

Islamic Resistance Movement

Hammas

Studies of
Thought & Experience

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Chapter Fourteen

Hamas Assessment of the Experience

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Hamas Assessment of the Experience*

First: The Elements of Strength and Cohesion in Hamas

Hamas is almost unique among national liberation movements in that it has been able to maintain its unity and cohesion, for the following reasons:

1. The *shura* (consultation) structure in Hamas, which is binding for the leadership. The *shura* structure is broad, beginning in the neighborhood and terminating in the highest levels of the movement's leadership. *Shura* is the only path to rising in the ranks.
2. Specialized institutional work, which focuses on energies and encourages competencies, with regulations governing each institution.
3. Non-subservience to external policies, no matter how powerful or influential, with the movement's institutions preserving the ability to define its decisions and attitudes.
4. Separation of powers and the absence of dictatorships or authoritarian leaders.
5. Reliance on elections as the basis of selecting leaders at all levels.
6. Critiques, adjustments, and constant evaluation of all middle and top leaders, in a context of respect, conviviality and transparency.
7. Communication, mutual trust and respect between the leadership and the base.

The Most Important Elements of Strength and Cohesion

1. Internal education.
2. Organizational cohesion.
3. Institutional work.
4. Legitimacy-based leadership.

* This is the text of interviews conducted via e-mail by Mohsen Mohammad Saleh from Beirut, Lebanon, with Musa Abu Marzuq in Doha, Qatar. Correspondence began on 26/12/2013, and the text was approved by Dr. Abu Marzuq on 19/2/2014. The questions and answers were placed here in the form of titles to facilitate the readability of the text.

Second: The Priorities of the Palestinian National Project in the Eyes of the Hamas Movement

The national project is the project adopted by the national community, albeit through different ideological backgrounds and philosophical prisms. In this respect, we can say: Seldom has there been a Palestinian consensus on a national project, with the exception of a short period of time when the PLO project was put forward along with its national charter under the slogans of national unity, liberation, and return. The most dangerous division occurred, creating a split in the national project, when the Oslo Accords were signed. Fatah, and the PLO it led, adopted the project for a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and a just settlement to the refugee question, as part of the two-state solution, renouncing violence and accepting recognition of Israel. A sizeable segment of the Palestinians, whose priority was still resistance, liberation, and return, rejected this. The first proposal that brought the two rival camps together was the National Accord Document, which was signed by a sizeable number of factions, but was not fully implemented as an inclusive national project. In my belief, there are no permanent obstacles to reaching an inclusive national project based on national accord. But if we look at the priorities of the national project, we will no doubt see that there are some issues that affect the details of these priorities. These can be quickly summed up as follows:

1. The impasse that Palestinian statehood has hit through negotiations. The Israeli terms are impossible for the Palestinian side to accept. Meanwhile, huge challenges confront the resistance project because of security coordination in Palestine, the blockade and “Zionist” measures on the ground.

2. The state of the Palestinian people: Internally divided between a WB isolated from Jerusalem, Gaza, and the Palestinian interior. The WB itself is now divided into quasi-cantons under apartheid, making it difficult for the people of the same homeland to communicate and live with one another. This is not to mention the disasters that have befallen the Palestinians in the Diaspora, including in Iraq and Syria, and before that in Kuwait, in addition to the ongoing threat to the Palestinians of Lebanon, where at least half have left the country. In short, because of the Arab situation and policies after the *Nakbah* to the present day, our people have been displaced not once, but twice and thrice.

3. The national project cannot be isolated from the Arab milieu, which has yet to restore internal stability and reorder its political, social, and constitutional conditions.

4. The great advantages that the “Zionist” project enjoys in all areas, and implications therein for the Palestinian situation. Most security threats facing Israel have faded, including the armies of surrounding Arab states and neutralized chemical and nuclear weapons.

5. The international position (led by the US and Europe) in favor of political settlement, with overwhelming bias on the side of the “Zionist enemy.” Much of the international community’s influence on the Palestinian issue has been neutralized, though many people around the world continue to support the just Palestinian cause.

