and there is no doubt that the matter is vague on the surface, but we believe the matter is clear. Our positions on Oslo and all the surrendering agreements are decisive, with no hesitation. However, there are obligations that compelled us to obtain the authority to change its role, and make it combine the service of the people and the management of day-to-day affairs on the one hand, and the right to resist the occupation on the other. Today we are an authority in GS, however we resist, as well as develop and strengthen this resistance, with the realization that it is difficult to practically combine all these considerations. However, our support of the principles and our commitment to them prompts us to shape reality to be in line with them and not vice versa.

3. Agreeing to a state on the 1967 borders: Some worry that this is may be a prelude to walking in the footsteps of those before us, and eventually the big dream will shrink. To this we say ‘no’: we are not necessarily convinced that the liberation of the occupied territory of 1967 is a practical goal. Personally, I believe in terms of the practical objective aspect, that anyone who can liberate the territories occupied in 1967, is able to liberate the rest of Palestine. However, there is a need to unify the Palestinian as well as the Arab stance on a common denominator upon which all parties agree, regardless of how that program may vary from one party to another. This is what drives us, the Hamas movement, and other resistance movements, to take this political stance as long as it is not at the expense of the rest of the Palestinian land and does not contain any abandonment of our rights or any part of our land, nor include any recognition of “Israel.”

4. The matter of the division: This is also a reality that has been forced upon us, we did not choose it. As everyone knows, it was imposed on us in 2007 when several international and regional parties rejected the results of the 2006 elections. I attest to this, at a historical moment, that the division occurred on June 13th, 14th, and 15th, 2007. On the 15th of that month, I called the Egyptian authorities and informed them we were ready to settle the matter and reconcile, because the division was not our choice, it was forced upon us. Since that time, we have been continuously working on putting an end to the decision, and strive to achieve reconciliation on national foundations that ensure the rearrangement of the Palestinian interior within the PA and PLO framework, and the adoption of a national political program that aligns with Palestinian fundamentals, rights, and national interests.

Third: The Changes in the Arab World and Its Effects on the Issue, Hamas’s Role and Potential Challenges

We now move on to the second part of the topic, which is the vision regarding the changes in the Arab world and their impact on the cause and the role of Hamas, as well as the challenges and opportunities resulting from them. We can sum this up as follows:

1. In addition to its significance to the nation in the context of its historical revival, the “Arab Spring” is also a major strategic development in the path to liberating Palestine and facing the “Zionist project.” This is because Palestine’s battle and liberation needs a strong and robust nation on its internal front, and a foreign policy that is also based on the people’s will and has independent decisions.

2. There is no doubt that the Arab Spring has increased Israeli concerns and muddled up its calculations, because the rules of the game the enemy is accustomed to have begun to change. We will be satisfied with addressing the main points on this topic due to the limited time.

3. We have no doubt that the Arab Spring and the changes it brought about in the Arab world give Hamas and the Palestinian resistance movements a chance to work in a better Arab environment that is more in line with the resistance, and more adherent to the national Palestinian fundamentals and rights.

4. Obviously, this Spring and the major events succeeding it change the map of Hamas’s political relations, and have added and impacted on it. Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco are certainly a qualitative addition to Hamas’s political relations in comparison to their former relations. Keeping in mind that Hamas has had various relations with most Arab countries over the past two decades, the Arab Spring enhanced some of these relations, as we have mentioned, as well as continued some others and we are concerned with all of them.

As for the impact of the Arab Spring on the movement’s relations, our well-known and distinct relationship with Syria is suffering and is known to all in light of current events. We did not wish for what happened to happen, and from the first moment, as history will attest, we were keen on things going another way. We wanted Syria to remain strong in terms of its security, stability and foreign policy, which, over the last few years, have been aligned with the resistance. This is a historical truth, and with the Arab Spring and its inevitable spread to the Syrian arena, the Syrian people are no less concerned with democracy, freedom and involvement in decisions than any other Arab nation. We hoped that an internal policy would be adopted that would respond to people’s will. We have given many pointers in this direction, not as interference in internal affairs, but honest advice to lookout for Arab interests, including Syrian interests. Syria would remain the resistance’s fortress, through its foreign policy and based on an internal policy that satisfies its people and responds to its demands. However, unfortunately, things

went in the tragic direction we are witnessing today. Nevertheless, we believe that Syria, which will rely democratically on its people's will, can only be with the resistance. Resistance was not strictly an official choice made by countries, but has always been the choice of the people first, and when a leader feels his people support the resistance, he will be stronger. The people have always supported the resistance, but some regimes support it, while others are negative towards it, and some are enemies of the resistance.

This is undoubtedly a model of our relations that have been impacted, and there are other examples known to all. Hamas, however, and this is an important point, has not moved from one axis to another, as Palestine and the Palestinian resistance is the essence of the resistance axis. Resistance, and the axis of resistance, is not just a hotel we merely stay in or leave, and resistance is not linked to geography. When the Hamas leadership was in Jordan, along with its presence inside Palestine, Hamas was supporting the resistance and exercising resistance. Later, even after we moved to Qatar, then Syria, then other countries such as Egypt, Hamas remained a resistance movement. Hamas has and will always be a supporter of the resistance and a resistance movement, regardless of its geographical location, because this is its essence and its strategic choice until, *insha'Allah*, we liberate Palestine.

5. The Arab Spring and its major events temporarily distracted the world from the Palestinian issue, and this is certainly a loss, but a short and temporary one. I say that the Arab nations have a right to pursue their interests and concerns, and we are sure that even when the Arab nations are busy with their internal affairs, Palestine is present in their minds, hearts, and in their chants. The last war on Gaza was renewed and concrete evidence of Palestine's status that never changes in the eyes of the nation, even when they are busy with their internal affairs and developments.

Fourth: Challenges and Problems Facing the Arab Spring and Its Countries

It is clear that there are challenges and problems facing the Arab Spring and its countries that call for a series of observations and alerts. It is also essential for there to be a high degree of directness and transparency when dealing with this subject, for a leader does not lie to his people. Based on this, I will make a series

of recommendations and blunt observations on this subject, only for the objective of contributing to the greater good of our great nation:

1. There is a need to strike a balance between internal priorities, meaning national concerns and national priorities, without conflicting with one another as success internally strengthens a country's foreign position, and vice versa. It is wrong to adopt the policy of retreating into oneself. What we are saying is that being concerned with the bigger issues does not only enhance a country's regional and international role, but also serves the country's internal policy in facing pressures and attempts at external intervention. It is wrong to protect oneself by hiding away, instead, protect yourself with openness, taking initiative, and occupying yourself with larger issues.

2. It is necessary not to manage the crucial current phase in the nation's history from a narrow country-wide perspective, but from the broader context of the Arab and Muslim nation through cooperation and integration. I assure you that this serves internal national concerns, interests and issues. Economic, security, and political integration between the Arab countries, particularly during this difficult transitional phase that some Arab Spring countries are going through, serves these countries and their people and eases this transitional phase. The people and their leaders are in their own countries and are busy with their national concerns, and this is their natural right, but while they are rebuilding their countries, they must think of the nation's concerns and interests! Where does it stand? What is its role? Where is its place under the sun? The nation has been a playground for others to play in and wrestle over, and it has been absent. The time has come for the nation to become a key player and contribute to re-building the regional map. This is our collective responsibility; we must build our countries and, at the same time, the greater Arab country. The Arabs have been absent for many decades, and today is the day they return to the stage and arena, not to wrestle with anyone, except for the "Zionist" enemy and anyone who invades their land. As for the regional and neighboring countries, we want to build a map of balance, integration, and cooperation, without losing the Arabs' position or their role.

3. Managing the relationship with the West and major countries, and this is normal in today's world, for political and economic purposes, etc. However, this must not be at the expense of the Palestinian issue and the Arab role and responsibilities related to it. I say this while I am confident that the nation, *insha'Allah*, is aware of

this, but it is just a reminder. We believe that it is necessary not to give gratuitous concessions to the West while managing our relations with it. The legitimacy of the Arab Spring countries stems from their people's will, not foreign support, and addressing major issues strengthens these countries, not weakens them.

4. It is important to raise the ceiling of the Arab stance, the League of Arab States, and the ceiling of every country in the political situation, particularly in terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Moreover, it is necessary to reconsider and review the current Arab strategy. To begin with, this requires changing the political language. Yes, it is true that the people need time, but it is not right, after this Arab Spring, to keep the same language, same initiatives, same projects, and same attitudes. I know that full transformation and development requires time, but we must take the first step towards this now; the political language and terms of the Arab political dialogue must change. We must initiate and research change of the Arab strategy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, and from there, we must move towards changing the attitudes towards the resistance and resistance movements. What used to be strange, rejected, or taboo in the past by the standards of the official Arab norms, such as arming the resistance, must become possible today. A strategy must be drawn for the nation to study as it wishes, parts of which will be announced while others won't, how to support the resistance movements with funds and arms, and how to back it politically and protect its back, etc. This will be a strong message from the nation that times have changed, and the world must respect the nation's will, rights, and interests. It cannot remain biased to "Israel" and stand by helplessly while it launches an aggression against the nation, and violates its rights, interests, and sanctities.

If there are no official wars between armies, the nation should at least support the golden option that has proved its worth, with the help of *Allah*, especially during the past years. Since 1967, "Israel" has not won a true war, unless we consider 1982, when it expelled the Palestinian revolution from Beirut and Lebanon. However, after that, "Israel" has not been victorious, neither in Lebanon or any part of Palestine, especially Gaza, and this is credited to, after *Allah*, the resistance, the heroes of the resistance, the weapons of the resistance, and the support of the nation.

Furthermore, there is a need to turn the page on old projects and initiatives, and search for new visions, projects, and strategies, beginning with obtaining real cards of strength, and keeping the nation's options open.

5. The peace agreements and the positions of the countries that hold them, is certainly a heavy legacy that needs to be reconsidered. However, the question is how; in what way, and in which time frame? What is so important now that it must be done. Political settlements and agreements with “Israel” are unfair to the nation and Palestine, they are not an advantage or inherent, nor is this a normal situation. “Israel” is not and will not be a friend or a neighbor, but an enemy not only to the Palestinians, but to the nation as a whole. If we characterize the agreements as such, we must make it a priority to address the relations, contact and normalization with the Israeli occupier. This is unacceptable, especially in light of the great Arab Spring, because at this point, the nation’s leaders must realize that the anger of their people is not only a result of internal policies, but also a result of the nation’s shame and weak position, policies, and strategies in terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

6. With regards to the rise of Islamists to power and the significance and impact this has on the issue, this does not imply that Palestine only needs Islamists, or that Hamas and the PIJ, as national Islamic Palestinian powers, are only in need of Islamists due to their importance, distinction, and firm position towards the issue. On the contrary, we need all the nation’s trends and elements; the Islamists, nationalists, liberals, and the left-wing. This is our nation, and we need everyone in it, and Palestine was and will remain a national issue. It is also necessary to disassociate ourselves from any divisions or sectarian, ethnic, or religious alignments. May *Allah* rid us of the hateful sectarianism that has spread over the region; May *Allah* rid us of ethnic, sectarian, and denominational divisions. Our nation has always been characterized with this beautiful diversity; this is a history that we have inherited, which has formed the nation’s civilization and course throughout history. Today, it is wrong for us to explore these gaps, in which our enemies pour oil and fire to destroy us. This not only requires us to instil correct ideas and concepts, but also entails that our behavior, as countries, movements, academics, or intellectuals must be in line with these positions and concepts, and does not promote sectarian or ethnic feelings.

In its Arab Spring, we want our nation to be unified as a nation, unified for Palestine, and we want it to build its internal front based on the interests of its people. Today, these people are thirsty for freedom, democracy, development, making a dignified living, progress, advancement and technology. At the same

time, they look forward to having an advanced nation comparable to other nations, and a firm grip on managing their relations, foreign policies, and their battle with the “Zionist” enemy.

Finally, I would like to, once again, thank al-Zaytouna Centre for giving us this opportunity. These are our humble experiences that we wished to present and convey to you, and perhaps it may be of benefit to you. We hope that Hamas continues, as it has always done, to meet your expectations and gain confidence.

*May Allah Bless You, wa Assalamu ‘Alaikum wa Rahmatullah
wa Barakatuhuh.*

Chapter Thirteen

*Hamas: An Analysis of the Vision and
Experience in Power*

Mr. Isma'il Haniyyah

Hamas: An Analysis of the Vision and Experience in Power*

First: The Most Prominent Core Principles of Hamas

The core principles of Hamas are the fundamentals of the Palestinian people as relates to two key issues: the land and man. The land refers to the Palestinian land in its totality, and man means a free man on his free land, in a way that achieves the return of every Palestinian to his land, home, and village, where he can live freely and in dignity. It is where man enjoys his full human rights, beginning with the right to self-determination and not ending with the smallest rights, as an integral whole. In other words, our core goals, based on these principles, are: liberating the Palestinian land and the return of the refugees to live in their free land.

Second: The Elements of Power and Cohesion that Hamas Enjoys

Hamas has suffered a series of blows, each intended to be decisive in the elimination of the movement. However, providence, thanks to its commitment to the true path *Allah* had taught to humanity, and Hamas's reliance on Islamic teachings and ideas, meant that it was firmly established in the hearts of stout men who were willing to sacrifice everything for the noble goals Hamas was founded to serve. It meant that the masses rallied behind these men who sacrificed all and took the path to martyrdom, beginning with the founder Sheikh Ahmad Yasin and not ending with leaders such as 'Abdul 'Aziz al-Rantisi, Isma'il Abu Shanab, Ibrahim Maqadmeh, Salah Shehadeh, Jamal Mansur, Jamal Salim, Salah Darwazah and many others. There are also many strengths that led to Hamas's steady growth, including the justice of the cause for which it was founded, namely the Palestinian issue with all its components. Furthermore, Hamas's

* This is the text of interviews conducted via e-mail by Mohsen Mohammad Saleh from Beirut, Lebanon, with Isma'il Haniyyah in Gaza, Palestine. Correspondence began on 19/12/2013, and the text was approved by Mr. Haniyyah on 11/3/2014. The questions and answers were placed here in the form of titles to facilitate the readability of the text.

leaders and cadres have shown exceptional loyalty and dedication in defending this cause and sacrificing themselves for its sake.

The third element is Hamas's political prudence, and understanding of jurisprudence in finding balance and identifying priorities with regard to the movement's policies. This allows Hamas to continue to move forward without impasses, renewing itself while maintaining its authenticity of thought.

One distinguished characteristic of Hamas is its insistence on upholding the fundamentals of our people and their resistance, as the way to achieve our national goals, and its refusal to be drawn into any bargaining over these principles and rights. Nevertheless, Hamas has still shown the political flexibility required to cooperate when the situation has allowed it. Among the distinguishing characteristics of Hamas has been the movement's reach in the Arab and Islamic worlds, which has meant that the Palestinian people are not alone in their struggle.

Another characteristic is the organizational state and the *shura*-based rotation of the leadership of the movement. In addition, Hamas is known to operate in all domains of Palestinian life: Social, political, military, and security, in addition to its *da'wah* activities [to invite people, both Muslims and non-Muslims, to understand the worship of *Allah* as expressed in the Qur'an and the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad], allowing it to proliferate and reach new spheres.

Third: The Priorities of the Palestinian National Project

Priorities change from one period to another, each having its own requirements. The prevailing situation and national circumstances in each period place one issue ahead of the other, where these issues are part of the overall objectives of our people.

In addition, the series of major developments since 1991, the start of the Madrid negotiations and the Declaration of Principles led to the decline of a "national project" that enjoyed the support of all Palestinian forces and factions, paving the way for factional programs that aimed to achieve the general objectives and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Hamas's objectives in this phase of the history of our people include restoring the unity of our people, and preserving fundamental and national rights, without compromise or concession in the current

political context, which is marked by Arab preoccupation, Palestinian division, and general weakness resulting from the imbalance of power in the region. Hamas seeks to alter the balance of power in favor of completing the liberation project, and securing a life of freedom and dignity for Palestinians to become major actors in the liberation project. Among our priorities is continuing to work for national liberation side by side with building Palestinian institutions, on national foundations, be they political, administrative, or security institutions.

These issues should be addressed simultaneously, because we believe the continuation of the domestic political division and the monopoly over Palestinian decision-making are a danger to the Palestinian issue, which threatens to weaken the Palestinians' position.

Fourth: Evaluating Hamas's Resistance Model

Hamas presented a new model of national action not just in Palestine, but also in the Arab and Muslim region. Hamas's model is unique in terms of the challenges it faces, and the ways it dealt with them. Although Hamas is a natural extension of the Islamic movement, its conduct on the ground differed from the approach of its parent organization. Indeed, Hamas's activities were not limited to the charitable, preaching, and social spheres, but also focused on resistance in light of the nature of the Palestinian situation and the occupation, meaning that resistance became a priority.

Hamas was thus able to form its own model, establishing itself as a distinctive case in the Palestinian arena. Despite the sharp factional rivalry over popular support, Hamas was able to gain a significant popular weight in multiple democratic elections.

This model is a combination of resistance, *da'wah* activities, relief work, popular work, political action, and intellectual action. Hamas came to have a legacy worth studying in detail in all areas, and even in its experience in power, it presented different leadership styles.

After 26 years, Hamas accumulated an experience spanning different generations, each of which influenced the movement's history and present approach, making it an influential player not only in Palestine but in the wider region.

In each phase, its resistance model developed in a way that was politically appropriate, and that achieved the goals entrusted to the resistance towards liberation as well as the interim goals set out in the framework of its comprehensive vision.

Fifth: Hamas's Position on Jews

We as Muslims recognize the holy books revealed by *Allah* and respect Judaism as a monotheistic faith. We consider Jews People of the Book, exactly like Christians who live side by side with Muslims in Palestine and various countries of the region.

Islam has stated the foundations according to which the People of the Book should be treated and respected. There is a difference between Judaism and Jews on one hand, and Zionism and “Zionists” and their occupation of our land on the other. We do not consider “Zionists” enemies because they are Jews, but because they are occupying our land and usurping our rights. Before the “Zionist” occupation, Muslims coexisted with Jews [in Palestine] without problems. Many Jews settled in the Arab world because they were protected there, while they had been massacred in Europe.

Sixth: The Position on Recognizing the “Zionist Entity,” the Peace Project, and the Bare Minimum That Hamas Can Agree On

The PLO's recognition of the “Zionist entity” has proved to be politically disastrous. It was not a recognition of a *fait accompli* but a recognition of “Israel's” right to exist, without any considerations or controls. The doors were opened wide for the occupation, and under the Oslo Accords, around 78% of historical Palestine was ceded to Israel, while the remainder was deemed “disputed territories” to be negotiated upon.

The Oslo Accords were the product of a new political era, in which the US was the world's only superpower, and the byproduct of the Gulf war and the collective Arab shift towards the peace process post-Madrid. The Oslo Accords were not only

a fundamental compromise of Palestinian rights to the occupation, but were also a source of major division in the Palestinian arena over both means and objectives, transferring the conflict into the Palestinian domestic scene. Time has shown that the peace process is a futile path that serves the interests of the occupation in accumulating facts on the ground and daily concessions from the Palestinian negotiator without any achievements to speak of for the Palestinians. In addition, negotiations have helped whitewash the occupation and its many crimes against the people of Palestine, as well as its ongoing efforts to appropriate the [Islamic] holy sites and Judaize them.

For our part, we make a distinction between political efforts and compromise; we are not opposed to any diplomatic or political efforts to restore our rights, but we are against bargaining or exchanging our rights.

There has been a Palestinian accord over establishing a Palestinian state on the borders of 1967, with the return of refugees, and without waiving the rest of our rights. The Palestinian people gives its mandate to the leadership on the basis of restoring their rights and not waving them, because it is not our own, or our generation's alone, to give it up.

Seventh: The Experience of Hamas in the PA

1. Hamas and the Problem of Reform and Change Under Occupation

When Hamas boycotted the elections in 1996, the goal was to deny the Oslo program, which was at its peak, any legitimacy. The Oslo project wanted to enlist the entire Palestinian people in its aims, through several gateways including the elections. The PLC role was marginalized by a text that clearly stated that neither the PLC nor the PA president may issue legislation inconsistent with the agreements signed between the two sides. Moreover, the PA was not given any powers or responsibilities in international relations or economic agreements under Oslo.

However, a series of changes led us to reconsider our position in 2006, when the Oslo Accords had ceased to exist in practical terms. After 10 years of negative results and frustration among the Palestinians, the negotiations path had proven to be a failure. The PA's poor political and governmental performance was also a factor in popular disillusionment, requiring a new force to enter the scene without

the legacy of corruption that had hit many PA components. In effect, there was huge popular pressure on Hamas to stand in the election, and indeed, we ran under the slogan of “Reform and Change.” We wanted to correct some of the paths taken by the PA leadership before 2006, to protect the cause and the people from corruption and collaboration, two sides of the same coin.

Hamas was able to combine two programs and two stages, namely, national liberation with building and change. Hamas struck a practical example in its ability to fulfill this combination, as both the movement and the government underwent major existential threats aiming to thwart them. Hamas fought blockade and numerous difficult wars, and emerged more steadfast and able to offer more service to the Palestinian people. Hamas proved that where there is a real will, there is a way to advance along the two paths. Today, resistance under Hamas is stronger and better able to hurt the enemy, and has been able to impose new equations [on Israel] and undermine the fundamental foundations of its security and military doctrine.

This is due to the fact that there is a government protecting this resistance and providing it with political cover. Perhaps one of the most prominent manifestations of the integration between the political performance of the government and resistance was during Operation Stones of Baked Clay.** Hamas excelled during that war, and the government played a key political role in securing regional support, protecting the back of the resistance. This would not have been possible had there not been a government with this political approach. Indeed, we have seen previous governments condemning and even aborting Palestinian resistance operations, and hence, participation in the election was a requirement for the success and advancement of the resistance program. The proof of this can be found in comparing the conditions of GS and WB, in terms of the ability and strength of the resistance.

Moreover, the Change and Reform project made important strides. In GS at least, where our government is present, corruption, excesses, and dominant centers of power have been addressed. Despite the GS blockade, there was progress in the economy, and the government implemented important measures in the context of good governance and institution building.

** The war was named by Hamas as Stones of Baked Clay, while the Israelis dubbed it Operation Pillar of Defense.

In the occupied WB, the problem has been that the government was not allowed to play its role because of the occupation, domestic political division and the establishment of a parallel government led by Salam Fayyad.

2. The Experience of the 10th Hamas-led Government

When Hamas contested in the 2006 legislative election, it was fully aware of the challenges it was going to face [if it won]. Hamas knew it was about to enter a new phase, and for this reason, it put forward the best of its cadres in the election. In forming the tenth government afterwards, Hamas appointed historic leaders because the task was historic. The Reform and Change program was not confined to changing names, people and their political affiliations, but it sought to change the approach and path of the national authority, in terms of doctrine, political practice, and rationale for its decisions. This would inevitably lead to the emergence of major internal and external opposition, requiring a special breed of leaders with the determination to fight.

And indeed, this is exactly what happened. The blockade began almost immediately after the election and Hamas declared its intent to form the government. Attempts to thwart the work of the government internally and externally began, and it was clear that many did not accept the results of the elections even if they had recognized them on the surface. Some sought to thwart the work of the government during its early months, gambling that the government would collapse within three months.

But the government was able to withstand the attempts to thwart its work, which was manifested through security chaos and political siege, disruption in the ministries, and even military escalation.

The government formed an Executive Force to overcome the security chaos. Corruption was addressed by tightening the monitoring and control of the ministries and seeking alternatives to politically motivated funding, while the government reached out to many nations to break the political isolation.

The majority of civil servants did not comply with the Hamas-led government in an attempt to hinder its work and progress, and to form a parallel government at the president's office, in addition the security forces actually worked to undermine security and hinder any achievement. Despite all of the above, the government functioned and endured for a whole year, during which it was able to prove that

Hamas's presence in power does not disrupt resistance. It soon captured [the Israeli soldier Gilad] Shalit, and proved that under Hamas's rule, it is possible to establish diplomatic bonds with countries that do not care much about the American and Israeli siege. Hamas proved that political performance can produce changes by securing financial alternatives that would support the resistance government. A real base at the national, regional, and international levels was able to rally around this vision.

3. The Experience of National Unity Government (11th Government)

We spared no effort before forming the tenth government to have a National Unity Government. For this purpose, Hamas formed a special committee to reach out to national and Islamic factions, holding lengthy talks both bilaterally and multilaterally to reach an agreement. Hamas displayed flexibility with regard to ministerial posts and the program of the government, despite enjoying a comfortable majority that allowed it to easily form a majority and obtain a vote of confidence in the PLC. However, we wanted to follow a new model in governance, in addition to ensuring integrity and good governance, namely, joint action and real partnership.

Our efforts ended in failure for multiple reasons, notably the involvement of external actors that wanted Hamas to fail. However, some potential partners were of the view that the government would not last and did not want to be part of a failed project, as they saw it, or serve as a lifeline for Hamas.

Yet, Hamas succeeded in enduring for a whole year before huge pressures that would have been enough to topple other stable administrations, including financial and economic siege, security chaos, military escalation, and disobedience by civil servants, in addition to incitement in the media and lies and fabrications meant to undermine the government and internal and external plotting. There was soon a conviction that Hamas had a lot of support and experience, enough to allow it to foil the efforts made to oust it, and some figures were prompted to accept cooperation. We communicated with those figures sincerely, and during talks in Mecca, we believed there was a good opportunity to forge real partnership in the Palestinian political arena and present the model we had aspired to a year earlier.

We wanted the National Unity Government to be a message to the world stressing the unity of our people and their ability to overcome the toughest crises. We wanted to say that the spirit of defiance is something that all can exhibit, especially as

the agreement in Mecca had followed an *Intifadah* waged by all factions together against the occupation, as the Oslo option had practically collapsed under the chains of the enemy's tanks.

However, the facts proved those expectations wrong. It seemed that there was a faction that did not accept the new reality, and thus worked day and night to sabotage Hamas. This faction linked its interests to those of the US and Israel against Hamas's experience in power, even though it was in the context of a National Unity Government. The centers of power in the security forces and the Palestinian administration continued their attempts at undermining the government. Their interests dictated that Hamas had to be removed and the previous model restored.

These efforts were led by the security forces, which seemed to be determined to drag the country into organized chaos, mayhem, and bloodletting, by deploying unnecessary checkpoints, deploying on rooftops, and spreading terror among the citizens.

This necessitated a security campaign by the Executive Force, to eliminate tension hotspots and rogue elements. The campaign lasted three days and culminated with the full surrender of these elements in GS, on 14/6/2007. It was hoped that this step would be welcomed as one that had imposed order and stability in GS. However, the subsequent decisions of the president created a new reality and two parallel governments in GS and WB, disrupting the work of the PLC and ushering in the phase of division. This division can be traced back to the fact that Fatah led by Mahmud 'Abbas had rejected the results of the [2006] election from the beginning.

4. The Experience of the Hamas Caretaker Government 2007–2013

This phase carries dual connotations. True, there were and there continue to be immense difficulties and challenges, perhaps the toughest in the history of our people. But our people made great sacrifices and showed unlimited steadfastness and patience, exceeding all expectations. Against their pain, there was hope, and the government and the people together were able to present a great Palestinian example of heroism.

This stage began with the tightening of the blockade, in an unprecedented way and from different directions. Attempts to strangulate GS began, with many goods, food, clothes, fuel, and medicines disappearing from the Strip. Electricity was cut

off from people's homes, and GS turned into a large and isolated prison; it seemed that the politicians implementing the GS siege, in Palestine, the Arab countries concerned, and internationally, had lost their humanity.

However, the resourcefulness of our people exceeded those of the leaders. The masses broke the siege, with 750 thousand people overrunning the border with Egypt, entering El-Arish (45 km inside Egyptian territory). They bought Strip's needs within three days, and all returned safely to Gaza without committing a single crime, setting a unique moral example. Their resourcefulness continued with the tunnels that soon became a lifeline for Gaza. During this same period, the majority of civil servants in all sectors refrained from carrying out their duties, in an attempt to disrupt the public sector. This included teachers, doctors, nurses, judges, lawyers, police officers, and other public sector employees.

Many civil servants left their jobs to spread chaos and restlessness among GS citizens. However, within three days the government was able to replace them and get the public sector kickstarted. Hundreds of people volunteered in the posts on a pro bono basis, to maintain the stability of GS and the functioning of all sectors.

The failure of all these attempts forced Hamas's opponents to resort to their final option to topple the Hamas-led government completely: military force. In late 2008 and early 2009, through 22 days of continuous aggression, Israel waged the most violent war in the region since 1967 on GS. Israeli warplanes spared no part of Gaza, turning the Strip into a bloodbath. The assault proceeded by land, sea, and air, but was met with legendary endurance by a virtually unarmed people, equipped with relatively primitive weaponry, who gave the world this message: we are alive and have the will to survive, and shall never surrender. In the 22 days of the assault, 1,500 people died, 5 thousand homes were destroyed, and 10 thousand people were injured. Eventually, Israel halted its assault without achieving any of its objectives. Neither the government was toppled, nor was Shalit retrieved, nor was the resistance defeated as it continued to fire rockets on the areas in range from Gaza, even after Israel declared a unilateral 12-hour ceasefire. The resistance refused to accept Israel's conditions for a ceasefire, and so this aggression and terrorism against the Strip stopped unilaterally.

After this failure on the part of the conspirators, the equation started to change. The siege began to erode, especially after Israel's foolish assault on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla bound for GS, killing nine Turkish solidarity activists. The

blockade turned into a major humanitarian issue and a political crisis with countries that for a long time were classed as Israel's friends. These developments led to the re-opening of the Rafah crossing intermittently. National dialogue rounds began in Cairo, which restored relations with Gaza after an estrangement that had lasted nearly two years. The government developed its performance in all areas with a focus on good governance, transparency, justice, and administrative reform. The government proceeded to rebuild the entire administrative system, and launched the reconstruction of GS to repair what had been destroyed by the occupation's assault.

There were successive victories by our people, government, and resistance. The Devotion to the Free Prisoner swap deal secured the freedom of 1,050 prisoners, some of our finest men, who were detained by the occupation, spreading joy in every home in the GS. Gaza became a Mecca for the free men and women of the world, with dozens, possibly hundreds of delegations visiting from all around the world to express solidarity, including Arabs, Muslims, Europeans, and Americans, all carrying with them projects as well as moral and material support. Gaza became a symbol of pride, dignity and human freedom. The difficulties that Gaza and its government faced turned into a blessing, with *Allah* elevating this small enclave in importance and significance thanks to the jihad, sacrifice, and steadfastness of its people against conspiracies and injustice.

The occupation attempted to spoil the feeling of triumph and break the will of the Palestinian people, by assassinating one of Hamas' senior leaders, Ahmad Ja'bari and then waging a second war. However, Israel once again was caught off guard, as weak and besieged GS led fierce resistance against Israel and challenged all its security doctrines. The resistance, for the first time in the conflict with Israel, bombed Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, downed planes, targeted warships, and destroyed tanks.

Moreover, the government continued to function, and the GS's markets, bakeries, and streets remained stable with all government departments operating under alternative plans, leaving the enemy dumbfounded. Political action intersected with administrative operations and resistance work. Soon, the prime minister of Egypt, the League of Arab States foreign ministers, and the secretary-general of the League of Arab States travelled to Gaza along with the Turkish foreign minister following a series of contacts made by the Hamas-led government and intensive

efforts that culminated for the first time with an agreement to stop the assault on GS. The resistance achieved a political victory for the first time in the history of the conflict with Israel, thanks to the integration and harmony of national action.

That war reinforced the conviction that it is possible to combine and integrate government and resistance, and that this in fact is the most appropriate situation where resistance is given political cover, and that real achievements can be made.

Today, there is a strong government. All attempts to foil its work or drive a wedge between it and the people have failed. It has been able to achieve security for the citizens, and carry out a series of strategic projects in GS. Under the Hamas-led government, GS has enjoyed a kick-start, with agricultural projects developed and achieving self-sufficiency in many types of vegetables and fruits. Hitherto abandoned factories have been restored and reopened.

All this has happened at a time when the government remained under siege and subject to various plots, and was boycotted by Arab and Western nations. However, its legitimacy and its capacity to act stem from the faith of the people, and their trust and appreciation.

Eighth: Evaluation of Hamas's Relations with Fatah and the Palestinian Left

1. The Relationship with Fatah

The Fatah movement is a national movement that has led national struggle in important and sensitive periods in the history of the Palestinian issue. However, political developments led to a political rivalry with it and a difference in approach, most notably after it agreed to sign the Oslo Accords and to enter the slippery slope of negotiations.

We seek, through reconciliation, to bridge the gap between us, not in order for Hamas to become Fatah or Fatah to become Hamas, but to coexist and for democratic mechanisms to arbitrate between different political visions and programs. Each must respect the opinion of the other, but in the end, we must all bow down to the will of the Palestinian people who should choose their political path and leaders through the ballot boxes.

We are not in a state of enmity with Fatah, albeit the differences between us led at one stage to armed conflict as a result of developments dictated by the moment and the political dynamic, which we looked at in detail earlier. Fundamentally, we are partners in the same homeland, and we must both work to achieve real partnership. To embody what we always called for; partners in motherland, partners in blood and partners in decision.

2. The Relationship with the Left

Hamas's relationship with the various components of our people and its forces and factions is based on mutual respect. These forces all have a history of an exceptional national role and struggle, and continue to be part of the struggle for Palestine. Our relationship with them is based on partnership in shouldering national responsibilities, albeit our relationships have been marked by periods of accord and others of difference. In the end, we are part of the same national direction, and we respect our ideological differences, knowing that diversity, and even competition for the sake of Palestine, is in the nature of things and commendable, as long as we have good faith in one another.

We have worked with these national forces as part of the Supreme Follow-up Committee of National Forces, and before it in the Alliance of Ten Factions and in the alliance of rejectionist forces. We continue to meet to coordinate joint action, and we hope to improve and develop our national relations. The left is the backbone of the "third current," and has played an important role in the political arena recently. We have worked hard to build a special relationship with the left in the context of the supreme Palestinian interest. We also should not forget that the left is an important and active part of various civil society groups—legal, health, social work, etc., which have had a positive role in breaking the GS siege.

Chapter Fourteen

Hamas Assessment of the Experience

Dr. Musa Abu Marzuq

Hamas Assessment of the Experience*

First: The Elements of Strength and Cohesion in Hamas

Hamas is almost unique among national liberation movements in that it has been able to maintain its unity and cohesion, for the following reasons:

1. The *shura* (consultation) structure in Hamas, which is binding for the leadership. The *shura* structure is broad, beginning in the neighborhood and terminating in the highest levels of the movement's leadership. *Shura* is the only path to rising in the ranks.
2. Specialized institutional work, which focuses on energies and encourages competencies, with regulations governing each institution.
3. Non-subservience to external policies, no matter how powerful or influential, with the movement's institutions preserving the ability to define its decisions and attitudes.
4. Separation of powers and the absence of dictatorships or authoritarian leaders.
5. Reliance on elections as the basis of selecting leaders at all levels.
6. Critiques, adjustments, and constant evaluation of all middle and top leaders, in a context of respect, conviviality and transparency.
7. Communication, mutual trust and respect between the leadership and the base.

The Most Important Elements of Strength and Cohesion

1. Internal education.
2. Organizational cohesion.
3. Institutional work.
4. Legitimacy-based leadership.

* This is the text of interviews conducted via e-mail by Mohsen Mohammad Saleh from Beirut, Lebanon, with Musa Abu Marzuq in Doha, Qatar. Correspondence began on 26/12/2013, and the text was approved by Dr. Abu Marzuq on 19/2/2014. The questions and answers were placed here in the form of titles to facilitate the readability of the text.

Second: The Priorities of the Palestinian National Project in the Eyes of the Hamas Movement

The national project is the project adopted by the national community, albeit through different ideological backgrounds and philosophical prisms. In this respect, we can say: Seldom has there been a Palestinian consensus on a national project, with the exception of a short period of time when the PLO project was put forward along with its national charter under the slogans of national unity, liberation, and return. The most dangerous division occurred, creating a split in the national project, when the Oslo Accords were signed. Fatah, and the PLO it led, adopted the project for a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and a just settlement to the refugee question, as part of the two-state solution, renouncing violence and accepting recognition of Israel. A sizeable segment of the Palestinians, whose priority was still resistance, liberation, and return, rejected this. The first proposal that brought the two rival camps together was the National Accord Document, which was signed by a sizeable number of factions, but was not fully implemented as an inclusive national project. In my belief, there are no permanent obstacles to reaching an inclusive national project based on national accord. But if we look at the priorities of the national project, we will no doubt see that there are some issues that affect the details of these priorities. These can be quickly summed up as follows:

1. The impasse that Palestinian statehood has hit through negotiations. The Israeli terms are impossible for the Palestinian side to accept. Meanwhile, huge challenges confront the resistance project because of security coordination in Palestine, the blockade and “Zionist” measures on the ground.

2. The state of the Palestinian people: Internally divided between a WB isolated from Jerusalem, Gaza, and the Palestinian interior. The WB itself is now divided into quasi-cantons under apartheid, making it difficult for the people of the same homeland to communicate and live with one another. This is not to mention the disasters that have befallen the Palestinians in the Diaspora, including in Iraq and Syria, and before that in Kuwait, in addition to the ongoing threat to the Palestinians of Lebanon, where at least half have left the country. In short, because of the Arab situation and policies after the *Nakbah* to the present day, our people have been displaced not once, but twice and thrice.

3. The national project cannot be isolated from the Arab milieu, which has yet to restore internal stability and reorder its political, social, and constitutional conditions.

4. The great advantages that the “Zionist” project enjoys in all areas, and implications therein for the Palestinian situation. Most security threats facing Israel have faded, including the armies of surrounding Arab states and neutralized chemical and nuclear weapons.

5. The international position (led by the US and Europe) in favor of political settlement, with overwhelming bias on the side of the “Zionist enemy.” Much of the international community’s influence on the Palestinian issue has been neutralized, though many people around the world continue to support the just Palestinian cause.

Taking the above points, I can I define the priorities of the Palestinian national project as follows:

1. Putting the Palestinian house in order, including:
 - a. Palestinian reconciliation and an end to division.
 - b. Rebuilding the PLO, reviving its institutions, and including everybody in its structures.
 - c. Reforming the PA to turn it into a tool of national leverage in line with an inclusive national program.
 - d. A code of honor that sets the rules governing political differences and handling of responsibilities, by prohibiting the use of force internally, promoting democracy and peaceful rotation of power, and upholding human rights and values, etc.
2. Resistance in all its forms as a right of the Palestinian people:
 - a. Criminalizing security coordination.
 - b. Agreeing on programs and mechanisms for resistance, such as joint committees, joint coordination, or joint leadership.
3. Freeing prisoners detained by Israel:
 - a. Working to free prisoners by all means.
 - b. Caring for liberated prisoners.
 - c. Caring for the families of prisoners and martyrs.

4. Restoring the Arab and Islamic roles in the Palestinian issue at all levels, official and popular. This is a strategic matter for our cause, and in order to rectify the historical mistake that placed 99% of Palestinian cards in the hands of the US.
5. Restoring international support and activating international institutions for the sake of our people, such as the International Criminal Court, human rights groups, and cultural institutions, and addressing all negative results of US pressure and domination of the region.

Third: Hamas Position on the Jews and Zionist Movement

We recognize Judaism as a religion and we believe in its prophets. The Islam of anyone of us cannot be complete without belief in all prophets; Abraham, Musa, 'Isaa, Isaac, Yusuf, John (Yahya), etc. We make no distinction between any of *Allah's* messengers, and we believe they are all infallible from sin, fraud, and immorality. Jews had long lived among Muslims, sharing their food and occasions, intermarrying with them, comforting them in their sadness and sharing in their happy occasions. When the West persecuted Jews, they sought shelter in Muslim lands. Jews thus came to Turkey, Morocco, and other countries. Never did history record that we persecuted Jews or Christians, whose protection and co-citizenship we considered even above those of Muslims in light of the Prophet's commandments.

The Palestinians did not rise up against Jews (as a Zionist movement) until after the Balfour Declaration, which granted Palestine to them as a national homeland, when at the time they accounted for less than 8% of the population of Palestine. The actions of the Palestinians against Zionist Jews in Palestine were on the grounds that the latter usurped their land, property, and killed their women and children in more than 100 massacres that the West, regrettably, turned a blind eye to. When we call Zionists "Jews" it is because they insist their actions are on behalf of all Jews and insist Israel is the homeland of the Jews.

The Zionist movement is a racist movement that encourages murder, land grabs, the funding and arming of men to kill innocents. The movement transported hundreds of thousands of people from Europe, Russia, Africa, and the Mashreq into Palestine, confiscating Palestinian lands by force of arms. The movement established colonies at the expense of the Palestinians, whose lives were destroyed

and who were forced to live in camps. To this day, they live in dispossession without having done anything to deserve it, solely on the basis of religious claims that are not corroborated in any way by history or indeed by religion: A just God would never grant another people's lands and discriminate against one people in favor of another people, as they believe.

Although the "Zionists" chased down Palestinians into the Diaspora and into their homes in Arab and Western capitals, Hamas chose to restrict its resistance to the Palestinian interior and did not carry out any operations outside Palestine.

Outside Palestine, "Zionists," mostly Jewish "Zionists," organize themselves into political lobbies to pressure the parliaments of Europe and America, using money, the media, and ballot boxes to gather support for Israel and supply it with all means of killing and destruction.

Fourth: The Position on the Recognition of the "Zionist Entity," and the Peace Settlement Project, and the Minimum That Can Be Accepted by Hamas

1. Recognizing the "Zionist Entity"

Recognizing the "Zionist entity" would mean ceding at least 78% of historical Palestine (in light of Abu Mazen's acceptance to exchange lands). These lands have rightful owners, including myself. My father was forcibly removed from his village of Yibna along with its entire population, and forced to march on foot to a refugee camp in Rafah in GS. My family, which consists of hundreds of members, will never cede its right and surrender its village for any alternative. The same goes for all Palestinians, who will never relinquish their right to return to their homeland. Even if all parties reach an agreement, there is no way we would recognize the "Zionist entity" on the land of my fathers and ancestors, no matter how much the facts change and the balances are broken.

