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Entitled

Hamas’ Vision

For the Advancement of the Palestinian National Project

Presented in a webinar held by

Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations

3/11/2021

In the Name of Allah Most Merciful Most Beneficent

Hamas’ Vision for the Advancement of the Palestinian National Project

Presented by the Head of the Movement’s Political Bureau Isma‘il
Haniyyah

In a webinar held by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations
on 3/11/2021¹

All praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and prayers and peace be upon the Master of the Messengers, our Master Muhammad and his family and companions.

I want to express my thanks and appreciation for the invitation of al-Zaytouna Centre. My gratitude is extended to my brother, Dr. Mohsen Saleh, and I also salute the center for its pioneering role in enriching national discussions on various issues, acting as an important tributary to many studies and research centers concerned with our people, our issue and our region.

¹ The final text of the paper was received after editing and some additions made by Mr. Ismail Haniyeh on 10/11/2021.



I welcome the dear brothers participating in this webinar, and I salute our Palestinian people, whether they are inside the occupied Palestinian territory or outside waiting for the hour to return to their land and homes, and salute all the members of the *Ummah* [Muslim nation] and all the free people of the world.

I also salute our people in Jerusalem, especially in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, who today are expressing their national, Arab and Islamic stance by rejecting the alleged deal offered by the Israeli courts, preferring to stay with their homes and their ownership of this pure and blessed land. This confirms the adherence of the Palestinian people to their land and their rights, and proves that these rights are neither lost nor subject to statutes of limitations and that they cannot be robbed by Zionist firepower, oppression, or external political support to this entity.

As this webinar coincides with the 114th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, this gives us an important motivation to address a topic that lies at the core of the issue, and at the root of the conflict with the Zionist occupation.

At the outset, I would like to offer an overview of the important changes that have occurred in the situation internally and externally:

Current Changes

Several changes have occurred in the Palestinian situation that have both direct and indirect implications for the course of the conflict with the occupation, in addition to their impact on the Palestinian national project, and on the positioning of the resistance project at the heart of this conflict. We highlight four of them:

First Change: The cancellation of the legislative, presidential and the Palestinian National Council (PNC) elections that had been agreed upon, shortly before voting day and before beginning a new road map to rearrange the Palestinian house and rebuild the Palestinian political system.

The cancellation of the elections, under the pretext that the Israelis would not allow them to be held in Jerusalem, has caused a real national predicament, and brought us back to square one. This is while we affirm that no one in the Palestinian arena would agree to holding elections without Jerusalem. However, we have always emphasized that holding elections in



Jerusalem is a national battle that we must fight together, and by which we would impose our will as Palestinians, as we have many means and ways in this matter.

Second Change: The Battle of the Sword of Jerusalem, which marked an important shift in the course of the conflict with the Zionist occupation. Indeed, it produced important outcomes, and opened a broad horizon for our people, our nation and all the free peoples of the world. The battle confirmed the unity of the Palestinian homeland, at the geographic level, from Rafah to Ras al-Naqoura; the unity of the Palestinian people at the action level, and the ability of the resistance to discredit the Israeli deterrence theory. It also confirmed that Jerusalem remains the heart of the conflict.

The battle re-centered the issue of Palestine in the Arab, Islamic and even global realms, after ten years of losing its level of priority dwindling among the people of the region, due to their preoccupation with the conflicts that have erupted in their region.

Third Change: The US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Although Afghanistan is far from Palestine, the decision to withdraw has its effects on the region, the [Palestine] issue and the conflict with the Israeli occupation. Twenty years ago, the US entered the region militarily through the gateway of Afghanistan, and now it has begun leaving the region, with its military presence receding significantly in Afghanistan. This withdrawal could be followed by other withdrawals, potentially from Iraq or northern Syria. Undoubtedly, the results of this retreat will impact the allies of the US in the region, led by the Zionist entity.

