

Islamic Resistance Movement

Hammas

Studies of
Thought & Experience

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Chapter Twelve

Hamas: Milestones in Thought and Experience

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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.*

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



Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations

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