2. The Oslo Accords

In 1993, Hamas and most factions inside and outside the PLO rejected Oslo in principle. Today, 20 years later, our rejection has proved to be right on the mark, given the outcome of that path. The resistance drove out the occupation from GS,

while negotiations perpetuated the occupation in WB. The negotiations continue, but the Oslo Accords were overtaken in the direction of something even more sinister.

The negotiations taking place today are opposed by the entire national spectrum, even the negotiators, who resigned only for Abu Mazen to make them return to negotiations. The most dangerous fact is that there are US pressures to accept a new framework involving US proposals. There are US-European threats to the leadership of the PLO. The only description I have [for the project] is a state in the remnants of the WB in return for salaries paid to PA employees. The political conditions of the Arabs and the Palestinians are not conducive at all for any negotiations with the “Zionist entity,” and the PA must instead seek to unify the people and its forces under the banner of the homeland.

3. The Bare Minimum that Hamas Can Accept

The peace process is based on the two-state solution, mutual recognition, and ending the conflict. But regardless of all the justifications, ending the conflict would be unacceptable, the two-state solution is unacceptable, and mutual recognition is unacceptable as they mean discarding the rights and core principles of the Palestinian people.

Nevertheless, Hamas accepts a Palestinian state in the WB and GS with Jerusalem as its capital, without any settlements, and without recognizing “Israel.” Therefore, talk about similarity in the positions of Hamas and Fatah is incorrect; there is a fundamental difference between the two positions.

Fifth: The Experience of Hamas in the PA

Everyone knows that Hamas’s participation in the elections was on the basis of its own program and not the Oslo Accords. After winning 74 seats in the PLC, it was not allowed practically to govern GS and WB, especially in the wake of the capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. The “Zionist” authorities soon arrested members of the PLC and even ministers in WB, and imposed a siege on GS. For its part, Fatah pulled out its civil servants from their posts, handing over the empty offices to the Hamas government to thwart its work. All this made Hamas’s tenure uniquely difficult. For Hamas had to govern GS and its 1.5 million people (2006 figures) under siege, in addition to having to combine governance and resistance. The resilience of the small enclave has been astounding, before a “Zionist”

aggression by sea, land and air. In addition, Hamas's experience is considered the first such resistance characterized by an Islamic frame of reference, taking power by democratic means. It succeeded in fighting corruption, and governed under the banner of Change and Reform.

It is important to evaluate its experience in the light of the circumstances in which it governed in; crippling international siege, internal obstacles mainly imposed by Fatah (like pulling out civil servants from their posts), and the weakening of the capabilities of Hamas. Indeed, all international aid went to the government of Ramallah. Furthermore, military aggression continued, including the major wars of 2006, 2008/2009, and 2012. This is not to mention the needs of the population Hamas governed, from travel to employment and from humanitarian needs, education, and healthcare to reconstruction...

The WB experience with Hamas was too short to build an objective evaluation. As soon as Hamas's government took over, Fatah engaged in obstructionism abetted by the media and the "Zionist" enemy. Many government, municipal, and parliamentary leaders were arrested, with 42 deputies detained in the WB. After the WB-GS split, Hamas's ministers were ousted, mayors and municipal officials were persecuted, and a large number of Hamas-affiliated civil servants were sacked (1,100 civil servants).

While it is difficult to evaluate the experience in general, the following observations may be made:

1. Politically

Hamas has achieved the following:

- a. Gained popular legitimacy through success in the elections.
- b. Successfully confronted pressures, including pressures to recognize "Israel," renounce what they call "violence" meaning the resistance, and recognize signed agreements.
- c. Forged alliances and good relations with countries around the world, albeit some of these have been adversely affected in recent years.
- d. Reconciliation with Fatah, which has remained at a standstill, although agreements and accords were reached with Fatah under Egyptian mediation.
- e. Overcome the dilemma of Takfiri movements, and their incitement against Hamas among Salafi movements.

- f. The movement succeeded in overcoming all the pressure that were seeking to exclude it.

2. Economically

Hamas succeeded to some extent in building a limited but functional economy, dominated by commerce through the tunnels, which were closed down after mid-2013. Because of the siege, unemployment has remained high, above 40%. Infrastructure has remained dysfunctional because of Israeli aggression, and it was difficult to repair or upgrade it because of the blockade. Many sectors shut down because of low electricity production. Not even intact factories could operate, because of the absence of raw materials and power shortages. The poverty rate also increased dramatically. The huge deficit in the Hamas GS administration's budget was all too plain to see, caused by declining agricultural exports, tunnel closures, a decline in the private sector, and lack of local and foreign investment, with the exception of aid, given to the Strip.

3. Security

- a. Hamas restored security in the streets, imposed security orders and controlled arms. It imposed discipline on tribes and clans, especially those who were taking the law into their own hands or were engaging in bullying.
- b. Hamas succeeded in cracking down on agents and collaborators with the Zionists to a large degree, but could not eliminate them.
- c. Several al-Qaeda-linked groups emerged, albeit they were small in number and had limited influence. These include Jund Ansar Allah, Jaljalat, Hizbullah in Palestine, Jaysh al-Islam, etc. These groups claimed that Hamas was not implementing Shariah law, declaring the movement and its government as infidels. The groups declared an Islamic emirate in Rafah. These groups were behind the killing of Italian solidarity activist Vittorio Arrigoni and [the kidnapping of] British journalist Alan Johnston, as well as various other attacks.
- d. There was also unjustified violence against the regular police forces by families during arrests of wanted men, but Hamas was able to control the situation.

4. Socially, Morally and Legally

Perhaps this was one of the aspects that caused the most criticism against Hamas in GS. Many rumors circulated about forcing women lawyers and female school students as well as women in the public to wear hijab [Islamic dress code], banning

them from sitting in cafes and smoking shishas, and banning them from riding motorcycles. There were claims that Hamas was going beyond “Erdoğanism” to “Talibanism,” establishing a new Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Palestine. There were even claims that the PLC approved, in its second reading, a new penal code, and that there was no third reading for more than two years. But none of this had any base in reality in the life of the GS people and their Hamas-led administration. However, some things were indeed true and we must address them, such as the lynching of collaborators in the street and restrictions on the freedom of some people to travel. In light of the bickering between Fatah and Hamas, some violations were almost inevitable, including restrictions on freedom of assembly and holding rallies, legal prosecutions, and summonses. Nevertheless, a broad segment of Hamas’s political opponents’ voiced criticisms and made claims that were vindictive, and filed vindictive complaints before a number of legal organizations, including in cases of elections in press syndicates, clubs, and trade unions, closing some non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and claiming that Hamas had prevented certain newspapers from WB from entering GS.

Sixth: Evaluation of Hamas’s Relations with Other Palestinian Forces

1. Relationship with Fatah

The relationship between Fatah and Hamas is complicated for objective reasons. The leadership of the PLO, most of its apparatus, its representatives in embassies and international organizations, in addition to the PA and various leaders and officials in the PLC and ministries are all from a Fatah background. Disagreements and agreements, or conflict and reconciliation, started to emerge most dramatically after Hamas won the [2006] legislative elections, with Fatah losing unexpectedly for the first time. The elections impacted Fatah’s leadership of the Palestinian national project and its institutions, particularly the PLO. It was feared that Hamas and its various branches would accede to the PLO, hold elections, and alter its internal equation. This explains the almost immediate calls for rerunning the legislative election, with the result of the elections only accepted in parallel with the bid to topple Hamas and end its first experience in power.

The differences over the national project emerged as Fatah insisted on the peace process and negotiations to reach a Palestinian state alongside “Israel” in a two-state solution, ending the conflict and accepting a just solution of the refugee issue instead of the right of return.

For its part, Hamas sees “Israel” as illegitimate and insists on not recognizing it. Hamas believes that resistance is the main program for the liberation of Palestine and the return of Palestinian refugees to their land. It accepts a Palestinian state in WB and GS with Jerusalem as its capital, without the recognition [of Israel], settlements, and ending the conflict.

The third difference concerns legitimacy. Fatah does not see Hamas as having any legitimacy, whether through the elections or its victory in the PLC, or through resistance; the source of legitimacy in the national liberation phase. For Fatah, only the Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas is legitimate.

One of the documents that revealed this was the National Accord Document, signed by all factions with the exception of the PIJ. This document addressed all the main points of contention, using wording agreed by all sides, whether in relation to political efforts, resistance, UN resolutions, the PLO, or other issues that have been the subject of disagreement. The second document was the Cairo Agreement and its annexes. The document addressed the issues of the government, PLC, presidency, elections, security file and social reconciliation. Meetings were held in Sanaa, Doha, Mecca, Damascus, Amman and Cairo to resolve the disputes. Previously, the dispute was embodied in attempts to marginalize, ignore, and then contain Hamas, and recently, to subdue it and assimilate it into Ramallah’s policies. There were many meetings between Hamas and Fatah held in Sanaa, Amman, Khartoum and Tunis. In those meetings, no agreements were reached except in Khartoum, but even then, Yasir ‘Arafat refused to sign the draft agreement, which was signed by Nasir Yusuf. This reflected the profound differences, the outlines of resolutions which were agreed but at the time of writing remain unimplemented (early 2014).

In my view, the differences between Fatah and Hamas will continue. But what ultimately matters here is this:

- a. Organizing these differences and not allowing them to go from their political aspect to become a military conflict, as happened in 2007.

- b. Implementing agreements, which requires political will and good faith.
- c. Fatah must accept partnership with all factions. Fatah must understand that the time of dominating and monopolizing the Palestinian decision-making process has gone. The time when nationalism could be defined by Fatah has ended, and the time of considering what others decide is backwardness and collaboration has also ended.
- d. Putting aside external factors despite the inherent difficulty in this (the main funding comes from the US). The “Zionist entity” controls at least three main aspects:
 - The government: through arrests and restrictions on freedoms.
 - Elections: Excluding certain parties, also using arrests and restrictions, and prohibiting elections in Jerusalem.
 - Security: The key issue and the “Zionist entity’s” pretext in any talks.

Israel has also vetoed Palestinian reconciliation and wants to maintain the division. Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu repeatedly said that Mahmud ‘Abbas has to choose between peace and Hamas, and that one cannot have both.

2. Relationship with the PIJ Movement

The relationship between Hamas and PIJ is special. They share the same ideology and approach, and it is hard to identify different policies.

PIJ was the first to carry out resistance operations against the occupation in the 1980s. One of the incentives that made Hamas move from preaching and reformism to resistance was the PIJ. We became like two horses racing in the same direction, with Hamas the one in the front today. Some have asked: If Hamas is on the field, then what is the future of the PIJ and its independence?

We have launched many dialogues with Dr. Fathi al-Shiqaqi. Our relationship goes far beyond a dialogue between two groups. It has been proposed that we should step up our coordination gradually until full merger and unity. The tightly knit relationship with the leadership continued afterwards, but certainly, there have been some friction due to competition over popular support, sometimes over some mosques, over mosques’ bulletin boards, and others over slogans painted on walls. Yet, these issues could be quickly resolved. Some issues had to do with PIJ rushing to take credit for some Hamas operations. Perhaps the biggest dispute occurred when Hamas decided to run in the legislative elections. For its own calculations,

the PIJ refused to participate. However, there was no serious damage caused to the relationship as a result of such political disputes. True, we have not merged or unified, but we continue to coordinate and engage in joint action. The Joint Committees and coordination between the leaderships has been successful and has had a positive impact at all levels.

3. The Relationship with the Left Forces

In the Palestinian arena, the main factions have been Fatah, Hamas, PIJ, and leftist groups. Historically, these comprised the Arab Nationalist Movement and the PCP. The latter has adopted leftist positions.

We can say that the forces of the Palestinian left can be divided into two parts: A camp that sided with the resistance and opposed the Oslo Accords, working with PIJ and Hamas in Damascus. And a camp whose leaders remained in the PLO Executive Committee and supported the Oslo Accords. Our relationship with the latter faction is good, but they are politically aligned with Fatah.

Seventh: Evaluation of the Palestinian Reconciliation Project

After the Israeli war on GS, the Battle of al-Furqan [Operation Cast Lead] 2008/2009, reconciliation efforts were immediately launched at the invitation of Egypt. The talks included all Palestinian factions, after a time in which Mahmud ‘Abbas had insisted on maintaining the status quo, to force Hamas to back down. There had been various attempts to exclude Hamas or thwart its administration of GS, for example by closing the crossings, tightening the blockade, and asking civil servants not to show up for work, under threat of suspending their wages. After the end of the war, in order perhaps to avoid bearing the consequences of the war, and after long and arduous talks, our brothers in Fatah proposed reattaching GS to WB, whereby everyone would be equal under occupation. For its part, Hamas believed that national accord and partnership should be the basis of political consensus.

The clearest evidence that supports Hamas’s position was Mahmud ‘Abbas’ refusal to implement a UN Human Rights Council report condemning the Zionist entity for its war on GS (Goldstone Report), despite popular consensus regarding the need to hold Israeli accountable. ‘Abbas then went to negotiations amid popular and factional opposition and rejection.

Hamas insists on accord and partnership. This is what prevented it, for many months, from signing the Egyptian document. When Mahmud ‘Abbas approved, the Egyptian document was signed with some notes added regarding accord on national partnership in all affairs. After the document was signed, a large number of amendments, measures, and details were signed, but we have yet to realize the real goal of ending division and restoring national unity (early 2014).

Regarding the accusation against Hamas of obstructing national reconciliation, this was a baseless allegation; both sides have committed mistakes, some were addressed and others were not. There were positive aspects that followed a political gain on 29/11/2012, when Palestine obtained the status of a non-member observer state at the United Nations, and then the victory of the resistance against Israeli aggression on GS (Operation Stones of Baked Clay) in November 2012. Steps were taken including releasing detainees, reducing media bickering, and allowing each side to organize rallies in WB and GS. The central electoral commission returned to GS, suggesting the split was about to end and a technocratic National Unity Government was going to be formed, chaired by Mahmud ‘Abbas.

There were many obstacles that blocked reconciliation, which I summarize as follows:

1. The external factor: By which I mean the “Zionist entity,” which controls several important areas: security, elections, and political, media, and electoral freedoms. Israel is also able to freely arrest ministers and MPs in WB. Another actor is the US, who is able to put pressure on donors and restrict payments to the PA. Both the “Zionist entity” and US are against reconciliation.

The “Zionist authorities” have frequently taken punitive measures, such as withholding tax receipts, arresting Palestinian ministers, MPs, and municipal officials. Netanyahu has threatened ‘Abbas, saying he must choose between Hamas and peace, and that he can’t have both ways.

2. Political programs: There are two political programs in the Palestinian arena: resistance and negotiations. The first is based on not recognizing the “Zionist entity,” resistance against its occupation of the land and the holy sites, and rejection of security coordination, negotiations, and the two-state solution. The second program is based on political settlement, recognition of the “Zionist entity,” negotiations with the occupation, security coordination, land swaps, and

cracking down on the resistance. For this reason, we find it extremely hard to find common ground and language to deal with one another. In this regard, the National Accord Document was probably one of the most successful approaches, though this obstacle of the political program remains significant.

3. The political priorities of Mahmud ‘Abbas: ‘Abbas does not want a confrontation with Israel or with the US, the sponsor who rejected reconciliation. His priority is negotiations, which is why he usually resorts to internal dialogue when negotiations are at an impasse, and backtracks when negotiations resume, making reconciliation a secondary issue for him.

As for the ways to overcome the division, it is through:

1. Political will: With enough political will, we can overcome many difficulties. But political will has not yet reached the level needed to reach political accord. If this were made a priority, things would be different, and better for the interests and rights of the Palestinian people.
2. Implementing what has already been agreed on, not stopping each time a major event takes place in the Arab world, and not waiting for negotiations with Israel.
3. Agreeing to a unified political program. I believe the National Accord Document could be a good basis for this.
4. Seeking Arab support and an understanding of the real depth of our cause. This needs to be revived and the cause of Palestine should not be left for US and international organizations.

Eighth: Revolutions and Changes in the Arab World

The changes in the Arab world have been profound. Hardly any regime can be exempted from questions about its future and about difficult internal challenges, whether in countries directly affected by the so-called Arab Spring or other nearby countries with different internal circumstances.

The Arab world is undergoing big changes, and it will take years before it settles on clear political foundations. Rival factions inside every country are strong enough to make them hard to dislodge from the scene, but weak enough to make it difficult for them to contain others, too.

Naturally, there are external actors influencing events in these countries too. The negative effects of the conflict and unrest are multilayered, and affect security, economy, poverty, unemployment, import, export, education, and social cohesion. The time in which we live makes it harder for minorities, be they religious, ethnic, or class-based, to rule by themselves. In the end, the will of the people will triumph, but this will likely have a huge price in blood and treasure. We ask *Allah* for pardon, well-being, and the recovery of our shared purpose.

Ninth: The Relationship with Iran, Syria and Hizbullah (Refusal Front)

1. The Relationship with Iran

The policy of the movement is to engage with all parties and forces of different creeds, sects, customs and races, and of all backgrounds, with the exception of the “Zionist entity.” Hamas’s established policy is that there can be no dialogue, meeting, or agreement with the “Zionist enemy.”

A criterion governing relations with these forces is based on their proximity and support for the Palestinian cause, people, and their resistance. Another would be non-interference in the internal affairs of the movement. Likewise, Hamas does not interfere in the internal affairs of these nations and parties. We need the support of all these actors, and the extent of their support is usually indicative of the level and depth of the relationship.

Our relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on its position on the Palestinian issue and its support for the people and resistance of Palestine, Iran being one of the leading nations in this regard. However, our relationship with Iran is not indicative of identical policies. We have differed with some of Iran’s policies, and Iran has objected to some of our policies. For example, we have diverged on Syria, and Iran was not in favor of our participation in the election in 2006. Despite all these differences, the relationship continued and Iran has never interfered in any of the movement’s internal affairs.

2. The Relationship with Syria

We have stressed on more than one occasion the following points regarding our relationship with Syria:

- a. Syria and President al-Assad have supported Hamas in all its positions and in its resistance. The relationship between us was special, standing in defiance of major powers, who pressured Syria to expel us or close down our offices.
- b. Throughout our relationship, the Syrian regime did not interfere in our internal affairs. The regime never asked us to do anything against our will.
- c. Hamas respected this relationship, and was grateful for the regime's support and cooperation. We considered our relationship exceptional because we valued the regime and its leadership.
- d. Upon the start of the unrest in Syria, the regime asked us to determine our position. We determined our position, which the regime accepted in April 2011, and which was consistent with our policy of non-interference. Our position was both in gratitude of the regime's support for us, and in support of the Syrian people's aspirations and rights.
- e. We tried, in good faith, to mediate between the regime and the opposition, based on advice from Hizbullah and with the approval of President al-Assad. As soon as we started moving, we were asked to stop at the request of President al-Assad himself, as conveyed to us by Maj. Gen. Ali Mamlouk.
- f. Hamas remained until November, without taking any decision to leave dear Syria. That is, until the regime proposed a meeting with the Syrian president, the Palestinian factions, and Hizbullah. We proposed a Palestinian meeting with the president alone, and then another Lebanese meeting, to avoid giving anyone a negative impression.
- g. The regime rejected the proposal and the meeting was canceled.
- h. The regime asked us to decide Hamas's position with it or against it, and did not accept our neutral posture regarding what was happening in Syria. Our position after the regime adopted the military solution was to reject that policy. Our advice was that the regime should adopt a political solution and not involve the army and security forces. This would have been reasonable, particularly since President Bashar al-Assad was not the subject of contention for almost all forces, throughout the first few months of the revolution.
- i. We were asked to meet with the president by ourselves. We tried to decline in various ways, to avoid giving out the impression that the movement had sided with the regime and its policies. We took the decision in this regard; we had no choice, either take a side, meet with the president or decline, and leave in line

with our policy not to intervene in Syrian affairs and to spare our Palestinians camps from the repercussions of the conflict in Syria.

- j. The political bureau decided to leave but not to boycott. A member of the political bureau and a field official remained behind while the rest of the political bureau and Hamas members who were not Palestinian Syrians left. We declared that the reason was the leadership's inability to run the internal and external affairs of Hamas because of the events in Syria, which was also correct.
- k. When we left, we did not criticize the regime and we recalled its support, but we also stressed our policies and principles in siding with the people and their aspirations.
- l. In fact, serious damage was caused to the movement, whose leaders and cadres were scattered, and whose relations with other forces and parties in our nation were hurt.
- m. Hamas did not take any position or decision in the direction of taking part in the conflict in Syria. All claims that members of the group under different names fighting and dying in the field, or training rebels on digging tunnels and planting bombs, were baseless. Those who claimed they were Hamas fighters were insincere. Those who fought and who had had a history with Hamas had already left the movement, and went to fight out of their own personal convictions that we had nothing to do with. Hamas's operations in Syria were limited to relief work in Refugee Camps, albeit many relief workers were killed or detained.
- n. The Palestinians cannot fight their cause on their own without Arab and Muslim support. Arabs and Muslims have been the depth of the cause, having considered Palestine their central question, sacrificing thousands of martyrs for its sake. Whatever happens, countries like Syria and Egypt, and all countries surrounding Palestine, are indispensable. Our people live in these countries, and their peoples have embraced our revolution throughout history. We cannot drop Syria from our minds or reality, and this is but a temporary situation where we had to adopt a certain position in line with our strategic policy of not interfering in others' affairs for the sake of our cause's future.

3. The Relationship with Hizbullah

Our relationship is one of shared struggle and jihad against the Zionist project. Perhaps the victories achieved by Hizbullah and Hamas were a milestone in the

history of the Arabs and the Muslims, against a tyrannical behemoth supported by the world's preeminent superpower. We work together to strengthen resistance at all levels, and we continue to hold meetings with Hizbullah. It has shown understanding of our position on Syria, but after we left Damascus, the relationship became somewhat tense, with differences emerging on how to deal with the crisis and then their participation in the conflict. In all cases, the ties have since improved, and there are efforts underway to restore healthy relations. We are keen on preserving this relationship despite our differences on some issues.

Tenth: Hamas's International Relations

Hamis is open in its international relations and contacts with most Western, Asian and African countries, as well as some Latin American countries. The main foundation of the relationship is political related to the conflict with the "Zionist entity" and the issue of Palestinian refugees.

We have public relations, contacts, and routine meetings with Western countries that are not part of the EU, which has had a positive impact on the Palestinian people, especially in terms of their understanding of the conflict and its instruments, and the interest of the Palestinian people and their needs.

Concerning EU nations, Hamas has been placed on the list of terrorist sponsors. Contact with most of them is carried out by academics, retired diplomats and study centers and advisers close to decision-making centers.

The problem is that putting a name on the list is easier than taking it off, because the decision is made unanimously. That's why Europeans are dealing with Hamas not as a national liberation movement but as a "terrorist" group.

In any case, such politicized labels are imposed by the strong who force others to accept it, but it is unfair and unjust. This is the case of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê—PKK*) in Iraq, which they see as a liberation movement, while they consider the Turkish branch of the same party a terrorist group. Consider the PLO, which the US has yet to remove from its terror list. Nelson Mandela himself left the presidency with his name still on the terror list.

The label caused them embarrassment when Hamas won the elections in early 2006. Nevertheless, the West sided with the US in agreeing to impose three conditions on Hamas before dealing with it after its election victory:

1. Recognizing the “Zionist entity.”
2. Renouncing violence.
3. Recognizing agreements signed by the PLO.

In other words, despite recognizing that there are occupied areas, where international law allows resistance against occupation, they deem it [illegitimate] “violence.” Israel did not deal with any of the agreements signed in a transparent or credible way, turning all agreements into worthless pieces of paper and the same goes for the deadlines agreed. And yet, Palestinians are expected to recognize agreements signed by the PLO.

Finally, should they ask Palestinians to recognize Israel, when it is Israel that must recognize the Palestinians and their rights, before asking the oppressed to recognize the oppressor who occupied their land and expelled them to refugee camps that still bear witness to the injustice and tyranny of the occupation?

Hamas spares no occasion for upholding Palestinian rights and their legitimacy. Here, we must acknowledge that liberation forces, including many youth, human rights, and leftist groups in the West have come a long way in supporting the cause of Palestine.

Chapter Fifteen

*Hamas's Vision for Managing the Conflict
with the "Zionist Enemy"*

Mr. Sami Khater

Hamas's Vision for Managing the Conflict with the "Zionist Enemy"

Introduction

It is natural to question, discuss, and evaluate the ideology and conduct of an organization involved in a certain conflict, especially when this conflict has overlapping local, regional and international interests. And especially when the organization carries out an active and effective role such as that of Hamas.

Hamas's ideology and conduct in managing its conflict with the "Zionist enemy" is facing systematic distortion by the "Zionist entity" supported by Western forces. Despite the fact that this plan is based on hostility and combat against Hamas by all available means, this chapter does not seek just to respond to the inaccuracies that dominate these efforts, as this would not change anything for the Israelis or the different parties supporting them for historical, temporal, or interest-based reasons.

Unfortunately, despite the in-depth dialogue held between Hamas and official and popular European parties, most Western countries still refuse to deal with Hamas. Their refusal does not stem from either the values or norms of international law, nor from Hamas's attitudes and policies characterized by methodology, rationality, and realism. In fact, it stems from the Western commitment to supporting the Zionist project in its injustice and aggression, and the Israeli standard of considering any resistance against it to be a terrorist movement.

It is hoped that the West will someday change its criteria for dealing with Palestine's occupation and the Arab-Israeli conflict, to act in accordance with the principles of international law, the values of freedom and justice, and for the sake of the future of international peace and stability.

Herein is not a presentation of academic research but rather a vision we have participated in formulating since Hamas's founding, to be readily accessible by policymakers, as well as researchers and those interested in this subject. We hope that this work will contribute to the understanding of Hamas in particular, and the Palestinian conflict with the "Zionist occupation," which is the core of international conflict in the Arab world or the "the Middle East" region, in general.

First: The Main Driving Forces in the Crystallization of Hamas's Vision

What we are discussing here are the main factors that shape Hamas's vision of its conflict with the "Zionist enemy," stances and policies. However, decisions concerning new developments are made by evaluating the situation at hand and determining the main interest, while keeping in mind the temporal strategy and objectives.

The following are the main parameters that shape our vision for managing the conflict with the "Zionist enemy," since Hamas's inception:

1. The Islamic Background

This generally means Islamic provisions or the Shari'ah law, specifically those related to the conflict with the "Zionist enemy." This is due to the fact that the majority of Palestinians are Muslims belonging to an Arab nation where Islam is the predominant religion. Thus, it is only normal that Islamic values and legal provisions be present in Hamas's stances and policies, and this is how it will remain.

For the Palestinians, Palestine is not only a land. It is also a Holy and blessed land; Muslims' first *Qiblah* [The direction Muslims face when performing their prayers]; as well as the land of *Isra'* [The Night Journey] and *Mi'raj* [The Night Ascension], where Prophet Muhammad (SAAWS) was carried from Mecca to Jerusalem, and then from there to the Heavens. It is also home to *al-Aqsa* Mosque, in the virtue and significance of which were reported a number of texts from the Qur'an as well as the Prophet (SAAWS).

As a result of these religious attributes, coupled with strategic position in the Arab and Islamic region, Palestine maintains good standing not only for Arabs and Muslims, but also for other monotheistic religions, especially for Christian Arabs, as it is the birthplace of the Christ (PBUH), the home to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the land of the ancestors.

Consequently, Hamas defends the land of Palestine not only because it is the Palestinians' homeland as well as that of their ancestors, or that it was overtaken by a cruel enemy, but because of the additional motive of this special position it holds among Muslims which distinguishes it from other Arab and Muslim lands.

Thus, Arabs and Muslims support the people of Palestine on a different scale compared to their support to other people under occupation or aggression.

Hamas believes that the failure of the pro-"Zionist entity" West to take all the aforementioned factors into account increases tension in the region regardless of the efforts that might be made to maintain stability.

2. Conditions of Hamas Inception

The founders of Hamas were affiliated to the MB movement, one of the mainstream Islamic movements with a comprehensive understanding of Islam. This affiliation resulted in changing Hamas's approach, instilling it with religious conviction tending towards the school of moderate Islamic thought to which Hamas ideologically still belongs. However, on the organizational level, Hamas is a national liberation movement that has its own decision-making and policy-design mechanisms, the cornerstone of their foreign relations being non-interference in the internal affairs of states, parties, and organizations.

For example, we refer here to the fact that the provisions of Islamic law oblige Muslims to fight the occupiers of their land. This is exactly what happened in Palestine, where the Zionist movement organized emigration campaigns for Jews from Europe to Palestine. The British occupation helped them to forcefully establish the "State of Israel" and to expel the people of Palestine into exile and Diaspora.

Another example is what has sometimes been referred to as "fighting the Jews" in Palestine. In fact, Palestinians fought those who occupied their land and assaulted them, and not for the fact that they were Jews. This goes in accordance with the Islamic rule that says that "there is no compulsion in religion."

3. The General Background on the Circumstances That Led to the Establishment of the "State of Israel" and the Role of the West

Hamas, like any other Palestinian, Arab, or Islamic political movement, has a deep understanding of how the "State of Israel" emerged. However, because we are talking here about a vision, we are not going to elaborate on the evident and detailed circumstances that led to the establishment of the "State of Israel" on the land of Palestine, its continued aggression, or Western support for it.

It has been clear to us in Hamas that, despite the fact that there have been religious and national motives and backgrounds behind the project of establishing

the “State of Israel,” especially for some Jewish communities in Europe, the European colonial powers, for geo-strategic reasons, played the primary role in the success of this project. Concomitantly, there was a desire to get rid of the so-called “Jewish question,” while the new entity would be employed as a tool to impose hegemony and control at the heart of the Arab and Muslim countries. Western powers wanted to prevent the development of these countries in order to keep the region’s wealth and resources under their control thus precluding it from becoming an autonomous active and influential force. Still, one should not neglect the fact that some leading Western powers had religious and cultural backgrounds supporting the so-called “return of the Jews” to Palestine.

Since its inception, Islamic history has witnessed tolerance for followers of other monotheistic religions, especially Jews who lived in the region peacefully from the Islamic state of Prophet Muhammad (SAAWS), during the caliphate and until modern times. We particularly refer here to the fact that fighting the Jews in al-Madinah and its environs only occurred after their aggression and conspiracy against the Muslims, the Prophet Muhammad (SAAWS), and their emerging state.

The Jews of Spain (Andalusia) took refuge in Muslim countries after the Inquisition tribunals. Additionally, throughout time, Palestinian history has recorded tolerance between Christians, Jews and Muslims, as no conflict had taken place between Muslims and Christians on one hand, and the Jews on the other until the Zionist gangs emerged in Palestine and began their brutal massacres against Palestinians. All of this came after the establishment of “Israel” and its racist policy that opposes everything Arab or Muslim.

Since the beginning of the Palestinian struggle, Christians participated alongside Muslims against the Zionist occupation. For example, one of most the prominent aides of Haj Amin al-Hussaini, Palestine’s leader during the British occupation, was Emil Ghouri—a Christian.

This historical background remains the interpretation for the Western support for and bias towards “Israel.” It is important to note here that there are sometimes competing interests among Western forces supporting “Israel.”

Based on this understanding, Hamas believes that the Zionist project is one that targets the present and future of the whole Arab and Muslim *Ummah*, regardless of its direct aim at seizing Palestinian land and displacing its people. Consequently,

the whole *Ummah* should be playing a role in the conflict with the "Zionist occupation," and not just the Palestinian people.

4. Lessons Learned by Hamas

Lessons have been learned from the extensive conflict with the "Zionist enemy," especially after the establishment of "Israel" in 1948, when it controlled nearly 77% of the Palestinian land; as well as after the 1967 war, which led to the occupation of the remaining part of Palestine.

For example, it is noted here that hijacking planes proved to be ineffective in resisting the occupation. Also, the imbalance of power in favor of the enemy on one hand and the Western bias for it on another, along with some countries in the region being affected by these facts, have all persuaded Hamas to limit its confrontation with the occupation to Palestine only. This is despite the fact that the "Zionist enemy" targets Palestinian people and assassinates their leaders in exile and in the Diaspora.

5. Observing the Rules of International Humanitarian Law

Human rights and international law meet Islamic values that call for the preference of peace and stability over war, which is considered necessary only in cases of self-defense. Consequently, Hamas has sought to take into account these aspects in its policies and stances, as it still calls on the West, in particular, to apply the rules of international law and not be biased towards the occupation.

According to international law, it is not permissible to seize other people's land by force, nor to impose facts or to undermine or eliminate their rights as "Israel" is doing in the 1948 and 1967 territories. In addition, resisting the occupation is a legitimate right under international law. However, the West does not recognize this right for the Palestinian people, but rather sides with the enemy in regarding it as a form of "terrorism."

Although "martyrdom operations," or what the West refers to as suicide bombings, have always come as reactions to crimes committed by the occupation's army and forces, there have been occasions when Hamas offered to stop those operations under the condition that the occupation forces would stop targeting Palestinian civilians, yet the occupation state refused. It is widely known that whenever Hamas would agree to a ceasefire, the occupation state would rush into violating its terms. This stresses Hamas's keenness to observe humanitarian values

and principles stipulated in international conventions in contrast to the occupation state's refusal to comply with the Geneva Convention or respect international resolutions. It is noted that these resolutions have tried, at least partially, to do justice to the Palestinian people in their bitter struggle with the occupation.

Second: Hamas's Vision of Managing the Conflict with the "Zionist Enemy"

In light of the above, Hamas's vision of managing the conflict with the "Zionist enemy" includes the following:

1. Hamas's Hostility Perspective

It took the West many decades of wars launched for economic, political or sectarian reasons to define hostility and aggression as any action carried out by a state against another, whether through military occupation or any form of attack, and whether it targeted the land, the armed forces, or the commercial fleets. Additionally, any consequences of such aggression are perceived as void regardless of the lapse of time. As for the concept of hostility, it has been defined in Islam, the intellectual reference of Hamas, and ever since the beginning of the prophethood of Muhammad (SAAWS). Islam embraced peace and rejected aggression against individuals and groups, regarding it as a forbidden crime unless launched against the aggressor.

Accordingly, neither Islam nor Hamas recognizes hostility against an individual, a group, or a state based on race, religion, or wealth. It is thus impermissible for Muslims to be hostile to Christians, Jews, or even polytheists, had the latter not started aggression in the first place against Muslims, their lands, their sacred places or their wealth. Therefore, Hamas's criteria for hostility and aggression is essentially a political one, rather than religious, racial, or sectarian. Yet, as mentioned earlier, based on the implicit religious meaning and value Palestine has for Arabs and Muslims, this takes on an added dimension in drive and motivation. Other differences concerning religious doctrines and legislations between Muslims, Christians and Jews, are only normal and have been present throughout humanity ever since the descent of Adam and Eve. Such differences are not, by any of the Islamic jurisprudence doctrines, regarded as an excuse

for hostility, as they are otherwise based on reasoning and fact-finding and are approached with tolerance and dialogue.

2. Hamas and the Jews

According to Muslim beliefs, Christians, Jews and all other human beings were created from one essence and all are brothers in humanity. They all share the right to live in freedom and dignity without exception or discrimination. Humans are, by creation, honored beings regardless of their religion, color, sex, or race.

In this regard, Hamas does not resist Israeli occupation based on its hostility to Jews. It rather perceives resistance as its right to self-defense and response to the aggression exercised by the "Zionist entity's" security forces and institutions against the land, holy sites, resources and people of Palestine.

As mentioned earlier, Palestine has been an exemplar of tolerance and coexistence between its Muslim, Christian, and Jewish residents. Conflict and fighting had never been present before the Zionist movement gangs' aggression towards the Palestinian people and their land, the approach of which became planned and sustained after the establishment of "Israel."

Based on this view, Hamas has nothing against those who embrace Judaism as a religion. This is evident in Hamas's policy to limit its confrontation with the enemy to the Palestinian territories only, although "Israel" targets Palestinian people and leaders of Palestinian resistance movements in exile and Diaspora.

Once Palestine is liberated and the "Zionist occupation" terminated, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Palestinians will live in tolerance, coexistence, peace, and security as they did before the beginning of the systematic migration campaigns of the world's Jews to Palestine that were organized by the Zionist movement. Notably, some Zionist researchers and their supporters deliberately shed light on parts of Hamas's Charter that could be understood as anti-Semitic, or seen as hostile to Jews merely for being Jews. It can be assured that this is an intended disinformation, as nothing of the like is mentioned in Hamas's Charter, and the concept of "anti-Semitism" is not even known to Muslims in the first place, but rather reflects the "Jewish question" that first emerged in Europe.

In fact, any loose terms in Hamas's Charter are due to the conditions of origination of the movement where this style dominated Arab and Islamic rhetoric in general and was not intended on religious, political or legal grounds. It remains to say that anyone

who looks into Hamas's track record and political performance since its inception realizes that the movement's stance regarding Jews has been clearly revealed.

3. Hamas and the Zionist Movement

Hamis differentiates between Judaism as a heavenly religion and Zionism as a political, racist, aggressive movement aiming at the occupation of Palestine and expelling its people, in addition to establishing a nationalist state for the Jews. Indeed, the Zionist movement has worked to achieve its goals through the use of brute force with the complicity of colonial forces, especially Britain during its mandate in Palestine from 1922 until the establishment of "Israel" in 1948.

While Hamas believes that any Jew is not its enemy because of his religious belief, it considers every Zionist an enemy, whether Jewish or not. This distinction includes those who embraced the principles of Zionism and participated in its aggressive projects before 1948, and those who become members of the occupation state after 1948, and participated in one way or another in its aggressive crimes. Nonetheless, Hamas does not target or resist such a person unless they are in Palestine.

4. Hamas and the "State of Israel"

Hamis considers "Israel" as an invalid entity, which is the outcome of a "Zionist aggression" on the land and people of Palestine. It usurped the whole Palestinian land after the 1967 aggression and performs all kinds of aggression against the land, people and holy sites as well as systematically Judaizing the land of Palestine, expelling its people while imposing a discriminatory system similar to that of South Africa during the apartheid years.

"Israel" confiscates lands, builds settlements, and treats Palestinians with all kinds of oppression, humiliation, imprisonment, detention and deprivation. Further, it works to establish a racist Jewish state, while calling on the world, and on the Palestinians, to recognize it as a Jewish state, thus seeking to legitimize all its practices and pave the way to expel the Palestinians from their land.

As the "Israeli entity" embraces this policy, Hamas believes that it is an enemy that should be fought and faced with all legal and legitimate means according to principles of Islamic jurisprudence and rules of international law, as well as the values of freedom and justice universally agreed upon. The calls in the West for the Palestinian people in general, and for Hamas in particular, to recognize "Israel" is a further oppression that accentuates the injustice the West committed

in supporting the establishment of the "Zionist entity." Ultimately, it is not part of Hamas's vision to legally recognize "the state of Israel," or in any way legitimize its occupation. For this would invalidate the right of the Palestinian people to its land and holy sites as well as their right to self-defense, liberation and self-determination, a natural right secured by international conventions.

5. Hamas's Resistance Tools

Based on Hamas's belief that "Israel" is an invalid entity and an occupation state, the movement's major tool for resistance is to fight it by all legitimate means and to bear the consequences until ending the occupation and liberating all Palestinian land. Resisting the occupation is perceived by Hamas as a right not only emanating from Islamic references, but also secured by international laws and covenants. Hamas is optimistic that the advocates of justice and freedom would back it in defending the rights of the Palestinian people and support their resilience and resistance until achieving victory and liberating the land and the holy sites.

Remarkably, the occupation cannot be faced except with resistance, with all its forms, especially armed resistance, whereas negotiations, though legitimate in Islamic jurisprudence and international relations, remain useless with repressive, aggressive occupation.

Indeed, since Madrid 1991 until this date, the peace process has been essentially used as a cover for all Judaization and repressive measures employed by "Israel" against the Palestinians, their land and holy sites. Hamas believes that Palestinians cannot benefit from negotiations unless they are recognized as a people with inalienable rights, and their state is established accordingly. Notably, in light of Hamas's concern about the unity of the Palestinian stance, the movement is ready to respect the results of a free and fair popular referendum regarding the outcome of negotiations that are held by a leadership fairly representing different political forces and factions, while Hamas would maintain its own perception regarding the occupation state.

6. Hamas and "Israel's" Supporters

Hamas believes that supporting "Israel's" aggression against the Palestinian people is tyranny that has no grounds in human and international law and customs. Hamas hopes that any supporter of "Israel" will stop in order to back Palestinian rights on one hand, and to honor international peace and security on the other hand.

Still, Hamas does not consider anyone who supports “Israel” an enemy who must be targeted, because it only targets those directly involved in the aggression against the Palestinian people. Consequently, Hamas did not target any individual, group or state except the occupation state. It also avoided targeting the occupation and its figures and institutions outside Palestine, a policy does not arise from fear as one might presume. In fact, it is out of legitimate and laudable wisdom as well as being part of well-considered principles and policies that aim at not antagonizing others, as well as keenness to promote security and peace among nations and peoples and serving the good of mankind.

7. Hamas and Targeting Civilians

Fighting, as it is legitimate in Islam, forbids the killing of women, children and the elderly or, put differently, it prevents the killing of non-combatants, an issue clear in jurisprudence of provisions of war in Islamic Shari‘ah law. In light of such rules, resistance pursued by Hamas is a legitimate right taken up to face the occupation, targeting military and aggressive forces and the infrastructure of the occupation state.

The Palestinian resistance has not conducted any operation that has caused major injuries among non-combatants, except in case of urgency and in retaliation against “Zionist” offensive on Palestinian civilians. Such exceptions arise when “Zionists” commit terrorist massacres against unarmed civilians, such as the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre in Hebron, on 25/2/1994, which targeted peaceful worshippers.