Fourth Change: Zionist attempts to penetrate the region through normalization with some Arab governments. This is manifesting through the implementation of the “Deal of the Century” and the projects of the so-called “regional peace” or “economic peace.” Today, we are witnessing attempts to forge military and security alliances in the region, in which Israel is successful due to its military, security and economic superiority.

These four changes bring with them opportunities and challenges, and impose a lot of historical and national responsibilities on us as Palestinians. We are facing very complex and difficult equations, which must force us to work according to a comprehensive, mature and specific vision, based on



political purity and confidence in the ability of our people to win the battle of wills.

The Main Axes of the Vision

Our vision of how to advance the national project can be summarized in four axes:

First Axis: Our vision and general description of the current situation and stage, in which the framework governing our issue is formed. They are summarized in the following dimensions:

First Dimension: Our issue is an Islamic cause, with links to Qur'anic scriptures and the prophet's hadiths. It [includes protecting] *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and the land where the Messenger of Allah (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) was transported and ascended to heaven. Jerusalem is the gateway to heaven. Jerusalem was conquered by 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and liberated by Saladin. It has been painted by the blood of the Prophet's companions and their successors. In it are buried the remains of the Mujahideen leaders and founders of jihad and resistance movements throughout the phases of the open conflict with the Zionist project. Therefore, it is a sacred issue, whose fundamentals and Islamic identity are not subject to alteration. For this reason, Hamas moves and deals with changes, challenges and opportunities on the basis of a fixed, clear and fundamental vision.

Second Dimension: The Palestine issue is a national as well as an Arab issue, in addition to being a humanist issue. In it, the national, Arab, Islamic and humanist levels complement one another, interacting in harmony as part of the project for liberation and return.

The level of the conflict with the Zionist enemy is so complex and overlapping that no faction alone can settle it, whether it is Fatah, Hamas or any other faction. If we say that the nature of the conflict with the occupation is a civilizational conflict, since the Zionist entity represents the spearhead of a Western project in the region, then the Palestinian factions and the Palestinian resistance constitute the spearhead of the *Ummah* [Muslim Nation] and the free people of the world.



Third Dimension: We are still in the stage of national liberation, as the Palestinian people are still seeking liberation from occupation, and are striving to achieve their goals of freedom, return and independence. Any characterization outside this leads us, and has indeed led us, into confusion and political turmoil. Some believed that we were in a stage of building a national authority as a step towards a Palestinian state, or a state under occupation or an authority under occupation. As a result, concepts, programs and goals have been muddled, with a negative impact on the outcomes in politics and on the ground.

Fourth Dimension: The main contradiction is with the occupation. While there are differences and disparities between us as Palestinians, or a conflict between programs and methods, and how to deal with changes and developments, Hamas and the resistance forces and all the honorable patriots see that the main foe of our people is the Zionist enemy. They do not see that the internal differences between us can shift the camp of enemies into the Palestinian arena, since we Palestinians are one people despite political differences.

Fifth Dimension: The principle of partnership is an obligatory necessity in building institutions, whether the representative institutions of the Palestinian people, or partnership in governance within the regions of the West Bank (WB) and Gaza Strip (GS). The policy of exclusion is not one to adopt in the process of national liberation. The national whole is important in the Palestinian equation of power, be it factions, figures or institutions, and everyone's participation is essential in confronting the Zionist occupation.

Sixth Dimension: The Palestine issue, by virtue of the overlapping layers within it, affects and is affected by the regional and international dimension. Indeed, it was an international decision that formed the basis for building the Zionist project in the region. For example, we are now in the month of November, and we have two dates that reflect the dimensions of the historical injustice that befell our people: the anniversary of the calamitous Balfour Declaration, and then the anniversary of the United Nations partition decision. Therefore, as we seek to advance the national project, we cannot neglect this [international] dimension. We are connected to the rest of the world, not on an island isolated [or separate].



What is also supremely important is to build positively across our regional and international landscape, but never at the expense of Palestinian national fundamentals. We have experienced some negative outcomes in our official relations with some countries in the region as well as internationally.