Taking the above points, I can I define the priorities of the Palestinian national project as follows:

1. Putting the Palestinian house in order, including:
 - a. Palestinian reconciliation and an end to division.
 - b. Rebuilding the PLO, reviving its institutions, and including everybody in its structures.
 - c. Reforming the PA to turn it into a tool of national leverage in line with an inclusive national program.
 - d. A code of honor that sets the rules governing political differences and handling of responsibilities, by prohibiting the use of force internally, promoting democracy and peaceful rotation of power, and upholding human rights and values, etc.
2. Resistance in all its forms as a right of the Palestinian people:
 - a. Criminalizing security coordination.
 - b. Agreeing on programs and mechanisms for resistance, such as joint committees, joint coordination, or joint leadership.
3. Freeing prisoners detained by Israel:
 - a. Working to free prisoners by all means.
 - b. Caring for liberated prisoners.
 - c. Caring for the families of prisoners and martyrs.

4. Restoring the Arab and Islamic roles in the Palestinian issue at all levels, official and popular. This is a strategic matter for our cause, and in order to rectify the historical mistake that placed 99% of Palestinian cards in the hands of the US.
5. Restoring international support and activating international institutions for the sake of our people, such as the International Criminal Court, human rights groups, and cultural institutions, and addressing all negative results of US pressure and domination of the region.

Third: Hamas Position on the Jews and Zionist Movement

We recognize Judaism as a religion and we believe in its prophets. The Islam of anyone of us cannot be complete without belief in all prophets; Abraham, Musa, 'Isaa, Isaac, Yusuf, John (Yahya), etc. We make no distinction between any of *Allah's* messengers, and we believe they are all infallible from sin, fraud, and immorality. Jews had long lived among Muslims, sharing their food and occasions, intermarrying with them, comforting them in their sadness and sharing in their happy occasions. When the West persecuted Jews, they sought shelter in Muslim lands. Jews thus came to Turkey, Morocco, and other countries. Never did history record that we persecuted Jews or Christians, whose protection and co-citizenship we considered even above those of Muslims in light of the Prophet's commandments.

The Palestinians did not rise up against Jews (as a Zionist movement) until after the Balfour Declaration, which granted Palestine to them as a national homeland, when at the time they accounted for less than 8% of the population of Palestine. The actions of the Palestinians against Zionist Jews in Palestine were on the grounds that the latter usurped their land, property, and killed their women and children in more than 100 massacres that the West, regrettably, turned a blind eye to. When we call Zionists "Jews" it is because they insist their actions are on behalf of all Jews and insist Israel is the homeland of the Jews.

The Zionist movement is a racist movement that encourages murder, land grabs, the funding and arming of men to kill innocents. The movement transported hundreds of thousands of people from Europe, Russia, Africa, and the Mashreq into Palestine, confiscating Palestinian lands by force of arms. The movement established colonies at the expense of the Palestinians, whose lives were destroyed

and who were forced to live in camps. To this day, they live in dispossession without having done anything to deserve it, solely on the basis of religious claims that are not corroborated in any way by history or indeed by religion: A just God would never grant another people's lands and discriminate against one people in favor of another people, as they believe.

Although the "Zionists" chased down Palestinians into the Diaspora and into their homes in Arab and Western capitals, Hamas chose to restrict its resistance to the Palestinian interior and did not carry out any operations outside Palestine.

Outside Palestine, "Zionists," mostly Jewish "Zionists," organize themselves into political lobbies to pressure the parliaments of Europe and America, using money, the media, and ballot boxes to gather support for Israel and supply it with all means of killing and destruction.

Fourth: The Position on the Recognition of the "Zionist Entity," and the Peace Settlement Project, and the Minimum That Can Be Accepted by Hamas

1. Recognizing the "Zionist Entity"

Recognizing the "Zionist entity" would mean ceding at least 78% of historical Palestine (in light of Abu Mazen's acceptance to exchange lands). These lands have rightful owners, including myself. My father was forcibly removed from his village of Yibna along with its entire population, and forced to march on foot to a refugee camp in Rafah in GS. My family, which consists of hundreds of members, will never cede its right and surrender its village for any alternative. The same goes for all Palestinians, who will never relinquish their right to return to their homeland. Even if all parties reach an agreement, there is no way we would recognize the "Zionist entity" on the land of my fathers and ancestors, no matter how much the facts change and the balances are broken.