Hamas and other resistance factions have repeatedly presented an initiative that prevents targeting Israeli and Palestinian non-combatants. However, the occupation state has always refused and continued to target Palestinian civilians without any concern about human value, or respect for human rights or international covenants. And the question remains: Who is to blame more? The weak who is suffering under the occupation or the strong side represented in the occupation and which does not refrain from committing the ugliest crimes and harshest forms of aggression?

8. Hamas and Overall Management of the Conflict

Hamas has perceived the Zionist project as an aggressive occupation that seeks to replace the indigenous Palestinian population, a project connected to the hegemonic aspirations of Western countries targeting Arab and Muslim countries.

Thus, it is considered a unique conflict that cannot be resolved according to a "compromise," which would be based on maintaining the Zionist project on parts of Palestine while the Palestinian people do not see the restoration of all their rights. Any incomplete solution would lead to an extended conflict that would necessitate large sacrifices and incur negative implications for human culture, especially Western culture. Ultimately, it is necessary to resolve this conflict by giving the Palestinian people their inalienable rights, primarily their right to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories. Should occupation not be ended through "Israel's" compliance with the principles of international law and conventions, liberation must be achieved through Palestinian struggle supported by Arab, Islamic and humanitarian circles. It is a struggle that will not cease until it achieves its goals.

Hamas, which is inclined by nature to peace, given its Islamic background, will accept and cooperate with any international effort to resolve the conflict with the "Zionist enemy," based on ending the occupation on all Palestinian land and achieving the rights of the Palestinian people; especially the right to liberation, self-determination, establishing the fully-sovereign Palestinian state over all Palestinian land with Jerusalem as its capital, while implementing the right of return. Should the international community fail to meet its obligation, Hamas is confident that the strength of its lawful right will ultimately defeat its enemy, no matter how long that would take.

"With Allah is the Decision, in the past and in the Future: on that Day shall the Believers rejoice" Surat Al-Rum: 4 (The Romans)

Chapter Sixteen

Hamas International Relations

Mr. Usamah Hamdan

Hamas International Relations*

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the bases of Hamas' foreign relations and their policies. It also examines the development of the movement's relationships as well as difficulties and challenges that it has faced since its inception in 1987; especially with its commitment to resistance and an Islamic approach. This is in addition to its refusal to recognize Israel and its rejection of its political hegemony along with the Israel lobby that supports it in tarnishing Hamas' image abroad. This chapter also discusses the impact of the American labelling of Hamas as a "terrorist" movement on the movement's foreign relations. Finally, this chapter comments on the successes and failures of the movement's foreign relations.

First: Bases and Principles of Hamas' Foreign Relations

At the beginning of its foreign relations, Hamas adopted a set of principles and policies, which constituted the main pillar of the establishment and development of these relations. And since the beginning of its political relations, and by studying the experience of political relations among Palestinian factions and forces in particular, and liberation revolutionary forces in general, the movement's leadership realized that the success of these relations and achievement of the desired goals would be dependent on principles that can be summarized in the following points:

1. The political relations of the movement are part of an integrated system of struggle against the occupation, which, although based on resistance in thought and deed, are integrated with the activities of armed resistance, and support their achievements on the ground politically.

* This is the text of a written interview conducted by Mohsen Mohammad Saleh from Beirut, Lebanon, with Usamah Hamdan in Beirut, Lebanon. The text was approved by Mr. Hamdan on 3/3/2014. The questions and answers were placed here in the form of titles to facilitate the readability of the text.

2. The movement's relations must be based on a strategic vision of a political action that has clear goals (provisionally and strategically). This vision must in turn arise from a strategy aimed at liberation.

3. To achieve this, the movement's political relations must be managed in a fully institutional manner that guarantees the consistency of the movement's political track, continuity of its political performance and the good functioning of its political relations. Furthermore, it should not be adversely affected by changes that may occur in the internal environment of the movement and in its leadership frameworks. It must also succeed in dealing with all the developments in the external environment, and be able to continue in the face of all challenges in the long battle with the enemy.

4. In this context, the interests of the movement's political relations always depend on the interests of the Palestinian people and their cause. And regardless of the nature of the available political relations, and opportunities that may sometimes seem tempting, the movement's relations must not conflict or adversely affect the national interests of the Palestinian people and their cause.

5. Following this logic, benefiting from the lessons of the Palestinian experience is vital, beginning with the British occupation of Palestine up to the launch of the movement in 1987, through all the successes and failures on the path of struggle of the Palestinian people. The movement did not deal with the Palestinian political relations' negatively, or from the premise that what the others did was wrong, but dealt with them in terms of patriotic criticism, benefiting from successful experiences, while working hard to overcome its missteps and mistakes.

6. Hamas' faith in the Palestinian people's dedication to their nation has occupied an important place in the management of the movement's political relations; as it has always believed that the Palestinian people are an integral part of the Arab and Muslim nations. In this sense, these nations represent the Palestinians' strategic depth and the main protector and supporter of their cause. There is also a human dimension that motivates much of the world's free people to support the Palestinians, their cause, resistance and struggle.

7. Finding what is common in the relationships, agreeing on points of convergence, then working to consolidate and expand them, whatever differences there may be, constituted the basis for building the movement's political relations, for total agreement cannot always be attained. It was important for Hamas to

establish early on that differences in positions or visions toward issues other than the Palestinian issue must not be an obstacle to building relationships that serve the Palestinian cause.

8. In the context of its political relations, the movement has always been keen on the independence of its decisions, while remaining part of its nation, and keen on the rejection of dependency in any of its political relations. It has always refused to be under the wing of a party or a group, whatever the state of harmony and good relations between them. Also the movement has refused to build any kind of relationship on the basis of exploiting it or its performance for the political benefit of agendas that may conflict with the movement's principles, the nation's interests, or the benefit of humanity in general.

9. In all its political performance, Islamic ethics and principles have predominated. The movement has succeeded in carving a new experience in building and managing political relations. It dealt with all components and with the needs of political work and its details, without being contradictory or inconsistent with the Islamic system of values, ethics and principles.

Standards and Principles of Hamas' Foreign Relations Building

In accordance with the principles and foundations upon which Hamas started building its foreign political relations, it has adopted a number of policies in establishing, managing and developing its foreign relations at regional and international levels. The most important of these policies can be summarized in the following points:

1. The "Zionist entity" is the only enemy of the Palestinian people and their resistance forces, among which Hamas includes itself. Hostility to it stems from its occupation of the Palestinian territories and its usurpation of the rights of the Palestinian people. Therefore, the movement has no problem in dealing with any regional or international party; the only party with which it does not deal with is the one that occupied the Palestinian territories, destroyed Palestinian life, and displaced the Palestinian refugees.

2. The movement has adopted an open approach, based on Palestinian national rights, and in the context of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and on the basis of ending the occupation.

3. The movement is committed to the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of states under any circumstances.

4. The movement has built its relations on the popular and official levels in a manner that maintains its relationship with the Palestinian state and its institutions. It also established relations at the grassroots level, aware of the importance of public relations. The movement has succeeded in achieving this through transparency in its relationships. Moreover, the movement's policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of states was important for its success in building official and popular relations simultaneously.

5. Hamas' relations with other States are not directed against other countries or parties, rather they are relations directed to the benefit of the Palestinian issue and the Palestinian people. Thus, Hamas cannot be part of an axis fighting a battle against a bloc or another axis at the regional and international political levels; it rather seeks to maintain its relations with everyone based on the support of the Palestinian issue.

6. Clarity in the movement's political positions and vision, which gained it important credibility at the level of political relations.

7. Hamas' work takes place within the occupied territories. It is active there directly against the occupation on the land of Palestine. Thus, the movement does not exercise military action against any country or on the ground of any country. This policy has led to the realization of all regional and international parties that the resistance against the occupation is not pointless, or a mere desire to fight, it is an action of national struggle directed against an occupier. In spite of all the accusations leveled by the West (US and Europe) against the movement, this policy has had generally a positive supportive impact on the external relations of the movement.

8. The form and nature of bilateral relations are determined in accordance with the parties with which the relations are established.

Second: External Difficulties and Challenges

The process of building any party's political ties faces a number of difficulties and challenges; in that, Hamas was no exception. It faced and still faces a number of difficulties and challenges, some of which are associated with the political

and regional environment, and some with the movement's own subjective circumstances and the evolution of its performance and growth. These challenges can be reviewed in the following context:

1. The Launching Phase (1987–1990)

The movement's emergence on the Palestinian political scene was as a national Palestinian faction with Islamic reference; the challenges then were mainly Palestinian. For the Fatah movement and the PLO were not happy with this development in the Palestinian political environment, especially that the announcement of the launch of Hamas coincided with the start of the blessed *Intifadah* (an appellation that had spread in that period, and was adopted by Hamas). This took place in an Arab political environment that, in the wake of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, viewed the Palestinian situation as a burden. Fatah and the PLO leadership were under conditions of political volatility and anxiety, which arose from their fear of an end to their political role, and were under pressure to join the occupation in a political process. However, it was not acceptable for it to be engaged in such a process directly, but through representatives from the Palestinians of the interior and through a regional role led by Jordan. In spite of its readiness to do that through Arafat's 1983 visit to Cairo, followed by the Palestinian-Jordanian understanding of 1984, the Fatah and PLO leadership was not ready to accept what could lead to the formation of a Palestinian leadership that could replace it, or even to accept the existence of competing national political symbols.

With the launch of the first *Intifadah*, this leadership felt that it had a golden opportunity to consolidate its leadership and command of the Palestinian people and to engage in the process of direct political settlement with the occupation. However, the announcement of the launch of Hamas created two main challenges for this leadership; the first was in the legitimacy of leadership, where the movement was launched in the occupied territories, and was based on the historical and deep legacy of the Islamic movement inside Palestine. The second was the refusal of this movement to come to a settlement with the enemy, and its call for jihad for the liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea, which constituted a challenge to the theory of "land for peace."

At the time, the Fatah and PLO leadership tried to tarnish the image of Hamas and to turn Arab and Islamic parties against it, in the hope of isolating it politically in order to deal with it as a strictly internal Palestinian matter. In spite of all that

the PLO leadership did then, the impact of these efforts remained limited due to Hamas' closeness to the Arab and Muslim public, which welcomed the launch of Hamas and regained the hope of liberation following the events of (1982–1986).

Although the movement used to carry out its political activities from the beginning, the formation of its first specialized political committee took place in 1989; when it laid the foundations of its work and defined its responsibilities. It followed political and media developments, and made many studies and proposals. It also tried during the same year to arrange some political meetings and send delegations to some countries. The first attempt was a meeting with the Iraqi leadership, which did not transpire.

2. The 1990–1992 Phase

This phase, however short, was characterized by two major events that left a significant impact on the Palestinian issue and on Hamas' political relations.

The first event was the occupation of Kuwait and the subsequent US-led Operation Desert Storm; while the second event was the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference. The first event allowed a significant presence of Hamas at a political level; when the movement participated in the Arab mediation delegation, which sought to end the occupation of Kuwait through an Arab peace settlement. This gave the movement the opportunity to be present at the Arab political level, especially with the Arab Gulf countries, in particular KSA and Kuwait, in addition to Iraq, Libya, Jordan, Yemen and Sudan, through visits to the capitals of these countries. Hamas also began developing contacts and holding meetings with representatives of other Muslim countries (Iran and Pakistan).

With regard to the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference, Hamas saw this conference as a threat to the Palestinian issue, especially as it came in the wake of Desert Storm, one of the political effects of which was to weaken the PLO's political position, causing division in the Arab world that weakened the Arab position in general.

In late 1991, Ibrahim Ghushah was appointed the official spokesperson for Hamas. At this stage, the movement sought to establish relations with all the parties who inquired about and got to know Hamas, its ideas, intellectual concepts and political vision. While the positions of others were positive to the extent of openness and responsiveness with the movement's quest to build these relationships.

About two weeks before the end of 1992, Israel deported 415 Islamic leaders from the WB and GS, 385 of them affiliated with Hamas and 15 with the PIJ. Their humanitarian case, their steadfastness in Marj al-Zuhur and their rejection of their expulsion meant their cases took on global dimensions. This event proved a quantum leap for Hamas' political and international media work.

3. The Oslo Phase (1993–2000)

The convening of the Madrid Peace Conference on 30/10/1991 was a turning point for the Palestinian national struggle. The Arab and international consensus in supporting the conference at that time, and Arab participation in it, had an impact on the relations of the movement that had rejected the conference, considered it a threat to the Palestinian issue, and believed the goal of the conference was to liquidate the Palestinian issue. The Oslo Accords at the end of 1993 appeared to confirm the soundness of the stance adopted by the movement.

Despite the skepticism of many parties about the possibility of achieving peace, the regional and international communities stood by the peace process, especially after the formation of the PA in the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, which was then expanded to many areas of the WB.

Although relations with the Arab world have not witnessed any alienation, they have seen reservation and a cooling of relations from a number of Arab parties. Things went as far as the participation of many of these parties in the Sharm el-Sheikh conference of 1996, which aimed to halt the growing power of Palestinian resistance, especially Hamas.

In contrast, relationships at the regional level have expanded and developed with a number of Arab states, as well as with Iran.

The steadfastness of the deportees in Marj al-Zuhur had significant impact on the movement's political relations, as it pushed forward contacts with several Arab countries. It also opened up important horizons in the relationships with some Muslim countries. Furthermore, Hamas had a number of contacts with western embassies in Jordan, in an attempt to support the cause of the deportees and their return. Thus, some contacts were made and meetings were held with the ambassadors of Britain, Germany, Italy, and Norway, and with the political advisor at the US Embassy. However, in late March 1993, the US State Department issued a decree banning contact with Hamas, while other Western countries tended toward freezing contacts with the movement.

At the end of this phase, following a failed assassination attempt on the head of the movement's political bureau Khalid Mish'al in Amman, and in light of the political embarrassment caused to "Zionist entity" by this attempt, Sheikh Ahmad Yasin was released from prison; he then left GS for medical treatment. The movement succeeded in arranging a trip for him across a number of Arab countries including: KSA, Qatar, Iran, Kuwait, UAE, Syria, Sudan, and Egypt. This tour had positive effects on the movement's relations and opened up numerous prospects in the Arab and Muslim worlds. Moreover, Sheikh Yasin received an invitation to visit South Africa, which was later cancelled following pressure from the Palestinian Embassy there.

This phase had the following key characteristics:

- a. Coldness of major Arab parties in dealing with the movement, which constituted a challenge to its ability to maintain its relations with them without a negative impact on its resistance agenda against the occupation. It can be said that it has succeeded in overcoming this challenge without making any concessions on its agenda and goals. Hamas was successful in avoiding a distracting battle with Jordan in 1999, after Jordan had decided to cut its relations with the movement and arrest the head of its political bureau and a number of its members.
- b. Development of its relations with Iran and some Arab parties. This phase also witnessed the movement's leadership focusing on those parties that support its agenda, raising its relationship with them to the highest possible level.
- c. The beginning of contacts and relations with some African countries.
- d. Hamas was placed on the American list of terrorist organizations, a response to Israeli demands, to put pressure on the movement and force it to respond positively to the political settlement reached in the Oslo Accords.

4. *Al-Aqsa Intifadah* Phase (2000–2005)

In light of the failure to reach a final peace solution (as was agreed in Oslo) and in light of *al-Aqsa Intifadah* and the rise of Hamas' resistance activities, this phase witnessed major developments in the movement's political relations.

The movement proved its ability not only to withstand difficult conditions (1993–2000), but also to raise the level of confrontation with the occupation and penetrate its security measures and red lines. In parallel, it provided political initiatives consistent with its resistance activities (the pacification of 2003, the

concept of truce and pacification in 2005, and the declaration of its participation in the PLC elections).

In light of *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, the movement developed its political relations, and strengthened its relations with its allies.

Hamis advanced its relations with a number of regional parties, despite the deadlock, which had affected them during the previous phase, especially those with Egypt. It has also managed to achieve important breakthroughs in its international relations by meeting officials from most EU countries. Thus, there were direct contacts with representatives of the EU's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, and a number of unannounced, official visits to European capitals. There was also the beginning of direct contact with the Russian Federation, when a delegation from the movement was invited to visit Moscow in November 2005; and the visit took place in January 2006, the beginning of a relationship, which is still ongoing.

At this stage, Hamis had demonstrated its ability to form a wide network of relationships while continuing its resistance activities. The importance of the movement's ability militarily and among the population to consolidate its political role should not be overlooked. Moreover, the existence of alliances based on resistance to the occupation had important implications on its political relations.

However, this stage also saw unprecedented American pressure applied to the EU to add Hamis to the European terrorist list. Despite resistance from many EU countries, these pressures finally led to compliance in 2003. This move was rejected by the movement, which felt that it demonstrated political hypocrisy and double standards.

5. International Conditions Phase (2006–2007)

During this phase, Hamis participated in the PLC elections; the results surprised everyone when the movement won a comfortable majority of seats. But instead of responding to the Palestinian people's will, the US sought to undermine the movement's victory; releasing what was known at the time as "the Quartet conditions" for dealing with any government formed by or which involved Hamis. When Hamis rejected those conditions, international and regional parties interfered to prevent the formation of a government of national unity, which Hamis had sought; while these parties had bet on the movement's failure. In spite of

difficulties, the government formed by Hamas succeeded in persevering in the face of challenges, which led to the launch of the US-led scheme dubbed “the Dayton Project” aimed at the overthrow of the government formed by Hamas. In spite of the fact that Hamas had agreed to form a National Unity Government in the Mecca Agreement of March 2007, moves against the movement did not stop, being under US supervision and using Palestinian tools (Preventive Security Force—PSF). With a widening circle of assassinations and breaches of security, the government had to control and restrain the security forces. This was not really understood by President ‘Abbas nor did he respond to it as the head of PA and Fatah, in which he was required to abide by the Mecca Agreement. This stage ended with Palestinian schism and two governments, one in GS and the other in Ramallah.

Perhaps the most important challenge faced by Hamas at this time was the political siege imposed by the US and the Quartet on the Hamas government and the National Unity Government, and the deliberate confusion by these parties between the relationship with Hamas and that with the National Unity Government. In addition, the collapse of the Mecca Agreement had a negative impact on the KSA-Hamas relationship.

At this stage, the movement gained great support from its allies, as well as the support of Arab parties that appreciated the movement’s role and its impact on the national level. These parties sought to build a positive relationship with the movement, despite the effect that the schism had on these relations later.

International relationships, despite the blockade, continued to develop with the Russian Federation and some European countries, some of which considered (despite their EU membership) that EU decisions were binding on EU institutions, and not on its member states. This phase also witnessed the evolution of the relationship with South Africa, and a series of contacts with a number of African and Latin American countries.

6. The Phase of Siege and War (2007–2011)

The US sought to tighten the screws on Hamas through the GS blockade. The occupation benefited from this siege and waged a serious attack on GS in December 2008. Many regional parties hoped for an end to resistance in GS and the crushing of Hamas during this operation, in which Ramallah saw an opportunity to regain GS.

Hamis steadfastness, public rallying around it, and the failure of Israel's invasion of GS, were an unexpected blow to the occupation, and a victory that boosted the movement's status and reflected its political relations regionally and internationally.

During this phase, the movement's regional relationships developed, its alliances becoming more firmly established, international relations widened, and it became the focus of European decision-makers. Furthermore, relations with Russia evolved to the level of official meetings with the president; and the relationship with the Chinese Communist Party began.

The efforts of activists from around the world to break the GS siege opened many channels with the movement. These efforts have shaken the stereotype that the "Zionist entity" has always tried to draw of the resistance.

7. The Arab Uprisings Phase

It is too early to talk about the effects of this phase on Hamis' political relations, for two reasons: the first is that it has not reached its end, and the second is linked to regional fluctuations and conflicts. The Arab uprisings mark a starting point for determining attitudes toward the movement; after its resistance project had been, for years, the basic criterion and perhaps the only one.

Possibly the most important challenge facing Hamis and its regional political relations, in light of the region's volatile environment, has been the great horizontal and vertical division, regionally and within each country. This is a challenge that has two aspects; the division fuels internal conflicts and weakens interest in the Palestinian issue; and the second is that there are attempts by many parties to involve Hamis in their quarrels and conflicts, which Hamis has decided not to get involved in.

The Role of Israel and its Lobby in Distorting the Image of Hamis Abroad

No doubt that Israel has looked with great concern at Hamis' international relations and contacts. We understand that placing Hamis on the US list of terrorist organizations in 1993 was done under pressure from Israel and the "Zionist lobby," which since the early nineties has focused its attacks on Hamis more than on all the other Palestinian factions combined, including those of the PLO. After the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, attacks by the Israel lobby on PLO factions declined, while its attacks on Hamis increased and escalated. The boldness and clout of the "Zionist lobby" in the US extended to launching an attack on former

US President, Jimmy Carter, despite all the political weight he enjoys at home, and his role in the signing of the Camp David agreement; this attack came after he met with Khalid Mish'al.

The “Zionist lobby” worked against Hamas in three parallel directions:

1. Hiding behind the issue of terrorism, working to tarnish the image of the movement and to present it, especially after the September 2001 events, as a terrorist movement; claiming that the American suffering following these events is parallel to that of Israel.
2. Exerting pressure on all politicians who expressed their understanding of Palestinian resistance and Hamas' conduct and stances. Putting pressure on all the politicians trying to make contact with Hamas or holding meetings with it, and on those who had met with the movement, regardless of their positions.
3. Exerting pressure on various media outlets in order to present the movement in a negative light, taking advantage of the stereotype lingering in the mind of the American public of the Palestinian struggle and the Arab character.

With respect to Europe, the efforts of “Zionist” pressure groups had not realized the success that Israel required of them. So Israel resorted to the use of US pressure to include Hamas on the EU list of terrorist organization, after more than 10 years of Hamas' inclusion on the equivalent US list. It could be argued that the efforts made by Hamas and Palestinian civil society organizations, and by forces and parties in Europe that support Palestinian rights, have succeeded to a reasonable extent in clarifying many of the images that the “Zionist lobby” was trying to portray. They have also succeeded in securing some pro-Palestinian achievements, such as imposing a ban on dealing with companies working in or for Israeli settlements; in addition to the existence of a considerable number of Western and European universities that currently refuse to deal with Israeli institutions and universities.

Effective confrontation of the efforts made by the “Zionist lobbies” and the Israeli government requires unifying Arab and Palestinian efforts in this domain.

The Impact of Labelling Hamas a “Terrorist” Movement on Its Foreign Relations

No doubt that considering Hamas a “terrorist” movement has had an impact on its foreign relations, starting with the US and the countries that are committed to

American policies, namely its neighboring countries, Canada and Japan. And there is no doubt that classifying Hamas as a “terrorist” movement has greatly hampered the building of relationships with these countries and others with similar policies. In addition, these countries did not make attempts to understand Hamas’ positions, remaining committed to those of the US.

There are many European countries that have dealt with Hamas and began to form impressions different than those of the US. However, these countries, and as a result of American pressure and accusations of the movement being a “terrorist” organization, have not made their relations with Hamas public. Although we believe that the US knows and has intelligence about the Hamas-Europe communications that have taken place. However, accusing the movement of “terrorism” has made it impossible for politicians in these countries to publicly disclose, in a clear manner, their relations with the movement.

There are other countries that did not care too much about the American position but were subjected to incessant US pressure that impeded the smooth growth of these relationships. And here it must be noted that there is a fourth category countries; those that have been able to face American pressure and were able to deal with Hamas in a clear, public and open manner, and these relations continue to exist and grow.

Overall, accusing Hamas of “terrorism” has left an impact on the movement’s relationships with the countries that tie their policies wholly or partially with those of the US or are America’s close allies in the region. Charging Hamas with “terrorism” has not left a significant impact upon populations, who often realize that this charge is politically motivated and has little to do with reality. The public was often responsive with the Hamas’ clarification of some of these accusations, and there are even some parties that defend Hamas or support it in one way or another. The popular dimension has been more able to distinguish between the political stance and Hamas being actually a “terrorist” movement.

Are Hamas’ Islamic Devotion, Its Commitment to the Resistance Program, And Its Refusal to Recognize Israel, Obstacles in the Way of Its Foreign Relations?

Hamas being a national liberation movement with an Islamic reference was problematic for the movement from the outset. The context of Hamas’ development

remains a negative attitude toward Islamists among Western political elites. Confusion in communications with US personalities and institutions would turn into surprise when they actually dealt with the movement. What they would see is quite different from the stereotype they had envisioned. They discovered the rational role of Hamas as a national liberation movement, with resistance being its choice of policy in the response to the occupation; while the language of its political discourse, argument and vision was clear which did not contradict with the values adopted by the West, in terms of democracy, freedom, self-determination and human rights. The movement was able to create a positive impression on these parties about the nature of its religious commitment, which gave the movement credibility and suggested that the Islamic Movement's commitment has a positive and not a negative effect, as propagated by pro-Israel propaganda. Russia, China, Latin American and African countries were not deterred by the Islamic reference of Hamas. Indeed, the movement seemed to gain respect for its Islamic commitment, and esteem for the movement's respect for the values of the society to which they belong.

The conditions set by the US after Hamas' victory in the 2006 elections, under the name of the Quartet's conditions, had an impact on the movement's external relations, particularly at the international level. All international parties, even those that maintained a positive relationship with the movement, sought at first to persuade it to declare its acceptance of the conditions; the movement was clear in dealing with this issue. It stressed that these conditions were designed to disrupt its political role after it won the elections, which was a surprise to Israel and the US, and that the demands made by the Quartet were conditions to which Yasir 'Arafat had committed the PLO since the eighties, yet they neither achieved the promised settlement nor did they resolve the Palestinian issue.

Thus, the first stage was that of discussing these conditions and clarifying the movement's position toward them. This phase led to an understanding on the part of many parties, but they did not affect any change in the Quartet's conditions.

The second stage in confronting these conditions was to confirm that the movement would continue to adhere to its fundamental principles and bolster its field capabilities. There is no doubt that clinging to these fundamentals, including refusing to give up Palestinian rights and insisting on resistance, was reinforced as the movement's basic position, especially following its steadfastness during the Israeli aggression "Cast Lead Operation" in 2008/2009, and in the subsequent

attack in 2012. The movement also assured all parties that the pressure concerning the Quartet's conditions would not yield results. From the beginning of 2013 to the time of writing, international pressure on Hamas to accept these conditions has receded; the reasons for that are manifold, in particular Hamas' steadfastness in the face of pressure and aggression, the stalemate in the peace process, and spiraling changes that have led to instability in the region.

Third: Development of Hamas' International Relations

In its international relations, Hamas has focused on the official and party dimensions. In spite of the role of institutions in the political decision-making process, the transfer of power and democratic life in those countries impose on the movement the necessity to build relationships with active parties and civil society forces. So one of Hamas' approaches in its building of international relationships was paying attention to official institutions (the Foreign Ministry, the Presidency of the State or the Government, etc.) and in parallel, to institutions of civil society and political parties.

Hamas' leadership laid down a set of rules for the development of its international relations, which can be summarized as follows:

1. International relations are governed by the same principles and policies that govern Hamas' political relations.
2. Despite the importance of international relations in the movement and the need to win friends and supporters for the achievement of our rights, this cannot be achieved on the basis of concessions that affect the national rights of our Palestinian people or the project of resistance and liberation, being a Palestinian national project.
3. The main factor in international relations is acquiring power, power on the ground in connection to our people and our rights, power in the face of the occupation through resistance and steadfastness, and power in the depth of our connection to our nation as Hamas' strategic depth and its connection to the party.
4. Grasping the magnitude of "Zionist" infiltration and means of pressure in the international environment, and the need to confront this infiltration with methods that fight its effects as much as possible.

5. International relations should not be limited to the West, in particular the US and certain European countries. The circle should be widened enough to embrace all the world's continents, thus Asia, Africa and Latin America should be included as well.
6. Relations will not succeed if their logic comes from a narrow mentality that seeks to tame the Palestinian side into accepting the occupation or change in order to suit the peace process and its conditions. For political relations to succeed, they must take place in the framework of understanding the principles, grasping the rights of the Palestinian people, and agreeing to deal with Hamas as it is, and not after undergoing a rehabilitation process that did not succeed with other parties.

These principles have helped push forward the movement's relationships in many directions, yielding the development of relations with Russia, East Asia, Africa and Latin America. In addition, these principles made the movement careful in building its relationships on solid foundations, without any rush, for it may upset the balance required in such relationships.

Hamas began its international connections (via the embassies of some countries in a number of Arab and Islamic capitals) in 1993. These connections included contacts with the embassies of the US, Britain, and France, in addition to a number of other European countries. Some of these contacts were initiated by the embassies of these countries.

The movement decided to excuse itself from continuing its meetings with the US Embassy unless the level of these meetings evolved and their manner changed. Before long, the US decided to place Hamas on its terrorism list, due to its adherence to the resistance and rejection of the peace process then. This led some European embassies to stop their communication with Hamas in Amman, while contacts of many other European embassies continued through their representatives in Tehran, Khartoum and Beirut, but remained limited to communications concerning developments and events. In 1995, some European parties initiated contact with Hamas in an attempt to persuade the movement of the importance of participating in the presidential and PLC elections. Hamas insisted that it would not participate in these elections, as a democratic expression of its political position.

In 1998, with the start of the preparations for the "final status" negotiations, Hamas received a letter from Germany carried by the senior adviser to its Prime

Minister at the time. The letter's intent was to urge the movement to support the efforts of the peace process, promising it a role in the negotiations and in the administration of the PA, and a role in the final settlement should it agree. The year 2000 witnessed the opening of contacts with many European capitals, in particular the countries of the Mediterranean basin, in addition to Switzerland and Norway.

1. Hamas and the United States

In its political relations, Hamas had a clear vision and a political horizon open to relationships with all the components of the international community, while keeping in mind that the Israeli occupation is the enemy that Hamas and the Palestinian people face. In this spirit, Hamas has dealt with all sides of the international community. However, the US has always dealt with Hamas according to Israeli calculations. Thus, the inclusion of Hamas on the US terrorism list came after Israeli pressure, and the inclusion of Hamas on Europe's list of terrorist organizations came after American pressure in favor of an Israeli demand that had not found a European response.

Following the events of September 2001, the negativity of the US position increased. The lack of a specific definition of the term 'terrorism' worsened America's approach. Thus, any contact with Hamas by a US citizen became a crime punishable by US law and the judiciary.

Despite that, meetings were held with American figures (who have no official positions) even if they had official positions in the past. All of these meetings had a green light from the authorities; most prominent among them was the meeting with former President Jimmy Carter in 2008 after President Obama won the Presidency.

[American] officials met with Hamas on numerous occasions, stressing the need not to make public these meetings, despite the fact that they had their superiors' approval.

Relations with the US can be assessed as follows:

- a. The US has dealt with Hamas in terms of Israeli interests, and to date this rule still applies in this administration's dealings with Hamas.
- b. Despite the openness shown by many American personalities that held meetings with the movement, the US did not deal with an open mind in understanding Hamas' positions. It has always resorted to pressuring Hamas into accepting its conditions.

- c. Contacts between the two have failed to achieve a serious breakthrough in their relationship, because the US has insisted that embarking on a relationship with Hamas is conditional on Hamas' acceptance of Israeli conditions.

2. Hamas and European Countries

European relations have been affected dramatically by two main events; the first one occurred when, in the wake of *Al-Aqsa Intifadah*, the US pressured European countries into placing Hamas on the "list of terrorist organizations." Despite the fact that putting Hamas on the list has prevented EU institutions from contacting it, that did not prevent many European countries from having such contacts. The most significant impact of the blockade in the first months was freezing European countries' contacts with Hamas; which were soon resumed after the second event took place, namely, the Palestinian elections.

In spite of the international Quartet's conditions, Europe considered contacts with Hamas to be important, especially after it had won the elections. They saw that refusing to deal with it would pose obstacles or will abuse the image long advocated in Europe with regard to democracy and peoples' freedom to choose by respecting election results.

In the following, we point out some of the factors affecting European relations with Hamas:

- a. Europe does not have its own political role; rather European countries play roles that do not go beyond the US-set ceiling, thus weakening their role in the Palestinian issue and the Middle East in general. Nonetheless this role cannot be European in so far as there are general policies, and every country acts according to what it believes to be in its interest.
- b. The overall European role is rejected by Israel, so it comes in specific contexts that do not conflict with Israeli and US interests. Thus, Europe remains incapable of playing an active role; its role being almost confined exclusively to filling the vacuum of the American role, when the US is incapable of making any progress, either focusing on other priorities, or preoccupied with hotter crises.
- c. In the "peace process," Europe plays the role of a financier rather than broker, thus its role is not key.
- d. Nevertheless, Hamas has been keen to have positive relationships with European countries; and it is premature to disclose any information on these relationships

due to a mutual commitment between the two sides not to disclose them. It could be argued that since 2006, growth and development in these relations has occurred. There are countries that do not mind revealing such relations, like Switzerland and Norway. But there are other countries which always deal with the movement at formal political levels, having more than mere contacts with it; of this type there are five EU countries.

Hamas is keen to develop these relations and is exerting political effort at the time of writing to take the name of the movement off the European “list of terrorist organizations.” And, despite the fact that some European countries are cooperating in this matter, there is still a European law decreeing that such a decision should be in consensus. Furthermore, there are some new EU countries that prefer to comply with the US administration’s policies rather than be closer to the European policies.

3. Hamas and Russia

There is variation in these relationships, despite the fact that these countries belong to the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). However, Hamas’ relations with Russia began in 2005; and it is to be noted that the Russian leadership in the person of President Vladimir Putin had called for the establishment of these relations before Hamas entered the elections. In the wake of the movement’s declaration that it would enter the elections, contacts began with it, as a Hamas delegation visited Russia and had preliminary official meetings there.

After its election victory, Russia invited Hamas to visit and, in early March 2006, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev met a delegation from the movement in Moscow, headed by Khalid Mish‘al. Afterwards, meetings evolved between the two sides, and there were many visits and contacts at various levels, culminating in a meeting in May 2010 attended by Khalid Mish‘al, head of Hamas’ political bureau, and the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev (who became president of Russia from 2008–2012) in the presence of President Bashar al-Assad. The relationship between the movement and Russia continues, based on mutual respect.

Russia has shown that it appreciates and understands the movement’s role; and it has the potential to play a better and more effective role for the Palestinian issue and in favor of the Palestinian people. Perhaps the most striking aspects of

this relationship is the multiple and successive meetings between the movement's leadership and Russian officials, in particular, the Russian Foreign Minister, members of the State Duma, assistants to the president and his Special Envoy for the Middle East. These visits were not dominated by Protocol and political dialogue; they rather surpassed that and involved serious and productive work to build understandings that serve the Palestinian issue and people.

4. Hamas and China

In the framework of China's commitment to build positive relations with the region, there have been the beginnings of a connection with Hamas, and some encouraging political meetings for the development of relations; particularly as the Arab collective memory is one of looking to China to be a support for the Palestinian issue at its different junctures. Moreover, it is expected that China will be a key player on the international scene over the next decade, as American challenges drive more than one party to re-examine its relations with the region. Therefore, it is expected that China's role as an international political player will be enhanced, and that in turn opens up the prospect of positive relations with it. Hamas will seek to develop its relationship with China further.

5. Hamas and India

At an official level, relations with India have been within the framework of initial contacts and cannot be classified as official ties. While relations at the party and civil society levels have grown at a positive pace and may have positive impacts on the official level.

The effect of the PLO's historical ties with India on any relationship at the Palestinian level must not be overlooked. Also we cannot neglect the Israeli effect on such relationships, as Israel has tried to use the terrorism issue to pressurize Palestinian relations with India in general. In spite of all of that, there remain chances to have relations with India, if we take into account the history of India's relation to and support of the Palestinian cause in various international forums, and the fact that Indian-Israeli relations are a relatively recent development.

6. Hamas and South Africa

As for the relationship with South Africa, it is one that can be described as good, and long-standing. After the termination of the apartheid regime, South Africa gave

the Palestinian struggle its support and endorsement. Furthermore, after Sheikh Ahmad Yasin was released from prison in 1998, he received a formal invitation to visit South Africa. However, the visit did not materialize due to pressure from the PLO and Yasir 'Arafat personally. In spite of that, the relationship between the movement and South Africa has evolved steadily; many meetings have been held at the leadership level. The head of Hamas' political bureau has met the vice president, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and a number of other senior officials. In addition, there have been many Hamas delegations that have visited South Africa, holding meetings with key figures there. These had a general framework of developing and strengthening relations between the two sides.

South Africa has shown clear interest in providing its expertise to the Palestinian side in the face of racist policies; South Africa is a model in conflict management against a racist entity that can be utilized in various key aspects of the struggle against Israel.

During the Israeli aggression on Gaza of 2008/2009, South Africa supported the Palestinian people and their resistance. The president of South Africa and the South African Parliament declared their condemnation of the aggression and stated that they stood by the Palestinian people in their right to resist the occupation. And in 2012, a number of official delegations visited GS; and in many of these visits to the Palestinian territories, they met leaders of Hamas. The two sides are seeking to develop and promote bilateral relations.

7. Hamas and the Countries of Latin America

Regarding Latin America, there are contacts with a number of countries there and regular meetings with a number of others, in particular Venezuela, Brazil and Cuba. Meetings have been held with a number of Latin American foreign ministers, and envoys were sent to the region, in addition to opening permanent channels of communication with a number of these countries. In spite of the considerable efforts made by the Zionist lobby to disrupt Latin American-Palestinian relations in general and relations with Hamas in particular, and the Israeli security penetration in this region, the chances of relations between the movement and Latin America are promising.

Fourth: About Hamas' Successes and Failures in its Foreign Relations

There is no doubt that in its foreign policy, Hamas has enjoyed successes on numerous issues and on many fronts. First, the movement has succeeded in providing a coherent political discourse that adheres to Palestinian rights and fundamentals, and to the resistance, while remaining in line with international law in terms of the right of people to freedom and self-determination. This has upset Israel and its supporters, because the movement's political stance in this area was solid to the point that it was not possible to respond to it with ease; rather a direct, serious response to it would have led to results that are contrary to what the "Zionist entity" and its supporters wish for.

The second point of success has been that the movement has, in general, dealt openly with its political relations, including its international relations. This has revealed capability and a high level of flexibility within the movement that has helped other parties form positive convictions about it, expressed by some and not expressed by others. It has been proven that Hamas is able to build relationships and to fulfill its commitments in the context of these relationships, without undermining its principles.

Furthermore, Hamas has been able to create and develop a network of relationships at international level, under attacks against it carried out by the "Zionist lobby" and attempts at disrupting its relations carried out by the PA and its embassies. This has been achieved in the context of a region containing many parties that have not dealt positively with it. So this is undoubtedly one of Hamas' successes.

Another one of the movement's successes has been its ability to develop a set of political relations that respected the privacy developed between the movement and the states. It has respected the desire of many countries to keep their relations with it undeclared, and that has yielded credibility and confidence in their relations with Hamas, and created an extensive network of relationships in Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa.

Another of Hamas' successes has been its ability to combine relations at the official level with relations at the level of civil society institutions, and with figures

and forces with influence in the political environment. This has provided and continues to provide Hamas with opportunities to develop its political relations.

It is clear that the levels of the movement's relations in the international environment continue to vary widely, from countries with which the relations are in their initial stage, to countries with which the movement enjoys strong and solid relations. This enjoins the movement to employ various forms and tools, which may sometimes result in confusion.

Among the gaps that the movement has faced in its international relations, perhaps most significant has been the "accusation of terrorism" adopted by the Zionist lobby and the US, which became an obstacle to forming relations after the September 2001 events.

One of the challenges that the movement has faced in its international relations has been the attempt by numerous parties to link the level of its relations with Hamas to Hamas re-formulating its position and vision towards the peace process, instead of dealing with the movement as it is.

Also one of the challenges has been that relations with the international community need dynamics that differ from those needed in the environment of Arab and regional relations.

At one stage, its communication and media performance constituted one of the gaps in the management of the movements political relations.

Overall, the achievements of the movement in international relations had more positives than flaws. Dealing with the flaws, however entrenched, will lead to improvement in the level of the movement's network of foreign relations in general, and the international relations in particular.

Documents

Documents

Document No. 1

The First Communiqué of the Islamic Resistance Movement—HAMAS¹

14 December 1987

In the Name of *Allah*, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾

(O you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear *Allah* that you may be successful)

O Our steadfast Muslim masses:

Today you are on a date with destiny decreed by Almighty *Allah*, which will befall the Jews and their helpers. You are part of this destiny that, sooner or later, will pull up their entity by its roots, *Allah* willing.

In one week, there were hundreds of wounded and dozens of martyrs who gave their lives in *Allah*'s way, for the sake of the glory and dignity of the Muslim Ummah, and to regain our right to our homeland, with the objective to raise *Allah*'s banner on earth. This is a sincere expression of the spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion enjoyed by our people that robbed the Zionists of their sleep and shook their being to the core. This also proved to the world that a people that seek death cannot die.

The Jews must understand that despite their shackles, prisons and detention centers.. despite the suffering endured by our people under their criminal occupation.. despite the rivers of blood, shed everyday.. and despite the wounds, our people are more capable of perseverance and steadfastness than them in the face of their tyranny and arrogance, until they learn that their policy of violence will be met with something [more severe] from our children and young people who love the Gardens of Eternity more than our enemies love this worldly life.

¹ The First Communiqué of the Islamic Resistance Movement—HAMAS, site of Muslim Brothers Movement Wikipedia, translated from Arabic by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations. All translations of the Qura'nic verses in the Documents are from the site of The Quranic Arabic Corpus, <http://corpus.quran.com/>

The *Intifadah* of our people who are steadfast in our occupied land has come in rejection of the occupation in its entirety and its pressures.. in rejection of the policy of usurping lands and planting settlements.. and in rejection of the policy of oppression imposed by the Zionists.. It has come to awaken the consciences of those panting for an insignificant peace.. for empty international conferences.. for treacherous side reconciliations in the manner of Camp David.. and to let them be certain that Islam is the solution and the alternative.