These dimensions, describing the reality and the stage of this issue, require us to state clearly that a people under occupation must adopt a strategy of resistance to achieve liberation. No people throughout contemporary history have been able to liberate themselves from their occupier without comprehensive resistance in all its forms, including armed resistance. We face a colonial settler occupation that does not even recognize the existence of our people and their right to live in their homeland. Its well-known narrative being “a land without a people for a people without a land.” This is a settlement-replacement occupation based on expulsion and displacement, and on the concept of the so-called “Jewishness of the state” and “a state for all Jews”; that is the “Jewishness of the state” in its legal sense, and “a state for all Jews” meaning that every Jew in the world can live within this state.

These dimensions in describing our reality in all its aspects are very important in helping us to understand the dimensions of the national project, the challenges it faces, how we might deal with them, and determining the components necessary for advancement. These components are interdependent. We cannot remove any component from a comprehensive vision, because a Palestinian project of this size and complexity can never be tackled through a limited or fragmented vision, but rather through an integrated vision and an integrated theory.

Second Axis: The Challenges:

All Palestinian generations, leaders and factions are aware of the nature of the Palestinian national project, and the challenges surrounding it since its inception, but the intractability we are facing today requires research into the factors that have brought the Palestinian national project into its current predicament.

Many factors have contributed to this predicament, starting from the time of the discussions surrounding the ten-point program in 1974 and the Resistant Authority. Since that time, the foundations of a different situation



have been laid, regarding the Palestinian national project and then the Oslo Accords, which led to collapses and setbacks. Although we do not ignore the bright spots in the history of the Palestinian revolution and its steadfastness in Lebanon, and the first and second *Intifadah*, the painful truth is that the Oslo Accords constituted the start of the bitter harvest that we have now reaped. This resulted in five major challenges that are the manifestations of the regression of the Palestinian national project:

First Challenge: There is a major political imbalance, reflected in the concepts and vocabulary of the national project: Historic Palestine, the right of return, the land and the borders of the Palestinian state, the resistance and the armed struggle. These concepts were disturbed after Oslo, as were the goals, means, and the function of the Palestinian Authority (PA). All of this dragged the national issue into a maze and resulted in the major imbalance that the Palestinian arena has been suffering ever since.

Now, what goals are we talking about? What are the national fundamentals on which there is a consensus? What is our concept of the state and state borders? What is our understanding of the mechanisms of dealing with this occupation? Is this Authority really, as was said, a step on the path of establishing the state, or has it been transformed into an institution that the occupation forces are satisfied with, particularly due to its willingness to work as a partner in the field of security?

We plunged into political imbalance and turmoil, reflected in our performance, policies and [internal] relations, and this has negatively impacted external solidarity with us. Thus, we began to hear statements like “we accept what the Palestinians themselves accept,” followed by audacious moves towards recognizing the Israeli entity or normalizing relations with it, most recently with the occupying state being welcomed an observer member of the African Union.

Second Challenge: The lack of representation of half of the Palestinian people—i.e., the Diaspora and our people in occupied Palestine of 1948—in the equation of the conflict and the project of liberation and return. Indeed, it can seem now as if the Palestine issue has become the cause of WB and GS residents only. When they talk about elections and government, the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and PA refer to legislative elections and the government in WB



and GS. As for the Palestinian people abroad, since Oslo, attempts have been made to expunge them from the equations of liberation and return, and the threat this encourages is the attempted erasure of the right of return. Certainly, no Palestinian national project can rise without the integration of the interior and the Diaspora; the Palestinian bird cannot fly with one wing.

Third Challenge: The decline in the leadership role of the Palestinian people, represented by the PLO, sacrificed to put more power in the hands of the PA. Instead of the PLO being the PA's frame of reference, the opposite happened. The PLO's budget has become part of the PA or presidency's budget. The truly representative leadership institution of our Palestinian people was undermined and weakened, and its meetings convened only to approve internal or external projects.