2. The Oslo Accords

In 1993, Hamas and most factions inside and outside the PLO rejected Oslo in principle. Today, 20 years later, our rejection has proved to be right on the mark, given the outcome of that path. The resistance drove out the occupation from GS,

while negotiations perpetuated the occupation in WB. The negotiations continue, but the Oslo Accords were overtaken in the direction of something even more sinister.

The negotiations taking place today are opposed by the entire national spectrum, even the negotiators, who resigned only for Abu Mazen to make them return to negotiations. The most dangerous fact is that there are US pressures to accept a new framework involving US proposals. There are US-European threats to the leadership of the PLO. The only description I have [for the project] is a state in the remnants of the WB in return for salaries paid to PA employees. The political conditions of the Arabs and the Palestinians are not conducive at all for any negotiations with the “Zionist entity,” and the PA must instead seek to unify the people and its forces under the banner of the homeland.

3. The Bare Minimum that Hamas Can Accept

The peace process is based on the two-state solution, mutual recognition, and ending the conflict. But regardless of all the justifications, ending the conflict would be unacceptable, the two-state solution is unacceptable, and mutual recognition is unacceptable as they mean discarding the rights and core principles of the Palestinian people.

Nevertheless, Hamas accepts a Palestinian state in the WB and GS with Jerusalem as its capital, without any settlements, and without recognizing “Israel.” Therefore, talk about similarity in the positions of Hamas and Fatah is incorrect; there is a fundamental difference between the two positions.

Fifth: The Experience of Hamas in the PA

Everyone knows that Hamas’s participation in the elections was on the basis of its own program and not the Oslo Accords. After winning 74 seats in the PLC, it was not allowed practically to govern GS and WB, especially in the wake of the capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. The “Zionist” authorities soon arrested members of the PLC and even ministers in WB, and imposed a siege on GS. For its part, Fatah pulled out its civil servants from their posts, handing over the empty offices to the Hamas government to thwart its work. All this made Hamas’s tenure uniquely difficult. For Hamas had to govern GS and its 1.5 million people (2006 figures) under siege, in addition to having to combine governance and resistance. The resilience of the small enclave has been astounding, before a “Zionist”

aggression by sea, land and air. In addition, Hamas's experience is considered the first such resistance characterized by an Islamic frame of reference, taking power by democratic means. It succeeded in fighting corruption, and governed under the banner of Change and Reform.

It is important to evaluate its experience in the light of the circumstances in which it governed in; crippling international siege, internal obstacles mainly imposed by Fatah (like pulling out civil servants from their posts), and the weakening of the capabilities of Hamas. Indeed, all international aid went to the government of Ramallah. Furthermore, military aggression continued, including the major wars of 2006, 2008/2009, and 2012. This is not to mention the needs of the population Hamas governed, from travel to employment and from humanitarian needs, education, and healthcare to reconstruction...

The WB experience with Hamas was too short to build an objective evaluation. As soon as Hamas's government took over, Fatah engaged in obstructionism abetted by the media and the "Zionist" enemy. Many government, municipal, and parliamentary leaders were arrested, with 42 deputies detained in the WB. After the WB-GS split, Hamas's ministers were ousted, mayors and municipal officials were persecuted, and a large number of Hamas-affiliated civil servants were sacked (1,100 civil servants).

While it is difficult to evaluate the experience in general, the following observations may be made:

1. Politically

Hamas has achieved the following:

- a. Gained popular legitimacy through success in the elections.
- b. Successfully confronted pressures, including pressures to recognize "Israel," renounce what they call "violence" meaning the resistance, and recognize signed agreements.
- c. Forged alliances and good relations with countries around the world, albeit some of these have been adversely affected in recent years.
- d. Reconciliation with Fatah, which has remained at a standstill, although agreements and accords were reached with Fatah under Egyptian mediation.
- e. Overcome the dilemma of Takfiri movements, and their incitement against Hamas among Salafi movements.

- f. The movement succeeded in overcoming all the pressure that were seeking to exclude it.