Do the reckless settlers not know that our people knew and know their path, the path of martyrdom and sacrifice, that our people are generous in this regard, that the policies of their military and settlers will not benefit them and that all their attempts to wipe out and annihilate our people will fail, in spite of their bullets, informers and disgraceful acts..

Let them know that violence only begets violence and killing only begets killing. How true is the saying, “Since I am drowning, why should I fear getting wet?”

To the criminal Zionists: take your hands off our people, our cities, our camps, and our villages. Our battle with you is one of ideology, existence and life.

Let the world know that the Jews commit Nazi crimes against our people, and that they will drink from this same cup.

﴿وَلَنَعْلَمَنَّ نَبَاهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ﴾

(And you will surely know [the truth of] its information after a time)

The Islamic Resistance Movement

14–12–1987 AD

Document No. 2

Hamas Memorandum to the President and Members of the Preparatory Committee Tasked with Reforming the Palestinian National Council²

6 April 1990

In the Name of *Allah*, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

From the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)

To: President of the Palestinian National Council

His Eminence Sheikh 'Abdul Hamid al-Sa'eh

Respected Members of the Preparatory Committee,

Assalammu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullah

We in the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), note our appreciation of the kind invitation you extended to us to participate in the works of the preparatory committee for the re-formation of the Palestinian National Council, which will begin its work on Saturday 12 of Ramadan 1410 AH, corresponding to 7 April 1990 AD. This invitation considers (Hamas) an active and influential force in the leadership of the blessed *Intifadah* and a challenge to the Jewish occupation and its oppressive machinery, which has prompted our Palestinian people to rally around their movement (Hamas) in a great jihadist cohesion.. baptized by blood and sacrifices.

While we decline the invitation to participate in the mentioned committee for a number of considerations and circumstances, we ask *Allah* to grant you success to uphold the rights of our people and their fundamentals for which they have made many sacrifices throughout the past years.

On this occasion, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) reaffirms that it stands with the unity of our people regardless of their orientations and forces, on clear foundations and bases... without compromise or concession... for this reason, our movement proposes to you our vision for the basis on which the Palestinian National Council must be formed in the next stage.

² Hamas Media Office, *Wath'iq Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah* (The Documents of the Islamic Resistance Movement), p.126, translated from Arabic by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations.

Your Eminence the Chairman of the Palestinian National Council

Brothers, Members of the Preparatory Committee

The formation of the National Council in the past stage came as a result of a number of political factors and circumstances experienced by our people in the early years of its national awakening after the exodus in 1948.. No doubt, as a result of the changes and circumstances, the next Palestinian National Council must represent the circumstances of the current stage... the stage of the blessed *Intifadah* and the realities on the ground it has engendered as well as political and popular forces and orientations.

Our valiant uprising has proven that our heroic Palestinian people are able, with *Allah's* help, to confront the occupation and shake its presence and stability... and are insistent upon securing their inalienable rights. The *Intifadah* has also demonstrated the organic cohesion among our people, with all their forces and orientations.

Your Eminence the Chairman of the Palestinian National Council

Brothers, Members of the Preparatory Committee

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) believes that the new lineup of the National Council must accommodate the following elements:

First: Election not appointment must be the primary means by which the members of the National Council are selected. Elections take place according to regions and with proportions that are equivalent to their weight.

Second: If the elections cannot be held, then the lineup should reflect the weight of the political forces on the ground, in numbers proportional to their sizes.

Third: Independents are chosen... based on the results of the elections. If it is not possible to hold the elections, their numbers and names are determined according to the consensus of all active forces on the Palestinian arena.

Fourth: For political, administrative, security and financial considerations, it is preferred that the number of members in the Palestinian National Council would be reduced and the role of the Central Council be reconsidered.

Fifth: Amending the Palestinian National Charter in line with the doctrine of the Muslim Palestinian people and their heritage.

Your Eminence the Chairman of the Palestinian National Council

Brothers, Members of the Preparatory Committee

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) stresses the importance of national unity in this crucial stage of our people's jihad.. for this reason, we in Hamas open our hearts and chests and extend our hands to coordinate with all Palestinian forces, parties and institutions to serve the best interests of our people and our cause. In line with (Hamas)'s fixed position on this issue.. and answering the calls for (Hamas) to participate in the National Palestinian Council by His Eminence the Chairman of the Palestinian National Council Sheikh 'Abdul-Hamid al-Sa'ih, and by some Palestinian forces approving this, Hamas can deal positively with the issue of participating in the Palestinian National Council:

First: Considering Palestine the land from the sea to the river, and from the Negev to Ras al-Naqoura, is one and indivisible, and is the right of the Palestinian people.

Second: Refusal to compromise on any part of the land of Palestine, and refusing recognition of the Jewish entity as a legitimate entity under any circumstances.. and rejecting all international resolutions that detract from our people's rights in their land, including resolutions 181, 242 and 338.

Third: Reaffirming the military option, and considering jihad the right path to liberate Palestine and achieve independence.

Fourth: Considering the question of Palestine an issue that concerns the entire Arab and Muslim nation, which must do what is needed in this regard and assume its role in the liberation.

Fifth: Reaffirming the importance of the continuation, development and escalation of the *Intifadah*, and supporting the steadfastness of our people against the occupation.

Sixth: Representing (Hamas) in the Council with a number of members equivalent to its weight on the ground, which is between 40–50% of the total number of members of the Palestinian National Council.

Seventh: (Hamas) must obtain its rights in all institutions and departments of the Organization [PLO] proportional to its size and weight.

Eighth: The immediate cessation of all violations and assaults against (Hamas) prisoners at the hands of Fatah in prisons inside [Palestine], and giving them the rights enjoyed by [the prisoners affiliated to] other forces in the prisons.

Ninth: Annulling all retreats, concessions and recognitions that are contrary to our rights, the aspirations of our people and their sacrifices, the latest concessions having been in the decisions of the nineteenth session in Algeria in November 1988.

Tenth: Taking into account the above-mentioned five elements in the formation of the National Council. These fundamentals, principles and conditions, are not a new proposition by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and are not intended to obstruct.. but they are the foundations that our movement was established on to affirm and defend.

Your Eminence Chairman of the Palestinian National Council

Brothers, Members of the Preparatory Committee

As we present our vision for re-forming the Palestinian National Council and our considerations for participating and engaging in the Palestine Liberation Organization.. we affirm our readiness to work diligently with all Palestinian forces regardless of their ideology or affiliation, and ask *Allah* to guide you and help you succeed, and *Allah* is behind the intent.. may *Allah* preserve the unity of our people and nation.

﴿وَقُلْ أَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

(And say, Do [as you will], for *Allah* will see your deeds, and [so, will] His Messenger and the believers. And you will be returned to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, and He will inform you of what you used to do)

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)

Palestine

11 Ramadan 1410 AH

6 April 1990 AD

Document No. 3

The First Statement of the Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades³

1 January 1992

In the Name of *Allah*, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

﴿قَاتِلُوهُمْ يُعَذِّبُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ وَيُخْزِيهِمْ وَيَصْرِكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَيُشْفِ صُدُورَ قَوْمٍ مُّؤْمِنِينَ﴾

(Fight them; *Allah* will punish them by your hands and will disgrace them and give you victory over them and satisfy the breasts of a believing people)

Military statement

The Jewish rabbi (Doron Shushan) was killed in response to the crimes of the terrorist Rabin

In retaliation for the cascade of blood flowing from the bleeding wounds of our people everywhere in our pure land, and to burn the ground under the feet of the Jewish gangs occupying the land of Palestine, one of our groups on Wednesday 1/1/1992 shot and killed the rabbi of the settlement of Kfar Darom (Doron Shushan), by shooting him. Let Rabin and his cohorts know that killing innocent members of our people will be met in kind, and every Jew shall be a legitimate target for our heroes from this moment.

We pledge to *Allah* that we will continue on the path of jihad until victory or martyrdom.

Allah is great and praise to *Allah*

Allah is great and death to the occupiers

Martyr Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades

1 January 1992 AD

³ The First Statement of the Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades, Muslim Brothers Movement Wikipedia, translated from Arabic by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations.



Document No. 4

Hamas Statement Rejecting the Cairo Agreement (Oslo 2) Between the PLO and Israel⁴

14 May 1994

The anniversary of the creation of the occupation state and the Zionist aggression against our sacred Palestinian land, falls on Sunday 15 May, less than two weeks after the signing of the fateful Cairo Agreement, where our Palestinian cause is undergoing a serious stage of our long struggle against the brutal occupation. On 15 May 1948, Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the state of the occupying enemy after the occupation of our Palestinian land in 1948.

In these days, the Zionist occupiers are celebrating the anniversary of declaring the establishment of their illegitimate state, after they defeated a segment of our people and forced it to recognize their illegitimate entity and cede rights of our people and their land. Recently, the majority [participating] in Madrid, Oslo, and Cairo achieved what they wanted and completed the so-called peace negotiations with the occupying Zionist enemy, and signed the deed selling Palestine and its people. They signed with the terrorist Rabin their collaboration and employment contracts in administrative posts in the enemy's civil administration.

It has become clear and evident to our Palestinian people and the Arab and Muslim nation the extent of fraud these people have engaged in to pass their humiliating concessions, leaving no room for them to hide the sin and aggression they have perpetrated against our people, cause, and sacred rights.

Our Palestinian people.. our Arab and Muslim nation:

Your movement, the Islamic Resistance Movement "Hamas," which has categorically renounced the disgraceful agreement called the Gaza-Jericho [Agreement], will work with the loyal and honorable in our nation and with the Islamic and national factions that reject this humiliating agreement, to expose the extent of the collapse and negligence that the signatories of the ill-fated Cairo Agreement have brought about. Here is some of the (good news) about this

⁴ PIC, <http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/documents/cairo.htm>, translated from Arabic by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations.

humiliating agreement, which the minority of Oslo, Madrid and Cairo have broken to us:

First: The self-rule authority, which is composed of 24 member, shall be subject to the approval and endorsement of the Zionist enemy. Any change in the members of this administration should be by agreement between the Organization [PLO] and the government of the enemy, and no member of these may discharge his duties without the approval of the occupying enemy, and this is what Article 4 of the Cairo Agreement has stated. It confirms that this authority is a tool appointed by the occupation, and reports to it, and cannot be considered an independent national authority.

Second: Foreign relations and external security are not among the powers and competences of the self-rule authority, according to the fifth and sixth articles. This means that this authority does not have any form of sovereignty, and that its tasks are confined to civilian functions, services, and executive tasks within the framework permitted by the occupation.

Third: Keeping the settlements intact in Gaza Strip, giving the settlements and the settlers legitimacy to remain, and keeping the task of protecting settlements and settlers the responsibility of the enemy's army. Using this pretext, the occupation forces and vehicles will continue their presence in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, and will continue their movements in the streets.

Fourth: The government of the enemy has the right to oppose and stop any laws or regulations issued by the Palestinian Authority, as indicated in the Seventh Article, which means that this Authority does not have control, and that its supreme reference point in all matters of affairs is the occupation, and that any laws or decisions issued must serve the occupation or at least do not conflict with its interests.

Fifth: Functions of the Palestinian police are confined to the maintenance of internal order and security for the Palestinians in Gaza and Jericho, and it is not among its responsibilities to address external threats or protect the border, which remains the prerogative of the enemy army, which retains the powers to take any action it deems necessary to do.

Sixth: The [Palestinian] Liberation Organization is obliged to share lists containing the names of Palestinian police with the authorities of the Zionist enemy,

and the enemy has the right to object to any of those names, which also proves the lack of independence of any decision by the civil administration authority.

Seventh: The type and quantity of the weapons of the Palestinian police was agreed on, and it was also agreed to record the serial number of each weapon and the name of the police officer who will receive it. No organization or individual in Gaza and Jericho may manufacture, sell, purchase, acquire, import, or bring in any firearms or (other weapons?!) or even gunpowder used in excavation and civilian purposes.

Eighth: Under this agreement, the [Palestine] Liberation Organization pledged to refrain from any form of criticism or incitement, including propaganda against the occupying enemy and its repressive practices, and to take various measures to prevent any organization, group, or person to do so, as stated in Article Twelve of the agreement. This turns the self-rule authority into a tool that serves the Zionist interests and defends them. It also allows this administration and the authorities of the occupying enemy to deem the publication of verses of the Qur'an, which speak of the corrupt morals of the Jews and the eternal enmity they hold towards those who believe, an act of incitement that must be prevented and prosecuted.

Ninth: The detainees who were released or who will be released in the coming days are bound to remain in the Gaza Strip and Jericho throughout the remainder of the term of their sentences, which confirms that Gaza and Jericho by the Zionist concept is a big prison for our people. This is stipulated in Article Twenty of the agreement.

Tenth: The detainees who are being released belong to the Fatah movement and the supporters of the [peace] settlement, while the enemy government rejects, as well as the self-rule authority, the release of opponents of the [peace] settlement unless they pledge to sign a document approving and pledging to condemn their past and their struggle, and pledge to support of the ill-fated agreement. The format of this humiliating pledge was imposed by the [Palestine] Liberation Organization and its negotiating team, and the detained heroes have refused to sign this humiliating document.

Eleventh: The [Palestine] Liberation Organization has equated the detained mujahidin [freedom fighters] and collaborators who have betrayed their people and their homeland: the [Palestine Liberation] Organization accepted the release of prisoners in exchange for an amnesty for collaborators, and a pledge to find a

solution to their case accepted by the enemy, and it also pledged not to prosecute them or harm them in any way.

These are some of the contents of the Cairo Agreement between the [Palestine] Liberation Organization and the Zionist entity.. It demonstrates the extent of compromise and forfeiture made by the PLO and its negotiators, and it demonstrates their total collapse before Zionist negotiators and before American dictates. It confirms that what happened was not liberation as the deluded ones tried to claim, and is not an [Israeli] withdrawal as the enemy authorities claim, but a redeployment of the enemy army in a new way that reduces their burden and the (risks) they are exposed to. The rest of the articles of the agreement, its maps and its annexes include larger and more serious disasters, and this explains the reluctance of the leadership of the [Palestine Liberation] Organization to publish all matters relating to the agreement and its details. Our movement will work to expose this ill-fated agreement and identify its devastating dangers to our people and our cause and expose its symbols and sponsors..

We in the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) emphasize the following:

First: The signing of that ill-fated agreement is the end of a stage and not the end of the Palestinian issue. It does not mean the end of the legitimate struggle of our people against the occupation, nor does it mean the end of the aspirations of our people and its aspirations, for which they have struggled and gave martyrs. It means the end of one stage of the Palestinian issue like several stages that ended before, and the end of the national role and struggle of the Oslo, Madrid and Cairo clique.

Second: The critical opposition of our people to the agreement does not require evidence or proof. The leaders behind Madrid, Oslo and Cairo themselves have begun to crack and crumble because of the extent of the shameful concessions included in the agreement. This explains the reluctance of some of the sponsors of the agreement—until now—to accept positions in the self-rule authority for fear of the anger and indignation of their people, and their certainty that this agreement is a distasteful surrender to the usurper occupier.

Third: The self-rule authority subservient to the occupation and lacking in sovereignty that these people have brought confirms that this agreement carries with it the seeds of its own death and failure, and that is not sustainable in any way. It confirms that what was taken by force cannot be recovered by negotiations and

concessions, and that struggles, jihad and sacrifices are the only way to liberation and defeating the occupiers.

Fourth: The leadership of the movement (Hamis) has decided to refuse for any of its detained heroes to sign the so-called humiliating (pledge document) imposed by the negotiating team. Because signing this pledge means a condemnation of our people's struggle, sacrifices and martyrs, which no true patriot would accept.

Fifth: The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamis) reaffirms its absolute rejection of this agreement, and considers it a humiliating compromise and surrender. [Hamis] along with the steadfast Palestinian people and most of the national and Islamic factions will remain faithful to the people and the cause, and is determined to continue the path of jihad and liberation, and to strengthen the unity of our people and strengthen its resistance forces, while unifying its ranks to confront this critical juncture, with our keen desire to avoid any form of fighting between the sons of our one people.

Allah is great.. and victory for our struggling people

Saturday 3 Dhul Hijjah 1414 AH

14 May 1994 AD

The Islamic Resistance Movement
(Hamis) – Palestine

Document No. 5

Memorandum Issued by Hamas on the Elections of the Palestinian Limited Self-Rule Council⁵

16 January 1996

We in the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamis) and out of our religious and patriotic duty to safeguard the interests of our people and defend their rights and gains, and in line with our position, which we have already announced, that is to boycott the elections of the limited self-rule council and calling on our people to

⁵ A memorandum issued by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamis) on the Elections of the Palestinian Limited Self-Rule Council, PIC, <http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/documents/election2.htm>, translated from Arabic by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations.

boycott them [as well], we decided to delineate in this memo our view on these elections and the foundations and fundamentals that we based our decision on.

The position of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) on this election is determined by the following:

First: The Palestinian elections are taking place in a stage where the occupation retains sovereignty over our land, our wealth and our holy sites, and even dominates directly most Palestinian areas such as Hebron and Jerusalem, as well as the settlements and Areas (B) and (C) in the occupied West Bank. This means these elections will cement this occupation and give it legitimacy as did the Oslo Accords. On the other hand, the presence of the occupation during these elections severely undermines claims about their fairness and impartiality!

Second: The Oslo, Cairo and Taba agreements, in addition to the Palestinian election law, state that these elections are designed to put the Oslo Accords into practice through the election of a Palestinian Council. This council would then implement them while enjoying executive authority in addition to limited legislative powers under the ceiling of the Accords without conflicting with them. This is while giving the Zionist entity the power to veto some of the legislations that do not fit in with the provisions and spirit of the Accords or prejudice the Zionist entity.

Hence, the calls directed by the Palestinian Authority for the opposition to participate in these elections in order to change the Oslo Accord, or even cancel it, are misleading calls; how can the opposition change an agreement that makes elections the means for its implementation rather than changing it!!

Third: The Palestinian people is one unit and cannot be divided. Therefore, the elections, which will be limited to our people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip without the Diaspora and without Jerusalem (with regard to candidates), and without our detainees who remain steadfast in Israeli jails, is an attempt to split the Palestinian people and divide it. This serves the Zionist attempts to liquidate the Palestinian issue, resettle and compensate the refugees, and grant the Palestinians in the [West] Bank and [Gaza] Strip an autonomy linked to the Zionist entity. It also seriously detracts from the Palestinian leadership's seriousness with regard to establishing democracy in the Palestinian community, by holding elections for the Palestinian people under occupation and ignoring 5 million Palestinians in the Diaspora!

Fourth: Democratic elections that take place in an atmosphere of freedom of speech, pluralism and rotation of power is the perfect way for people to elect their representatives. The rejection by (Hamis) movement to participate in the self-rule council elections does not mean refusing democracy. Islamic movements all over the Arab countries have been involved in the parliaments of their countries. However, holding these elections does not mean that the Palestinian Authority is keen on democracy, which it violates every day by continuing to detain journalists and harassing them for trivial reasons, and by assaulting newspapers and journalists, as happened with *al-Ummah* newspaper in Jerusalem, with the journalist Sayyid Abu Musameh, editor in chief of *al-Watan* newspaper, and journalist Maher al-Alami and many others. The ongoing detention campaigns against outspoken opponents of the Oslo Accords, including of mosque imams and preachers, as happened with Sheikh Ahmad Nimr and others, and the Palestinian Authority's continuous attempts to bribe people and put pressure on the Palestinian people in general and opponents in particular, in order to abide by the commitments made by the [Palestinian] Authority to the Zionist entity, is proof of the Authority's hostile approach towards the spirit of democracy and the essence of freedom of expression within the Palestinian community.

Lastly.. the appointment by the president of the Authority of the heads of Palestinian municipalities and councils, especially in Gaza and Nablus, invalidates the claim by the Authority that these elections are an expression of true democracy!

Fifth: Because the limited self-rule elections mean the perpetuation of agreements signed independently of the will of the Palestinian people; because they aim to cover up the concessions made by the Palestinian leadership to the Zionist entity; because the occupation is still perched on our land and is appropriating our wealth and our holy sites; and because we believe that our people deserve real elections and representation that do not exclude any segment, we have decided to boycott these elections and we invite the Palestinian people to boycott too.

Sixth: And in recognition by the (Hamis) movement of the critical stage through which the Palestinian issue is passing and the reality of situation produced by the Oslo Accords and the polarization it has caused in the Palestinian arena, [Hamis] has pledged to avoid the use of force to thwart the elections. For this could result in unrest in the Palestinian arena and damage the principle of national

unity, which Hamas movement has stated that it is keen to preserve at a time when it was subjected more than once to the oppression of the Palestinian Authority!

Seventh: We see that the upcoming stage will not be the stage of liberation from occupation, and will not be an era of prosperity for Palestinian democracy as some claim. On the contrary, all indications suggest the Zionists will be intransigent regarding final status issues, and the mentality of monopoly and bullying will continue in the ranks of the Palestinian Authority leadership.

Therefore, we call for adhering to the principle of national unity and to avoid anything that could undermine it. We stress the need for all forces of the Palestinian people to meet to achieve the higher goals of the Palestinian people, respect the right of the opposition to continue its resistance against the Zionist occupation and express its position in rejection of the Oslo Accords by all legitimate means.

We do not consider that the elections are the goal of the cause of our people. There are the issues of Jerusalem, settlements, sovereignty and refugees, which need all the forces of our people to stand together to prevent losing them in the final status negotiations, like other [rights] were lost in previous negotiations!

Finally, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), as it is keen to clarify its position in this crucial stage of the life of the Palestinian people, calls upon all our people to support it in this position, and stresses that it will remain faithful to our people's rights and gains, and loyal to the blood of the righteous martyrs who have died in defense of the right to independence and freedom. [Hamas] will continue to raise the banner of resistance against the occupation as long as it occupies one inch of our land!

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)
Palestine 16/1/1996 AD

Document No. 6

Hamis Statement at the Beginning of *al-Aqsa Intifadah*⁶

29 September 2000

In the Name of *Allah*, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

In protest against the heinous Zionist massacre against our defenseless people in the courtyards of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamis) calls on the masses of the Palestinian people to stage a general strike tomorrow Saturday, and confront the enemy soldiers and herds of settlers, to emphasize the refusal of our people of Zionist aggressive greed and of compromising Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa*.

We also call on the masses of the struggling Palestinian people to observe three days of mourning for the souls of the martyrs of *al-Aqsa* massacre.

Allah is great..... and victory to our steadfast people.

The Islamic Resistance Movement
(Hamis) – Palestine
Friday 2 Rajab 1421 AH
29 September 2000 AD

⁶ Site of Muqatel min al-Sahraa', http://www.moqatel.com/openshare/Behoth/Siasia2/EntefadaAq/mol02.doc_cvt.htm, translated from Arabic by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations.

Document No. 7

Interview with Sheikh Ahmad Yasin Conducted by the Palestinian Information Center on the Third Anniversary of the *Intifadah*⁷

28 September 2003

Gaza/ Exclusive

Since he survived a failed Zionist attempt to assassinate him by bombarding the house where he was present with his chief of staff Isma'il Haniyyah, the member of the political bureau of the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas, he has been out of sight, and has not given any statements or interviews to the media.

With the fourth [third] annual anniversary of the blessed *al-Aqsa Intifadah* and the anniversary of the liberation of *al-Aqsa* Mosque from the Crusaders at the hands of the Muslim leader Salahuddin, in addition to the occasion of the Night Journey (*al-Isra' wa al Mi'raj*), Sheikh Yasin wanted to reassure the Palestinian people, the Arab nation, and the Muslim nation regarding the state of the movement and the resistance in Palestine. Hence this special interview with Sheikh Yasin.

Q. On the fourth [third] annual anniversary of *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, what would you like to say? And what is the impact of “martyrdom” operations on you at this stage?

A. I want to proclaim to the entire Arab and Islamic nation that Jerusalem is the first *Qiblah* [prayer direction] of the Muslims. We appeal to them to stand alongside our Palestinian people until the liberation of Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa*. We appeal to every Muslim, leader, commander, and monarch, to every man and woman, that Jerusalem today is in danger and is being lost. We must come together to reclaim it and liberate it.

Standing alongside the people of Palestine is the duty of every Muslim for the future of the nation and its pride. Jerusalem is the land of *al-Isra'*, the first *Qiblah* of the Muslims.

⁷ PIC, <http://www.palestine-info.com/arabic/hamas/hewar/yaseeen1.htm>, translated from Arabic by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations.

Note: The PIC has indicated that the interview was conducted on the fourth anniversary of the *Intifadah*, whereas it was actually conducted on the third, on 28/9/2003.

Today is the anniversary of three years since the blessed *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, which enters its fourth year of fierce resistance, sacrifice, blood, martyrs, wounded, and prisoners. We salute the Palestinian people in the Diaspora and the Occupied Territories and in the Palestinian [territories] of [19]48, and all patient Palestinian people steadfast everywhere, the people who have sacrificed and who is defying the world's mightiest power. We pay tribute to them, and I stress to all that resistance and jihad are our choice and the path to victory is fraught with martyrs and blood. We have pledged to *Allah* and to our peoples that we will not surrender and raise the white banners. We will fight until victory or martyrdom. This is our promise and our path, no matter the threats, the aggression, the bombardment, and the destruction of our homes and children, and no matter the enemy's massacres. We are a people with a just cause, a homeland, and a heritage, and we will not surrender. We will stay the course no matter how long it is, and victory is guaranteed in the end for the believers, because *Allah* has promised us victory and that we shall prevail in the earth, and what *Allah* wills will be done.

I say that our people are stronger than the Zionist enemy, and they have energy and potential to put equations that trump the equation of might. Our people are the victors and the enemy has failed to impose its will by force. *Allah* willing, the *Intifadah* will continue until victory, and until the enemy surrenders and recognizes our people's rights to their land, homeland, and holy sites.

I salute the steadfast and striving Palestinian people, who have refused to surrender, and who have offered tens of thousands of martyrs, prisoners, wounded, disabled [and who have braced] massacres, [and sacrificed] homes and lands. These strong mighty people, no one can defeat or vanquish them, for they have a just cause.

I assure them victory is near. The enemy is being battered by the strikes of the resistance. All we must do is to persevere and not be despairing, and close our ranks against the enemy on the basis of jihad and resistance, not surrender.

As for threats, they only make us stronger. The martyrdom operations have a strong impact on the Zionist enemy, and have shaken its foundations and undermined its security, economy and all that it possesses. It is for this reason that the enemy has lost its mind.

We do not have F16s or Apaches. We do not have long-range missiles. We have humans who are willing to fight and to be martyred. This has shaken [the enemy's] foundations and impacted him. When it agrees to stop its assaults on our civilians and holy sites, and end extrajudicial assassinations, then we can stop our attacks on their civilians.

Q. Can we say that *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, in its fourth year, has achieved even in part its goals?

A. The goals are long-term and include the liberation of our land and the expulsion of the occupation, and the cessation of the aggression. This cannot be achieved in a day, two days, a year or two years. This is a protracted war of attrition [that will continue] until the enemy surrenders and recognizes the rights of our people, and [their right to] return to their lands and holy sites, in order for their rights to be fulfilled on their own land. Therefore, we cannot today say that there are achievements, and in case we do, the first achievement is the continuation of the *Intifadah*, and a voluntary confrontation with the enemy now exists. This is an important achievement. Our Palestinian people have not surrendered and have not raised the white banner, and all forcible attempts imposed by Sharon to subjugate our people have failed. Therefore, the greatest achievement is that jihad and resistance have continued without surrendering. For the Zionist enemy is the one that is reeling and it is he who will surrender in the end.

Q. Has the Zionist terrorist state succeeded in isolating the leadership of Hamas from the Palestinian masses after targeting them with F16 strikes?

A. Sheikh [Yasin] sarcastic: If the Zionist state had succeeded in this I would not have been with you now. I say it will fail in all its attempts to eliminate the movement and has already failed to do so. We will triumph, *Allah* willing, and so will our people.

No one will be able to eliminate Hamas's leadership. But Hamas has found itself face to face with a new reality and a new Zionist strategy that attacks without respecting boundaries, constraints, homes, women, and children. It was bound to adopt a new strategy to adapt with this unjust reality, to avoid aggression and shore up its presence on the ground, and maintain its strength, resistance and jihad. Hamas cannot be eliminated by aggression, killing of [its] leadership, and the murder of individuals.. Hamas movement is the movement

of an entire Palestinian people, the movement of a nation, the movement of history, and it will triumph at the end, *Allah* willing.

Q. How do you evaluate the relationship between Palestinians themselves in this critical and sensitive phase of the history of their cause? Are Palestinians still in agreement over resistance as they were before?

A. All Palestinian factions are in agreement on the need to sustain the *Intifadah* and resistance. The new projects seeking to stop the *Intifadah* and resistance and seeking disarmament are American projects. Sometimes they're imposed through a new ministry, or a new prime minister, and other means.

What do they want in return for the disarmament of the Palestinian people???, We cannot sell out our homeland and compromise on our rights in return for vague promises from America. We want a land, a homeland, and a free people on their land. We want the return of 5 million refugees to Palestine. When that happens, then it would be possible to stop resistance. In a state there can be no resistance, but under occupation every Palestinian has the right to bear arms and defend himself.

Q. Can Hamas change its tactics and strategies in the new year of the *Intifadah* in light of relentless Zionist aggression?

A. Why have we bore arms, why do we resist, and for what goal is the *Intifadah*? If we surrender to threats, fear and murder, we will have failed. We have resolved to carry out jihad until liberation and victory, and we cannot change our main tactics and core principles. We will fight until Palestine is liberated and our Palestinian state is established. As for some tactics, they can be changed from time to time.

Q. Everyone in the Palestinian street is wondering: until when will Hamas's leadership remain in hiding, not confronting its people or leading the masses as it had done in three years of the *Intifadah*?

A. Hamas has found itself face to face with a new variable that necessitates change to confront this reality. No man can find himself in his home as Dr. Mahmud al-Zahhar had done and be hit by airstrikes? So how can we address this reality in means other than security means? But the leadership of Hamas will not be absent from the street and the people. This meeting today is proof that we will not be absent and we will be on the ground, no matter the sacrifices.

Q. What has prompted you to make this sudden appearance and speak in this interview?

A. My appearance is not sudden. I make frequent appearances. The worshippers at the Islamic Complex Mosque bear witness to this. But today, I came out for the occasion of the Night Journey and the anniversary of the liberation of Jerusalem from the Crusaders, to appeal to the Islamic nation to stand alongside the Palestinian people, and to stress that the leadership of Hamas cannot be absent from the Palestinian street. It is part of the street, of the masses, and of reality, and it is steadfast on the path of defending [its people] and jihad against the Zionist enemy. It will not surrender, *Allah* willing.

Q. But the Zionist state interprets the absence of Hamas's leaders as if it has succeeded in eliminating the movement's ability to mobilize the masses, influence them, and convince them of the idea of resistance.

A. This claim does not concern us much. They have failed. Hamas can mobilize the masses, and [stay] present [remain]. Its leaders can appear at the right time, without fear, because they seek martyrdom and do not fear death.

Q. But there have been no major military operations like the ones we have seen in the past by Hamas movement, since the recent attack on the movement's leadership. Have these attacks affected Hamas's ability to carry out such operations?

A. On the contrary. Hamas has proven throughout its history that it can respond in kind, and force [the enemy] to pay a heavy cost for its crimes. I've seen that recent attacks were a very rapid response, but we do not know the obstacles that face the resistance fighters in their attacks and operations against the enemy. We know that the enemy has implemented huge security precautions to thwart many operations, but what matters is that we do not surrender, and that the resistance and jihad continue. The timing of the response is not important. What is important is to fight and not surrender. I think the enemy will pay the price for its crimes, *Allah* willing, sooner or later.

Q. Why do you wait for mediators to come and ask you this, why do you not launch an initiative, for three months for example at this time, to say Hamas is willing to stop attacks and thus embarrass the Zionist state before international public opinion?

A. The terrorist state has been embarrassed greatly and has not abided, or respected the world, the United Nations, the Security Council. The United States protects it at the UN Security Council, [even] as it targets homes, women, children, and elderly people. Is there a greater embarrassment than (this) in the world, the world's silence is deafening. The terrorist state demolishes homes every day, is building a racist barrier, and is grabbing Palestinian land despite all international resolutions. For this reason, it does not need to be embarrassed [further]. It would take any initiative from the Palestinian Authority or any Palestinian faction at the time it is on the offensive as weakness and retreat. We will not be defeated and we will triumph *Allah* willing.

Q. The US president Bush said he would fight extremist ideologies in the Middle East. How will you respond?

A. This is Bush's conscience that he revealed at the start of the war on Islam and Muslims. He described the war as a crusade, then backtracked under international pressure. Today, he is declaring a war on Islam under the pretext of terrorism and ideologies that produce terrorism. To Bush, terrorism is Islam, the Muslims, and the Muslim nation. But Bush must understand that people with a creed are not intimidated by threats, and that Islam is stronger than the Bush regime and the Bush state. Islam will prevail and will be the victor in the future.

If Bush has a correct creed then let him engage with Islam. He would find himself defeated in the arena of thought and proof. He failed to explain his principles and to confront Islam with arguments, and so he resorted to warplanes, tanks, and armies. He is defeated, and will be defeated, *Allah* willing, in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and all the Islamic land, because Muslim peoples are still alive and still hold on to their faith. They will defend it until Bush and his allies fall, *Allah* willing.

Q. The prime minister-designate Ahmad Qurai' said he is seeking a mutual ceasefire between the Palestinians and the Zionist enemy, and is holding a dialogue with the Palestinian factions. Has there been a dialogue with you?

A. First of all: There has been no dialogue. Second: A truce cannot come from the part of an oppressed refugee people who is being destroyed, killed, and persecuted. The truce must come from the part of the side that is stronger. The Zionist enemy, during the truce proposed in the past, continued its aggression,

destruction, massacres, and killing, and did not stop for a moment. For this reason, there is no way to talk today about any truce because the enemy continues its aggression. Those who want a truce must stop the enemy's aggression, massacres, and brutality first, which is hounding our people day and night, and the demolition of homes, and arrests, and settlements, and the racist barrier. All this is present on the Palestinian land. After that we can talk about ending the aggression and a ceasefire. The occupation and its practices are here. End the aggression on our people, and settlements, and massacres, and [end] home destruction and land confiscation. End the aggression on our people in all their land, then talk about a truce.

Q. Are there any active Egyptian mediations with Hamas movement to reach an agreement like before?

A. So far, I am not aware of any Egyptian mediation.

Q. Until when will Hamas's leadership continue to work underground, i.e., covertly?

A. Until circumstances imposed by this reality change. Until this unjust reality changes.

Q. Regarding the internal crisis of the Palestinian Authority, how do you perceive that? Are you trying to help reduce the tensions? You previously spoke about the need to strengthen the internal Palestinian ranks and internal unity, especially since you do not differ much with 'Arafat.

A. Most definitely. I once again here stress the unity of our people and stress the rejection of any internal problems and any internal clashes. All the problems that have happened do not undermine communication, understanding, and dialogue. Every mistake committed during these problems, their perpetrators will be held accountable.

Q. How do you evaluate the efforts of Abu al-'Ala' to form a Palestinian government and what are your expectations?

A. We, the Palestinian people, our goal is not governments. Our goal is to liberate the Palestinian land and person. For this goal, we can search for the means to reach it. If the government is a means to liberate the land and Palestinian person, then we welcome it. If it pushes us towards surrender and [disarmament], then no, or to raise the white banner for the Zionist enemy. In that case, the government

has no meaning. For this reason, we do not participate in any government, and in the past we did not participate in a government under occupation.. The prime minister, [any] minister and the cabinet need permits to travel from Ramallah to Nablus, and from Gaza to the [West] Bank. If this government has no will, freedom, or independence, if it has no power for itself, then what will it do for the Palestinian people? For this reason, we do not participate in this government.

Q. Abu al-‘Ala’ spoke about the chaotic deployment of arms. Does this mean it is possible to collect arms from the Palestinian resistance? Will Hamas hand over its weapons to the [Palestinian] Authority?

A. We said a clear word, our people bore weapons to defend themselves, their nation, and their homeland. No one can remove these arms except after the land is liberated and holy sites are reclaimed. Only then can weapons be removed, when we have a state and independent entity with one authority. But under occupation, there can be no freedom. Our people have no authority. There is no free will and disarmament means surrendering to the Israeli enemy, killing the *Intifadah*, and killing the resistance. It would mean that victory of Sharon and that he defeated the Palestinian people. The Palestinian people have surrendered to Zionist dictates and terms to liquidate the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people. This is a dangerous path that is rejected, and our people will not accept it.

Q. If it is possible to obtain guarantees for the Zionist state to end assassinations and killings, can we then talk again about a truce with Arab or international guarantees?

A. We expect all those who talk about truce to stop the enemy first. To stop its aggression, its crimes, and declare its commitment. Then we can think of the new reality.

Q. There are reports suggesting Hamas movement officials met with the Lebanese Hizbullah officials last week to discuss a deal to swap prisoners with the Zionist entity. Do you have any information on what has been discussed regarding the prisoner swap deal with the Zionists? Did Hamas present a list?

A. No doubt, there are serious attempts with international mediation for a prisoner swap process and deal. We from our side are working in coordination with

Hizbullah to get the highest number possible of Palestinian prisoners from the prisons of the Zionist entity.

Q. Did you give lists to Hizbullah?

A. At any rate, everything is contingent upon the reality and timing. However, Hizbullah is willing to cooperate with us to release the number they can of Palestinian and Arab prisoners in Zionist prisons.

Q. Did Abu al-‘Ala’ contact the movement to obtain a mutual truce as he declared? Has he contacted you?

A. So far, there have been no contacts and no understandings, neither with Abu al-‘Ala’ nor with others on this subject. The time is not right to speak about a truce. Talking about a truce at this time is something we categorically reject.

Q. How do you see Sharon’s insistence on eliminating Hamas leaders, specifically yourself?

A. I say once again that threats only make us stronger. We seek martyrdom. The one who carries a bomb and detonates himself is a martyrdom seeker. We are seekers of martyrdom, not of life and worldly matters. We are seekers of the afterlife. Therefore, threats do not harm us and only make us stronger. They do not weaken us. We love martyrdom and hate living in humiliation.

Q. There are reports that the Zionist entity state intends to invade Gaza Strip next month. Is Hamas prepared to defend Gaza Strip?

A. Gaza will not be easily violated. If the Zionist entity enters Gaza, it will pay a heavy price. It will not be able to settle in Gaza.. The entire Palestinian people will defend Gaza and all the Palestinian factions. Even the Palestinian police will defend it because it belongs to all, not to Hamas or others. It belongs to the Palestinian people, *Allah* willing.

Q. Hamas has threatened to target residential buildings after the attack on the home of Doctor al-Zahhar. Are the Qassam Brigades able to carry through with this threat?

A. This depends on the capabilities of the military wing of the movement and the conditions surrounding it.

Document No. 8

Hamas Statement on the Participation in Elections of the Legislative Council of the Palestinian Authority⁸

12 March 2005

Out of our keenness in the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas to strengthen our approach in the service of the Palestinian people in all areas and fields; take care of their affairs and interests; and protect their rights and gains; and in order to contribute to building the Palestinian society's institutions on a sound footing; address all aspects of corruption and dysfunction; and achieve comprehensive and real national reform, so that our people would be better able to endure the occupation and aggression; and to respond to the pulse and aspirations of our people, and their keenness on seeing all forces and factions participate in political life in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas, after deliberations and extensive consultations involving various institutions and leadership bodies at home and abroad, including the prisoners of the movement in Zionist occupation prisons, has decided to participate in the upcoming Palestinian Legislative Council elections, so as to uphold the legitimate rights of our people, and protect the resistance program as a strategic option until the end of the occupation, *Allah* willing.

⁸ Mohsen Mohammad Saleh and Wael Sa'ad, editors, *Mukhtarat min al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2005* (Selected Palestinian Documents for the Year 2005) (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2006), Document no. 28, p. 68, translated by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations.

Document No. 9

The “Cairo Declaration” That was Issued by the Palestinian Factions on 17/3/2005⁹

17 March 2005

The “Cairo Declaration” was issued by 13 Palestinian political factions after three days of meetings in Cairo, Egypt.

1. Those gathered confirmed their adherence to Palestinian fundamentals, without any neglect, and the right of the Palestinian people to resistance in order to end the occupation, establish a Palestinian state with full sovereignty with Jerusalem as its capital, and the guaranteeing of the right of return of refugees to their homes and property.
2. Those gathered agreed on a program for the year 2005, centered on the continuation of the atmosphere of calm in return for Israel’s adherence to stopping all forms of aggression against our land and our Palestinian people, no matter where they are, as well as the release of all prisoners and detainees.
3. Those gathered confirmed that the continuation of settlement and the construction of the wall and the Judaization of Jerusalem are explosive issues.
4. Those gathered explored the internal Palestinian situation and agreed on the necessity of completing total reform in all areas, of supporting the democratic process in its various aspects and of holding local and legislative elections at their determined time according to an election law to be agreed upon. The conference recommends to the Legislative Council that it take steps to amend the legislative elections law, relying on an equal division (of seats) in a mixed system, and it recommends that the law for elections of local councils be amended on the basis of proportional representation.
5. Those gathered agreed to develop the Palestine Liberation Organization on bases that will be settled upon in order to include all the Palestinian powers and factions, as the organization is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. To do this, it has been agreed upon to form a committee

⁹ *Al majdal* magazine, BADIL Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, Bethlehem-Palestine, issue 25, Spring 2005, p. 57, http://www.badil.org/phocadownload/Badil_docs/publications/al-majdal-25.pdf

to define these bases, and the committee will be made up of the president of the National Council, the members of the [Palestine Liberation] Organization's Executive Committee, the secretaries general of all Palestinian factions and independent national personalities. The president of the executive committee will convene this committee.