Fourth Challenge: The decline of the role of resistance as a strategic option in the mind of the Palestinian leadership, which has placed its faith in negotiations and commitment to the so-called "peace" as a strategic option, while claiming that security cooperation [with Israel] is "sacred" and that *Intifadahs* and rockets are "futile".

While resistance has receded in the mind of the Palestinian leadership, it has not in the minds of the Palestinian people, and not even among the popular bases of the Fatah movement itself, who stand alongside us when it comes to resistance, *Intifadah*, prisons, detention centers, and are among the martyrs and wounded, facing settlements, sieges and wars. Adding insult to injury, the PA leadership has been unable to combine political action with resistance, making Palestinians like those mocked for seeking out a duel without bringing a sword.

Fifth Challenge: These failures have led to a decline of solidarity with the Palestine issue, and some even daring to normalize and recognize the Israeli entity and exchange ambassadors. This has happened under the pretext that the Palestinians themselves accepted giving up 78% of the land of Palestine, accepted their security forces collaborating with the occupation, cracking down on the resistance and imposing sanctions on Gaza, despite it being the strategic base of the resistance and a bastion of the Palestinian people.



Third Axis: Strengths:

Another question we should ask is: Is the situation and the outlook really so bleak? Certainly not, for we have many elements of strength. Here I focus on four particular strengths:

First: At the top of the list are the Palestinian people themselves. This great, faithful, steadfast nation has never been tired of resistance, steadfastness and resilience. They have offered hundreds of thousands of martyrs, wounded and prisoners, along with destroyed homes and millions of refugees. They have faced massacres, Judaization, attempts to destroy their national identity and attempts to demoralize their youth. Yet these efforts have failed to bring our people to their knees or shake their determination to achieve their goals and their freedom.

These people are a reservoir of revolution and leadership, an incubator of resistance. Whenever the occupation and the people collaborating with it think that these people have become tired and unable to continue, the people rise up again like a phoenix from under the rubble. They will initiate uprising after uprising, and revolution after revolution, fight wars, and record luminous pages in the history of the conflict with the occupation. Today, we can state that the Palestinian people's willingness and readiness to continue on the path to freedom has not lessened.

Second: The strength of the just cause that we have and believe in. The peoples of the world today and those with free consciences champion political, social and legal rights and justice. We have seen during the Battle of Sword of Jerusalem how the masses of the world came out in the United States of America, Europe, Asia and Australia in solidarity with the Palestinian people, Jerusalem and the resistance. It is this sense of justice that always renews our ability, hope, perseverance and persistence. Righteousness is on our side, right speaks for itself, and injustice is so glaring. The injustice of the occupation can never change the political, historical and geographical facts of this land, Palestine, nor its place, status, and power.

Third: Political geography; The strategic environment surrounding Palestine is an incubator of the cause and although there are ups and downs, the main context of this strategic environment is an incubator of the Palestinian people, resistance, *Intifadah* and all Palestinian rights.



Fourth: Resistance; The world has seen the ability of the Palestinian people when the besieged resistance in Gaza possesses missiles that can reach every inch of the geography of occupied Palestine. We must appreciate this ability when building the equation of deterrence against the occupation. Although Israel has the strongest army in the region, it does not dare to launch a ground operation in Gaza. The Palestinian people, with their popular, political, legal, civil, military and media resistance, have established themselves firmly on the map. Today, the resistance is preparing for the battles of liberation and expelling the occupiers.

Fourth Axis: Elements of Advancing the Palestinian National Project:

Between the challenges and predicaments, and between the opportunities and strengths, we can build and advance our Palestinian national project. Although the occupation is superior in matters of the military and intelligence, it is also in a predicament. The Israeli government is fragile, and the political structure in the Zionist society is not homogeneous. Israel's political parties today are different from what they were during the founding phase. This means that while we are thinking about restoring the vocabulary of the national project and advancing it, we start from a position of power, and not only predicament and crisis, as we work to set out realistic hopes for our people.

