

A 'Kinder, Gentler' Hamas?

Hamas Leaders on the Record

Oct 27, 1997



Brief Analysis

Since the attempted assassination of Hamas leader Khalid Mish'al in Jordan and the release of Hamas founder and spiritual leader Shaykh Ahmed Yassin, many observers have predicted that Hamas may have moderated its message, possibly offering itself as a potential partner for peace. However, since Shaykh Yassin outlined a "temporary truce" with Israel, subsequent Hamas statements have clarified the organization's position on Israel and the peace process. Following are recent statements by Hamas officials that are indicative of a consistent policy of confrontation and support of violence dating to the issuance of the Hamas charter in 1988.

"A nation that does not wage jihad cannot exist. God is with us and Satan with them. We will fight and fight until we regain our rights and our homeland, God willing. . . . I want to proclaim loudly to the world that we are not fighting Jews because they are Jews! We are fighting them because they assaulted us, they killed us, they took our land, our homes, our children, our women, they scattered us, we became scattered everywhere, a people without a homeland. We want our rights. We don't want more. We love peace, but they hate peace, because people who take away the rights of others don't believe in peace. Why should we not fight? We have our right to defend ourselves." —Hamas leader Shaykh Ahmed Yassin (*New York Times*, 10/22/97)

Hamas is fully concerned about the interests and rights of the Palestinian people. Thus, it views positively any temporary solution that would return rights to their lawful owners, as long as this does not conflict with its strategy, which guarantees the restoration of the full Palestinian rights. Regaining some rights does not mean, in any way, giving up others. The proposed truce [offered by Shaykh Ahmed Yassin to Israel] underlines this view. . . . There is nothing in [the truce] about recognition of the Zionist entity and this would be totally out of the question. > - Muhammad Nazzal, Hamas' representative in Jordan (*al-Sabil*, Amman, 10/14-20/97, translated in FBIS-NES-97-288, 10/16/97)

"When I mentioned a halt, I didn't mean stop in the full sense of the word. I mean a cooling off of activities. . . . This truce has a limited period of time." —Hamas leader Shaykh Ahmed Yassin (*Associated Press*, 10/19/97)

"Israel, as the country of the Jews, must disappear from the map. . . . If someone steals a million dollars from you, will you be satisfied with the return of one hundred dollars? This is Arafat's solution, but we demand that everything be returned. . . . If Israel will withdraw from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, evacuate the settlements, release all the prisoners and refrain from involvement in Palestinian affairs-only then will we be able to consider a temporary cease fire. . . . I am without a home, like four million other Palestinians. We demand that our stolen land be returned to us." —Hamas leader Shaykh Ahmed Yassin (*Svenska Dagbladet*, Stockholm, 10/18/97, translated in *Reuters*, 10/18/97)

"The goal of Hamas is a fixed one. It is based on Islam, and Islam clearly orders us to liberate our land. So the goals of Hamas are unchangeable." —Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi (*Associated Press*, 10/16/97)

"Suicide means that a person is tired or has given up living, and therefore he kills himself. This is forbidden by Islam. Those who give their lives for the defense of their land know where they are going. They are doing this to get close to

Allah and what you are talking about is self-sacrifice and not suicide. This will stop should Israel agree to a temporary cease-fire in accordance with certain conditions." — Hamas leader Shaykh Ahmed Yassin (Al-Quds, Jerusalem, 10/16/97, translated in Jerusalem Post, 10/19/97)

"All the talk about offers made by Hamas to Israel and about an ongoing dialogue between the two parties aims to sow divisions between Hamas and the PA. . . . If Israel accepts the truce offer, the PA, not Jordan, will undertake to negotiate over this matter in lieu of Hamas." — Hamas official Isma'il Haniyah (Radio Monte Carlo, 10/11/97, translated in FBIS-NES-97-287, 10/15/97)

"It's permitted in Islam to do a temporary truce with the enemy for a limited period of time. It is prohibited in Islam to make a permanent reconciliation with the enemy. . . . We are opposed to what has been signed by the Palestinian Authority (PA). We are well aware that the PA is a party negotiating with Israel, but this has nothing to do with us." — Hamas leader Shaykh Ahmed Yassin (Christian Science Monitor, 10/10/97)

"Hamas will remain a thorn in America's throat and will continue its jihad process until the total liberation of Palestine's soil, from the sea to the river. . . . What the American wickedness spelled out, that Hamas is a terrorist organization, I'd like to affirm that Hamas will terrorize the enemies of God and will keep its vow to resist." — Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi after the inclusion of Hamas on the U.S. Department of State's list of terrorist organizations (Reuters, 10/10/97)

"Any calls on Hamas to abandon its platform will be unfair as long as the occupation is still there and the Zionist suppression and terrorism are still ongoing. . . . In light of the perpetuation of the occupation, usurpation of Palestinian rights, the enemy's violations inside and outside Palestine, and the fact that there are five million refugees and displaced persons outside Palestine; then the Palestinian people will retain all the options of steadfastness and resistance through military operations or intifada until the goal of liberation and repatriation is achieved. — Khalid Mish'al, head of the Hamas Political Bureau (al-Ra'y, Amman, 10/9/97, translated in Israeli and Global News, 10/12/97)

"I feel that it is justice for us to [do] with the Jews as they did to us. . . in the same way that they dispossessed our people. They killed thousands of Palestinians in tens of massacres and they destroyed homes. So I think it is just to do with them as they did to us." — Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi (Israeli Media Review and Analysis, 10/8/97)

Compiled by Rachel Ingber and Jonathan Lincoln. ❖

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