6. Those gathered felt unanimously that dialogue is the sole means of interaction among all the factions, as a support to national unity and the unity of the Palestinian ranks. They were unanimous in forbidding the use of weapons in internal disputes, respecting the rights of the Palestinian citizen and refraining from violating them, and that continuing dialogue through the coming period is a basic necessity toward unifying our speech and preserving Palestinian rights.

Document No. 10

Text of the “Change and Reform” List Program for the Palestinian Legislative Council Elections 2006¹⁰

In the Name of *Allah*, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

“Change and Reform” List

﴿إِن أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ﴾

(I only intend reform as much as I am able. And my success is not but through *Allah*. Upon him I have relied, and to Him I return.)

(*Surat Hud*: 88)

Elections Program

Palestinian Legislative Council Elections

Second Term

2006 AD

Introduction

Due to our conviction that we are defending one of the greatest bays of Islam; due to our responsibility towards our struggling people and their holy and just cause; due to our duty to contribute in reforming the Palestinian reality, to alleviate

¹⁰ Site of Ikhwanweb, 30/1/2006, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=4921>

the suffering of our brave people, consolidate their resistance and protect them against corruption; and due to our hope to consolidate our national unity and to reinforce the domestic Palestinian front: we decided to participate in the Palestinian legislative elections 2006.

The list of “Change and Reform” believes that its participation in the legislative elections now and under the reality of the Palestinian cause, comes within the comprehensive program of liberating Palestine, repatriating the Palestinian people and establishing their independent state whose capital is Jerusalem. Such participation is meant to be backing up and support the *Intifadah* and resistance program assented by the Palestinian people as a strategic option to end the occupation.

The Change and Reform list works on establishing a civil developed Palestinian society based on political multiplicity, authority alternation and directing the Palestinian political system as well as its political and reform program to accomplish the national rights of the Palestinian people, taking into consideration the existence of the oppressive occupation and its odious burden placed on our land and people, as well as its flagrant intervention even in the details of the Palestinian life.

Our list brings forward its program as a kind of fidelity to our patient people who believe that such an approach is the most effective alternative; and consider Hamas movement as being the promising hope for better future, *Allah* willing; they also deem such list as the sincere leadership for better future, *Allah* willing. *Allah* says:

﴿وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّيْنَاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ﴾

(And, [moreover], this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way. This has He instructed you that you may become righteous.)

(*Surat al-An'am* (The Cattle): 153)

First: Our Fundamentals

Our list (Change and Reform List) adopts a number of fundamentals arising from Islamic reference that we approve and consider as point of consensus not only on the national Palestinian domain but also on the Arab and Islamic one. Such fundamentals are as follows:

1. The true religion of Islam and its civilization achievements are our reference and a way of life in all its aspects: politically, economically, socially and legally.
2. Historical Palestine is a part of the Arab and Islamic land; It is a right for the Palestinian people that is imprescriptible. Any other military or allegedly legal procedures cannot change such a fact.
3. The Palestinian people are one unit, wherever they exist; they are part and parcel of the Arab and Muslim nation. *Allah* Says in the holy Qur'an

﴿إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ﴾

(Indeed this, your religion, is one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me.) (*Surat al-Anbiya'* (The Prophets): 92)

4. Our Palestinian people are still living a stage of national liberation, they have the right to work for regaining their rights as well as ending the occupation by using all available means including armed resistance. We have to exploit all our energy to support the resistance of our people and to provide all abilities to end occupation and establishing the Palestinian state whose Jerusalem is its capital.
5. The right of all Palestinians who are expatriated and refugees to return to their home and properties; the right of self-determination and all our national rights are inalienable rights. Such rights are also fixed and they cannot be diminished by any political concessions.
6. Full adherence to our people's fixed and original rights in land, Jerusalem, holy sites, water, borders and a Palestinian state of complete sovereignty with Jerusalem as a capital.
7. Support and protection of Palestinian national unity is one of the priorities of the Palestinian national work.
8. The prisoners and detainees issue is at the head of the priorities of the Palestinian work.

Second: Domestic Policy

On the domestic policy level that organizes the Palestinian political life with its different dimensions, we are aiming at achieving the following priorities, which we consider as being a guarantee to a future that is suitable to the struggle and sacrifice of our people and capable of enhancing their steadfastness in an endeavor to achieve comprehensive liberation and desired reform.

1. Preserving the Palestinian national fundamentals and resisting any attempt to give them up.

2. Preserving the Palestinian existence in Jerusalem; offering political, economic, social, and cultural support for that purpose; resisting enemy attempts towards Jerusalem Judaization and protecting Palestinian Islamic and Christian holy sites from Zionist desecration.
3. Political freedoms, multiplicity, freedom to form parties, having the poll voting decide [democracy] and peaceful rotation of power are considered the main frame that organizes the Palestinian political work; and a guarantee of reform as well as fighting corruption and establishing a developed civil Palestinian community.
4. Deepening bonds of national unity, approving dialogue, using common sense to solve domestic disputes and prohibiting fighting each other and using all kinds of force or threat within the internal frame.
5. Working on strengthening respect of public freedoms (freedom of speech, media, mass meetings, transportation and work) as being part of life of the Palestinian people.
6. Palestinian blood should be prohibited inside the Palestinian society; dialogue is the only acceptable way to solve domestic Palestinian disputes.
7. Prohibition of political detention and refusal of suppression of opinions.
8. Protecting civil society's institutions and activation of their role in development and censorship.
9. Rectifying and guiding the role played by security forces in protecting citizens' safety. Stopping wrong and abusive practices; providing a guarantee of citizens' freedom; safeguarding public and private properties; and subjecting the practices of such agencies to the review and calling to account of the legislative council.
10. Considering the security cooperation or the so called "security coordination" with the occupation forces a major political and religious crime that deserves the utmost punishment.
11. Protecting resistance; activating its role in fighting occupation; and completing the mission of liberation.
12. Raising Palestinian man who is proud of his religion, land, freedom and dignity and who is ready to give all that is precious and valuable for these rights.
13. Activating the resistance against the racial Separation Wall, by all possible means including international institutions or courts.

14. Guaranteeing and respecting minority rights at all levels on the basis of full citizenship.
15. (All kinds of) public fund are the right of the entire Palestinian people. It should be used in funding comprehensive Palestinian development in a way that fulfills social and geographical justice, away from misuse, waste, usurpation, corruption and pilferage.
16. Prisoners, injured and martyrs are symbols of Palestinian sacrifice. A topmost goal on our national agenda is to take care of such people and their families as well as releasing prisoners.
17. Improving the efficiency of institutions that support the prisoner movement, and the families of martyrs and injured. Treating prisoners and martyrs as civil employees, and paying them salaries that are equal to the civil ones.
18. Keeping both Muslim and Christian Palestinian endowments away from aggression and manipulation, as well as developing such endowments that exist all over Palestine, in a way that suits their moral and material values.
19. Working on mending the relations between Palestine Liberation Organization and the National Palestinian Authority in a way that serves national goals and respects fields of specialization.

Third: Foreign Relations

1. Strengthening relations with the Arab and Muslim world in all fields as being the strategic depth for Palestine as well as openness to other world countries.
2. Activation of the role played by Arab and Muslim masses to support the resistance of our people against occupation, and the refusal of normalization with it.
3. Refusing ethnic, regional and sectarian calls that aim at dividing the *Ummah*.
4. Setting up balanced political relations with the international community that guarantee effective participation in it; and preserve the nation's unity, its national sovereignty and its development. Protecting its cause and rights—especially the Palestinian cause—repulsing any possible attacks.
5. Emphasizing at all international levels and in all international forums the illegitimacy of the occupation and its consequences.
6. Considering the occupation as being the most ugly form of terrorism, and fighting it by all means, which is a right dictated by religious and international laws.

7. Calling all peoples and charitable powers in the world to join into an alliance to establish a just universal peace that is based on getting rid of all kinds of occupation, and colonization aftermath; Banning foreign intervention in domestic affairs.
8. Rehabilitating Palestinian rights in international and Arab gatherings, especially the right of liberation, repatriation of refugees, establishing the Palestinian state with complete sovereignty and bringing about all stands and resolutions supporting it.
9. Calling the international community to participate effectively in rehabilitating cities and villages as well as providing infrastructure for them.
10. Refusing the conditioned donations that require concession of national fundamentals; and working continuously to find honorable alternatives.

Fourth: Administrative Reform and Combating Corruption

1. Fighting corruption in all forms as well as considering it a main reason behind weakening the domestic Palestinian front and undermining foundations of national unity.. Following up investigation in financial and administrative corruption cases, and punishing corrupted people through judicial authorities.
2. Enhancing transparency, censorship and inquiries in dealing with public budget in all its stages (i.e., planning, preparation, discussion, approval and execution).
3. Modernizing legislations and general administrative systems in a way that guarantees increasing the effectiveness of the executive bodies, so that they would be able to offer public services in a high quality and facility at all levels. Achieving decentralization approach; working through authorization principles and participating in decision making.
4. Rephrasing public employment policy in a way that guarantees equal opportunities for Palestinians depending on competence, fighting nepotism, and factional and party preference, in appointments and promotions in all public institutions and government departments.
5. Forming a national parliamentary committee to monitor Palestinian Islamic and Christian endowment funds to guarantee proper usage and achieve its aspired goals.
6. Fighting negligence in governmental performance and wasting public fund, and to instill a sense of responsibility among all employees (All of you are guardians and all of you are responsible for his subjects) (Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad)

7. Applying the policy of “From where did you get this?” on public services employees.
8. Developing and activating the role of censorship apparatus, like the administrative and monetary censorship office and other censorship bodies.
9. Establishing “Ombudsman Office” to receive citizen complaints.

Fifth: Legislative Policy and Judicial Reform

1. Making the Islamic law as “the basic source of legislation” in Palestine.
2. Confirming separation of judicial, executive and legislative authorities.
3. Activating the Constitutional Court role.
4. Stipulating the legislations that observe the confidentiality of the Palestinian people, their values and heritage.
5. Establishing a judicial institute for training and habilitation.
6. Re-forming the Supreme Judicial Council through elections done by the judges of Palestine, based on competence and experience and not on political and social preference or personal nepotism.
7. Passing laws that activate judicial inspection to monitor the judicial system at all levels.
8. Passing laws necessary for preventing politicization of the General Attorney office, and enacting experience, censorship, inquiry and calling to account.
9. Amending the law of code of civil and commercial procedures as well as criminal procedures law to insure shortening span of judicial proceedings and reducing number of circulated cases as well as determining time limitations for legal proceedings and periods of postponement.
10. Enhancing democracy and consultation in all fields and sites as well as achieving efficient participation.
11. Putting limitations on the executive authority infringement of the Constitution, as it passes temporary laws, makes repeated amendments, delays execution of laws or any other infringement.
12. Passing a new electoral law that achieves equity and guarantees the formation of a council that represents our people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in an honest and real way.
13. Fighting any legislations or agreements with the enemy that may damage the rights of our Palestinian people.

Sixth: Public Freedoms and Citizenship Rights

1. Achieving the principle of equality before the law for all individuals so that they would gain equity in rights and duties.
2. Providing security for each citizen, protecting him/her and his/her properties, so that s/he is not exposed to arbitrary detention, torture or revenge.
3. Stopping intervention of the security forces in the employment process, and cancelling what is known as security safety.
4. Deepening the dialogue culture, and respecting all opinions in a way that does not contradict with people's beliefs and civilizational heritage.
5. Guaranteeing the rights of special groups (prisoners and their families, families of martyrs, woman and child, handicapped and the poor).
6. Keeping media institutions and guaranteeing the right of reporters to obtain information and publish it.
7. Protecting the freedoms of syndicates, preserving their independence, keeping them away from all kinds of domination, and allowing the establishment of new syndicates to protect workers' rights in all fields.
8. Recognizing political powers, encouraging them and benefiting from their role as well as supporting all different institutions of the civil society.
9. Approving the principle of equal opportunities as well as placing the right man in the right place.

Seventh: Educational and Pedagogical Policy

Because upbringing is the foundation of having a generation able to determine the future of the country and achieving the dream of freedom, liberation and independence; education should also be up-to-date. Therefore, our list will try to achieve the following:

1. Applying the principles on which the philosophy of pedagogy and education is based, first of which, is that Islam is a comprehensive system that includes man's welfare and that preserves man's rights along with those of the community.
2. Applying laws of obligatory education; and expanding the secondary education whether technical or academic.
3. Developing curriculums and school instruments in a way that comply with the philosophy of education and pedagogy, their goals in Palestine and requisites of complying with the modern age.

4. To be concerned with humanities and concentrating on learning languages, especially the Arabic language in different stages.
5. Strengthening ethics of education and pedagogy professions, respecting rights of teachers and developing their capacities.
6. Passing legislations that protect the academic and educational process in universities and higher educational institutions from absurdity, temperament and nepotism.
7. Establishing and developing institutions to sponsor outstanding and talented people and those who have special capabilities.
8. Developing higher education institutions, and supporting scientific research domains including the establishment of the Palestinian Scientific Research Center.
9. Encouraging student syndicate work, providing the proper atmosphere for the work and support of students' unions so that they would be able to perform their desired roles. The schools and universities will thus remain fortresses for national work.
10. Securing sport and cultural facilities, science and computer laboratories at all schools of the country.
11. Providing different specializations in different areas by attracting qualified Palestinians migrants and training those qualified at home.
12. Encouraging scouting activities and domestic tourism and making such activities requisites of educational process especially through curriculums of national education.
13. Encouraging private educational institutions in different educational stages (pre-university) for what they provide the state's budget, and the competition they represent that benefits education in general.
14. Allowing licenses for qualitative universities (private and non-profit) to encourage competition that leads develops qualified persons. Such universities will also encourage students to remain in the country thus providing new financial resources.
15. To be concerned with technical education and training as well as agricultural education.
16. Developing strategies of education so that it would concentrate on qualification and reject employment nepotism.. and would also concentrate on the quality of students who graduated from the educational system.

17. Supporting the fund of needy college students and developing its mechanisms, so that it would be most transparent and objective, and would be able to make aid reach to those who deserve it.

Eighth: Preaching and Guidance

1. Increasing the competence of preachers, giving them rights equal to their counterparts in other ministries, whether concerning promotions, grades, rights. Also, offering them material incentives, passing legislations and putting systems that achieve justice.
2. Stopping all forms of security interventions in this apparatus, and enabling scholars to play their role as well as stopping expulsion policy.
3. Reconsidering preaching and guidance law in order to give chance to people of knowledge and competence to perform their religious and national duties.
4. Taking care of mosques as well as activating their preaching and educational roles inside the community.
5. Following up issues of Hajj and Umrah in order to facilitate the performance of their rites.

Ninth: Social Policy

1. Supporting the sound foundation and coherence of the Palestinian family in order to be the strong base that preserves our social and ethical values.
2. Achieving social solidarity, encouraging and expanding the existing social protection network in order to guarantee political and economic stability of the family and society as well as enhancing constituents of resistance.
3. Providing social services (education, health, and social security) as well as other public services for all [Palestinians] without discrimination, nepotism or factional preference.
4. Unifying retirement system in order to achieve equity and justice among retired people.
5. Regarding civil law and Shari'ah courts [Islamic courts]:
 - There is a need to pass one law driven from Islamic law and various schools of Islamic jurisprudence, as well as choosing what suits the development of Palestinian Muslim society.
 - Passing legislations related to Palestinian Islamic religious courts of different levels, so they could be uniformly applied in the courts (of Jerusalem, West Bank

and Gaza). This includes endowment law, inheritance law and non-Muslim religious groups law.

- Representing religious courts in the Palestinian constitutional court with a reasonable percentage.
6. Preserving the social fabric of the Palestinian people and public ethics, providing guarantee not to violate social fundamentals and preventing passing any legislations that may affect them.
 7. Supporting social institutions that care for different community groups (e.g. women, child, orphans, and poor people of special needs).
 8. Developing educational, training and rehabilitation institutions and centers that take care of detainees and ex-detainees, in order to integrate these into society and allow their contribution to nation development.
 9. Providing educational and comprehensive care to the families of martyrs and detainees and all the needy groups in society.
 10. Activating, organizing and developing Zakat committees.
 11. Fighting poverty by establishing justice and distributing resources, and by encouraging charity institutions while removing restrictions.
 12. Developing social insurance systems in order to end poverty and to keep social unity that is prevailing in Palestinian society.
 13. Fighting drugs, intoxicants and all forms of corruption by [spreading] culture, awareness, education and activation of law.
 14. Supporting disability and special needs organizations; and developing programs for their integration into society.
 15. Adopting a clear policy that takes care of the human element, by developing labor force, and achieving job security and psychological stability of workers.
 16. Activating and supporting reform committees, as they have a role in solving problems between members of society and in defusing tension among those who are at odds.

Tenth: Cultural and Media Policy

Due to the important role of culture and media in forming citizen's mentality and thoughts; and in building the character of the *Ummah*; our list will work on:

1. Setting up media policy on bases of free thinking and expression; and on integrity.

2. Protecting citizens, especially youngsters, against spoilage, Westernization, intellectual invasion; and resisting cultural normalization.
3. Facilitating the mission of media men and means; and the right of audience to know the truth.
4. Stopping the interference of security forces in giving licenses for publishing houses, research centers, publications and opinion survey centers.
5. Raising cultural standards and public awareness of rights, duties, responsibilities and their consequences.
6. Activating public mass media, and liberating them of group orientation, and consolidating professionalism and transparency in their programs.
7. Establishing public institutions and encouraging the establishment of private ones that are interested in Palestinian heritage and its modern history and holy sites.
8. Directing government mass media towards the advancement of Palestinian society and consolidating its endurance and resistance, making it a platform that expresses honestly the struggle of the Palestinian people and the nobility of their cause. Add to this, providing a space for politicians, thinkers and media persons to put forth their subjects freely, without violating national fundamentals.

Eleventh: Woman, Child and Family Issues

1. Childhood protection and care, while stressing [the children's] right to be brought up, fed, psychologically and physically raised, guided and educated.
2. The Palestinian woman is a partner in Jihad and resistance; and a partner in building and development.
3. Ensuring women's rights, and completing the legislative frame consolidating them, and working on enabling them to contribute to social, economic and political development.
4. Fortifying women with Islamic education; edifying her with her legislative rights; and stressing her independent character based on virtuousness, modesty and moral obligation.
5. Activating the role of constructive women's volunteer organizations, as they are a part of civil society organizations.
6. Establishing guiding units in the countryside for carpets, mats, textile, and miniatures, etc., to secure job opportunities for countrywomen.
7. Encouraging the investment of woman powers in public work, and highlighting her role in building the society.

8. Supporting family stability through:

- Developing legislations concerning working women, to achieve family stability and youngsters' protection and care.
- Solidarity with families whose houses are demolished and children detained and chased.
- Providing suitable health clinics and hospitals, a matter that will [improve] the general health of families, especially related to motherhood and infancy.
- Protecting women against all forms of exploitation of their femininity, including those that degrade their dignity, or treat them as only a body in commercials and advertisement, or in illegal acts.

Twelfth: Youth Issues

1. Expanding the establishment of youth institutions and developing the existing ones, which will ensure building a sound youth character, and encouraging youth dialogue platforms.
2. Supporting sports and cultural clubs, and putting an end to interferences in their affairs, and fighting negative phenomena there.
3. Supporting and encouraging creative youth in all fields, and providing job and creativity opportunities for young people according to their interests.
4. Working on taking care of the youth, and fortifying them against all means of spoilage and moral deviation.
5. Providing suitable and respectable job opportunities for the youth, especially university graduates.
6. Increasing youth participation in most political, social, cultural and art events.
7. Supporting different sporting teams which would ensure their participation in local, Arab, Islamic and international championships. Working on setting up halls and playgrounds that serve this purpose.

Thirteen: Housing Policy

1. Allotting some public lands to construct housing blocks and towns, and distributing them on people with limited income, especially those whose houses were demolished, poor families, and families of martyrs and detainees.
2. Reducing the housing problem for those with limited income of the Palestinian people, and reducing the problem of crowded houses, especially in Gaza Strip, and some of the areas in the West Bank.

3. Encouraging the establishment of workforce housing complexes of public institutions like schools, hospitals, universities and public facilities.
4. Justice in distributing charity housing buildings, which will encourage the benefactors to continue supporting these projects.
5. Concentrating on activating construction sector through providing easy finance for housing and public building projects. This will relatively quickly contribute to:
 - Solving unemployment problem among Palestinians who used to work for the Israeli economy, especially that they have the experience and skill in construction. Moreover, staffing tens of thousands of new workers, especially those with low skills.
 - Decreasing rent bills the government pays for the buildings it occupies, consequently reducing budget expenses, and directing revenues to other priorities.
 - Developing social services through providing new buildings or expanding the existing ones, especially in the field of education and health care.
6. Providing apartments for junior employees and those with limited income, at cost price and with facilitated interest-free installment payments; and encouraging housing contracts and handling cases of payment difficulties.
7. Approving structural and regional blueprints of Palestinian cities and villages.

Fourteenth: Health and Environment Policy

1. Mending health insurance system, and make it available for all citizens starting with the most needy poor class.
2. Putting a time plan to achieve self-sufficiency in medical care in all medical specializations, in order to prevent waste of money in seeking treatment abroad.
3. Expanding the services of primary health care and general health centers, to facilitate remedy, and to lessen the load on citizens in villages and cities.
4. Developing general health services to outcompete these in private sector.
5. Putting required plans for expanding the building of hospitals according to regional needs.
6. Striking a balance in specializations and expertise in hospitals, and fair distribution of qualified staffs and equipment in all areas.
7. Providing material incentives for doctors, nurses, and health workers in remote areas, and health workers of rare specialties.

8. Encouraging private and specialized health services.
9. Elevating health sector standards (doctors, pharmacists, nurses and health administrations) according to what is suitable for the needs and requirements of the Palestinian society.
10. Providing suitable health facilities to take care of the injured or handicapped of the Palestinian people, who got hit during Palestinian struggle; and of all groups without any discrimination.
11. Providing the suitable and free care for the families of martyrs, injured, handicapped, and prisoners.
12. Working on having a clean environment by spreading public sanitation education, and planting trees in roads and public parks; and encouraging the planting of private and public gardens.
13. Protecting the environment and stopping the Palestinian environmental deterioration, through coordination with international organizations. Moreover, resisting the continuous environmental pollution of Palestinian lands, due to the occupation and Zionist settlements practices; and working on exposing these practices in international forums.
14. Keeping Gaza's beach clean, beautiful and suitable for tourism; and stopping transgressions of it, including dumping fill dirt and waste; and preventing environmental pollution resulting from dumping sewage into the sea.
15. Following up with the prepared studies to get rid of the environmental disaster resulting from waste water tanks in the northern of Gaza Strip; and to specify new lands to increase the number of "garbage landfills" in Gaza Strip and West Bank, and setting up projects to make use of them.

Fifteen: Agricultural Policy

1. Developing the agricultural sector and animal wealth in order to achieve food safety for the Palestinian people, then working on achieving extra production for exportation.
2. Working on categorizing the Palestinian lands and determining its usage, like citrus, grains, fruits, roses, etc., and passing necessary legislations for developing them.
3. Re-forming and activating the Farmers Union in order to reach all the nation's governorates, to contribute in applying the agricultural policies aiming at developing this important sector.

4. Working on adopting an agricultural lending system instead of usury system. Encouraging agricultural lending in kind.
5. Working on enhancing coordination among institutions of the agricultural sector on the policy, production, industry and marketing; and working on opening international and Arab markets to the Palestinian products, especially agricultural ones within the available preferential treatment agreements.
6. Adopting a comprehensive rural development program, as a frame to agriculture development through providing necessary infrastructure for agricultural projects.
7. Encouraging food industry projects to make use of the production surplus, and working on developing the qualities of seeds, seedlings, herbicides and locally-made fertilizers.
8. Taking care of fish resources, and protecting fishermen rights.
9. Regulating the import, marketing and use of agricultural or veterinary fertilizers and medicine; and rationing the usage of chemicals fertilizers, and providing agricultural guidance services.
10. Encouraging land reclamation, and supporting its cultivation and irrigation.
11. Working on developing animal wealth, and reducing the gap between supply and demand.
12. Monitoring the performance of “Coastal [Municipalities] Water Utility” to achieve nation and citizens interests.

Sixteenth: Economic, Financial and Monetary Policy

Allah (SWT) Says:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا﴾

(And [they are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate)

(*Surat al-Furqan* (The Criterion): 67)

And He (SWT) says:

﴿يَمْحُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُرِي الضَّعْفَتِ﴾

(*Allah* destroys interest and gives increase for charities. And *Allah* does not like every sinning disbeliever).

(*Surat al-Baqarah* (The Cow): 276)

1. Achieving economic and currency independence; disengagement from the Zionist entity, its economy and currency; and also getting rid of its dependency [on Israeli economy] and seeking to issue a Palestinian currency.

2. Reviewing and developing the economic and monetary laws and legislations.
3. Providing the proper legal and procedural environment to encourage investment and pass vital additional economic laws as: antitrust and customs laws.
4. Seeking to build the “Resistance Economy,” encouraging self-independence, avoiding forms of lavishness and levity, and being cautious of nonproductive projects, or those which corrupt the social and moral structure like nightclubs and gambling houses, etc.
5. The well-planned distribution of projects and the expansion of its geographic and human areas to protect them and to ease the probabilities of assault, restriction, and siege by the enemy.
6. Reviewing and developing international economic agreements to take into consideration the special conditions of the Palestinian economy. The most important of those are:
 - Paris Economic Treaty [Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the PLO, representing the Palestinian people].
 - The Free Trade Agreement with the United States.
 - The Partnership Treaty with the European Union [Euro-Mediterranean Interim Association Agreement].
 - Economic cooperation agreements with Egypt and Jordan.
7. Developing the economic and trade relation with the Arab and Muslim world through privileged trade treaties that contribute in developing the Palestinian economy and helping it to get rid of the Israeli economy dependence.
8. Putting the economic policies (monetary, currency, operational, trade, industrial, and agricultural) that work (during the legislative council term (4 years)) on achieving balanced economic development, [and that] reinforce self-abilities, protect marginalized groups, keep the social solidarity and achieve stability of prices and wages. They will lead to fighting poverty, reducing unemployment, keeping the inflation limited, achieving economic growth and improving the standard of living.
9. Developing the infrastructure to be suitable for the industrial, agricultural, and public services sectors, and concentrating on training and qualifying the Palestinian labor force to be fit for the Palestinian market needs, thus solving the problem of depending on the Israeli economy in operations.

10. Protecting the properties and public money and using it in a way that achieve public benefit for the present and future generations, and this require an ambitious program of administrative and monetary reform in all the authority institutions and apparatuses. Also, using international aid in an ideal way so as to achieve comprehensive development targets away from squandering and misuse, and by this, social justice would be achieved.
11. Reviewing the prices of gas, oil derivatives, electricity, phone and water to ease off on citizens.
12. Taking care of the Palestinian productive sectors by applying the recommendations of the serious scientific studies especially those which discuss developing the Palestinian economy own resources.
13. Developing the Palestinian trade and custom policy to suit the developing conditions of the Palestinian economy and the characteristics and objectives of the Palestinian external trade.
14. Reframing the income tax law to be ascending in order to help the low-income individual, modifying the indirect taxes of the Palestinian economy and reducing the value-added tax to suit the Palestinian developing level.

Seventeen: Labor and Workers Issues

1. Respecting, developing and encouraging occupational and specialized unions and associations.
2. Specifying minimum limit for wages in different labor sectors, in order to provide an acceptable and a respectable standard of living.
3. Carrying out a serious national plan to deal with unemployment, based on programs for developing Palestinian economic resources and the perfect use of the Palestinian public money (both domestic and international funds).
4. Spreading labor culture and awareness concerning the rights and obligations between all the workers in all sectors and with different legal methods.
5. Workers in all sectors should be under a comprehensive health insurance.
6. Developing the law of labor, workers and unions so as to insure workers' rights and their right in union work and to go along with the period developments and achieving justice with all workers in the different production sectors.
7. Linking wages and salaries of workers with the cost of living table.

Eighteenth: Transportation and Crossing Points

1. Rehabilitation of all the roads in the country with modern specifications.
2. Building new vital roads between cities and villages, where each damaged citizen [could] keep his/her right of compensation.
3. Stressing free efficient communication between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
4. Opening free crossings between Palestinian territories, Egypt and Jordan; and rejecting any foreign intervention at any level.
5. Working on opening the port and airport to develop Palestinian economy, and serve the communication between the members of the nation, inside and outside [Palestine].

Epilogue

The blessed *Intifadah* had settled new facts on the ground, made the Oslo [Accords] old history, where various parties, including the Zionist occupation, spoke of “the burial of Oslo.” Now our people are more coherent, aware and harder to handle, and Hamas is going ahead [to participate in] the elections. It was able, with *Allah*’s help, and with the cooperation of all the honest [people], to support the resistance course and entrench it in our people’s minds, souls and conscious.

O Brother voter... O Sister voter... this is our platform, we put it in your hands...and we share with you the ambition, put our hands in yours, [and] we don’t pretend that we make miracles or have the magic wand.

But we do our best to achieve our national project on the way to our greatest aims.. a one free wise nation..

O Brother voter..... O Sister voter.... the responsibility is common, and *Allah* raises and develops the good doing.

Our method depends on honest and qualified representatives, who raise the slogan of [being] honest to *Allah*, and loyal to Him, the people and the cause... so be absolutely confident that they’ll apply their slogans and they will fulfill their promises..

O Brother voter..... O Sister voter....

When you are in front of the ballot box remember your responsibility in the presence of *Allah*... you are entrusted with your testimony to choose your representative in the legislative council.. when this representative speaks and has

the final word in religion, nation and future issues; he acting on your behalf, so choose the best to please your generous God and your great prophet (SAAWS)

﴿إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنْ آسْتَجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ﴾

(Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy)..
Yes, choose the best to be happy and to please your people *Allah* willing.

“Islam is the solution” is our way to change and reform.

Our program is our way to support the building of the society, which was destroyed by the occupation, and protect its resistance.

Our program is our way to support the Islamic and national unity towards full national liberty.

Our program is that of the people and the whole nation.

﴿وَقُلْ أَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَسَتُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عِلِّيِّ الْعَالِينَ وَالشَّهَادَةِ﴾

﴿فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

(And say, Do [as you will], for *Allah* will see your deeds, and [so, will] His Messenger and the believers. And you will be returned to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, and He will inform you of what you used to do.)

(*Surat al-Tawbah* (The Repentance): 105)

O Brother voter..O Sister voter:

(Voting is your duty, so vote only your conscience)



Document No. 11

Address by Prime Minister Isma‘il Haniyyah to the Legislative Council for a Vote of Confidence in the Tenth Government¹¹ [Excerpts]

27 March 2006

In the Name of *Allah*, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Praise be to *Allah*, and peace and blessings be upon His trustworthy Messenger and all Prophets and companions, and their followers until the Day of Judgement,

Brother, distinguished Speaker of the Legislative Council,

Brothers and sisters, distinguished members of the Legislative Council,

Distinguished gentlemen, ambassadors, consuls and representatives of countries and international organizations

Distinguished guests

Dear attendance

May *Allah*'s peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you,

I had hoped for this Council to convene in better circumstances, and for our meeting to be in Jerusalem, capital of our independent Palestinian state. However, this circumstance in which the homeland has fragmented gives the world clear proof of the cruelty of the occupation and its oppression. The occupation is waging a bloody war against our unarmed people, inciting against its democratic choice, and insisting on keeping the region in a spiral of bloody conflict.

Today, your esteemed Council is convening to witness the birth of a new Palestinian government, the tenth government, amid the continuation of the occupation and aggression, the increasing number of martyrs and wounded, and the continuation of assassinations, arrests, strangulation and siege. [This is in addition to] land confiscation, the construction of the Apartheid Wall, the Judaization of Jerusalem, and the continuation of the excavations under the blessed

¹¹ PIC, 27/3/2006, http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/Hamas/hewar/2006/ismael_haneyya/27_3_06.htm; and Donia Al-Watan electronic newspaper, 27/3/2006, <http://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2006/03/27/40919.html>, translated from Arabic by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations.

al-Aqsa Mosque with permanent threats to storm it. There is also the expansion of settlements and plans to annex the Jordan Valley, and the prevention of our people from communicating with one another inside the West Bank itself. This was cemented by turning the Qalandiya checkpoint into the equivalent of a border crossing.. The occupation culminated its assaults by raiding the Jericho prison and abducting the resistance fighters Ahmad Sa'adat and Fuad al-Shubaki along with a number of their fellow detainees, leaving a number of martyrs and wounded, in addition to the full destruction of the Muqata'a building. By [perpetrating] these criminal acts, [Israel] has violated all the agreements that were signed.

We are confident that the usurper occupation is staging all these escalations to undermine the new government, with a view to send a message to the Palestinian people saying: "You have made the wrong choice, and you must be punished." Unfortunately, this position is being adopted before the entire world, and we warn of the consequences of such policies.. The great Palestinian people must not be punished for having exercised their right to choose their leaders through free democratic elections observed by the world, and witnessed its honesty. Wrong are those who also believe that economic pressures will force our government to succumb or that it will impact the determination and steadfastness of our proud Palestinian people.. This government will lead its people to a free and dignified life, relying on *Allah* almighty.

﴿ وَمَا لَنَا إِلَّا نَنوَكِّلُ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَيْنَا سُبُلَنَا وَلَنَصْبِرَنَّ عَلَى مَا آذَيْتُمُونَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ ﴾

(And why should we not rely upon *Allah* while He has guided us to our [good] ways. And we will surely be patient against whatever harm you should cause us. And upon *Allah* let those who would rely [indeed] rely.)

We salute our righteous martyrs, of whom we mention the late President Yasir 'Arafat, Sheikh Imam Ahmad Yasin, Doctor 'Abdul 'Aziz al-Rantisi, Doctor Fathi Shiqaqi, Comrade Abu 'Ali Mustafa, and brother Abu al-'Abbas. We salute our gloried wounded and our detained heroes steadfast behind bars in occupation prisons and detention centers, [we wish] their forbearing families all the help and [we express our] appreciation.

We salute our freedom fighters and the leaders of Palestinian national action from all factions inside prisons.. We promise them—as we promise all male and female prisoners (Palestinians and Arabs)—that we shall never forget them. Their

sacrifices will not be in vain, and we shall work tirelessly to secure their release with dignity and pride, so that they may take part with us in achieving freedom for our people, and participate with us in building, developing, reforming, and changing.

We also salute and honor our great Palestinian people at home and abroad; in the Diaspora [refugee] camps, and our Palestinian communities all over the world.

Brother, distinguished Speaker of the Council,

Brothers and sisters, distinguished members of the Legislative Council,

It is my pleasure to extend to your esteemed council this program, hoping that you will grant confidence to my government, in order to proceed to implement its program, which it promised to our people to safeguard their supreme national interests, restore their usurped rights, and achieve the desired security, prosperity and reform.

I am pleased, before delving into the main themes of the government's program, to extend my sincere greetings to Mister President Mahmud 'Abbas (Abu Mazin), President of the Palestinian National Authority, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, respectfully noting his leading role in holding the legislative elections and strengthening the foundations of Palestinian democracy. He was keen on sponsoring and protecting political pluralism, and the days that accompanied the recent elections were quintessentially Palestinian, to the surprise of the whole world, reflecting the civilized face of the Palestinian people. I would like to reiterate our commitment to respecting the constitutional relationship with the president to serve the interests of our people and maintain its legitimate core fundamentals, while being committed to addressing policies and positions through dialogue, cooperation and continuous coordination between the institutions of the presidency, the government and other national institutions, led by the Palestine Liberation Organization, based on mutual respect and protection of the constitutional and functional prerogatives of each branch.

I would also like to extend my greetings and appreciation to our great people, who gave us this precious confidence, and pinned their hopes on us. We promise them to be up to their expectations, and to spare no effort in order to alleviate the suffering of all of them, and to achieve what they aspire for, namely freedom, independence, progress and prosperity.

This struggling people who excelled in resistance against the occupation and was an example of giving, patience and steadfastness, its talents will be reflected in construction, reconstruction, and in strengthening the democratic choice, *Allah* willing, the success of all of which could be a role model for all honest and free people in the world.

We also extend our gratitude to the heads and members of previous governments, and to the government of Brother Ahmad Qurai' (Abu 'Ala'), who graciously offered his cooperation for a smooth transition of power and in facilitating the conduct of various tasks. We also thank former ministers and members of the Legislative Council, and Brother Rawhi Fattouh, former speaker of our distinguished Legislative Council.

Brother, Speaker of the Council,

Brothers and sisters, members of the Council,

There are grave responsibilities that the government must tackle on the internal and external levels. Carrying out these tasks requires diagnosis of the previous stage, and an examination of reality, to build on the successes and straighten the march.

Perhaps one of the most important challenges and issues that await our government are the following:

First: The occupation and its ugly practices against the land, man, holy sites and wealth.

Second: Keeping the order and ending chaos in the Palestinian arena.

Third: The tough economic conditions experienced by the Palestinian people.

Fourth: Reform and cracking down on administrative and financial corruption.

Fifth: Putting the internal Palestinian house in order, and re-forming the Palestinian institutions on democratic bases that ensure all parties participate politically.

Sixth: Strengthening the position of the Palestinian issue in the Arab and Islamic world.

Seventh: Developing the relationship with the regional and international environment in order to serve the higher interests of our people.

In light of the above, we emphasize the following:

First: Protecting the right of our people to defend themselves against the occupation, remove settlements and the Apartheid Wall, and continue their struggle to establish an independent and fully sovereign Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital. [In addition,] rejecting partial solutions, temporary borders and fait accompli policies, and every project that detracts from our rights and interests such as the disengagement plan decoder aimed at transforming our country into ghettos and cantons that preclude a viable Palestinian state. We also reaffirm our commitment to the right of Palestinian refugees to return and to be compensated, and regard this as an inalienable individual and collective right. [We also reaffirm our commitment to] working for the liberation of prisoners and confronting the occupation's measures on the ground, including assassinations, arrests and incursions, and to defending Jerusalem that is being subjected to a major Judaization process. [We also reaffirm our commitment to] confronting attempts to annex the Jordan Valley and the expansion of settlements. We will also work to confront collective punishment, and the occupation's confiscation of our financial dues.

In this context, the government will deal with the agreements signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority with a strong sense of national responsibility, in the service of the interests of our people and their established rights. The government and its competent ministries will take into account the interests and needs of our people, and the mechanisms of life that are in contact with the occupation, in all economic, commercial, health and labor aspects. The government will deal with international resolutions on the Palestinian issue with national responsibility, in a way that protects the rights and national fundamentals of our people.

Second: Providing security for citizens and their properties, protecting embassies and the headquarters of international institutions, their employees and foreign guests, is a task that cannot be postponed. We will address it wisely and firmly through the rule of law and the ethical values that characterize our people, and through responsible cooperation between all segments of our great people. There is no doubt that these security breaches and abuses are not worthy of our people, who wrote pages of glory that make the nations of the earth proud. This requires addressing those limited violations, because of the distorted image they present of us, and the damage they cause to our higher interests.

In this context, the government will work to develop the performance of the security forces, and improve their role as the party responsible for protecting our people and preserving their security. They are also responsible for protecting the rule of law and keeping the order, and providing security for citizens without violating their constitutional rights or abusing their human dignity or intervening in their civil lives.

Third: My government, which adopts a reform strategy, affirms to your respectful council and to the people who gave us their precious confidence that we will be faithful to the trust they put in us. The citizen shall feel through the work of this government—*Allah* willing—real achievements on the ground, in administrative and financial reform; through active oversight and cooperation with the Legislative Council in issuing laws that promote reform and fight corruption.

The government will work on meeting the urgent needs of the citizens in various fields, through planning and initiatives, and determining the priorities for spending, launching initiatives and innovations, and maintaining the highest degree of credibility. [This is in addition to] benefiting from experiences of others in the field of institutionalization of the community and issues of democracy, human rights and public freedoms, taking into account our unique Palestinian, Arab and Islamic identity, and the political, social and historical reality of our people.

Also, in the context of reform, the government will seek to fight corruption, promote integrity and transparency, and shun abuse of public funds.. We will give the issue of administrative development a social dimension and a community-based culture that would establish a new concept. Indeed, we are now in a dire need for formulating a community-based Palestinian strategy for administrative development, and a sound work mechanism based on modern management concepts to implement this strategy in accordance with the requirements and needs of the Palestinian society.

Fourth: This government, which emerged through democratic choice and free elections, is committed to protecting Palestinian democracy and the peaceful transfer of power, and to the consolidation of political partnership and pluralism, as the sound choice to ensure the safety and stability of our political system.

We recognize that the promotion of *shura* and democracy requires work towards the establishment of the rule of law, and to get rid of tribal, family and factional feuds, and perpetuating the principle of equality between citizens in rights and duties.

The government will work to protect the constitutional rights of all citizens, and to protect the human rights of Palestinians and their freedom.

The government will also work to enable Palestinian women to occupy the place they deserve and that befits their great sacrifices, and guarantee their participation in decision-making in our ministers and national institutions.

The government is committed to protecting citizens' rights, and establishing the principle of citizenship, without discrimination based on creed or political affiliation. We will work together to fight political and administrative exclusion, and will lift injustice on people as much as possible (*O my servants... I have forbidden oppression for myself and I have made it forbidden among you, so do not oppress one another*).

Building the state of law strengthens democracy in Palestinian society, and helps support their steadfastness in defense of their rights and freedoms. The rule of law gives the judiciary the primary role guaranteeing of equality and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.. Therefore, the judiciary, prosecutors and lawyers are the necessary complement to the work of the executive branch with regard to the implementation of the rule of law and the promotion of democracy. This requires the judiciary to be independent and to work with high professionalism and responsibility.. the independence, professionalism and objectivity of the judiciary promotes security in society and is a fundamental guarantee for achieving justice.

