

Hamas's Misleading Narrative and Its Impact on Jordanian National Security

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Brief Analysis

In Jordan, Hamas is working to create a misleading narrative that conflates support for ending the war in Gaza and the Palestinians' right to self-determination with supporting Hamas.

A nguish and anger over the ongoing war are widespread across the Arab and Muslim world, and support for the Palestinian cause has been a rallying cry for decades. Hamas has proved itself shrewd and politically savvy; with support from the Iranian regime, Hamas propaganda is working hard to manipulate the emotions of Arab and Muslim publics, portraying support and sympathy for the Palestinian people as a full-throated endorsement of its political project and seeking to inextricably link the two.

So far, Hamas has apparently succeeded in reaping the benefits of this narrative. Beyond supporting the legitimate rights of Palestinians, [polling and anecdotal evidence \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/what-does-war-gaza-mean-jordans-national-security\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/what-does-war-gaza-mean-jordans-national-security) suggest the popularity of Hamas in the region has jumped significantly for the time being. Meanwhile, there is a notable lack of publicly expressed rejection countering their narrative.

In Jordan specifically, the group is actively seeking to further exploit the war to garner increased support—provocative statements by Hamas political bureau member Moussa Abu Marzouk have highlighted how comfortable the groups feels. In his interview with Iran's Al-Alam TV on April 29, 2024, he [claimed](#)

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[%25D9%2582%25D8%25B7%25D8%25B1](#)) that "Jordan will be the next destination for the movement's leaders if they leave Qatar. Jordan is a hospitable and generous country and supports Palestinian resistance. We have a good relationship with the Jordanian regime." He added, "Jordan and Egypt should cut ties with Israel and expel the ambassador. Such positions will stop the operation in Rafah."

A significant part of the Jordanian street movement's response to the war has been an emotional and human expression of popular anger at Israel's actions against civilians in Gaza and the West Bank. The Palestinian cause is a particularly sensitive and emotional issue for many Jordanians, including those older military personnel who remember when the West Bank was part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan before Israel occupied it in the 1967 war. The state [deliberately tolerated and encouraged \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/what-does-war-gaza-mean-jordans-national-security\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/what-does-war-gaza-mean-jordans-national-security) popular protests at the beginning of the war to contain popular anger, especially among Jordanians of Palestinian origin, and to prevent internal tensions from being exploited by the Iranian regime and its militias in neighboring Syria and Iraq.

Moreover, King Abdullah II has indeed condemned the heinous killing and kidnapping of the elderly, women, and children on October 7. In his speech alongside U.S. President Joe Biden at the White House on February 12, 2024, he [affirmed \(https://www.al-monitor.com/ar/originals/2024/02/baydn-lahl-alardn-nhn-nard-ay-thjyr-qsry-llflstynyyn\)](https://www.al-monitor.com/ar/originals/2024/02/baydn-lahl-alardn-nhn-nard-ay-thjyr-qsry-llflstynyyn) that "all attacks against innocent civilians, women, and children, including those that occurred on October 7, are unacceptable to any Muslim... We must ensure that the atrocities of the past months since October 7 will never be repeated and will not be accepted by any human being." Although the king avoided using the controversial and elusive term "terrorism," his speech could have been a moral and humanitarian pillar for a popular rejection of Hamas's actions as religiously unacceptable, building a moral imperative to reject religious or nationalist extremism and terrorism from both Arab and Israeli sides.

However, throughout the war there has been an almost complete silence when it comes to criticizing Hamas, whether it be its extremist ideology, its actions, or its destructive role in this war. The rare voices that do criticize Hamas's actions and call for peaceful negotiations are all too frequently stigmatized as traitors and attacked in order to silence these critiques. Meanwhile, pro-Hamas social media pages, such as "[Jordan's Flood to Support Gaza \(https://t.me/s/TwfanJordan\)](https://t.me/s/TwfanJordan)" on Telegram and the the "[Jordanian Youth Assembly to Support Resistance \(https://x.com/tajammo3_jo?lang=en\)](https://x.com/tajammo3_jo?lang=en)," account on X (formerly Twitter) have called for escalating protests and extremist demands in the streets under the pretext that the Jordanian state is failing to support the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank. Islamist factions are not the only elements attempting to undermine security in this way; some remnants of nationalist and leftist parties, some political figures, and a number of retired military personnel have joined the calls for increased demonstrations.

In this respect, the lack of a popular challenge to the narratives of Hamas is particularly concerning, as these unchallenged narratives can lead to easier recruitment and popular pressure for Jordan to weaken its security arrangements. Left unaddressed, these efforts aim to pressure the government to take more extreme positions towards Israel—such as canceling the peace treaty or demanding the dismantling of U.S. bases in Jordan—after feeling empowered by the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from Amman and the suspension of the water-for-energy project between Jordan and Israel.

Despite all the political and security problems caused by Hamas and the negative and malicious behavior of the Muslim Brotherhood towards the government in recent months, Jordan remains committed to managing its relations with the United States and maintaining the peace treaty with Israel. Intelligence communication and security coordination between the two countries have not ceased despite the apparent hostility between Netanyahu's

government and the Jordanian crown. It is all too clear that Tehran and its various proxies in the region are seeking to make Jordan a battlefield within Iran's known multi-front strategy managed by the Revolutionary Guard from Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen against the United States and Israel.

But the question of public attitudes towards Hamas is also a national security issue. Thus, there is a need for continuous and rigorous review of Jordan's positions towards Hamas, and to more publicly address the damaging behavior of those who promote it as a political tool. Such a discourse has enabled the Islamists to capitalize on the prevailing public sentiment and momentum supporting Islamic resistance, which helped them secure 31 out of 138 seats (22.4% of the total) in the recent parliamentary elections.

Jordanians should contrast the lack of internal debate with the wide range of opinions voiced by Jews and Israelis inside and outside Israel that they themselves have often pointed to and praised—from intellectuals and writers to politicians, soldiers, academics, and even ordinary people, raising their voices calling for a just peace with the Palestinians and criticizing the horrific aspects of war in Gaza. In Israel, voters have the power in principle to remove Itamar Ben Gvir, Bezalel Smotrich, and the rest of the far right from power through elections, where governments can come and go through the ballot box based on Israeli voters' decisions.

In contrast, how the Arab world and the Palestinian people will get rid of Hamas is a much thornier question. One essential step is the ability to openly criticize Hamas and address its position as a security threat to the state of Jordan. And even under the current situation, the Jordanian state also possesses sufficient strength, willpower, and experience to manage any attempts to cross red lines and create a state of security chaos in the country. ❖

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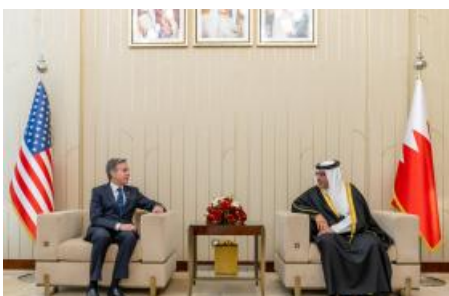
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