2. Economically

Hamas succeeded to some extent in building a limited but functional economy, dominated by commerce through the tunnels, which were closed down after mid-2013. Because of the siege, unemployment has remained high, above 40%. Infrastructure has remained dysfunctional because of Israeli aggression, and it was difficult to repair or upgrade it because of the blockade. Many sectors shut down because of low electricity production. Not even intact factories could operate, because of the absence of raw materials and power shortages. The poverty rate also increased dramatically. The huge deficit in the Hamas GS administration's budget was all too plain to see, caused by declining agricultural exports, tunnel closures, a decline in the private sector, and lack of local and foreign investment, with the exception of aid, given to the Strip.

3. Security

- a. Hamas restored security in the streets, imposed security orders and controlled arms. It imposed discipline on tribes and clans, especially those who were taking the law into their own hands or were engaging in bullying.
- b. Hamas succeeded in cracking down on agents and collaborators with the Zionists to a large degree, but could not eliminate them.
- c. Several al-Qaeda-linked groups emerged, albeit they were small in number and had limited influence. These include Jund Ansar Allah, Jaljalat, Hizbullah in Palestine, Jaysh al-Islam, etc. These groups claimed that Hamas was not implementing Shariah law, declaring the movement and its government as infidels. The groups declared an Islamic emirate in Rafah. These groups were behind the killing of Italian solidarity activist Vittorio Arrigoni and [the kidnapping of] British journalist Alan Johnston, as well as various other attacks.
- d. There was also unjustified violence against the regular police forces by families during arrests of wanted men, but Hamas was able to control the situation.

4. Socially, Morally and Legally

Perhaps this was one of the aspects that caused the most criticism against Hamas in GS. Many rumors circulated about forcing women lawyers and female school students as well as women in the public to wear hijab [Islamic dress code], banning

them from sitting in cafes and smoking shishas, and banning them from riding motorcycles. There were claims that Hamas was going beyond “Erdoğanism” to “Talibanism,” establishing a new Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Palestine. There were even claims that the PLC approved, in its second reading, a new penal code, and that there was no third reading for more than two years. But none of this had any base in reality in the life of the GS people and their Hamas-led administration. However, some things were indeed true and we must address them, such as the lynching of collaborators in the street and restrictions on the freedom of some people to travel. In light of the bickering between Fatah and Hamas, some violations were almost inevitable, including restrictions on freedom of assembly and holding rallies, legal prosecutions, and summonses. Nevertheless, a broad segment of Hamas’s political opponents’ voiced criticisms and made claims that were vindictive, and filed vindictive complaints before a number of legal organizations, including in cases of elections in press syndicates, clubs, and trade unions, closing some non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and claiming that Hamas had prevented certain newspapers from WB from entering GS.

Sixth: Evaluation of Hamas’s Relations with Other Palestinian Forces

1. Relationship with Fatah

The relationship between Fatah and Hamas is complicated for objective reasons. The leadership of the PLO, most of its apparatus, its representatives in embassies and international organizations, in addition to the PA and various leaders and officials in the PLC and ministries are all from a Fatah background. Disagreements and agreements, or conflict and reconciliation, started to emerge most dramatically after Hamas won the [2006] legislative elections, with Fatah losing unexpectedly for the first time. The elections impacted Fatah’s leadership of the Palestinian national project and its institutions, particularly the PLO. It was feared that Hamas and its various branches would accede to the PLO, hold elections, and alter its internal equation. This explains the almost immediate calls for rerunning the legislative election, with the result of the elections only accepted in parallel with the bid to topple Hamas and end its first experience in power.

The differences over the national project emerged as Fatah insisted on the peace process and negotiations to reach a Palestinian state alongside “Israel” in a two-state solution, ending the conflict and accepting a just solution of the refugee issue instead of the right of return.

For its part, Hamas sees “Israel” as illegitimate and insists on not recognizing it. Hamas believes that resistance is the main program for the liberation of Palestine and the return of Palestinian refugees to their land. It accepts a Palestinian state in WB and GS with Jerusalem as its capital, without the recognition [of Israel], settlements, and ending the conflict.