Fifth: Reforming the financial system and diverting all the revenues of the National Authority to the public treasury, and promoting the principle of transparency and specifying spending priorities, are all important tasks that cannot be postponed. We will seek to complete them as part of a comprehensive Palestinian economic vision, prepare ourselves for it well and creatively, and work under the following parameters:

a. Working to ensure free and dignified life for citizens, and maintaining the legitimate gains that have been achieved, securing staff salaries, both military and civilian, and allocations for social affairs and the families of martyrs, prisoners, the wounded and the disabled.

b. Giving priority to stimulating the national economy. Developing policies and programs to address poverty and unemployment, by strengthening local capacity and encouraging productive economic sectors, while continuing to support national

produces by all possible means. This is in addition to developing economic and trade relations with the Arab and Muslim worlds in particular and promoting direct ties with the European Union and the rest of the world.

c. Acting to protect the consumer and encouraging the private sector, by providing a favorable and adequate climate for its activities. In addition, laying sound foundations for collaboration between the government and official institutions and private sector institutions is an important guarantee for attracting investments to Palestine. The government will work to establish an adequate and stable climate for protecting investments.

Allow me from this podium to appeal to Palestinian, Arab and Muslim capitalists to come to our country to explore investment opportunities in various fields. We promise them that we will provide them with all possible assistance, and the investment climate, security and economic protection, through the enactment of necessary laws and legislations... We look forward to their participation and their contribution to alleviate the suffering of our people and to support their just cause, and ease the economic hardship, by contributing to the creation of employment opportunities for young people and male and female graduates.

Here, we reaffirm that investment is a pillar of sustainable development, [because] donations and aid do not spare the need—as important as these may be at this stage—and is therefore one of the first priorities of our economic program, to encourage investment in Palestine. Our government will be ready to discuss all the details related to the provision of the necessary guarantees for foreign investment. We here say that, a fortiori, the Palestinian capital should return to contribute to stimulating construction and development. Our government will urge the financial and banking institutions operating in Palestine to invest deposits and money inside Palestine, and we will help them in providing the best investment climate to achieve worthwhile financial returns.

While our economic program seeks to achieve sustainable development, by boosting energies and optimally exploiting the wealth, the government is aware that the political situation surrounding our people besieged by the occupation and the continued closure of the crossings have caused great damage to our fundamental infrastructure. We have been left in dire need of help and support from the international community, and our brothers and friends in the world. The government will seek openness and dialogue with all countries, including EU

member states to continue to provide aid to our people and our Authority, so as to provide a decent life to this afflicted people. We assure all donors that we will provide two guarantees:

First: All the money that will be provided to our people and our Authority will go to its allocated destination, and will be spent on projects and areas that are approved and funded, and will not go to any other party.

Second: Our government will provide all the guarantees and mechanisms to all donor countries and donors to monitor the disbursement of these funds, and make sure it is spent in the right place, according to the approved plans, projects and programs.

I want to say that hasty statements and decisions made following the elections, especially by the US administration that threatened to halt aid to the Palestinian people, are completely unjustifiable and do not serve in any way stability in the region. We call on the international community to reconsider its position on the new government, respect the democratic choice of the Palestinian people, and support our people's aspirations for freedom, independence, and liberation from the occupation, and to direct its pressures towards the occupation force rather than the Palestinian people under occupation.

The US administration, which calls for spreading democracy and respect for peoples' will, is required before others to encourage the Palestinian choice, and not lay siege to it with threats and intimidation. It is required to fulfill its promises regarding the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Our government will work to establish strong and healthy relations with various countries of the world, as well as with international institutions including the United Nations, the Security Council, and international organizations in different fields of work, to promote peace and global stability.. The European Union has provided a lot of aid to the Palestinian people, and supported its right to freedom and independence, and has voiced serious positions in the criticism of the policies of the occupation... Therefore, we are interested in a strong and solid relationship with the European Union, but we expect the European Union to reconsider some of its policies on the conflict in the region. We expect the European Union to play a bigger role in putting pressure on the occupation authorities to withdraw from occupied Palestinian lands, and end repeated aggressions against our people.

Our government expects the international community, especially the international Quartet, to side with justice and equity in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region, and not be biased in favor of one party over another party, and stop threatening to impose sanctions on the Palestinian people because of its democratic choice. In this regard, the government appreciates Russia's position as a member of the Quartet, which has chosen the path of dialogue rather than brandishing threats and intimidation. Our government would be willing to engage in dialogue with the Quartet and to seek all means to end the conflict and pursue calm in the region.

Brother, Speaker [of the Council],

Brothers and sisters, members of the Council,

We understand, as we review before you these challenges, and the methodology of the government in confronting them, that we are facing a difficult phase, and that the tasks required of this government are not easy, because the legacy is heavy and on more than one level. But we arm ourselves with a relentless will and determination, because we have no choice but to work together to protect this blessed nation.

To this end, we wanted to tackle all of this as a single rank in a coalition government. We thus spared no effort to form a national coalition government, and made lengthy efforts in recent weeks, to achieve this noble objective. We seriously worked in all honesty and sincerity through our long dialogues with the brothers in the parliamentary blocs and factions; to find common ground to guarantee the participation of all sides, especially the brothers in Fatah. The consultation and dialogue also included factions that are not represented in the Legislative Council and that did not take part in the elections, such our brothers in Islamic Jihad Movement.. During all these dialogues, we presented multiple formulations and many amendments to the political program of the national coalition government, and expressed understanding and a high level of flexibility in those talks, because we believed and we still believe that success can be achieved by coming together and uniting, for advancement, development and a better future.. However, our brothers in the parliamentary blocs preferred not to participate in this government, and we respect their choice. However, we say: If we failed together in forming a national coalition government, then we must succeed in maintaining national unity.. We will not give up on it, and we will continue to work to strengthen

national unity, close ranks, arranging putting Palestinian [political] house in order, and shore up our internal front, and will keep our hands stretched out for all to engage in dialogue and consultation on all issues in order to achieve the supreme national interest of our people and our nation. The door to participation in our government will remain open. This is the homeland of everyone, and [concerns] everyone's fate, and the future of everyone.

As for the Palestine Liberation Organization, the government appeals to the factions and forces to work together to implement the Cairo Understandings... We will work together to preserve the Palestine Liberation Organization as the framework that embodies the aspirations of our people and their continuous sacrifices to attain their rights. It is a title of cumulative struggle that we cherish and want to develop and reform through consultation and dialogue. We confirm here the necessity of rushing to expedite the necessary measures, so that it would bring in all active Palestinian factions and forces, and rebuild the [Palestine Liberation] Organization on sound democratic bases, thus achieving political partnership, where it is considered the large umbrella for all Palestinians inside and outside Palestine. It represents them and cares for their interests, carries their concerns, addresses their problems and issues, and protects their national rights.

We must also stress here Palestinian geographical unity, and insist on linking the two parts of the homeland politically, economically, socially, and culturally between the [West] Bank and [Gaza] Strip, in addition to linking the interior and outside [Palestine], and reactivating national institutions led by the Palestine Liberation Organization to guarantee the linkage and the right of return for our people in the Diaspora.

In relation to internal social affairs, I make reference to the need to pay attention to healthcare and developing it; in order to meet the needs of the Palestinian society. This includes developing health insurance programs and improving conditions in hospitals. It is also important to draft a clear social policy and strategy, to provide a decent social life for all segments of the Palestinian community through a social security program. This would protect society from social problems such as poverty, unemployment, and delinquency, in addition to social insurance for the elderly and those with special needs. [This is in addition to] working to provide social care for families through targeted social programs.

In the area of the rule of law and the promotion of democracy, we emphasize that the freedom of the Palestinian is the goal sought by the Palestinian government through equality, justice, and respect for human rights, especially for women and vulnerable groups, given what this achieves in terms of security and stability for society. This is what the government will emphasize in its executive work and legislative proposals, in which it will stress everything that contributes to human and social development, and [everything] that will facilitate developing the role of women and their participation in political and social life. Building the state of law strengthens democracy in Palestinian society, and help support their steadfastness in defense of their rights and freedoms. This requires an independent, professional and responsible judiciary.

It is necessary as well to advance and develop education, to bring it up to the developed nations standards, and benefit from modern experience while preserving identity.

In the areas of administrative development and government reform, we will seek to implement a governmental reform program, review the administrative structure, and develop the administrative system in all ministries and public institutions. We will strengthen cooperation between them, and continue building self-capacities in them, focusing on administrative development and human development as the foundation pillar of overall development.

It is necessary to repair and rebuild infrastructure and buildings destroyed by the Israeli occupation, and seek to allocate appropriate investments to develop, maintain, repair, or build basic infrastructure networks, including roads, water, electricity and others. [The same goes for] developing and building industrial zones and housing, especially for low-income segments newlyweds; and tapping into information technology and developing this sector to contribute to building a knowledge society.

Brother, Speaker [of the Council],

Brothers and sisters, members of the Council,

Distinguished guests

Our government will be keen to deepen the relationship and consultation with the Arab and Islamic surroundings, our national and strategic depth.. Our Palestinian people are an integral part of the Arab and Muslim nation, because their

cause is an Arab and Islamic responsibility, and does not impact the life and future of the Palestinian people alone, but the life and future of all Arabs and Muslims.

Our government would like to emphasize here the ongoing Arab and Islamic efforts for our people to obtain their rights, including the distinguished efforts of the League of Arab States and its Secretary General Doctor ‘Amr Moussa, who has always shown a strong commitment to the Palestinian issue. In this context, we send our warm congratulations on the occasion of the renewal of his term as Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and we hope that we to cooperate together in the next phase of the restoration of full Palestinian rights. We also salute and appreciate the Organization of the Islamic Conference... We affirm that our government will be keen to strengthen relations with Arab and Muslim countries; [whether] governments, people, clerics, Islamic and national movements, and political and intellectual elites, to serve collective Arab action and prepare a climate for Arab and Islamic solidarity with the rights of our Palestinian people.. Therefore, our government encourages all Arab and Islamic political action in order to restore the Palestinian people’s national rights, and establish their fully sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Our government also affirms its support for the cause of liberation from occupation, particularly in [our] brother [country] Iraq, the occupied Golan, and the remaining occupied Lebanese land.

We remind the whole world that it was the occupation authorities that have always ignored the Arab initiatives, including the initiative at the Arab summit in Beirut.. The problem has never been Palestinian or Arab but the Israeli occupation.

I would like to refer here to the messages we received through our extensive recent contacts with Arab and Muslim states. They carried good results and reassurances that the Palestinian people will not be alone in the coming phase, and that they will not be isolated but will receive political, financial, and moral support. Many leaders, elites, and economic figures in the Arab and Muslim worlds have pledged to give financial assistance and support; whether to the Palestinian government, its institutions, and projects, or the Palestinian people, non-governmental charities.

We consider that the aid donated by Egypt and Jordan, after the plight of the Israeli blockade, which caused a shortage of bread and flour, is a good example of Arab fraternal solidarity, and we believe it to be the beginning of what we expect the Arab and Muslim nation.

Our message to the whole world on this day is that the time has come to establish justice for the Palestinian issue, and restore rights to their rightful owners, and end the injustice done to our people over six decades.. The Palestinian people is in most need among all peoples of the earth for peace, security, and stability, and our government will not hesitate to make every possible effort in order to reach a just peace in the region, a peace that ends the occupation and restores rights to their owners. We were never advocates of war, terrorism, or bloodshed.

I pray to *Allah* Almighty to help us succeed carry the duty entrusted to us by our people. We pledge to our people, our righteous martyrs, our prisoners, our wounded, and our freedom fighters at home and abroad, to be loyal to the fundamentals and values for which we struggled and to which we committed ourselves, loyal to Palestine and its glorious history, and loyal to all the tolerant values of our Islamic faith. We reaffirm the spirit of tolerance, cooperation, and coexistence among the people of the one homeland, be they Muslims, Christians, or Samaritans, in the framework of citizenship that does not discriminate between citizens on the basis of religion or belief. We stress at the same time the need for hard work on a local, Arab, and international levels, and by all means available, to protect the Islamic and Christian holy sites, and the need to seek the protection of Jerusalem as the capital of our independent state from Judaization, and the need to support Jerusalemites to stay on their land in the face of Judaization and displacement procedures practiced by the occupation every day.

Brother Speaker,

Brothers and sisters,

The lineup of this government, the result of hard work, reflects in a conscious and creative way the requirements of the stage and of Palestinian national action. Its members are your brothers and include politicians, independents, and experts in their respective fields, who devoted themselves to the service of their people and their nation. Give them honest support and advice with the help of *Allah*.

We are facing a great task that requires us to continue to work day and night, and to make an extraordinary effort, with the help of *Allah* almighty who says:

﴿وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا﴾

(And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon *Allah*—then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, *Allah* will accomplish His purpose. *Allah* has already set for everything a [decreed] extent.)

and who says: ﴿وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ﴾

(And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression.)

I extend my greetings to your honorable assembly, valuing the trust people have placed in you, in the hope that you will grant my government confidence to work together to serve this great nation, each in their respective fields, and according to the Basic Law amended in 2003 AD.

We are looking forward to a joint and continuous collaboration with your esteemed council; to address the enormous tasks ahead of us, “may *Allah* help us all in carrying them out.” I am fully confident that our collaboration will have a decisive impact on making the experience of this government succeed, and we and you look forward to the cooperation of our people, of all groups, institutions and national and Islamic factions, as well as trade unions at home and abroad, for the success of this new experience.

We recognize the challenges we face, and have prepared ourselves fully for this stage reliant on *Allah* (Mighty and the Majestic), armed with our deep faith in the justice of our cause, and standing to benefit from the experiences of our brothers in the former ministries.. Their rich experiences will help us in tackling the challenges facing us to ensure a decent life for our people. A life that fits their struggle and history, and the sacrifices of thousands of martyrs, wounded, prisoners and detainees.

We affirm that our era, *Allah* willing, will be an era of mercy not an era of carnage. We will promote compassion, forgiveness, cooperation, cohesion, social justice, and fraternal coexistence, and charity for all. We will be supportive to all our people, whatever their views and affiliations. This is our homeland, our home, and this is our Palestinian family. Let us go forward with *Allah*'s blessing to build the homeland, and provide security and dignity for every citizen.

﴿وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

(And *Allah* is predominant over His affair, but most of the people do not know.)...

﴿رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ﴾

(Our Lord, let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us and grant us from Yourself mercy. Indeed, You are the Bestower.)

(...)

I hope my government will receive your precious confidence, and thank you for your understanding, and appreciate the people's trust in you. Assalammu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullah,

Your brother/ Isma'il Abdul Salam Haniyyah
Prime Minister
Gaza–Palestine

Drafted on Monday, the twenty seventh of March 2006 AD
Corresponding to Monday the twenty seventh of Safar 1427 AH

Document No. 12

Final Text of the National Conciliation Document¹²

28 June 2006

In the Name of *Allah*, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

﴿وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا﴾

(And hold firmly to the rope of *Allah* all together and do not become divided)

Allah Almighty has spoken the truth

(National Conciliation Document)

Preamble

Emanating from a high sense of national and historical responsibility, and because of the dangers facing our people, and stemming from the principle that rights cannot be relinquished and the occupation cannot be legitimized, and with the intention of reinforcing and consolidating the internal Palestinian front and preserving national unity in the homeland and in the Diaspora, and for the purpose of confronting the Israeli project, which aims to impose an Israeli solution [on our people], crushing their dreams and hindering [their] right to establish their independent fully sovereign Palestinian state—the scheme that the Israeli government intends to implement during the upcoming phase, comprising the construction and completion of the

¹² National Reconciliation Document, *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2006, <http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=828>

Apartheid Wall, the Judaization of Jerusalem, the expansion of Israeli settlements, the seizure of the Jordan Valley, the annexation of vast areas of the West Bank, and the blocking of our people from exercising their right of return.

And with the end of preserving the accomplishments and acquisitions our people have achieved throughout their long struggle, and in loyalty to our martyrs, prisoners, and injured, and because we are still in the phase of liberation, grounded in a high sense of nationalism and democracy; all this dictates the adoption of a political and resistance strategy commensurate with these challenges, and the success of the comprehensive Palestinian national dialogue, based on the Cairo Declaration and the urgent call for unity and solidarity, we therefore present this document (The National Conciliation Document) to our great steadfast people, to President Mahmud 'Abbas (Abu Mazin), to the Palestine Liberation Organization leadership, to the Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah, to the Cabinet, to the head and members of the Palestinian National Council, to the Speaker and members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, to all Palestinian forces and factions, to all nongovernmental and popular organizations and institutions, and to the leaders of Palestinian public opinion in the homeland and the Diaspora.

This National Conciliation Document is considered an integral package and the preamble is part and parcel of it.

1. The Palestinian people in the homeland and the Diaspora seek to liberate their land, to obtain the evacuation of the settlements and settlers, the removal of the Separation and Apartheid Wall, and to achieve their right to freedom, return and independence. In this spirit, they look to exercise their right to self-determination, including the right to establish their independent state on all the territories occupied in 1967, with al-Quds al-Sharif [Jerusalem] as its capital; to secure the right of the refugees to return to their homes and properties, from which they were driven out, and their right to compensation; to obtain the liberation of all prisoners and detainees, without exception or discrimination, basing their claims in all this on the historical right of our people on the land of their fathers and forefathers, on the United Nation Charter, and on international law and legitimacy.

2. To accelerate the implementation of that which was agreed upon in Cairo in March 2005 pertaining to the reinvigoration and reactivation of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the incorporation of all the forces and factions in accordance with democratic principles, which solidifies the position of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of all our

people wherever they may be, and in keeping with the changes on the Palestinian scene and which strengthen the position of the [Palestine] Liberation Organization as the competence that can assume its responsibilities in leading and mobilizing our people in the homeland and the Diaspora; and to defend their national, political and human rights in the various forums and circles in all the international and regional arenas. Furthermore, our national interest calls for the formation of a new National Council before the end of 2006, to ensure the representation of all national and Islamic forces, factions and parties and our people gatherings everywhere, [in addition to] all sectors, institutions, and prominent persons. [This would be] through elections whenever possible, according to the principle of proportional representation, and by consensus if elections are not possible, according to mechanisms to be laid down by the higher committee deriving from the Cairo Declaration. [It also calls for] the preservation of the Palestine Liberation Organization as a broad front and framework and a comprehensive national coalition that incorporates and will remain the highest political reference of all the Palestinians in the homeland and in the Diaspora.

3. [To affirm] the right of the Palestinian people of resistance and to preserve the option of resistance to the occupation by various means, and to concentrate the resistance in the territories occupied in 1967, concomitantly with political action, negotiations and diplomacy. To pursue the popular resistance against the occupation in all its forms and policies and to focus on the expansion of the participation of the various groups, fronts and sectors of our people in this popular resistance.

4. To formulate a Palestinian plan aimed at comprehensive political action; to unify Palestinian political discourse based on the Palestinian national goals as put forth in this document and on Arab legitimacy and international resolutions that grant justice to our people and that safeguard the rights and fundamentals of our people, implemented by the [Palestine] Liberation Organization and its institutions and the [Palestinian] National Authority with its president and government, the national and Islamic factions, civil society organizations, and public figures and operatives. To accomplish this with a view to mobilize and consolidate Arab, Islamic and international political, financial, economic and humanitarian backing for our people and National Authority; to win their support for the right of our people to self-determination, freedom, return, and independence; and, [furthermore,] to confront Israel's plan to impose the Israeli solution on our people, and to confront the oppressive siege [against us].

5. To protect and strengthen the Palestinian National Authority as it is the nucleus of our future state. This authority that was born out of the struggle, sacrifices, blood and sufferings of the Palestinian people; to stress that higher national interests call for the upholding of the Authority's Basic Law and the laws in force, and to respect the authority and responsibilities of the president, who was elected according to the will of the Palestinian people through free, open and democratic elections. Also, to respect the authority and responsibilities of the government that was given the vote of confidence by the [Palestinian] Legislative Council elected in free, democratic and fair elections. [To focus on] the importance and need for creative cooperation between the presidency and the government, and on the importance of joint action and periodic meetings between them to bring about and reinforce cooperation and complementarity according to the Basic Law and for the sake of the higher interests [of the Palestinians]; additionally, to focus on the need for comprehensive reforms in the [Palestinian] National Authority institutions, especially the judiciary, abiding by its authority, and securing the implementation of all its rulings, and the consolidation and endorsement of the sovereignty of the law.

6. To work on forming a national unity government that secures the participation of parliamentary blocs, and the political forces desirous of participating on the basis of this document and a joint program designed to advance the Palestinian condition on the local, Arab, regional and international levels. To confront any challenges through the building of a strong national unity government that enjoys Palestinian popular and political support from all forces, as well as Arab and international backing. To implement a national economy reform and development program, and encourage investment, fight poverty and unemployment, and to extend the best possible care to the groups that have borne the brunt of steadfastness, resistance and *Intifadah* and have been victims of Israeli criminal aggression, especially the families of martyrs, prisoners and injured, and the owners of homes demolished and properties destroyed by the occupation, in addition to those unemployed and the graduates.

7. [To acknowledge that the task of] conducting the negotiations falls within the jurisdiction of the (PLO) and the President of the Palestinian National Authority, predicated on the adherence to the Palestinian national goals as stated in this document with the condition that any agreement pertaining to the matter be referred to the new Palestinian National Council for ratification and endorsement, or be

presented for a general referendum in the homeland and the Diaspora whenever possible according to a law that regulates it.

8. [To recognize] the liberation of the prisoners and detainees is a sacred national duty that must be assumed through all possible means by all national and Islamic forces and factions, and by the PLO and the [Palestinian] National Authority president and government, the [Palestinian] Legislative Council and all the resistance forces.

9. To double the efforts to support and care for the Palestine refugees and defend their rights and to work for the holding of a popular conference for the refugees, proceeding from follow-up committees, with its duty to stress on the right of return, to adhere to this right, and to call on the international community to implement Resolution 194 which stipulates the right of the refugees to return and to be compensated.

10. To work on forming a unified resistance front to be called The Palestinian Resistance Front to lead and engage in resistance against the occupation and to unify and coordinate action and resistance, and to define a unified political reference for the front.

11. To observe the democratic system and to hold general, regular, free, open, and democratic elections in accordance with the law, for the presidency, the PLC, and local and municipal councils, and unions, syndicates and societies, and to respect the principle of a peaceful and smooth transfer of authority; and to ensure the principle of separation of powers, to undertake to protect the Palestinian democratic experience and protect democratic choice and its outcomes; and to respect the sovereignty of the law, individual and public freedoms, human rights, freedom of the press, and equality among the citizens in rights and duties without discrimination; and to protect the achievements of women and to enhance and promote them.

12. To reject and denounce the oppressive siege that is being led by the US and Israel against our people and to call on the Arab brethren at the popular and official levels to support the Palestinian people, the PLO and the [Palestinian] National Authority and to call on the Arab governments to implement the political, financial, economic and media resolutions of the summits supporting the Palestinian people and their national cause; to stress that the Palestinian National Authority is

committed to the Arab consensus and to joint Arab action that supports our just cause and the higher Arab interests.

13. To call on the Palestinian people to strive for unity and solidarity, to unify their ranks and to support the PLO and the Palestinian National Authority with its president and government; to endorse the people's steadfastness and resistance in the face of Israeli aggression and siege, and to reject any interference in internal Palestinian affairs.

14. To denounce all forms of rifts and discord and whatever leads to internal strife; to condemn and ban the use of arms among the members of one people in settling internal disputes regardless of the justification; to stress on the sanctity of Palestinian blood and to adopt dialogue as the sole means of resolving disagreements. To promote freedom of expression via all means, including the opposition to the Authority and its resolutions, based on the endorsement of the law for the right of peaceful protest and the organization of marches, demonstrations, and sit-ins, on the condition that these are peaceful and weapon-free, and to proscribe any acts of vandalism against private or public property.

15. It is of national interest to look for the most appropriate means and mechanisms to allow for the continuing participation of our people and their national, political, and social forces wherever they may be in the battle for freedom, return, and independence; and to take into consideration the new situation of Gaza Strip, which makes it a true leverage and force for the steadfastness of our people and an example in the use of efficient means and methods in resisting the occupation while taking the higher interests of our people into consideration.

16. To reform, develop and modernize the Palestinian security forces in all its branches in a manner that allows them to better assume their task in defending the homeland and the people, and to confront aggression and occupation; to maintain security and public order, to enforce laws, to end the state of chaos and lawlessness, to end armed parades and the public display of weapons and to confiscate them as this brings considerable harm to the resistance and distorts its image and threatens the unity of Palestinian society; to coordinate and restructure the relationship between the security forces and the resistance forces and formations, and to regulate and protect the possession of weapons.

17. To call on the [Palestinian] Legislative Council to continue issuing laws that regulate the work of the security forces in its various branches and to work towards issuing a law that bans the exercise of political and partisan involvement

by members of the security forces, and to require them to abide by the elected political reference as defined by law.

18. To work on the expansion of the role and presence of international solidarity committees and peace-loving groups to support our people in their steadfastness and just struggle against the occupation and its practices, against settlement building, the Separation Wall, and annexation, and to work towards the implementation of the ruling of the International Court of Justice at The Hague pertaining to the dismantlement of the Separation Wall and the settlements and their illegal presence.

Document No. 13

Mecca Agreement Between Fatah and Hamas Movements¹³

8 February 2007

In the Name of *Allah*, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

﴿سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ﴾

(Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from al-Masjid al-haram to al-Masjid *al-Aqsa*, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing).

Allah Almighty has spoken the truth.

Based on the generous initiative announced by Saudi King ‘Abdullah Bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz and under the sponsorship of his majesty, Fatah and Hamas Movements held in the period 19 to 21 Muharram 1428 AH, 6 to 8 February, 2007 in Holy Mecca the dialogues of Palestinian conciliation and agreement and these dialogues, thanks to *Allah* (SWT), ended with success and an agreement was reached on the following:

First: to stress on banning the shedding of the Palestinian blood and to take all measures and arrangements to prevent the shedding of the Palestinian blood and to stress on the importance of national unity as basis for national steadfastness and confronting the occupation and to achieve the legitimate national goals of the

¹³ Site of Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (JMCC), 9/2/2007, <https://web.archive.org/web/20080212122709/http://www.jmcc.org/documents/meccaagree.htm>

Palestinian people and adopt the language of dialogue as the sole basis for solving the political disagreements on the Palestinian arena.

Within this context, we offer gratitude to the brothers in Egypt and the Egyptian security delegation in Gaza who exerted tremendous efforts to calm the conditions in Gaza Strip in the past period.

Second: Final agreement to form a Palestinian national unity government according to a detailed agreement ratified by both sides and to start on an urgent basis to take the constitutional measures to form this government.

Third: to move ahead in measures to activate and reform the Palestine Liberation Organization and accelerate the work of the preparatory committee based on the Cairo and Damascus Understandings. It has been agreed also on detailed steps between both sides on this issue.

Fourth: to stress on the principle of political partnership on the basis of the effective laws in the Palestinian National Authority and on the basis of political pluralism according to an agreement ratified between both parties.

We gladly announce this agreement to our Palestinian masses and to the Arab and Muslim nation and to all our friends in the world. We stress on our commitment to this agreement in text and spirit so that we can devote our time to achieve our national goals and get rid of the occupation and regain our rights and devote work to the main files, mainly Jerusalem, the refugees, *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the prisoners and detainees and to confront the [Separation] Wall and settlements.

Document No. 14

The Platform of the National Unity Government Headed by Isma‘il Haniyyah¹⁴

16 March 2007

The Palestinian people have lived for more than 60 years under the yoke of dispersion, deprivation and eviction and suffered, due to occupation, all kinds of suffering and oppression and aggression, while our people marked a long process of struggle, resistance, perseverance, and resilience through which they sacrificed hundreds of thousands of martyrs, injured and prisoners. [They] gave the best examples of sacrifice and self-denial and giving and clinging to their rights and fundamentals, moving through important historical phases until we reached the phase of the national unity government (the eleventh government).

This government was born after many efforts exerted by the loyal members of our people who worked day and night to reach a reconciliatory vision and common denominators that gather all Palestinians under one umbrella.

This government came as a fruit of the positive spirit and mutual confidence that resulted in solving all issues in the various fields. It is one of the major and leading results of the Blessed Mecca Agreement under the sponsorship of the Saudi King ‘Abdullah Bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz. The national unity government is the culmination of a long series of Palestinian dialogues where the Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria had a leading role in sponsoring these dialogues and following them up with appreciated efforts by several brotherly Arab countries and Arab and Islamic organizations. It also reflects the devotion and loyalty to the long process of martyrs and the pains of the prisoners and injured, mainly the major martyrs: the late President Yasir ‘Arafat, Sheikh Imam Ahmad Yasin (Hamas founder), Leader Abu ‘Ali Mustafa (Secretary General of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—PFLP), (Israel assassinated the latter two in Ramallah and Gaza), Leader Fathi al-Shiqaqi (Secretary General of the Islamic Jihad movement, Israel assassinated him in Malta) and Leader Abu al-‘Abbas (Muhammad ‘Abbas;

¹⁴ Site of The United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), citing the translation of JMCC, 17/3/2007, <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/8670EE789BE79869852572C10058759A>

Secretary General of Palestinian Liberation Front, who died of a heart attack in an American prison in Iraq).

Based on the national conciliation document and in light of the letter of commissioning, the national unity government will work at all levels in a manner that achieves the higher interests of the Palestinian people in the following manner:

First: At the Political Level

1. The government affirms that the key to security and stability in the region depends on ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and recognizing the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people; the government will work with the international community for the sake of ending the occupation and regaining the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people so that we can build a solid basis for peace, security and prosperity in the region.
2. The government shall abide to protect the higher national interests of the Palestinian people, protect their rights, preserve and develop their accomplishments, and work on achieving their national goals as ratified by the resolutions of the [Palestinian] National Council meetings and the Articles of the Basic Law and the national conciliation document and the resolutions of the Arab summits. Based on this, the government shall respect the international legitimacy resolutions and the agreements that were signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization.
3. The government shall abide by rejecting the so-called state with temporary borders, because this idea is based on taking away from the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.
4. To cling to the right of the Palestinian refugees and right of return to their lands and properties.
5. To work diligently for the sake of liberating the heroic prisoners from the Israeli occupation prisons.
6. To confront the measures of the occupation on the ground in terms of assassinations, arrests, and incursions. The government shall grant special importance to the city of Jerusalem to confront the Israeli policies pertaining to the people, lands and holy sites of Jerusalem.
7. To consolidate the relations with the Arab and Muslim countries and open up and cooperate with the regional and international surrounding on the basis of mutual respect.

Second: At the Level of the Occupation

1. The government affirms that peace and stability in the region depends on ending all forms of occupation of the Palestinian territories and removing the apartheid wall and settlements and halt of the Judaization of Jerusalem and policies of annexation and restore the rights to their owners.
2. The government affirms that resistance is a legitimate right of the Palestinian people as granted by the international norms and charters; our Palestinian people have the right to defend themselves in face of any Israeli aggression and believes that halting resistance depends on ending the occupation and achieving freedom, return and independence.
3. Despite this, the government, through national conciliation, will work on consolidating the calm and expanding it to become a comprehensive reciprocal simultaneous truce. This should be in return for Israel halting its occupation measures on the ground, in terms of assassinations, arrests, incursions, home demolition, leveling of lands and excavations in Jerusalem. It should work on removing the check-points, reopening the crossings, lifting all restrictions on movement and the release of prisoners.
4. The government affirms what came in the National Conciliation Document on the issue of the administration of the negotiations which is the jurisdiction of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the President of the Palestinian National Authority, on the basis of clinging to the Palestinian national goals and towards achieving them, so that any offer on any final agreement should be presented to the new Palestinian National Council for ratification or to hold a general referendum for the Palestinian people inside and abroad, where a law organizes it.
5. The government shall support the exerted efforts and shall encourage relevant parties to accelerate and end the case of the captive Israeli soldier in the context of an honorable prisoners exchange deal.

Third: At the Security Level; the national unity government realizes the internal difficult conditions and believes that its top priority at the coming phase is to control the current security conditions and in order to achieve this, the government shall depend in its program on the following:

1. Forming a higher national security council that would be reference to all security forces and a framework that organizes their work and define their

policies, and asking the [Palestinian] Legislative Council to finalize the law pertaining to that council.

2. Structuring security forces and building them on professional bases, working to provide their needs, reduce the partisan considerations, move them away from political polarizations and conflicts and consolidate in them the loyalty to the homeland. They would execute their political leadership decisions, whatever those may be, and make sure that the personnel working in these forces commit themselves to the tasks commissioned to them.
3. Working on activating the laws that have been ratified by the [Palestinian] Legislative Council with regards to the security institution.
4. Setting up a comprehensive security plan to end all forms of chaos, lawlessness and aggressions; protect [and prevent] any bloodshed, the honor of families, funds, and public and private properties; control the weapons and provide security to the citizen; work on ending the oppression inflicted on people through the rule of the law; and support the police to perform its duties in the best manner.

Fourth: At the Legal Level

1. The government shall work in full cooperation with the judicial authority to secure the reform, activation and protection of the judicial apparatus with all its institutions, in a manner that can enable it to perform its duties in the context of achieving justice and fighting corruption and abiding by the rule of the law and implement the law with transparency and integrity on everybody without any interference from any party.
2. The government affirms that it would work according to the Basic Law, which organizes the relations between the three authorities on the basis of separating them. And [that it would] respect the authorities granted to the Presidency and to the government according to the law and order.
3. The government shall assist Mr. President in performing his various duties and will make sure to cooperate fully with the Presidency institution and the constitutional institutions and work with the [Palestinian] Legislative Council and the juridical authorities towards developing the Palestinian political system on the basis of having a unified strong national authority.

Fifth: At the Level of the Palestinian Value System

1. The eleventh government shall abide by consolidating national unity, protecting social peace, consolidating the values of mutual respect, adopting the language

- of dialogue, ending all forms of tension, consolidating the culture of tolerance, protecting Palestinian blood, and banning internal fighting.
2. The government affirms the unity of the Palestinian people inside and abroad, and shall work to have the participation of the Palestinian people abroad in all matters pertaining to the Palestinian affairs.
 3. The government shall seek to consolidate national conciliation and achieve comprehensive national reconciliation by forming a higher national commission under the sponsorship of the presidency and the government. It would be formed from the [Palestinian] Legislative [Council], factions, well-known figures, legal experts and scholars. The aim of this commission is to end the blood problems [killing and revenge] between the factions and families, and assess the damage caused to the properties and institutions, and work on solving these problems.
 4. The government shall work on reinforcing the principle of citizenship through equality in rights and duties and equal opportunities, and consolidate social justice in appointments and recruitments in the various ministries and institutions and end all forms of political favoritism in civil and security recruitments.
 5. The government affirms its respect to the principle of political pluralism, protection of public freedoms, reinforcement of *shura* and democracy values, protection of the human rights, consolidation of justice and equality principles, protection of free press and freedom of expression. It affirms also that it would abide by the peaceful transfer of power and conclude the elections at the local councils within the next six months, *Allah* willing.
 6. The government is committed to provide a dignified life to the Palestinian citizen and also the requirements of life and social welfare. It is committed to meet the health needs, develop health facilities, expand health insurance, and improve the situation of the hospitals and clinics. It is committed to tackle the phenomena of poverty and unemployment by providing job opportunities, development projects, social securities and the social welfare program. The government shall grant special care to education and higher education and shall encourage scientific research and provide its needs.
 7. To care for the sectors of laborers, farmers, fishermen and youths. To care also for women, so that they can assume the status they deserve based on their sacrifices and to secure their participation in decision making process. To contribute in the building process in all institutions and ministries and at the various fields.

Sixth: The Economic Situation

1. The government shall work on ending the siege imposed on our Palestinian people, through the programs and relations and the activation of regional and international frameworks, to alleviate the suffering of our Palestinian people.
2. The government shall give priority to upgrade and advance national economy, encourage [the interaction of] economic and trade sectors with the Arab and Muslim world, and encourage economic and trade relations with the European Union and the rest of the world.
3. [The government shall] protect the consumer, encourage the private sector, provide the proper climate for its activities, lay down the sound rules for government work and its official institutions and the institutions of the private sector, and end monopoly. The government shall work on providing the proper climate, and protection and stability of investment projects.
4. The government shall work on respecting the principles of free economy in a manner that meets with our values and norms, and in a manner that serves Palestinian development. It shall protect the private sector, encourage investment, fight unemployment and poverty, reinforce the productive economic sectors, reconstruct the infrastructure, and develop the industrial zone and the housing and technology sectors.

Seventh: Reform

1. My government which adopts the reform strategy affirms to your respectful council and to the people who granted us their esteemed confidence that we will remain faithful. The citizen shall feel this in the work of the government—*Allah* willing—through real achievements on the ground in the areas of administrative and financial reforms. [The government will] cooperate with the [Palestinian] Legislative Council, on issuing laws that reinforce reform and fight corruption, and it will look into the structures and methods of work to guarantee efficacy of work and performance in ministries and their abidance by the law.
2. The government shall work on meeting the urgent needs of the citizen in the various fields through planning and initiatives and in defining the priorities of spending and rationalize it. In launching initiatives and innovative ideas while maintaining the highest degrees of credibility and transparency.
3. Within the context of reform, the government shall seek to fight corruption and reinforce the values of integrity and transparency and refrain from abusing

public funds. We will give the matter of administrative development a social dimension and societal culture that establishes for a new concept. [We will] formulate a Palestinian societal strategy for administrative development and develop a sound working mechanism based on the principles of modern administration, which can assist in implementing this strategy according to the requirements and needs of the Palestinian society.

Eighth: International Relations; At the time when our government stresses on its Arab and Islamic depth, it shall work on establishing sound and solid relations with various world countries and international institutions, including the United Nations, the Security Council and international regional organizations in a manner that reinforces world peace and stability. The European Union has offered lots of assistance to our Palestinian people, supported their right in freedom and independence and has had serious standpoints in launching criticism to the Israeli occupation policies... Therefore, we are interested in solid ties with the European Union and we expect from it a larger role in exerting pressure on the occupation authorities to respect human rights as stipulated by the international charters to withdraw its troops from the occupied Palestinian Territories and halt repeated aggressions against our people. The government seeks to develop relations with countries of permanent membership in the Security Council, mainly the Russian Federation, Republic of China, Japan and the African and Asian countries in a manner that secures the just rights of our people. At the same time, the government calls on the American Administration to reconsider its unjust positions towards the Palestinian cause and calls on the need to respect the option of the Palestinian people as realized and translated in the national unity government.

Document No. 15

Press Conference Held by Hamas in Gaza City After the Military Takeover¹⁵

22 June 2007

Why did the situation in Gaza explode leading to the removal of the faction of sedition and treason?

Before the Mecca Agreement

First: The Conspiracy Against the Election Results From the First Day

- Incitement against Hamas and the government in front of the Americans and the Europeans not to lift the siege, but to tighten it.
- Inciting the banks and financial institutions not to deal with the government.
- Disobedience in the ministries leading to politicized strikes, especially in education and health.
- Armed marches, especially from members of the security forces, and attacks on ministries and private and public institutions. The Legislative Council more than once and the Council of Ministers were assaulted multiple times.
- Obstructing the Legislative Council, and the exploitation of the occupation authorities' arrest of Hamas's Members of Parliament; to impose some decisions and laws they want.

Second: The Military Takeover

When all measures failed to oust Hamas or to topple the government, pursuant to an American and Zionist decision, the phase of force, assaults, and assassinations began, targeting symbols, cadres, and members of Hamas, up to staging a coup against the government and declaring a state of emergency (Document No. 1).

- The killing of the young man Rami al-Dalou. The killers were known, but they were not punished, and were even helped to escape.

¹⁵ *Al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2007*, Document no. 187, p. 405, translated from Arabic by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations. Note: Dr. Khalil al-Hayyah was the speaker in the press conference.

About the circumstances of the Hamas military takeover of Gaza Strip, see also the two internal documents sent by Hamas leadership in GS to Hamas leadership in Damascus, on 13–14/6/2007, in: *Al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah li Sanat 2007*, Document no. 161 and Document no. 162, p. 345–349. (in Arabic)

- Scholar, university professor, and member of the political leadership of Hamas Dr. Hussein Abu Ajwa was murdered. The killers were protected and given treatment, and then smuggled to the West Bank, amid a complete security shutdown in the Gaza Strip.
- The Preventive Security Service, in a dangerous precedent, forced a person to make false confessions. The Preventive Security Service took the young man to the Kawari' family to make his false confessions, inducing the family to kill the person who falsely confessed to [killing one of its members]. The family did and staged the murder of Sheikh Bassam al-Fara outside his office. The young man's confessions are in our possession and are documented.
- The Preventive Security Service executed members of the Ghalban family at a checkpoint without them firing a single shot. In the incident, Leader Yasir al-Ghalban, his sister in law, and his niece were killed among those who were in the car.
- Samih al-Madhun, who confessed to his crimes in front of the media of killing and burning houses, was a source of much killing and destruction in the northern region. He interrogated and fired at the feet of the mujahidin without deterrent.
- After we agreed to stop all fighting with this faction, and held national dialogue sessions, I (Khalil al-Hayyah) sat down with leaders from Fatah and warned them regarding attempts by some of their men to engage in assault and repeat the same actions. Unfortunately, a group of them, two hours after the meeting, planted a bomb in a car belonging to the Executive Force in the Jabaliya area, killing four of its passengers. The killers were apprehended and they confessed to their crime. We handed them over for prosecution, but unfortunately, they were released.
- There was an assassination attempt against the prime minister at the Rafah crossing. His bodyguard 'Abdul-Rahman Nassar was killed, and the political adviser and secretary general of the Council of Ministers was injured. We have in our possession now recorded confessions damning the people who ordered this time and the officers who planned the assassination, and [showing] who gave the orders. We will present this to the fact-finding committee or any other legal body later.
- Mansur Shalayil killed a group of men from the [Hamas] movement in a vehicle of the radio station. At the time of withdrawal from outside the house, based on an agreement between us and Fatah, he also killed two men from Al-Qassam Brigades.

