

Arab Critique and Condemnation of Hamas Before October 7, 2023

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Brief Analysis

Part of a series: [Tracking International Reactions to the Hamas-Israel War](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/tracking-international-reactions-hamas-israel-war) (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/tracking-international-reactions-hamas-israel-war>)

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For years, Hamas was lambasted by leading Arab voices as a terrorist group that worked against Palestinian interests. And then October 7 happened.

Since Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel, the organization has become "the group that cannot be named." Indeed, in none of their original comments on the attack—even by those that condemned the targeting of civilians—did any Arab state specifically cite Hamas. (Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates later revised their original statements to condemn Hamas by name.) At the Cairo Peace Summit, held two weeks after the attack, not a single Arab leader mentioned Hamas; moreover, Hamas was not named in either the nine-nation Arab statement on the Gaza conflict issued on October 26 or the Jordan-proposed UN General Assembly resolution approved on October 27.

This was not always the case. As the following list of select citations shows, in recent years senior Arab officials, public figures, and prominent journalists have frequently attacked Hamas.

—Robert Satloff, Segal Executive Director, The Washington Institute

Saudi Arabia

- “[Hamas is] **extremist and terrorist** (<https://www.watan.com/2018/02/24/?nowprocket=1>).” —Adel al-Jubeir, minister of state for foreign affairs, *Watan*, February 24, 2018
- “Hamas has been a **terrorist movement for decades** (<https://www.memri.org/tv/saudi-journalist-bijad-hamas-murderous-terrorist-political-iranian-plots-conquer-arab-world>), and it has been directing its terrorism against the Palestinians and the Arab countries, even before carrying out terror operations under the pretext of ‘liberating Palestine’ or things like that...Hamas is...a murderous terrorist organization.” —Abdullah bin Bijad (journalist), MBC TV, November 26, 2021, posted by Middle East Media Research Institute
- “**Saudi Arabia classifies Hamas as a terrorist movement** (<https://www.arab48.com/%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9/%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1--%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A/2017/07/11/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1--%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D8%A5%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9->), and the right of resistance is guaranteed [only] for the Palestine Liberation Organization.” —Sami al-Saleh, ambassador to Algeria, Arab48.com, July 12, 2017

United Arab Emirates

- “[<https://allarab.news/in-stunning-statement-rarely-uttered-by-arab-leaders-senior-uae-official-tells-all-arab-news-jews-and-christians-belong-here-in-the-mideast-adding-their-roots-are-in-this-regio/>] Most of the Arabs are supporting the UAE-Israeli peace treaty. Except who? Those who are part of these terrorist organizations (<https://allarab.news/in-stunning-statement-rarely-uttered-by-arab-leaders-senior-uae-official-tells-all-arab-news-jews-and-christians-belong-here-in-the-mideast-adding-their-roots-are-in-this-regio/>)— Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Iranian regime, and [Turkish president Recep Tayyip] Erdogan, who is supporting these terrorist groups...” —Dr. Ali al-Nuaimi, chairman of Defense Affairs, Interior, and Foreign Relations Committee, Federal National Council, *All Arab News*, September 2, 2020
- “When you look at groups like Al Qaeda or ISIS, it’s easy for most of the international community to talk about. **It’s very unfortunate that countries are more reluctant to talk about entities like Hezbollah or Hamas or the Muslim Brotherhood in a clearer manner.** (<https://www.aljazeera.net/politics/2021/6/13/%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%83%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%84%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%A9>) It’s funny when countries designate, [within] the same entity, its military wing as a terrorist group and its political wing as a non-terrorist group, when the same entity says there is no difference between the military and political wings.” —Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, foreign minister, Al Jazeera, June 13, 2021
- “[Gaza] is occupied by Hamas. And **the Palestinian people in Gaza are suffering because of Hamas, not the Israelis** (<https://www.newsweek.com/i-helped-broker-abraham-accords-its-time-free-palestinians-hamas-iran-opinion-1598198>) ...What the public doesn’t understand is who is behind so much of the media they read—who is funding this misguided narrative, which only serves to protect Hamas, and ultimately, Iran...Hamas and the Palestinian leadership have hijacked the minds of 2 million Palestinians to sell their political and terrorist agendas.” —Dr. Ali al-Nuaimi, *Newsweek*, June 7, 2021
- “Hamas’s solidarity with the Iranian government does not take into consideration the Gulf and Arab anxiety over Tehran’s regional interference. It is unnecessary. It pushes the Palestinian issue into a maze and confirms the opinion that **the movement, in its orientation, is nothing more than an Iranian regional tool** (<https://twitter.com/AnwarGargash/status/1059831949014024197>).” —Anwar Gargash, minister of state for foreign affairs, Twitter, November 6, 2018