Therefore, we see that there are seven elements for the advancement of the national project:

First Element: Redefining the Palestinian national project with its fundamentals and objectives, as a project of liberation, return and statehood, with full sovereignty over the entire Palestinian national soil with Jerusalem as our capital, and the liberation of prisoners from enemy prisons.

Hence, it is necessary to agree on the goals and fundamentals, so that the compass should not go astray again. We say enough is enough, no more political wandering and 'pragmatism' at the expense of the fundamentals and goals.

Hamas, as it redefines the Palestinian national project, emphasizes the Arab and Muslim identity of Palestine, and evokes the place and status of



Palestine, its position in the *Ummah*'s immortal legacies, and its view of its sacred right to the entire land of Palestine.

Second Element: The restructuring of the Palestinian national leadership, represented by the PLO, on new political and administrative foundations that guarantee the participation of all forces and factions, securing the participation of our Palestinian people at home and in the Diaspora. We are not proposing an alternative to the PLO, but we are talking about how to rebuild the organization. That is why we accepted elections as an entry point for forming the PNC where elections can be held, or consensus is built where elections cannot take place. We reject the monopoly of leadership. There is no meaning in a Palestinian leadership that does not include Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front, the arms of resistance and independent personalities.

We are ready to immediately enter a real process of rearranging the PLO and building a unified Palestinian leadership that will steer the next stages for the Palestinian people. Until the completion of the PNC project, its rebuilding and the elections, we can form the national leadership for a temporary period represented by the provisional Palestinian leadership framework or the general secretaries of the Palestinian factions.

Third Element: Emphasizing that the independent Palestinian national decision cannot be taken under occupation through nebulous meetings of the PA or PLO institutions. The Palestinian will must be liberated from the grip of the occupier to ensure independent national decision making.

Hence, we emphasize redefining the PA and changing its functional role to act as leverage for the national project and not a cover for the occupation. The PA must not be an obstacle to the resistance or block the way for future generations to resolve the historical conflict with the Zionist enemy.

Fourth Element: Agreeing on a political program for the current stage, by focusing on common denominators and by referring to the agreements signed, whether the 2011 Cairo Agreement, the Prisoners' Document, or the unity government program signed in Mecca. This will provide a political legacy through which we can agree on a political program for the current stage. This program must be based on the inalienable fundamentals. Through the framework of this program, everyone participates, and in this political program of the current stage everyone must have a place.



Fifth Element: Agreeing on a strategy for resistance, managing the project of resistance against occupation, including popular resistance, combining diplomatic action with resistance, and agreeing on managing the decision related to resistance and political action. We have always said that we are ready to immediately engage in a project of popular resistance in WB, which will develop into an *Intifadah* and civil disobedience, and develop into all forms of resistance.

Sixth Element: Reviving our Palestine issue and Palestinian national project in its regional, Arab, and Islamic dimensions, as these provide the strategic depth of the issue and are the historical witness to our people and our nation's right to the land of Palestine and its blessed Jerusalem. It is the starting point for comprehensive liberation through the unity of fronts, the possession of revival elements and the direct involvement of the *Ummah* in the liberation project.

Seventh Element: The international dimension of the Palestine issue must be capitalized on, through its positive aspect at the official and popular levels, especially the growing state of solidarity with Palestinian rights, and the development of relations with various countries and relevant institutions. We must activate all effective efforts against the occupation, such as the boycott movements, and solidarity activities with our people. We must engage human rights and humanitarian institutions, build bridges with parties, and engage international actors in order to convey the Palestinian narrative in the best form, and push them to move to end the historical injustice against our Palestinian people.

These seven elements form levers for our Palestinian national project, and a starting point to regain the initiative and confront the occupation and its plans to liquidate the issue of our land and people.

In conclusion, despite all the surrounding challenges, I, as the head of the resistance movement in Palestine, Hamas, and from my position as a Palestinian citizen, am optimistic about the future. Much could be revealed in the coming stages [of our struggle], Allah willing.

Wassalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullah Wa Barakatuh [Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings]