- The crime at al-Hidayah mosque and the negative role of the Preventive [Security Service] there. The documents and investigations are there; the Preventive [Security Service] prevented ambulances from helping the wounded at the mosque, leading to the death of four Hamas members led by Abu Anas al-Mansi.
- The arson attack against the Islamic University by Presidential Security [forces] and members of the treacherous faction, without drawing a clear reaction from the presidency or the leaders of the putschist faction.
- The [murder of the] Ba'lushah family, and the attempt by the criminal faction to blame it on the [Hamas] movement members without proof. From day one, we were by the side of the bereaved and wounded family, and the government and prime minister stood by its side.
- On the night of the Mecca Agreement, they killed Muhammed Abu Karsh, a Qassam leader, and ordered one of the perpetrators from the Daghmash family to take the blame for it on behalf of the family. The criminal faction escaped criminal liability, implicating his family in the crime.

After the Mecca Agreement

- After the Mecca Agreement, we went back hoping that the incidents would stop and that we would not go back to violence. Unfortunately, the same faction continued the same policy, and continued to receive Zionist and American support (Document No. 2).
- Bringing in armored vehicles without the knowledge of the government nor the competent authorities.
- Forming groups outside the Fatah movement and the security forces to follow and pursue Hamas leaders, symbols, and members and collect information about them (Document No. 3), and eavesdropping on all means of communication. Also, uncovering places of storage and manufacturing of hardware and military equipment meant to fight the occupation, and uncovering locations of explosives and tunnels meant for the occupation, and places of weapons storage. Hundreds of their fighters were trained in urban warfare in multiple countries, and dates were chosen to initiate the confrontation with Hamas, after the end of the high school exams.
- We notified Abu Mazin and the Fatah leadership that we knew of the actions of these people, and warned against their plans.
- We told some Arab parties about this plan, including 'Amr Musa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and Minister Omar Suleiman, head of Egyptian intelligence.

Before Egypt's Last Call for Dialogue Between Factions

- Some senior members of this faction, who are known by name, held meetings with foreign parties, and handed them information on political and military leaders in Hamas. Days after this meeting, the names were put on the occupation's hit-lists (Document No. 4).
- After the agreement between Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah and Abu Mazin on the implementation of the security plan, prepared by the Interior Ministry under Minister Hani al-Qawasmi, it was agreed to carry out changes in the ranks of security leaders, led by Rashid Abu Shbak. Rashid Abu Shbak held a meeting of some security leaders at the Preventive Security [Service] headquarters, where he uttered obscenities against religion and the Divine, swearing he would turn the tables on everyone. In the same night, he deployed forces in Gaza City without the knowledge of the Interior Minister nor the government; these forces clashed with the Qassam brigades, and a massacre almost occurred. However, a number of their vehicles were commandeered, and the Prime Minister intervened personally, returning the vehicles to the police force. A day later, Bahaa Abu Jarad was killed, for which Hamas was falsely accused. Although we expressed our readiness to form a joint committee to investigate, they ignited the Gaza Strip, bearing in mind that Bahaa Abu Jarad had disagreements and problems with both Samih al-Madhun and Mansur Shalayil. Let it be known that we communicated this to Majed Abu Shammleh in the presence of the Egyptian security delegation, and he did not deny them [this information] and commented about the Rashid Abu Shbak incident by saying: Rashid was angry.
- They perpetrated some of the ugliest crimes known to humanity; people were killed for having a beard and for their affiliations; they fired at feet, and killed Journalist Muhammad 'Abdu, Suleiman al-'Ashi and 'Issam al-Juju after they took them and interrogated them. They killed the elderly merchant Nahed al-Nimr outside his house, in front of his sons and daughters. Those who killed him had emerged from the presidency forum and returned to it after their heinous actions, and also removed the veil from one of the sisters from the Islamic bloc, and shot between her feet.
- They burned civilian homes and shops.
- All these crimes were taking place in private rooms at President Abu Mazin's forum; they put barriers, climbed the towers, and harassed people.

- These crimes were carried out by Presidential Security forces, National Security groups at the checkpoints, and the Executive Force that was formed by Muhammad Dahlan to achieve his ambitions, goals, and plans under the eyes of Abu Mazin who did not lift a finger. We did not hear any condemnation, and unfortunately, there were pictures of him with Samih al-Madhun, a symbol of murder and torture at the forum. More dangerously, Samih and Mansur Shalayil received money from the presidential guard and we have evidence in our hands (Document No. 5).

Agreements Signed But Not Respected, and Which They were the First to Break

- The first agreement was violated by Maher al-Miqdad's groups, which assaulted an Al-Qassam position, with some of Miqdad's guards killed and some Al-Qassam men being wounded in the clashes.
- The second agreement: Fifteen minutes [after the agreement], the National Security [forces] killed Commander Ibrahim Munia Abu Usamah. During his funeral, they opened fire, killing Commander Muhammad Abu al-Khair (50 years old).
- The third agreement: An hour after the agreement, as the delegation of the factions headed from the Egyptian security delegation to carry out the agreement, there was an attempt on the lives of Ghazi Hamad and Ayman Taha by groups that identified themselves as Preventive Security [Service]. Brigadier-General Sharif Isma'il was wounded, and were it not for the fact that the delegation was travelling in an armored vehicle, they would have all been killed. They were also fired at outside the passport authority building.
- We took a unilateral decision and implemented a ceasefire, because in all agreements, we have found no one who could compel this faction to stop its crimes and wrongdoing. The Al-Qassam Brigades fired rockets into occupation positions in response to its crimes, and to head off anyone who wanted to preoccupy us with internal issues away from resisting the occupation.
- On the night of the unilateral cease fire, even though Abu Mazin reciprocated, eight members of Hamas were killed at the hands of those killers. In a horrific scene, all contacts with their leadership, which lasted an hour and a half, did not succeed in saving the life of a young man who was bleeding, as groups from National Security [forces] fired on the ambulance whenever it tried to approach him, until he died.

- Afterwards, the incidents were contained. As we met to address the roots and consequences of the incidents, a member of Presidential Security [forces] was apprehended and after investigations, he confessed that he was tasked with following and spying on Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah. His confessions are recorded in audio and video, and we communicated his actions to the Egyptian security delegation and Abu Mazin, so what did he do (Document No. 6). A map was also found at the presidential forum showing the entrances and exits of the prime minister's residence.
- They asked their misguided youths to gather information on institutions affiliated to Hamas or whose owners are close to or collaborate with Hamas. They posted this data online, while making false claims about them, inducing the occupation authorities to target and destroy them. This happened with the shops of Abu 'Akar for foods, al-Bar'asi shop, Harazallah, and Khazendar Exchange (Document No. 7).
- They led an organized campaign against the Executive Force, sharing information about it with multiple security apparatuses, including the places of its deployment and its capabilities. At the time, 'Azzam al-Ahmad said to lift the cover off it: This force must be crushed and terminated. A day after those remarks, the occupation army assaulted dozens of facilities of the Executive Force, killing dozens of martyrs, wounding scores, and fully destroying those sites.

The Last Explosion

- We made clear to the Egyptian brothers all these facts, and told them that as long as Dahlan's treacherous faction remained in our midst, no one would have security. I believe that others whom the Egyptians met told them the same. We asked the Egyptians whether there was anyone who could rein in this faction? and they said yes.
- The Egyptian brothers promised us to de-escalate the internal front, and we asked them to force those people to abide by this, and they promised to do so.

But the Surprise and Irony was

- They opened fire on a group of mujahidin [freedom fighters] in Rafah. There were unfortunate incidents in which a Qassam leader was killed in Rafah, martyr Ahmad Abu Harb. Yet those incidents were contained.
- A day after the Rafah incidents, they replicated them in Gaza, firing at the feet of Dr. Fayez al-Barawi, who was attending his brother's graduation ceremony at the presidential forum. They kidnapped two from Hamas in al-Zaytoun area,

and kidnapped Hasan al-Bozum, a bodyguard of the prime minister, and tortured him. They shaved his eyebrows, half of his moustache, and shaved his head in the shape of number (17).

- They shot at the government's headquarters when it was in session, and fired an RPG round at the home of the prime minister, directly hitting the house.
- They committed the most heinous crime, murdering scholar and imam of al-'Abbas mosque Sheikh Muhammad al-Rafati, causing anger among all people, none of whom could bear this scene. Yet the men restrained themselves as the following day marked the beginning of official high school exams. However, they pushed their lackeys and those they supplied with money and arms from the Bakr family, to burn a carpentry belonging to the 'Ajjur family, killing the mujahid Mazen 'Ajjur, a cadre from the Al-Qassam Brigades. Al-Qassam reacted to punish the Bakr family, but these were supplied by Presidential Security [forces] with weapons and equipment. On the same day, those killers threw off the young man Husam Abu Qainas from the twelfth floor of a tower, you can ask his family. Nevertheless, they lie and accuse Hamas of throwing people off from towers. Their groups also assaulted *Al-Aqsa* satellite TV channel using jeeps and heavy weapons. The incidents and the situation escalated, especially when Samih al-Madhun announced that he killed and burned more than twenty homes, killing dozens, and will kill anyone who is from Hamas, and slaughter them like sheep. The ethnic cleansing of the members and leaders of Hamas from the Tel al-Islam area campaign (Tel al-Howl) continued; dozens of homes and institutions were burned down, and we heard the cries of women calling for help from the horror of what they were subjected to in their homes and their places in this area, which was dominated by the treacherous faction.
- These actions were the spark and fuel for the fire. The head of the snake and their den where the plots were hatched were attacked. There, a mass grave was found for eight of our members, most of whom could not be identified because of the decomposition of the bodies. Evidence of their security, moral, and national crimes was found there.
- The Preventive Security [Service] fell to Al-Qassam. Afterwards the rest of their positions were surrendered. Those who were at the intelligence headquarters, aka *al-Safinah* [The Ship], escaped, and the security positions collapsed in front of Al-Qassam Brigades. People entered those positions before Al-Qassam, as happened in the presidential forum.

- A day after these events, all positions came under control, and were secured and guarded. Today they are under guard and no one is tampering with them.
- The police force, which did not intervene, was unharmed, and an agreement was reached with its commanders to continue its functions. But unfortunately, the orders came from Abu Mazin via Kamal al-Sheikh for them to withdraw from their positions and even to engage in sabotage and arson. They even left the venues of official high school exams unguarded during exams on Saturday. On Sunday, however, the situation was brought under control with the help of the Executive Force and those police officers who insisted on staying, whom we salute and respect.

Sabotage and Chaos

There were events that we do not accept and condemn, such as the vandalism of the Unknown Soldier, or some youths sitting on the president's chair, or assault on homes. However:

- These actions were carried out by ordinary people who rushed to these places, and no one could control things in the first two days.
- Or they were individual actions by some members of Hamas, but we reject and condemn this.

However, we find it odd that these events were highlighted while the crimes that took place were neglected. What is the position on throwing Husam Abu Qainas from the tower, the only incident of its kind to actually take place? What is the position of killing and interrogating people inside the presidential forum? What is the position regarding the violations against anyone from Hamas in the West Bank? What is the position on burning the home of 'Aziz Dwaik, Speaker of the Legislative Council who is kidnapped in Israeli jails, and the assault on the homes and sons and daughters of kidnapped members of parliament? Before all these crimes, what is everyone's position, including Abu Mazin's, regarding the burning of the Islamic University and the murder of scholars? Or are their blood, properties, and homes legitimate targets for assault!!!!!!

The Security Forces and Their Leaders were not Patriotic

The security forces were built not to serve the homeland, but to be a security infrastructure for international intelligence services. They played a bad role, from security collaboration with the occupation, to pursuing the mujahidin and selling intelligence to foreign entities. The following are details of these crimes:

1. Fighting and pursuing and monitoring resistance fighters (Document No. 9).
2. Relentlessly searching for the location of captured Zionist soldier Shalit.
3. Eavesdropping on people illegally, including political, security, and faction leaders, businessmen and businesswomen. Even Arab and other diplomatic missions were not spared from them and their spying, including Egyptians. They even spied on Abu ‘Ammar [Yasir ‘Arafat], May *Allah* have mercy on him.
4. Entrapping people sexually and morally, then blackmailing them to do their biddings, including ministers, directors, and politicians (Document No. 10).
5. Security coordination, or say grand treason, supervised by Dahlan and Rashid Abu Shabak, as confessed by leaders of this treacherous faction.
6. Leaders of the Preventive Security [Service] transformed from poor and destitute people to capitalists and feudal lords. Ask the head of sedition Muhammad Dahlan how he collected billions at home and abroad, and acquired towers, villas, estates, companies, and so on, run by his cronies, some registered in his name others in other names known to us.
7. It was the Preventive Security [Service] that created death squads, which tormented, blackmailed, killed and terrorized people, since the Palestine massacre, the university massacre, and the Jabalia massacre, and the Gaza massacre...etc.
8. Working for American, Zionist, and foreign intelligence, handing over information that harms Arab, regional, and Islamic national security. They pursued political leaders, scholars, and faction leaders, relayed dangerous information, and worked against states on behalf of other states while conducting so-called foreign relations in the security forces, especially Preventive Security [Service] and the intelligence services (Document No. 12).
9. Preventive [Security Service] is behind most kidnappings, especially of foreign persons.
10. Preventive [Security Service] was able to control command of security forces, institutions, and ministries, dominating the homeland. It deployed its cadres and leaders to dominate the public sector.
11. Smuggling drugs to the West Bank, after taking over the trade from drug dealers in Gaza, and using counterfeit [US] dollars, quantities of which were seized at security headquarters (Document No. 13).

The Islamic Resistance Movement – Hamas

Document No. 16

***Assabeel* Newspaper Interview with the Head of Hamas Political Bureau Khalid Mish'al on Hamas Political Thought¹⁶ [Excerpts]**

23 August 2010

Q. What is the equation adopted by Hamas to achieve liberation and end the occupation. In your view, can this liberation project be achieved with Palestinian efforts and capabilities in isolation from an Arab role and partnership?

A. From the beginning, it was clear that the Palestinian issue is not a confined conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis, but is a conflict between the nation and a Zionist expansionist occupation project targeting the entire nation, not just Palestine.

This understanding was the subject of accord from the outset. There was no doubt or argument regarding the nature of this conflict, which prompted the Arab states to enter their first wars with the Zionist entity. It also prompted many Arab and Muslim volunteers to participate effectively in the conflict with the Zionist project in its various phases.

But unfortunately, the divergence from this understanding of the nature of the conflict, and the desire of some to abandon their responsibilities, reinforced the logic that focused on the narrow national perspective, which began later to dominate the view of Arab official parties that falsely came to believe they could reduce the burden of the conflict with the Zionist project.

Later on, this affected official Palestinian policy, especially when its leaders' bearings deviated away from resistance to peaceful settlement and negotiations, believing at the time that they can do without Arab and Islamic support, as long as it was possible to deal directly with Israel and the United States through the negotiations option.

¹⁶ Site of Afro-Middle East Centre (AMEC), 30/8/2010, <http://www.amec.org.za/palestine-israel/item/976-hamas-mesh-al-lays-out-new-policy-direction.html>; Some parts of this interview were not translated by AMEC, they were translated by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations from the original Arabic source: *Assabeel*, 23/8/2010.

At that moment, there was increasing talk of the independence of Palestinian decision-making and the “Palestinization” of the conflict, which was promoted as an anti-thesis of the Arab and Islamic depth of the cause and the conflict. This took place in parallel with the Palestinian leadership’s gradual renunciation of the military option, especially after the Israeli army invaded Beirut in 1982, after which Palestinian fighters were directed to Arab exiles; later on, this even reached the point of declaring a divorce with armed resistance as an option.

This dangerous shift in the path of the conflict had serious implications for the Palestinian issue, the Arab reality, and the confrontation with the Zionist project. To this day, we are still suffering from the negative effects of this deviation in the bearings of the conflict. Hamas came to correct the direction of the compass, and address the serious deviation that took place, to rehabilitate the Arab, Islamic, and even humanist depths of the conflict with the Zionist entity.

Indeed, we believe that the conflict involves the whole nation, not just the Palestinian people, against the Zionist project that constitutes a radical opposite of the nation’s project, existence, and interests. This makes the whole nation a key party to the conflict and a partner in the confrontation, not just a supporter of the Palestinian people’s resistance. This is our firm conviction, and we have sought and continue to seek to reinforce it among the ranks of our nation, peoples, leaders, elites, and political movements, and to deploy it in practical terms in our culture, practice, confrontation, and management of the conflict, on the basis of partnership that we advanced from the outset as our slogan. We seek to translate this into methodological, permanent, and institutionalized working programs, rather than seasonal whims and transient emotions, yet without this meaning discarding Palestinian identity or compromising Palestinian independent decision-making.

Q. However, some claim that this understanding of the nature of the conflict may undermine Palestinian identity and independence?

A. For our part, we say that it is natural for the Palestinian people not to act as monitors waiting for others to act, because they are in the heart of the conflict, and it is their duty first to fight. Their natural place is to be at the vanguard of the confrontation and the forward trenches of the battle. Thus, our people have their whole lives and throughout the phases of the conflict taken the initiative to resist, fight, and sacrifice everything they have.

At the same time, the nation and all its constituents are required to fight the conflict on the basis of partnership, self-defense, and the common fate, not on the basis of supporting and aiding only. Confronting the Zionist project is not an effort for the sake of Palestine only, but is at the same time part of the defense of the nation itself, and its existence and civilizational project.

Therefore, both dimensions of the conflict are important and necessary, and there is no contradiction between them. No dimension should overshadow the other or be at the expense of the other [...] because this would create an imbalance in the equation. Therefore, things must be placed in proportion in a state of equilibrium, integration, and mutual support between what is Palestinian and what is Arab and Islamic (....)

The Arab, Islamic and human dimension is important in Hamas's philosophy and liberation project (.....)

In addition, Palestine has a special status in the Arab nation—for both Muslims and Christians—and the Islamic nation, by virtue of its history, status, and religious, geographic, and strategic position. Indeed, Palestine, and Jerusalem in particular, was the first Qibla [direction of Muslim prayer] of the Muslims and the place of the Isra' [The Night Journey] and Mi'raj [Ascension] of Prophet Muhammad (SAAWS). It is the earthly gate to heaven, the land of holiness and blessing, the land of messengers and messages, and the birthplace of Jesus 'Isa (PBUH). Palestine is not on the periphery of the Arab and Muslim world, but its heart and the heart of the world. Therefore, it is natural and even inevitable that this conflict has affected and interacted the Arab, Muslim, and human surrounding.

At the same time, we are not calling for bypassing special Palestinian circumstances, and do not see them as something that contradicts the Arab and Islamic dimension of the conflict. Indeed, this is a natural issue with human, realistic, and religious justifications. In the human and realistic perspective, it is natural for any people subjected to foreign aggression or occupation, to have a bigger duty than others in confronting this aggression. No people in the world, no matter their religious or nationalist extensions, can rely on others while foregoing their own role. To be sure, the role of the Palestinian people is a pioneering and essential one in the battle, and must not be disrupted under any justifications. It must not be considered secondary to the Arab and Islamic role,

because it is an authentic, major, and forward role that is complimented by the Arab and Islamic role and does not contradict it. (...)

Therefore, our philosophy is based on emphasizing the importance of the Arab, Islamic, and humanist depth of the conflict. At the same time, we emphasize the importance and special nature of the Palestinian role in taking the initiative and leading the battle, in the front trenches, resisting and sacrificing on the battleground, while urging the *Ummah* to take part in their battle for liberation. (...)

True, the Palestinian people cannot alone handle the burdens of the battle, because as we have always stressed, it is not a local but a global battle. However, the Palestinians can initiate the battle and bear its responsibilities, as they have done before, thanks to *Allah* Almighty, and to stand their ground, be steadfast, and excel on the battlefronts, draining the Zionist project and confronting it on all fronts and using all available means while holding on to their rights. They are great people who have the determination, will, and capacity to give and offer sacrifice, but they must not be left alone in the arena of confrontation. This does not contradict the independence of the Palestinian decision, and does not mean overshadowing the Palestinian identity. On the contrary, Arab and Islamic participation in the battle reinforces and does not weaken the Palestinian decision; because it saves it from being vulnerable to US and Israeli extortion. But when Palestinians are left alone and isolated from their Arab and Islamic depth, then the Palestinian decision becomes in danger, and subject to foreign and even hostile pressure and extortion as is the case today, unfortunately.

Hamas and Sectarian-Ethnic Contradictions

Q. Some are seeking to detonate sectarian-ethnic contradictions in the region. Some see this as part of a plot to dismantle and fragment the nation... This is happening in Iraq, Sudan, and elsewhere. How do you see this issue?

A. There are several dimensions for dealing with this extremely important issue:

The first dimension: Understanding reality with accuracy and balance. We realize that there is a broad degree of diversity and plurality in the region and the nation. There is religious, sectarian, ethnic and nationalist plurality. This plurality must not be ignored in terms of knowing it, being aware of it, and learning its implications, repercussions, and requirements.

The second dimension: The nation has lived for a long time, in the past and the recent past, in this state of plurality and diversity, and yet this did not lead to conflict or fragmentation. So why is this conflict emerging today? Have some suddenly awakened to this plurality as though it is something new requiring bloody conflicts and internal confrontations to be fought on its basis?

This logic is unacceptable, (...) It is not acceptable to stir strife between Muslims and Christians.. We are a tolerant nation, (...) We are a nation whose ethnicities mixed, its sects coexisted, and its cultures varied all in the framework of one nation. While Islam is not the faith of everyone, its civilization belongs to all in this nation.

As for the third dimension: It is that stirring and amplifying strife is part of a hostile agenda, a Western-Zionist-colonial agenda on the basis of “divide and conquer,” in order to dominate the region and seize its resources; (...)

The fourth dimension: addressing these issues is best done by allowing the nation to rise and recover, (...). We say to some members of this nation or its officials, who fear that any side in the world or in the region may be exploited [to take advantage of this] pluralism in the nation for their agenda. The solution is not to fall into the others’ trap and fuel differences and divisions. The solution is to recover the nation and help it rise from its state of weakness by strengthening it, and rallying its efforts and home front against the real enemies of the nation. Then, pluralism becomes a strength and not an element of weakness and fragmentation. The nation then can find the appropriate formula for coexistence and social peace among its components.

Hamas and the Islamist Movement

Q. What is the nature of the relationship between Hamas and the global Islamic movement? Do you alone benefit from this relation or the benefit is mutual?

A. Hamas, as a resistance and national liberation movement, and owing to its Islamic identity, history, and roots in the Muslim Brothers movement, intersects with the Islamic movements in the world in many common spheres. We are not ashamed of this intersection rather we hold on to it. Hamas is proud of this history, these roots, and this background, and of this sphere of intersection with Islamic movements in the Arab and Muslim world. However, Hamas does not

confine itself to that; by virtue of being a national liberation and resistance movement, and by virtue of the special nature of the conflict in Palestine and its Arab and Islamic dimensions, and given the position of the movement in the Arab-Israeli conflict and its awareness of the requirements of this conflict and its responsibilities vis-à-vis the Palestinian people, Hamas is open to various ideological, partisan, and political circles in the Arab and Muslim world. We are open to the circles of patriotic, national, and Islamic action, and to various ideological and political movements in the Arab world. We cooperate with them and intersect in common spheres of interest, and seek to unite efforts and rally them for the sake of Palestine and the confrontation with the Zionist project, and for the sake of the main causes of the nation, its security, and its common interests. (...)

The comprehensive understanding of Islam, and belief in the path of jihad and resistance, moderation and centrism, and openness to and tolerance of the other, seeking to serve people, and caring for the local community and national and social causes in addition to the causes and concerns of the nation, all these are notions that the Islamic movement, which has a beautiful, positive, and effective legacy, adopts. Hamas has certainly benefited from this legacy being part of the same school, and this is to the credit of the Islamic movement. However, this does not mean that there haven't been mistakes. Every human experience has mistakes and negative aspects, as well as achievements and positive aspects, but credit must be given where credit is due. (...)

On Negotiations with the Enemy

Q. Do you reject, in principle, negotiations with the enemy? If negotiations could not be conducted with the enemy, is it possible to do so with a friend? Does Hamas reject the principle of negotiations outright, or do you reject its form, conduct and results?

A. (...) It is indisputable that negotiating with the enemy is not rejected, either legally or rationally; indeed, there are some stages during a conflict among enemies when negotiations are required and become necessary. Both from a rational perspective and from legal logic, it is true that negotiations as a means and a tool may be acceptable and legitimate at certain points in time, and

rejected and prohibited at other times; that is, it is not rejected in itself, nor is it rejected all the time.

In Islamic history, in the era of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and in subsequent ages—at the time of Salahuddin [Saladin], for example—negotiation with the enemy was conducted, but within a clear framework and a specific philosophy, within a context, vision, rules and regulations governing this negotiation. This is in stark contrast to the wretched approach taken by those negotiation professionals who consider it a way of life and the sole strategic option in the service of which all other options are ruled out. (.....)

In the science of strategy and conflict management, negotiation is an extension to war, and a form of war management. What you obtain by negotiating at the table is a product of your condition on the ground, and an outcome of the balance of power in the field. If you are vanquished in the field, you will certainly be defeated in the negotiations as well. Just as war requires a balance of power, negotiations require a balance of power, (....)

The situation regarding the conflict with Israeli occupation is different, as this is a case of a body alien to the region, and which came from outside and imposed itself on a land and a people, drove people away from their land, and replaced them with an immigrant Diaspora from all over the world. This is, therefore, a complex situation which must be dealt with delicately.

When objective conditions and requirements for negotiation are available, especially the existence of a situation where sufficient balance and relative equilibrium are present; when there is proven need for it at the appropriate time—without hurry or delay—then it could be one of the options we resort to as a mechanism, means and tool, not as an objective or an end, not as a permanent condition or a strategic option. Negotiation is a tactical instrument, and just as war is not a permanent condition and has its requirements and conditions, so too does negotiation.

With this clear view of negotiations, and when it is exercised with great caution and under strict rules at the right time, it will be acceptable and useful in the context of conflict management; otherwise it will lead only to surrender and submission to the enemy's hegemony and conditions, and will result in the neglect of rights and a continuous decline in the level of demands and political positions. (.....)

Negotiation is a tool and a tactic in the service of a strategy and is not a strategy in itself; it is not a substitute for a strategy of resistance and confrontation with the occupation. (...)

Negotiation has its specific spaces and domains and is not an absolute option in all matters. There are issues that should not be negotiated, such as the critical fundamentals. Negotiation is a mechanism and a tactic within specific margins and domains; no one in their right mind would negotiate on everything, especially not on the principles. In business, negotiation is often on profits and not on business assets. Unfortunately, the current experience, especially of the Palestinian negotiations, is that all these rules have been abandoned.

In all honesty and courage, I say: negotiation is not absolutely prohibited or forbidden, be it from a legal or political perspective, or in view of the experiences of the nation and humanity, or the practices of the resistance movements and revolutions throughout history. However, it must be subject to equations, regulations, calculations, circumstances, contexts and proper management, for without these it becomes a negative and destructive tool. (.....)

Hamas and the Recognition

Q. The issue of recognizing the Zionist entity raises much debate. There is also talk of legal recognition in contrast to realistic [or pragmatic] one.. What is the position of Hamas on this issue?

A. Our position regarding the acknowledgement of the occupation's legality is clear and settled, and we do not hide or conceal it. (...)

It is unacceptable to legitimize occupation and theft of land. Occupation is a crime, theft is a crime, and should not be legitimized under any circumstances. These are uncontroversial concepts in the common human understanding, and so is the conception of the Palestinian victim whose land was usurped! This is an issue tied to our human existence, and it contrasts with recognizing the legitimacy of occupation and usurpation, not to mention the patriotic and religious feelings, cultural affiliation and historical presence, which all link us to this land.

(...) In short, we refuse to recognize the legitimacy of Israel because we refuse to recognize the legitimacy of occupation and theft of land. For us, this principle is clear and definitive.

Hamas and the Jews

Q. Is the resistance of Hamas directed against the Zionists as Jews or as occupiers?

A. We do not fight the Zionists because they are Jews; we fight them because they are occupiers. The reason behind our war with the Zionist entity and our resistance to it is the occupation, rather than differences in religion. Resistance and military confrontation with the Israelis was caused by occupation, aggression and crimes committed against the Palestinian people, and not because of the differences in religion and belief. (...)

Hamas and International Relations

Q. Are you satisfied with your achievements in international relations? What is the position of these relations in the thinking, programs and priorities of Hamas?

A. International relations in the political thinking of Hamas has several dimensions:

The first dimension: conviction that the Palestine battle, in one of its aspects, is the battle of humanity against Israeli injustice and oppression, and against the racist Zionist scheme targeting the world and humanity as a whole and threatening the interests of peoples and nations, since its evil and dangers are not limited to Palestine and the Palestinians and the Arabs and Muslims.

The second dimension: the necessity of promoting our just cause and winning more friends who support our legitimate right to resist occupation and aggression. It has been shown that there is still good in the human conscience, and that it could be awakened and moved in our favor if we present our case well, and strive to reveal the truth of the Zionist entity. (...)

The third dimension: just as Israel encircles and haunts us on the international stage, we too must follow it in all international forums, and not leave the stage to it. (...)

The fourth dimension: we are interested in forging a network of relations, strong and effective at all levels, international as well as Arab and Islamic. (...)

The fifth dimension: the forging of international relations starts here, from within the region, for here is the plant, and the harvest is there in the West, while hard work is required in both.

This means that the primary basis for achieving a breakthrough and success in international relations is strength on the ground, and being ingrained in it, united around our people and our nation, practicing resistance and resoluteness. [With such a foundation], the world will respect us and realize that there will be no peace or stability in the region unless they deal with us and accord us the consideration we deserve, respect our interests, rights and legitimate demands, and retreat from their current policies of bias towards Israel and disregard for the Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims. (.....)

Hamas, Alignments and Axes

Q. In recent years, the Arab arena has witnessed a number of different axes and alignments. Hamas has been classified by some as being within the axis of rejection. How do you view this situation dominating the Arab political scene; where do you see yourself with regard to it; and do you believe it to be in the interests of the nation?

A. I will answer this from three angles.

First angle: There is a reprehensible gathering, and another gathering which is praiseworthy. The reprehensible gathering is an assembly, for example, on the basis of race or narrow national ideas in opposition to other people; it invokes factors of categorization and internal alignment on the level of the country or the nation. (...)

But if people rally to do good, to support the Palestinian people, resist the Zionist enemy, challenge normalization, resist the efforts of enemies to infiltrate the nation, confront American hegemony and the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, and stand in the way of attempts to rob the nation's wealth... all this constitutes a praiseworthy gathering, and cannot be equated with the other one.

Therefore, when we say that we are for resistance, adherence to Palestinian rights, the right of return, and have a bias for Palestine, Jerusalem and the nation's sacred places, and that we reject the Zionist occupation and refuse to succumb to the dictates of the enemy, then this is something we are proud of and do not hide.

Second angle: we do not consider our commitment to resistance and refusal to submit to the Quartet's and the enemy's conditions and the American-Israeli vision of the settlement and relinquishment of Palestinian rights to be undermining of Palestinian or Arab parties, but, rather, [we consider it to be an undermining] of the Zionist enemy. (...) However, we do not antagonize anyone from our people and our nation, and we have not formed a Palestinian, Arab or Muslim axis against another Palestinian Arab one. We continue to reach out to all, and are keen to communicate with everyone and establish relationships with everyone. (...)

Third angle: if it was acceptable to disagree in our politics and analysis of the political situation when the deal was being put to the test and when people were paying heavily for the resistance, is it acceptable to disagree today after the deal has been proven a failure with an obstructive political horizon and very heavy costs and consequences, much heavier than the costs of the resistance?

We call on all the nation's states and forces to rally together with us in our natural environment as a nation; when the nation undergoes occupation, our natural environment and our priority should be the resistance. When we undergo aggression, it is natural to unite in the face of aggression; and when the nation enters a stage of independence, then our natural environment and priority would be reconstruction, economic advancement and cultural renaissance in all its dimensions.

Hamas and Christians

Q. What is the Hamas view of Christians and their role in the Palestinian cause?

A. Islam dealt with the Christians in a special manner compared to other religions, as in the [Qur'anic] verse:

﴿لَتَجِدَنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُم مَّوَدَّةً لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصْرُكَ إِنَّكَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِمْ قَائِمٌ﴾
 وَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿﴾

(You will surely find the most intense of the people in animosity toward the believers [to be] the Jews and those who associate others with *Allah*; and

you will find the nearest of them in affection to the believers those who say, “We are Christians.” That is because among them are priests and monks and because they are not arrogant.) (....)

Since the formation of Hamas, the relationship with the Christian brothers has been normal and good, and there were no problems between us and them. This despite the fact that some Palestinian forces tried, unfortunately, to scare Christians with the idea of the new Hamas, recalling that it is an Islamic movement in order that they might promote the notion of an allegedly inevitable contradiction between Hamas and the Christians. However, these attempts at intimidation failed, and Christians found the movement to be close to them, dealing with everyone with tolerance, openness and respect. During the first and second Palestinian *Intifadahs*, the movement took into consideration the specificities of Christian festivals, and was careful that strike days did not coincide with Christian festivals and events, just as it was also keen to protect Christian property. Not only this, but Hamas was also keen on an active Christian role in Palestinian political life. The movement’s leaders, at home and abroad, held several meetings with Christian national religious figures.

For these reasons, Hamas won broad support among Christians before and after the 2006 legislative elections; there were many Christians who voted for Hamas, and we supported them in the [West] Bank and [Gaza] Strip, too. For example, Dr. Husam al-Tawil—a Christian—won [a seat] in Gaza owing to votes from Hamas and its supporters. The number of Muslims who voted for him was several times the number of Christian votes—given that the number of Christians in the [Gaza] Strip is small. (....)

We are dealing with the Christian brothers as a fundamental component of the people and homeland, and an active part in the struggle against the occupation (....).

Hamas may have surprised some liberals and secularists in the Palestinian arena who thought, or even promoted the idea, that, by virtue of its Islamic identity, it will isolate itself and that a tenuous relationship may develop between us and Christian Palestinians. They were surprised when their expectations did not materialize. This is because religion is not about isolation and detachment; on the contrary, faith motivates a person to be tolerant, to be respectful of others, and to recognize their rights.

Hamas and Women

Q. Islamic movements are commonly accused of contempt towards women and marginalization of their role in political and social life. How do you view these charges in light of your experience in Hamas?

A. (...)

Woman in the Islamic concept of thought, jurisprudence, mandate and role is—indeed—one half of society, and she has been given her prestige and respect. However, there is a huge difference between respect and appreciation for woman and her rightful role... [on the one hand], and abusing her and presenting her as a cheap commodity as is done in the Western civilization [on the other]. There is a difference between preserving woman's chastity and modesty and safeguarding her rights while according her a suitable role, and dealing with her as a commodity of lust and pleasure. These ethical regulations are not just Islamic; they are innate and human.

We in Hamas are keen, as regards women, to invoke Islamic concepts and their unadulterated application which are not marred by the ages of backwardness or the weight of social norms and traditions that stem from the environment and not the religious text, especially since the environment of Palestine is not a closed environment but a historically civilized one enjoying plurality and openness to all religions, civilizations and cultures.

With this pure and original conception, and as a part and an extension of the Palestinian experience and its legacy, Hamas assigned a distinctive role for women in its operations. The role of women was highlighted during the *Intifadah*, in the resistance and all forms of struggle efforts, not only as mother, wife and sister to the strugglers, but also as one herself, (...)

The role of women is significant in the Palestinian arena and in the movement, whether at work, jihad and struggle, in the field of social charity and educational work, or political and syndicalist work. The Palestinian woman is educated and cultured, and her activity in schools and universities is no less than that of a man. (...)

Hamas and the [Palestine] Liberation Organization

Q. Do you believe the Palestine Liberation Organization is still suitable as a framework and reference point for representing the Palestinian people and

their aspirations, in light of its current circumstances, and the rejection by those who dominate it of any measures to activate it and reform its organizational and administrative structures?

A. No doubt, the reality of the organization today is complex and the subject of a real crisis in the Palestinian arena. It constitutes a major challenge for all Palestinian forces and figures. (...)

Therefore, we need to address this issue prudently and with balance and responsibility, and from various dimensions and angles, in order to find a real and suitable exit from this national crisis, the crisis of a reference authority.

The first dimension: The [Palestine] Liberation Organization, despite the weakness and decline it has suffered, and the mistakes and concessions made by its executive leadership, remains a framework with an [important] history, achievements, and track-record in the Palestinian experience. This requires all stakeholders to exert all efforts to build on this experience, and seek to reform the current state of the organization, mend its mistakes and weakness, and take the initiative with national accord to rebuild its institutions on real democratic foundations.

The second dimension: Any national framework, when it receives Arab, regional, and international recognition and acceptance, becomes an asset that must not be compromised. If it is possible to maintain this recognition and this asset, without it being at the expense of our Palestinian rights and national fundamentals, then this is something we must be keen to preserve, and not compromise or discard.

The third dimension: The reference points for peoples and liberation movements cannot be successfully maintained unless they enjoy the approval of everyone or the clear majority. No one party can alone claim to constitute a national reference point, or else it will be cause for further division and fragmentation, (...)

Furthermore, the party that has hijacked the organization today, controlling its levers without democratic legitimacy or broad Palestinian national accord, insisting to monopolize it and dominate its decisions, and flouting all decisions reached by Palestinian accord to rebuild and reform it, is killing the reference point and undermining the organization and its leading institutions as a national

reference authority and its legitimacy as the representative of the Palestinian people in the interior and abroad. (....)

These three dimensions make clear the complexity in the issue of the organization and the reference authority in the present reality. We in Hamas are well aware of this, and thus are keen to tackle this issue with various Palestinian forces and figures with a strong sense of responsibility seeking to find a real exit that could bring together the Palestinian people and all their forces to rally around a real unified reference framework, and not resort to choices that increase the fragmentation and division of the Palestinian reality. At the same time, we seek not to allow anyone to dominate the issue of the reference authority, disrupt it, and continue hijacking and monopolizing it.

We and others have accepted for the national reference authority to be the [Palestine] Liberation Organization. We welcome this and seek it strongly, especially since we as Palestinians have agreed to this many times. However, it is imperative to reform it and rebuild it to accommodate everyone, so that it may represent us all, and our people and cause. (....)

Q. Do you believe in partnership with the others in political action, or do you seek monopoly and dominance?

A. What we reject for others to do cannot be something we accept to do ourselves. We reject unilateralism, dominance, and monopoly, and our people reject this too. We are committed to partnership with all Palestinian forces and figures and are committed to this; we are all partners in the homeland and the cause. The victory of Hamas or others in the elections does not entitle them to monopolize decisions. We are committed to partnership and to coalition-based work with everyone, before or after elections. We have worked to achieve this on the arena of resistance and struggle as well as the arena of political and trade union action, in the experience of the Ten Factions, the Alliance of Palestinian Forces, and the formation of a national unity government after the Mecca Agreement in 2007, and in concluding many Palestinian agreements such as the Cairo Agreement in 2005, the Palestinian National Conciliation Document in 2006, and others.

No matter how strong any party in the Palestinian arena is, no matter its success or the extent of its electoral wins, it cannot and must not be allowed to monopolize Palestinian decision. (....)

Hamas and Flexibility and Realism

Q. How does Hamas perceive flexibility? What are its limits and margins, where does it begin and where does it end, and is Hamas's political flexibility the result of de facto pressures or the result of a prior vision?

A. The imbalance in this delicate and sensitive subject takes place when one sphere dominates another. Usually, each sphere must receive its due attention. If you expand the sphere of fundamentals to include non-fundamentals, you would have narrowed your margin of action. True, your motive could be caution and fear of mistakes, and it could be an attempt to be strict to preserve your symbolism and image as someone with a strong stance. This in my opinion is wrong and must be cautioned against. Indeed, fundamentals must not be an excuse for rigidity, pride, showiness, and one-upmanship.

Meanwhile, expanding the sphere of flexibility to include that of fundamentals and principles, under the pretext that these are necessities dictated by reality, is also wrong and rejected, because it leads to weakness and compromise and the squandering of interests and rights.

We are in a state of equilibrium. From the Islamic jurisprudence and thought perspective, we support a centrist and moderate school. We are in favor of putting things where they belong, without excess or compromise, because this is the correct path we adopt. (...)

Moreover, an exaggerated feeling of power often leads to misplaced intransigence. How can you be strong without your strength leading you to overconfidence, which could deny you some ability to be flexible and implicates you in crises? How do you save yourself from impotence that could lead you to weakness and compromise under pressure? This needs balance, wisdom, and shrewdness, but first and foremost guidance from *Allah* Almighty.

At the level of politics, possessing strength is what gives you the required balance in managing political decision-making. Those who work in politics away from strength and resistance will find themselves living on the sidelines of weak political interpretations, which in most cases re confined in the realm of necessity, compulsion, and temporary provisions.

Therefore, one of the most important factors that have helped Hamas master the combination of rigid fundamentals and flexibility in parallel, rather than in

opposition or intersection, is its possession of strength elements that allow it to be in a more balanced state.

A second important factor is our meticulous Islamic law understanding, because this helps us determine such issues and handle them correctly within wise balances and approaches.

The third factor is that “*Hamas*” has profound institutional experience in managing leadership decisions that allow it to determine such positions and policies. (...)

The fourth factor is that “*Hamas*” does not rush things. Haste is deadly, and those who rush things pay a heavy price; and may still not get what they want; (...)

The fifth factor: Although we are human, affected by human weaknesses and vulnerabilities, we, praise be to *Allah*, have strong immunity against intimidation and inducement, which are deadly things that affect leaders and push them to compromise and surrender to the *fait accompli*, and cave in to external pressures. Intimidation does not work with us, nor does inducement.

These factors in their totality allow us, praise to *Allah*, to manage the political decision with a combination of preserving fundamentals, and flexibility and realism at the same time, without one overshadowing the other. (...)

