

Shut Down Hamas

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Jan 22, 2004

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Articles & Testimony

Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher bravely told an audience at the American University of Kuwait recently that "we [Arab nations] have failed in taking a stand against targeting civilians in all sides, including Israeli civilians."

His Jan. 13 comment is significant because it followed the "strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and sources" by Arab interior ministers meeting in Tunisia a week earlier.

But the truest test of Arab willingness to condemn attacks on civilians remains whether Arab states will take action against Hamas, including its political leadership. While Jordan expelled Hamas leaders from Amman in 1999, they continue to plan, coordinate and fund terrorist attacks targeting Israeli and other civilians from Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Qatar, while Hamas recruits receive training in Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Sudan and even Jordan.

Indeed, according to Zainab al-Suwaij, a native of Basra, Iraq, and director of the American Islamic Conference, Hamas now runs a political office in Nasiriyah, Iraq, where it is radicalizing and recruiting Iraqi youths.

Hamas leaders readily acknowledge the central role their organization's "political wing" plays in operational decision-making. In July 2001, for example, Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi commented, "The [Hamas] political leadership has freed the hand of the [Izzedine al-Qassam] brigades to do whatever they want against the brothers of monkeys and pigs." Izzedine al-Qassam is Hamas' military wing.

And Hamas leaders are not all talk. A U.S. Treasury Department report in August identified some of the strictly military functions served by several senior Hamas political leaders. Among them:

- Khalid Mishaal, head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, Syria, "has been responsible for supervising assassination operations, bombings and the killing of Israeli settlers. To execute Hamas military activities, [he] maintains a direct link to Gaza-based Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi. He also provides instructions to other parts of the Hamas military wing."
- Usama Hamdan, Hamas' representative in Lebanon, "has worked with other Hamas and Hezbollah leaders on initiatives to develop and activate the military network inside the Palestinian territories in support of the current intifada, including the movement of weapons, explosives and personnel to the West Bank and Gaza for Hamas fighters."

- Imad Khalil Al-Alami, a Hamas leader in Syria, "has had oversight responsibility" and "directs sending personnel and funding" to Hamas terror cells in the West Bank and Gaza.

Similar activity has also been coordinated from the United States.

In the early 1990s, Hamas leader Musa Abu Marzouk, then living in the United States, dispatched self-described Hamas activist Mohammed Salah from Chicago to the Palestinian territories four times between 1989 and 1993 to fund and reorganize the Hamas military wing after Israeli arrests and deportations of Hamas activists.

Although Mr. Marzouk was purportedly only a political official, investigators discovered he instructed Mr. Salah "to recruit people in the U.S." About 1990, Mr. Salah "selected 10 people to serve on a military team and had them trained in the United States by Muslim instructors from the United States and Lebanon who had military experience."

An FBI affidavit in 1998 noted that Mr. Salah facilitated Hamas terrorist training efforts that "included mixing poisons, development of chemical weapons, and preparing remote control explosive devices." The affidavit also said Mr. Salah gave a Hamas member more than \$48,000 to buy weapons for use in Hamas attacks. At one point, Mr. Salah suggested to Mr. Marzouk that Hamas assassinate Palestinian negotiator Sari Nusseibeh for his role in peace talks with Israel.

Together with their colleagues abroad, Hamas political leaders in the West Bank and Gaza also plan and participate in attacks.

For example, in a 1994 telephone conversation secretly recorded by the FBI, Sheik Jamil Hamami, a Hamas political leader in the West Bank, told fellow Hamas members in the United States and Yemen: "We ... will act to make [the peace process] fail too. Operations [of] particular types will take place to shake this self-rule administration," according to the FBI.

Hamas leaders in Gaza, including the relatively moderate Ismail Abu Shanab and the more radical Mr. Rantisi, also have been implicated by U.S. and Israeli authorities in Hamas attacks.

The international community -- including Arab states -- must respond with the unequivocal message that no cause, however legitimate, justifies the use of terrorism. The council of Arab interior ministers should extend its condemnation of terror to include Hamas. And if Arab states would shut Hamas political offices, they would go a long way toward exposing the true nature of Hamas and put the Palestinian people back on the road to statehood.

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Baltimore Sun

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