Jordan

- “[W]hat Hamas has done behind the back of Fatah, the PA, and President Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas] has **greatly harmed the Palestinian cause** (<https://elaph.com/Web/opinion/2021/05/1327997.html>).” —Saleh al-Qallab, former minister of information, *Elaph*, May 12, 2021
- “**The Jordanian government views Hamas as having carried out an illegal coup** (<https://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2019/04/22/1237184.html>), and therefore, it has refused to receive any of the leaders of the Hamas movement, whether it’s Ismail Haniyeh or Mahmoud al-Zahar, neither collectively nor individually.” —Hamada Farana, former member of parliament, April 22, 2019
- “**It is in no way accurate or correct to call Hamas a national liberation movement** (https://aawsat.com/home/article/1493071/%d8%b5%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%82%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%a8/%d9%87%d9%84-%d9%81%d8%b9%d9%84%d8%a7%d9%8b-%c2%ab%d8%ad%d9%85%d8%a7%d8%b3%c2%bb-%d8%ad%d8%b1%d9%83%d8%a9-%d8%aa%d8%ad%d8%b1%d8%b1-%d9%88%d8%b7%d9%86%d9%8a-%d9%88%d9%85%d8%b3%d8%aa%d9%82%d9%84%d8%a9%d8%9f?_gl=1*1jma51k*_gcl_au*NTM4NjM4Njk5LjE2OTQxODQzMDU)...Can the claim that Hamas is a national liberation movement and is not affiliated with any of the axes and blocs in the region be believed when it displays such devotion to Iran, rivaled only by the devotion of the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Iraqi PMU [Popular Mobilization Units]?...If Hamas is really a national liberation movement, why did it follow the directives, or even the orders, of Qatar, of Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and of the Muslim Brotherhood [leaders] in Turkey?” —Saleh al-Qallab, *Asharq al-Awsat*, December 5, 2018
- “[Hamas] committed a number of violations that pose **a threat to Jordan’s security, stability, and sovereignty** (<https://bit.ly/3QAY0U5>).” (Statement justifying Jordan’s expulsion of Hamas leadership from the kingdom.) —Abdelraouf al-Rawabdeh, former prime minister, Al Arabiya, July 22, 2016

Egypt

- “Security agencies have uncovered a major plot and conspiracy aimed at destabilizing Egypt. The assassination of [former public prosecutor Hisham] Barakat was carried out under the guidance of fugitive Brotherhood leaders in Turkey in coordination with Hamas in Gaza (<https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2016/3/6/%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%AA%D9%87%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B3-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%BA%D8%AA%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%A8>), which oversaw the operation from its inception to its completion... [Hamas] provided training for militants to execute it and also took part in planning it.” —Magdy Abdel Ghaffar, minister of interior, Al Jazeera, March 6, 2016
- “I request striking the terrorist camps inside Gaza (<https://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2016/03/06/881019.html>) because terrorism always originates from within it. It is the responsibility of the Arab countries to take action to reject the involvement of Hamas in the assassination of Deputy Barakat through training conducted within Gaza aimed at assassinating him.” —Ahmed Moussa (journalist, TV presenter), *al-Watan Voice*, March 6, 2016
- “Just like we died in the past in defense of the Palestinian cause, we are ready to die today in defense of the Palestinian cause— (<https://www.memri.org/tv/egyptian-tv-hosts-criticize-hamas-leaders-we-are-sick-and-tired-you>) but we are not ready to die in defense of Hamas (<https://www.memri.org/tv/egyptian-tv-hosts-criticize-hamas-leaders-we-are-sick-and-tired-you>)...We are not prepared to sacrifice even a single hair from the eyebrow of an Egyptian soldier or civilian for the sake of Hamas and all the people who wage Jihad, while indulging themselves in all kinds of dishes at the swimming pool.” —Mazher Shahin, al-Tahrir TV host, July 12, 2014, posted by Middle East Media Research Institute
- “The Egyptian people will not accept an alternative, and their armed forces will only accept striking the centers of terrorism in the Gaza Strip and the destruction of Hamas (https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=876236515737372&paipv=0&eav=AfbTt_WeZiPmokO9QCF23JYeM_8bW_H_ebfJq9rY7500ihSh0X2qKOpf_B_TkzqIT-tk&_rdr) through decisive military operations.” —Hayat El-Derderi, journalist, Facebook, July 13, 2014
- “We know Hamas is the Brotherhood and the Brotherhood are terrorists (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-gaza-idUSBREA0D09D20140114>) and no country could develop with terrorists in or around it.” —unnamed Egyptian security official, interview with Reuters, January 14, 2014

Bahrain

- “Without Iran’s presence— (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/bahraini-fm-if-not-for-irans-support-of-hamas-wed-be-closer-to-mideast-peace/>) Iranian soldiers, Iranian funds, Iranian support for Hamas and the jihadists who control Gaza— (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/bahraini-fm-if-not-for-irans-support-of-hamas-wed-be-closer-to-mideast-peace/>) we would be much closer to achieving a better peace (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/bahraini-fm-if-not-for-irans-support-of-hamas-wed-be-closer-to-mideast-peace/>) between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and we would have a better opportunity.” —Khalid bin Ahmed al-Khalifa, minister of foreign affairs, *Times of Israel*, July 20, 2019

Kuwait

- “Although our hearts go out to the people of Gaza, we say to [Hamas]: For God’s sake, show some regard for the lives of the Muslims (<https://www.memri.org/tv/kuwaiti-cleric-othman-al-khamis-criticizes-hamas-show-some-regard-lives-muslims>) who were killed. More than 2,000 Muslims were killed, and over 10,000 wounded. Who is responsible for that? What were they killed for?” —Othman al-Khamis, cleric, posted by Middle East Media Research Institute, August 10, 2014
- “[Hamas] uses Palestinian blood as fuel for their war (<https://www.memri.org/tv/kuwaiti-columnist-fouad-al-hashem-hamas-uses-palestinian-blood-fuel-gain-power>), in order to reach power.” —Fouad al-Hashem, columnist, Rotana Khalijia TV (Saudi Arabia), July 14, 2014, posted by Middle East Media Research Institute

These excerpts were compiled by Miller Greene, Ana Estrada Hamm, Frances McDonough, and Ahmad Sharawi.



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