Therefore, it is important and necessary to always make sure understanding is deep, implementation is meticulous, timing is right, and the motive to be the general rather than personal or partisan interest.

(.....) We reckon that *Hamas*, thanks to experience and the challenges it has faced, has good experience in dealing with these balances and delicate issues. We, praise be to *Allah*, rely in all this on our long-standing Islamic law heritage, our national heritage, and the history and cultural assets of our nation, as well as the accumulated experiences of peoples and nations. (.....)

Hamas’ Model of Resistance

Q. What contribution did Hamas make vis-à-vis jihad and the struggle? What distinguishes its model of resistance?

A. It must first be emphasized that *Hamas* as a movement of resistance against the Zionist occupation is a natural and authentic part of the experience of the

Palestinian struggle, an extension of it, and one of its circles that is continuing from a hundred years ago, (...)

We and the others build on the experience of our forerunners and benefit from them, and then we create our own experiences with their positives and negatives, and interact with our associates in the march. All this will be a legacy for future generations who will carry the flag and continue the struggle until victory and liberation are achieved, *Allah* willing. This is the goal which everyone will have contributed to—even if they do not witness the final outcome.

We have striven to form our model of resistance, which we established as a contribution to this great struggle, and we were keen to offer—through it—a notable addition to the march of the Palestinian struggle. (...)

Among the most prominent of these visions, concepts and policies are:

First: Resistance is our means to achieve the strategic objective, namely, the liberation and restoration of our rights and ending the Zionist occupation of our land and our holy sites. (...)

Second: Resistance for us is a means, and not an end, in the service of the aim and the objectives; it is not resistance for the sake of resistance. (...) It is the means and the way for achieving this goal, and a strategic tool for liberation.

Third: Hamas is not a military group, but an all-embracing national liberation movement, with resistance as its main axis, its strategic means to liberation and the realization of the Palestinian national project. At the same time, the movement works in all fields and areas, and has its own aims and political vision. It is a grassroots movement conscious of the concerns of its people at home and abroad, defending their interests, and seeking to serve them as much as possible in all aspects of daily life.

Fourth: We have limited our resistance to be in opposition to the Israeli occupation alone. Our resistance is against the enemy occupying our land and encroaching on our people and holy sites, and not against anyone else. (...)

We also adopted the policy of confining the resistance to Palestine and not outside it—not out of powerlessness, but on account of an accurate estimation of interest, and a balancing of various considerations.

Fifth: We clearly adopt the policy of using weapons and force only in the face of the occupier and the external enemy attacking us; this is legitimate

resistance. This means not using weapons and force either in domestic affairs, or in addressing political and intellectual disputes. Addressing disputes within national ranks must be through dialogue, consensus and arbitration by people, through democracy and the ballot box.

The tragic events in the Gaza Strip a few years ago are not a departure from this policy, as this is an entirely different case. There was a Palestinian party which rejected the election result and sought to overturn it, that is, to overturn Palestinian legitimacy, and, unfortunately, they collaborated with the Zionist enemy and the Americans and used weapons against us. It is our natural right to defend ourselves when forced to do so, particularly considering that we did this from the position of a legitimate government formed after fair democratic elections which were approved by the elected Legislative Council. (...)

Sixth: We have adopted a policy of not engaging in turf battles in the region, contrary to what others had done in the earlier stages. We never used force and weapons against any Arab state or party even if they harmed and besieged us, or arrested and tortured our brethren, or stabbed the resistance in the back, or incited against us. The Arabs are our brothers and family and they constitute our strategic depth; so we cannot wrong them even if they did so to us. We have committed ourselves to this policy over the past years, and will remain committed to it, *Allah* willing, because our battle is exclusively against the Zionist enemy.

Seventh: In building the resistance, we took pains to focus on building the resistance activist religiously, educationally, psychologically, and intellectually, ensuring a high degree of organizational and behavioral discipline, commitment to religious and ethical rules of resistance, and developing the capacity for endurance and steadfastness in extreme circumstances, as well as building awareness and clarity of vision in the fighters, sincerity of purpose and intention, and the blending of the religious and national dimensions to develop a strong incentive in the course of jihad and the resistance. The mujahid [freedom fighter] struggles against the occupying enemy in defense of his homeland and holy sites, his people and nation, and his family and honor. (...)

Future of the Zionist Enterprise

Q. Through your reading of the course of the Zionist enterprise and its current reality.. how do you see the future of this enterprise? Is it moving towards realizing “Greater Israel,” or is it in decline and regression?

A. Factual data reinforce the conviction that the Zionist enterprise has no future in the region. There is a real decline in this enterprise, for which expansion was an important characteristic, and it is no longer able to continue in this way. The construction of the [Separation] Wall (while recognizing its negative repercussions on the Palestinian people), and the withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the Gaza Strip are but practical examples of this decline and regression.

Israel, which used to wage war on its neighbors and win easily, and was able to take the fight to its enemy, now has its heartland as a field of battle for the Palestinian resistance. This is a repetitive phenomenon. The so-called “Israeli home front” is now threatened in every war or confrontation and is paying the price for its leaders’ adventures.

Moreover, the Zionist ruling class in Israel today—and on the level of many military, political and security leaders—no longer has the capacity of the first generation who built this entity, nor the will to fight that they had had, not to mention rampant corruption in the ruling class, a growing number of suicides, the evasion of military service, and the declining performance of its security institutions.

Israel has not won a real war since 1967, except for the invasion of Beirut in 1982. This is an important indicator of the decline of the Zionist enterprise’s ability, and the fact that it has no future. In my estimation, the “Greater Israel” project has come to an end, simply because the Zionist enemy is no longer able to accomplish it, and because Israel continues on the same path as did apartheid South Africa. This is a growing conviction for many neutral politicians and observers.

After more than 60 years since the establishment of this entity, and when the question in the Israeli street is not only about the security of Israel, but also about its future and destiny, this is an important and serious development. When the Israeli community questions the basis of its existence and future, and the feasibility of its enterprise, then the countdown must have begun, *Allah* willing.

Saying this is not enough, however; what is required is building on it. We are not calling for an underestimation of the Zionist entity's strength and capabilities (for it is the sensible who do not underestimate their enemy) which still has many elements of power. Nevertheless, this realistic reading and vision, based on many facts and indicators, should prompt us not to succumb to Israeli threats or conditions for political settlement, and not to deal with the Zionist enterprise as an inevitable destiny. The real option and alternative to the policy of submission and the state of helplessness, waiting and getting bogged down in negotiations, is resistance. The Palestinian people are able, *Allah* willing, to continue the resistance, but they need the backing and participation of the nation. (.....)

In short, the Zionist enterprise, like all other enterprises of occupation, settler-colonialism and aggression throughout history, has no legitimacy and no future, because it is alien to our region and lacks the elements of survival. It will, thus, end up like all other similar enterprises. We are a great nation, proud of ourselves, our religion, our land, our history, our culture and identity, with Palestine and Jerusalem as our beating heart and an indicator of our life and survival. Therefore, we will not tolerate the Zionist entity for long and we will defeat it just as we defeated the Crusades and the Mongol advance in the past, *Allah* willing.

﴿وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ﴾

(And these days [of varying conditions] We alternate among the people.)

Allah Almighty has spoken the truth.

Document No. 17

Palestinian National Conciliation Agreement in Cairo on 3/5/2011¹⁷

3 May 2011

In the Name of *Allah*, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Palestinian National Conciliation Agreement

Based on national and historical responsibility which requires upholding the higher interests of the Palestinian people, in loyalty to the blood of the righteous martyrs, in tribute to the suffering of our brave prisoners, and in order to strengthen the internal Palestinian front, and maintain and protect national unity, the unity of our people in the homeland and the Diaspora, and in order to preserve the gains of our people achieved through their long march of struggle, and our certainty that the achievements and sacrifices of our steadfast people over the decades should not be squandered by any disputes or conflicts;

And pursuant to the comprehensive Palestinian national dialogue, which was held in Cairo, starting from 26–9–2009 with the participation of Egyptian actors, and the subsequent multiple and intensive dialogue sessions characterized by transparency and openness, and in-depth discussion of all the national action issues with an open mind and political will, and a genuine desire to end political, geographical and psychological division that brought disadvantages to all parts of the Palestinian homeland;

And in affirmation of the real desire for conciliation and reconciliation, and to overcome the obstacles that prevent re-unity of the homeland and the people, all Palestinian factions, organizations and forces agreed to end the state of Palestinian division, never to return, and identified all the fundamentals and necessary foundations for the implementation of the requirements. They agreed on solutions to the issues at the heart of the dispute and division, and these solutions will be the beacon and the main foundation for signing the Palestinian National Conciliation Agreement in Cairo. From it we will launch to the horizons of implementation, to

¹⁷ Site of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah), www.fatehwatan.ps/functions.php?action=files&table=files&ID=23, translated from Arabic by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations; and see PIC, 29/4/2011, <http://www.palinfo.com/site/pic/newsdetails.aspx?itemid=8718> translated from Arabic by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations.

melt all disagreements and harmonize wills, so that everyone can move hand in hand to build the Palestinian homeland.

In order to ensure the success of the National Conciliation Agreement in the next phase that will follow the signing process, all sides have agreed to comply with the requirements of this phase and provide the appropriate environment for the implementation of its requirements, and interact positively with them, provided that a higher committee chaired by Egypt with Arab participation would supervise and monitor the implementation of this agreement.

In the end, the conferees praise the Egyptian role in support of the Palestinian issue, and the hard work that led to the signing of the National Conciliation Agreement, to allow for a real re-arranging of the Palestinian house as a step towards the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. The conferees also extend their gratitude and appreciation to the Arab countries supporting the Palestinian issue; Palestine will continue to believe that the Arab countries are its real depth.

The conferees agreed that the agreement requires that good intentions turn into an executable program of work, and pledge to *Allah*, and pledge in front of their people in the homeland and Diaspora, implement all the provisions of the agreement and to make every effort to make it a success, for the benefit of the Palestinian people in the context of responsibility and commitment.

First: The Palestine Liberation Organization

Activating and developing the Palestine Liberation Organization on a consensual basis to include all forces and factions, according to the Cairo Agreement in March 2005, and as stated in the second paragraph of the National Conciliation Document in June 2006 regarding the development and activation of the Palestine Liberation Organization. [It must include] all forces and factions in accordance with democratic foundations that would cement the status of Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole and legitimate representative of our people anywhere they are present, in line with the changes in the Palestinian arena, and to enhance the [Palestine] Liberation Organization's ability to shoulder its responsibility leading our people in the homeland and in the Diaspora, and in mobilizing them and defending their national, political and human rights in all regional and international circles and forums.

The national interest requires the formation of a new National Council (within a specific timeframe), so as to ensure the representation of forces and factions, and national and Islamic parties, and all gatherings of our people everywhere, including all sectors institutions, dignitaries and personalities. [This is to be done] via elections where possible, in accordance with the principle of proportional representation. When it is not possible to hold elections, then in accordance with mechanisms developed by the committee created after the Cairo Agreement in March 2005. [It requires also] to preserve the Palestine Liberation Organization as a broad coalition and all-inclusive national framework, as well as a supreme political reference frame for the Palestinians in the homeland and Diaspora.

The term of the National Council is “4” years, to coincide with the election of the Legislative Council. The National Council elections must take place in accordance with the principle of full proportional representation and a law to be agreed upon, and consensually where it is not possible to hold elections.

The committee tasked with developing the Palestine Liberation Organization (according to the Cairo Declaration of March 2005) must create a special subcommittee to prepare an electoral law for the Palestinian National Council, and submit it to the committee for approval.

The committee tasked with developing the Palestine Liberation Organization (according to the Cairo Declaration of March 2005) completes its lineup and holds its first meeting as soon as the implementation of the agreement begins.

The committee specifies the relationship between institutions, structures, and functions of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian National Authority, especially the relationship between the National Council and the Legislative Council, in a way that would preserve the referential status of the Palestine Liberation Organization over the Palestinian Authority, and prevents redundancy in their powers and responsibilities.

Until a new National Council is elected, with emphasis on the powers of the Executive Committee and all other institutions of the [Palestine Liberation] Organization, the committee tasked with developing the Palestine Liberation Organization according to the Cairo Declaration of 2005 would complete its lineup and holds its first meeting as an interim leadership framework. Its functions will be as follows:

- Laying the foundations and mechanisms of the Palestinian National Council.

- Tackling fateful political and national issues and making decisions relevant to them by consensus.
- Following up the implementation of decisions emanating from the dialogue. Its first meeting would be held in Cairo to discuss the mechanisms of its work.

Second: The Elections

Legislative, presidential, and Palestinian National Council elections shall take place simultaneously on Monday 28–6–2010. Everyone shall be committed to this.

Palestinian National Council elections are to be held on the basis of full proportional representation at home and abroad, wherever possible, while legislative elections are held on the basis of a mixed system.

Legislative elections are held on the basis of a mixed system as follows:

- 75% (Lists).
- 25% (Districts).
- Threshold: 2%.
- The homeland consists of 16 electoral districts constituency (eleven in the West Bank, and five in the Gaza Strip).

The elections are held under Arab and international supervision, with the possibility of taking all measures to ensure they are held in fair and favorable conditions for all, and in an atmosphere of freedom, integrity and transparency in the [West] Bank and [Gaza] Strip.

Consensus on the Following General Principles

- Preparing the conditions necessary to facilitate the success of the presidential and legislative elections.
- Presidential and legislative elections are held in all areas of the Palestinian National Authority, including Jerusalem.
- Providing the necessary guarantees to successfully hold the elections on time.
- Signing a code of honor among all the forces and figures taking part in the dialogue to ensure that the elections are held routinely with integrity and transparency and in a timely manner.

Election Monitoring Mechanism

- Stressing what is stated in Article (113) of the electoral law regarding the monitoring and coverage of the elections.

- Strengthening the monitoring of the elections by expanding the local, Arab, and international participation.
- In the case an electronic system is established, electronic monitoring mechanisms could be set up, provided that paper checks are the main benchmark in this regard.

The Formation of an Electoral Court

In accordance with the provisions of the law, an electoral court consisting of a chairman and eight judges is formed, upon the recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Council. [Its formation would be] announced in a presidential decree after the completion of all formalities to form it (Supreme Judicial Council) in consultation and national consensus, in accordance with the law without infringing on the independence of the judiciary.

The Formation of the Electoral Commission

Pursuant to the electoral law, the Palestinian president forms the electoral commission based on consultations carried out and the recommendation of the political forces and national figures.

Third: Security

General Principles

Introduction

The Palestinian people is still living in the phase of national liberation. Therefore, the work of the security forces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip must achieve the security of the homeland and the citizen, through the following principles:

- Formulation of security forces laws according to their functions, and Palestinian national interests.
- The reference frame of the security forces is the Law on Serving in the Palestinian Security Forces. [These forces] must be professional and non-factional.
- Identifying the criteria and foundations for rebuilding, restructuring, and unifying the security forces.
- All security forces are subject to accountability by the Legislative Council.
- All the information and secrets in the possession of the security forces are subject to the notions and rules of secrecy in force under the laws and regulations, violation of which subjects violators to prosecution under penalty of law.

- All residents on the territories of the [Palestinian] Authority, including citizens and foreigners, are entitled to security and safety, without regard to race, color, or religion.
- Any information, communication, or relaying of information to the enemy affecting the Palestinian homeland, citizens, and resistance is considered treason punishable by law.
- The prohibition of political detention.
- The security forces must respect the Palestinian people's right to resist and defend the homeland and fellow citizens.
- Foreign relations for security affairs are subject to political decision and instructions.
- Keeping the security institutions away from political polarization and differences between forces and factions, and refraining from mudslinging and accusations of treason against security institutions, and considering them a guarantor of the security and stability of the homeland and the citizens.

Standards and Foundations of the Rebuilding and Restructuring of the Security Forces

- Stressing the provisions of the law on serving in the security forces, and upholding all prohibitions stated in the law (Articles 90–94).
- Adopting professional and patriotic standards for recruiting for the security forces.
- Expediting laws and regulations on security forces to regulate their work and ensure there is no overlap in their jurisdictions.
- Delineating and organizing the administrative hierarchy and the chain of command in the security establishment, in order to ensure the hierarchy of command and control.
- Banning the establishment of any military formations outside the framework of the planned structure of each force.
- The number of members in every force should be proportional to its functions.
- All forces must abide by the applicable laws in force in the areas of the [Palestinian] Authority, and respect the principles of human rights and the dignity of the citizens, in full cooperation with relevant bodies (the judiciary, public prosecutor, civil society organizations, various ministries), and must enable the national bodies and human rights institutions to exercise their work to ensure respect for human rights.

- The security forces, their leaders, and their members are accountable and answerable to the competent bodies and authorities in accordance with the law and regulations.
- Criminalization and prohibition of the use of arms for reasons beyond the functional tasks and the stated rules and regulations.
- Absolute preservation of the secrets of the state and the institution.
- The security forces carry out their duties in accordance with the law and away from interferences, and in accordance with the powers vested in them by law; it is necessary to enhance the law and legislation to serve this purpose.
- The need to pay attention to domestic and external training, in light of the importance of training in refining skills and acquiring experiences towards professional development.
- The criteria laid down must respond to the security needs of the Palestinians in their political contexts.
- The planned budget must be commensurate with the size of the tasks entrusted to the security forces. All facets of spending are subject to the principle of control and transparency.
- Committing to the specific terms of agency leaders in accordance with the law.

Supreme Security Committee and Assimilation

- Forming a Supreme Security Committee under decree from the Palestinian president. [The committee] comprises professional line officers chosen by consensus, and operates under Egyptian and Arab supervision to follow up and implement the National Conciliation Agreement in the [West] Bank and [Gaza] Strip. Among its functions is drafting security policies and overseeing their implementation.
- Rebuilding and re-structuring Palestinian security forces with Egyptian and Arab assistance in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- Affirming the occupational rights of all employees of the security forces (assimilation – retirement – transfer to civilian jobs –....).
- Assimilation begins with (three thousand) members of the ex-security forces, the police, National Security, and Civil Defense in the forces of Gaza Strip, immediately after the signing of the National Conciliation Agreement. This number will increase gradually until the legislative elections are held, in accordance with a mutually agreed mechanism.

- All the requirements of assimilating these personnel are guaranteed through Egyptian and Arab support.

Approving the number of security institutions according to the 2005 Civil Service Law on Palestinian Security Forces as follows:

- National Security Forces and the Palestinian National Liberation Army.
- Internal Security Forces (police – civil defense – Preventive Security)
- General Intelligence.

(And any other existing or new force or forces will be within the three institutions)

The Functions of the Security Forces

National Security

Definition

The National Security is a regular military body. It carries out its functions and powers under the command of the General Commander, who issues the necessary decisions to manage its work and organize all its affair, according to the provisions of the law and the regulations issued pursuant thereto.

The Missions of the National Security Forces

- Protecting the sovereignty of the country, ensuring the integrity of its territories, taking part in reconstruction, and helping in dealing with disasters internally, according to the cases where it is permissible to use the national security forces in non-military tasks.
- Enforcing judicial decisions and orders of the competent authority in respect to the security forces in accordance with military systems and laws.
- Protecting the nation from any external aggression.
- Confronting external and internal threats in its areas of deployment, and participating in responding to constitutionally defined emergencies.
- Military representation in national embassies abroad.

Internal Security Forces

Definition

Internal security is a regular security body, which functions and exercises its powers under the command of the Interior Minister and the Director General of

Internal Security [Forces], who issues the necessary decisions to manage its work and organize its affairs.

The Missions of the Internal Security Forces

- Maintenance of public order and preservation of morals and morality.
- Protecting citizens, their rights, and their freedoms, and protecting public and private institutions.
- Enforcing and respecting the law.
- Undertaking civil defense, rescue and fire-fighting operations.
- Combatting acts of espionage at home.
- Maintaining the home front against any external breaches or threats.
- Enforcing judicial decisions or any legal decisions issued by the competent authorities as provided by law.

Internal Security Forces are Composed of the Following Agencies

Police

Functions of the Police

- Maintaining order and security, and protecting life, honors, assets and morals.
- Prevention, detection, and tracking down of crimes, and arresting perpetrators and bringing them to justice.
- Running and guarding penitentiaries
- Enforcing laws, regulations, and official orders, and assisting the authorities to perform their functions in accordance with the provisions of the law.
- Controlling and regulating road traffic.
- Protecting gatherings and marches according to the law.

Internal Security/ Preventive Security [Service]

Internal/ Preventive Security [Service] Tasks

- Combatting espionage in the territories of the Palestinian Authority.
- Following up on and preventing crimes that threaten the internal security of the Palestinian Authority.
- Detecting crimes against government departments, public bodies and institutions and their employees.
- Providing information to the political leadership to guide the planning and decision-making processes.

Civil Defense

Civil Defense Tasks (Palestinian Civil Defense Act)

Security and Protection

Agreement was reached on the following tasks:

- Protecting official figures and government leaders during their internal movements and on their foreign visits.
- Providing protection for foreign delegations.
- Securing places of official meetings.
- Examining and securing vehicles belonging to the agency and to officials.
- Protecting officials' convoys and their movements in the country.
- Providing protection to personalities and visitors at crossings and facilitating their travel.
- Providing safe places to house dignitaries and government leaders in cases of emergency.
- Developing contingency plans for the movement and communication of dignitaries and government leaders in cases of emergency.

General Intelligence

The Definition of the General Intelligence

General Intelligence is an independent security body that reports to the Palestinian president, and carries out its functions and powers under his chairmanship and leadership. He issues the necessary decisions to manage its work and organize all its affairs.

The Functions of the Intelligence Service in Accordance with the Palestinian General Intelligence Law

- Taking the necessary measures to prevent any actions that endanger the security and safety of Palestine, and the necessary measures against their perpetrators in accordance with the provisions of the law.
- Uncovering external threats that could harm Palestinian national security, including espionage, conspiracies, and sabotage or other actions that threaten the nation's unity, security, independence and resources.
- Joint cooperation with counterparts from friendly countries to combat any actions that threaten peace and common security, or any of the areas of internal security, on condition of reciprocity.

Doctrine of the Security Forces

- The doctrine of the security forces is based on Article 84 of the Basic Law, with the addition of the clause “and protesting its legitimate rights.”

The Reference Frame of the Security Forces

- The reference frame of the security forces shall be in accordance with what has been agreed upon with respect to the tasks of the security forces.

National Security Council

- It is up to the [Palestinian] Legislative Council to issue the law on the Palestinian National Council.

Mechanisms of Arab Assistance for Building the Security Forces

- Forming a liaison committee to source specific needs.
- Each agency specifies its needs and submits them to the committee.
- Receiving security delegations visiting for the purpose of providing assistance to the security forces, provided that this is governed by the parameters of the mission according to a specific timetable.

Fourth: National Reconciliation

To Agree on the Following Objectives

- Promoting a culture of tolerance, love, reconciliation, political partnership, and coexistence.
- Resolving all violations that resulted from the chaos and division through legal and legitimate means.
- Developing a program to compensate those affected by the division and violence financially and morally.
- Developing the foundations and mechanisms to prevent the recurrence of the unfortunate events.
- Securing the necessary budgets needed to support the success of the committee’s mission through a national fund financed by the Arabs.
- Overseeing social reconciliation.
- Forming subcommittees in all governorates.

Means and Mechanisms of Reconciliation

- The immediate cessation of all forms of mutual incitement and violations, and monitoring the implementation.
- Holding broad-based public meetings that include all sectors of society (schools, universities, popular gatherings) and organizing media campaigns to promote a climate of reconciliation and tolerance in society, and including all forums including mosques to achieve this goal.
- Involving political forces, civil society groups, independents, and reconciliation committees to create a climate of reconciliation, tolerance, and forgiveness.
- Listening to all victims of internal violence and lawlessness, and identifying material and moral damage to those affected and their relatives.
- Identifying the bases of financial compensation to those affected.
- Discussing ways to activate the role of the law in accountability, and submitting recommendations in this regard to the competent authorities.
- Field visits and conducting the necessary surveys.
- Following matters up with the concerned authorities, demanding them to be firm in their positions to end vigilante actions, and enforcing strict accountability to prevent vigilantism.
- Lifting factional, tribal, and family cover on all those who perpetrate attacks on people and their properties.
- Issuing a code of conduct emphasizing the prohibition of infighting, and developing a follow-up mechanism.
- Making pan-Arab visits to facilitate the work of the reconciliation committee, in coordination with the competent authorities.

Forming a Reconciliation Committee Comprising the Following

- Chairman of the Committee ([Chosen] by consensus).
- Deputy Chairman.
- Secretary.
- Treasurer.
- Members.

Forming an Advisory Unit for Judicial Remedies, in Coordination with the Competent Authorities, Including

- Mobilization and Media Unit.
- Complaints and Grievances Unit.

- Public Relations Unit.
- Damage Survey Unit.
- The Judicial Guidance Unit (Regular Judiciary, Islamic Judiciary, Tribal Judiciary).

Considering the individuals who have suffered harm in different forms during the internal confrontations victims of violence, and that the Palestinian National Authority is responsible for addressing their cases, with follow-up and participation from the National Reconciliation Commission. What applies to the victims applies to the wounded.

Consequently, for those who have suffered harm in different forms because of individual criminal acts, the culprits bear responsibility, and the appropriate judicial measures shall be taken against them. For those who suffered harm of various kinds because of the political conflict, the groups that caused the harm bear the responsibility, not individuals. The consequences shall be addressed with the national participation of all sides, to achieve justice for those affected.

Every citizen who had a fixed or movable property stolen from them must present their case to the commission on complaints and grievances to restore their full rights.

Mechanisms for Reconciliation Commission

The Reconciliation Commission operates through the following mechanisms:

- The commission meets after the signing of the national accord agreement to distribute tasks among its members according to the agreed structure.
- Obtaining a suitable headquarters in Gaza City.
- Moving immediately to form sub-committees in the governorates within the West Bank and Gaza [Strip], to help the higher commission carry out its tasks.
- Identifying the necessary cadres to form the agreed units of work.
- Expediting the holding of a popular conference for reconciliation and forgiveness that would launch its work, and declare the start of the implementation of the code of honor.
- The commission will proceed to carry out its duties immediately after it is formed.
- Announcing through all media outlets the start of the commission's work, its offices, and the mechanism of its work and implementation.

- Drafting the necessary budget for the success of its work, and seeking to secure this necessary budget from the competent authority.
- The commission shall submit reports to the competent authorities for implementation, after gathering the necessary information regarding the citizens who were subjected to abuse and harm, and ways to address this.

Code of Honor of National Reconciliation

A code of honor for Palestinian national reconciliation was agreed (Annex A).

Fifth: The Joint Commission for the Implementation of the National Accord Agreement

Composition of the Commission

The commission is made up of (16 members) from Fatah, Hamas, the factions, and independents. Fatah and Hamas each nominate 8 members. President Mahmud ‘Abbas will then issue a presidential decree forming the commission after reaching an agreement on its members.

The Commission’s Frame of Reference

Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas “Abu Mazin” is the reference point for the commission, as President of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian National Authority.

The Legal Framework of the Commission

The commission is a coordinating framework that does not have any political obligations. It shall begin its work immediately after the signing of the National Conciliation Agreement, and end its work in the wake of the presidential, legislative, and National Council elections, and the formation of a new Palestinian government.

Functions of the Commission

The joint commission is responsible for implementing the National Conciliation Agreement to be applied at home by dealing with the various stakeholders, including the following:

- Creating the conditions for holding presidential, legislative and National Council elections.

- Supervising the handling of Palestinian internal reconciliation issues.
- Following-up reconstruction in the Gaza Strip.

Unifying the National Institutions of the Palestinian Authority in the [West] Bank and Gaza [Strip]

The institutions of the Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip shall be unified in coordination with the competent authorities, based on the principles of partnership, national accord, and strengthening of national unity, in line with and in implementation of the outcomes and decisions of the National Conciliation Agreement, especially in relation to the criteria and results produced by the legal administrative committee.

Resolving the Status of Associations and Organizations

Restoring the status of the associations and civil institutions that were closed or appropriated to the situation prior to 14 June 2007 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, immediately after the signing of the National Conciliation Agreement, and working to restore their assets and compensate them for their losses as a result.

Resolving the status of societies and civil institutions in accordance with the laws in force before 14 June 2007.

Redressing the employees assigned to the work in societies and civil institutions according to the law.

The funds belonging to societies or institutions may not be seized, except by judicial decision.

Handling Civil Cases and Administrative Problems Resulting from the Split

Addressing civil cases resulting from split (after 14 June 2007) [must proceed] by resolving the issues of the employees who were affected by the division, and restoring the unity of governmental and constitutional institutions, in addition to preserving the independence of the judiciary, and re-operationalizing these institutions in accordance with the Basic Law, relevant laws, and national consensus. [This is in addition to] resolving the repercussions of the decisions issued after this date, and all these are the foundation for ending the division and achieving and securing national unity.

These cases include appointments, promotions, dismissals, salary suspension,

and transfers in government institutions and departments, and disputed presidential and governmental decrees and decisions of relevance.

A legal administrative committee shall be formed comprising administrative and legal experts to study these cases mentioned above, and propose ways to resolve them. The committee shall present the results of its efforts to the competent executive bodies—within a maximum of four months after its formation—to implement them on the basis of the Basic Law and relevant laws.

This committee functions in accordance to the following bases and principles:

- Abiding by the amended Basic Law of 2005, and the relevant laws, regulations, and rules approved prior to 14 June 2007.
- Achieving justice and equity without discrimination between citizens and without prejudicing the rights of individuals who have been affected as a result of the split.
- Emphasizing the principle of partnership for the Palestinian people in the institutions of the [Palestinian] Authority, on the basis of competence and suitability between the employee and the job they are nominated to fill.
- Taking into account the available financial capacities and resources and their impact on the state budget, administrative and organizational structures of government institutions, and the approved employment policies, while also addressing overemployment in the government institutions.

Forming a specialized legal committee with powers made up of competent judges with proven integrity, to look into grievances and complaints brought by individuals, institutions, and bodies in objection to any decisions issued against them, without prejudice to the right of individuals, institutions, and bodies to take legal action according to law.

All bodies and authorities follow their terms of reference as determined by the Basic Law in accordance with the law regulating their work. They correct their status in accordance with the applicable laws without being inconsistent with the Basic Law.

Returning all civil servants in the [West] Bank and Gaza Strip who were in their posts before 14–6–2007 to their jobs, including those sacked and those who became absent from their jobs in the wake of the split, while maintaining their full rights and reversing all layoffs, immediately after the start of the implementation

of the national conciliation accord. This shall be done in accordance with the mechanism recommended by the legal administrative committee formed within the agreed deadline.

Commitment shall be made not to carry out any amendments or new appointments until the legal administrative committee formed under this agreement finishes its work.

Sixth: Detainees

In the context of agreeing on the need to resolve the problem of prisoners from all Palestinian factions, and in affirmation of the principle of prohibiting the detention on the backdrop of political affiliation and without due process, it has been agreed to resolve this problem through the following specific mechanisms:

- Fatah and Hamas draft lists of detainees who were still detained prior to the agreement. A copy of the list shall be handed over to Egypt and a human rights organization (to be agreed upon) after verifying the numbers and the names, prior to signing the national accord agreement.
- Each side releases the detainees in its custody from all other factions as soon as the agreement is signed.
- After the release of the detainees, each side hands over to Egypt a list containing the names of detainees that could not be released and the grounds for this. Status reports are then submitted to the leaderships of Fatah and Hamas.
- After the agreement is signed, efforts continue with Egyptian participation to close the detainees' file once and for all.

The Code of Honor of the Palestinian National Reconciliation

The Palestinian people, through their long history, embodied their patriotic personality through the throngs of victims, wounded, and detainees they have sacrificed in defense of their land, cause, and holy sites. Our people, who deserve all appreciation, are now living in very difficult circumstances.

In appreciation of these circumstances, and out of our belief in the need for a cohesive internal front through which we seek to achieve our people's aspirations, defend their rights, liberate our land, and restore our rights, and in light of the negative effects created by the state of division, we in the National Reconciliation Committee emanating from the Palestinian Dialogue Conference have agreed to work and abide by the terms of this code of honor.

And in confirmation of our desire to end the state of division and remedy its consequences, and protect our internal front and prevent the repetition of the unfortunate incidents, the code of honor shall include the following principles:

- Emphasizing the prohibition of internal fighting and armed conflict, whatever the reasons and no matter how sharp the differences are.
- Emphasizing the general principle that the Palestinians have always been in agreement with, namely that dialogue must remain the only means of communication between them, and for resolving differences that arise between them.
- Prohibiting detention, prosecutions and pursuits against the backdrop of political affiliation.
- No individual may be arrested without a court order or permission from the Prosecution.
- Banning the use of torture in detention and the need to respect the rights of the detainees and not humiliating them.
- Allowing defendants to defend themselves and allowing them all legal means to do so.
- Banning all forms of aggression against the will and the property.
- Lifting factional, family and clan cover on each individual who violates the law and the honor.
- Respecting the independence of the judiciary and its decisions and not interfering with it, and keeping it away from any political and partisan bickering.
- The need to respect existing laws, and to emphasize that everyone is equal before the law.
- Maintenance of public and private freedoms of individuals and groups.
- Emphasizing the freedom of the press and freedom of expression.
- Emphasizing on the prevention of any form of media and communal incitement.
- Emphasizing political partnership and the principle of peaceful transfer of power.
- [Emphasizing] the right of the Palestinian people to resist and confront occupation and aggression.
- Preserving the resistance and its arms against the occupation, and refraining from implicating it in family, clan, and factional disputes.
- Ensuring the right to work for all on the basis of competence and professionalism.
- Rejecting dismissals, exclusion, and salary suspension on grounds of political affiliations.

We present this document as an offering to our people, and pray to *Allah* Almighty to help our people and its leaders succeed in preserving its unity and defending its rights.

**We salute our faithful martyrs
Freedom for our imprisoned heroes
Prayers for a speedy recovery for our wounded**

**The National Reconciliation Committee
Palestinian Dialogue Conference**

In the Name of *Allah*, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Meeting Minutes

**Regarding Understandings About Palestinian
National Reconciliation**

Under Egyptian sponsorship, delegations from Fatah and Hamas met in Cairo on 27/4/2011, to discuss issues related to ending the division and achieving reconciliation, led by the observations concerning the clauses of the Palestinian National Conciliation Agreement of 2009.

The two sides have agreed that the understandings reached over these observations during the discussions are binding on both parties upon the implementation of the Palestinian National Conciliation Agreement.

The understandings, which Fatah and Hamas agreed on, include the following:

1. Elections

a. Election Commission

The two parties, Fatah and Hamas, have agreed to specify the names of the members of the Central Election Commission in agreement with the Palestinian factions, provided that it would be submitted to the president to issue a decree for the formation of this committee.

b. Elections Court

The two parties, Fatah and Hamas, have agreed to nominate no more than (12) judges to become members of the Elections Court, provided that [the lists be]

submitted to the Palestinian president in order to take the necessary legal steps for its formation, in agreement with the Palestinian factions.

c. The Timing of the Elections

Legislative, presidential, and Palestinian National Council elections shall be held simultaneously a year after the date of signing the National Conciliation Agreement, by the Palestinian factions and forces.

2. The Palestine Liberation Organization

Fatah and Hamas agreed that the tasks and decisions of the provisional leadership framework may not be obstructed, without prejudicing the powers of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

3. Security

Emphasizing that the formation of the Supreme Security Committee, which the Palestinian president issues a decree on, shall comprise professional officers chosen by consensus.

4. The Government

a. Formation of the Government

Fatah and Hamas agreed to form the Palestinian government and appoint the prime minister and ministers by consensus.

b. Functions of the Government

1. Creating the conditions for holding presidential and legislative elections and elections for the Palestinian National Council.
2. Supervising the handling of the Palestinian internal reconciliation issues resulting from the state of division.
3. Following-up reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and ending the blockade.
4. Following-up the implementation of the provisions of the Palestinian National Conciliation Agreement.
5. Handling civil cases and administrative problems resulting from the split.
6. Harmonization of the national institutions of the National Authority in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem.
7. Resolving the status of civil society and charitable institutions.

5. The Legislative Council

Both parties agreed on activating the Palestinian Legislative Council in accordance with the Basic Law.

Fatah Movement
'Azzam al-Ahmad

Hamis Movement
Musa Abu Marzuq

Document No. 18

Statement of Palestinian National Reconciliation Agreement Implementation Between Fatah and Hamas Movements (Al-Shati' Agreement)¹⁸

23 April 2014

In the Name of *Allah*, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

﴿وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا﴾

(And hold firmly to the rope of *Allah* all together and do not become divided.)

A statement issued from the meeting of the delegations of Palestine Liberation Organization and Hamas to end the division and implement the National Reconciliation Agreement.

At a time when the attack on the Palestinian issue is growing, at all levels; and at a time of increasing attacks on *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the first of two Qiblahs and the site of the Masra [Night Journey] of the Prophet (SAAWS); and as operations to Judaize the occupied city of Jerusalem and eliminate its Arab identity intensify; and as our Muslim and Christian holy sites are desecrated; and as settlements penetrate the steadfast territory of the West Bank; and as the occupation neglects all international agreements, treaties, pacts and norms; as its army intensifies its aggressions and transgresses all limits, and its leaders scheme against our people and leaders by means of this loathsome division; and as [the occupation's] settlers run wild over people, trees and stones; and as our male and female prisoners are subjected to the worst forms of abuse in the occupation's jails.

¹⁸ Site of Today in Gaza, Text of the Palestinian Reconciliation Agreement, <https://todayingaza.wordpress.com/2014/05/01/text-of-the-palestinian-reconciliation-agreement/>

At a time when the suffocating siege is tightening on our great [Gaza] Strip, and humanitarian problems intensify for our steadfast brothers there; and at a time when our people's suffering continues, whether in the homeland or Diaspora; national reconciliation, ending the Palestinian division, restoring and strengthening national unity, and putting in place controls that ensure stability, continuity and growth become a national duty.

After the brothers reviewed the political situation affecting our national cause, and the political stalemate resulting from Israeli politics and intransigence, everyone has [realized] the national responsibility of joint action, and the need to strengthen partnership in policy and decision-making, so that our people can continue their march toward freedom, return [to their homeland] and establish an independent Palestinian State, with its capital in Jerusalem.

Based on these exalted nationalist and religious premises, the Palestine Liberation Organization's delegation and the Islamic Resistance Movement "Hamas" met on the steadfast land of Gaza, to agree on timetables for ending the division and applying a National Reconciliation Agreement.

Two meetings were held over a period of two days, between the two delegations, and the meetings were characterized by understanding, diligence, agreement, and giving priority to the interests of the homeland; whereby the following was agreed upon:

First: Emphasizing the commitment to all that was agreed upon in the Cairo Agreement, including the understandings thereto, and the Doha Declaration, and [these agreements] shall be considered a reference for implementation [of reconciliation].

Second: The government: President Mahmud 'Abbas will begin consultations to form a government of national consensus, in line with his history, and it shall be declared within the legally specified period of five weeks, based on the Cairo Agreement and the Doha Declaration, and it will carry out all of its obligations.

Third: Elections: To emphasize that legislative, presidential and National Council elections will be held simultaneously, and the president is authorized to set a date for elections, in consultation with the national forces and actors, and the elections shall be held at least 6 months after the formation of the government.

This shall be discussed in the [Palestine] Liberation Organization Activation Committee, during its next meeting, and the requirements for holding the said elections shall be completed.

Fourth: The [Palestine] Liberation Organization: It was agreed that the Palestine Liberation Organization Activation and Development Committee will meet, to exercise its functions stipulated in the agreements, within five weeks as of this date, and it was confirmed that its meetings will continue periodically thereafter.

Fifth: The Societal Reconciliation Committee: The immediate resumption of work on social reconciliation, including [the work of] subcommittees, based on what was agreed upon in Cairo.

Sixth: Freedoms Committee: An emphasis on the application of what was agreed upon in Cairo, concerning the issue of public freedoms, and the Public Freedoms Committee in the [West] Bank and Gaza [Strip] has been called upon to resume work immediately and implement its decisions.

Seventh: The Legislative Council: An emphasis on the application of what has been agreed upon, to activate the Legislative Council and for it to carry out its duties.

In conclusion, the two delegations affirm the value of and their appreciation for the Egyptian role in overseeing the reconciliation agreement, and they confirm that this role will continue, and note the value of comprehensive Arab support for the application of the reconciliation agreement.

We salute our faithful martyrs
Freedom for our imprisoned heroes
We salute our blessed wounded

Palestine Liberation Organization Delegation:

‘Azzam al-Ahmad, Fatah movement, Bassam al-Salihi, Palestinian People’s Party, Mustafa al-Barghouti, Palestinian National Initiative, Munib al-Masri, a businessman, Jamil Shehadeh, Arab Liberation Front.

Hamas Movement Delegation:

Isma‘il Haniyyah, deputy head of the movement’s political bureau, Musa Abu Marzuq, member of the political bureau, ‘Imad Al-‘Almy, member of the political bureau, Mahmud al-Zahhar, member of the political bureau, Khalil al-Hayyeh, member of the political bureau, Nizar ‘Awad Allah, member of the political bureau.

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This Book

The Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas is a prominent Palestinian resistance movement. It enjoyed, and continues to enjoy, broad popularity in the Palestinian arena. Hamas adopts Islam as a creed, way of life, and a code. It belongs to the school of Muslim Brothers movement.

Credit for the idea behind this book is owed to the late Prof. Ibrahim Abu Rabi'. 17 academicians, researchers and senior Hamas leaders participated in writing the chapters of this book.

This book is indeed one of the most specialized references regarding Hamas thought and experience, and it is an indispensable source for those interested in studying the Movement. It committed itself to the methodologies of academic research and all this entails in terms of accuracy, objectivity, and documentation. The contributions by several Hamas leaders shed additional and up-to-date light on a number of controversial issues surrounding Hamas and its experience.

Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh

Islamic Resistance Movement

Hamas

Studies of Thought & Experience



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