The third difference concerns legitimacy. Fatah does not see Hamas as having any legitimacy, whether through the elections or its victory in the PLC, or through resistance; the source of legitimacy in the national liberation phase. For Fatah, only the Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas is legitimate.

One of the documents that revealed this was the National Accord Document, signed by all factions with the exception of the PIJ. This document addressed all the main points of contention, using wording agreed by all sides, whether in relation to political efforts, resistance, UN resolutions, the PLO, or other issues that have been the subject of disagreement. The second document was the Cairo Agreement and its annexes. The document addressed the issues of the government, PLC, presidency, elections, security file and social reconciliation. Meetings were held in Sanaa, Doha, Mecca, Damascus, Amman and Cairo to resolve the disputes. Previously, the dispute was embodied in attempts to marginalize, ignore, and then contain Hamas, and recently, to subdue it and assimilate it into Ramallah’s policies. There were many meetings between Hamas and Fatah held in Sanaa, Amman, Khartoum and Tunis. In those meetings, no agreements were reached except in Khartoum, but even then, Yasir ‘Arafat refused to sign the draft agreement, which was signed by Nasir Yusuf. This reflected the profound differences, the outlines of resolutions which were agreed but at the time of writing remain unimplemented (early 2014).

In my view, the differences between Fatah and Hamas will continue. But what ultimately matters here is this:

- a. Organizing these differences and not allowing them to go from their political aspect to become a military conflict, as happened in 2007.

- b. Implementing agreements, which requires political will and good faith.
- c. Fatah must accept partnership with all factions. Fatah must understand that the time of dominating and monopolizing the Palestinian decision-making process has gone. The time when nationalism could be defined by Fatah has ended, and the time of considering what others decide is backwardness and collaboration has also ended.
- d. Putting aside external factors despite the inherent difficulty in this (the main funding comes from the US). The “Zionist entity” controls at least three main aspects:
 - The government: through arrests and restrictions on freedoms.
 - Elections: Excluding certain parties, also using arrests and restrictions, and prohibiting elections in Jerusalem.
 - Security: The key issue and the “Zionist entity’s” pretext in any talks.

Israel has also vetoed Palestinian reconciliation and wants to maintain the division. Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu repeatedly said that Mahmud ‘Abbas has to choose between peace and Hamas, and that one cannot have both.

2. Relationship with the PIJ Movement

The relationship between Hamas and PIJ is special. They share the same ideology and approach, and it is hard to identify different policies.

PIJ was the first to carry out resistance operations against the occupation in the 1980s. One of the incentives that made Hamas move from preaching and reformism to resistance was the PIJ. We became like two horses racing in the same direction, with Hamas the one in the front today. Some have asked: If Hamas is on the field, then what is the future of the PIJ and its independence?

We have launched many dialogues with Dr. Fathi al-Shiqaqi. Our relationship goes far beyond a dialogue between two groups. It has been proposed that we should step up our coordination gradually until full merger and unity. The tightly knit relationship with the leadership continued afterwards, but certainly, there have been some friction due to competition over popular support, sometimes over some mosques, over mosques’ bulletin boards, and others over slogans painted on walls. Yet, these issues could be quickly resolved. Some issues had to do with PIJ rushing to take credit for some Hamas operations. Perhaps the biggest dispute occurred when Hamas decided to run in the legislative elections. For its own calculations,

the PIJ refused to participate. However, there was no serious damage caused to the relationship as a result of such political disputes. True, we have not merged or unified, but we continue to coordinate and engage in joint action. The Joint Committees and coordination between the leaderships has been successful and has had a positive impact at all levels.

3. The Relationship with the Left Forces

In the Palestinian arena, the main factions have been Fatah, Hamas, PIJ, and leftist groups. Historically, these comprised the Arab Nationalist Movement and the PCP. The latter has adopted leftist positions.

We can say that the forces of the Palestinian left can be divided into two parts: A camp that sided with the resistance and opposed the Oslo Accords, working with PIJ and Hamas in Damascus. And a camp whose leaders remained in the PLO Executive Committee and supported the Oslo Accords. Our relationship with the latter faction is good, but they are politically aligned with Fatah.

Seventh: Evaluation of the Palestinian Reconciliation Project

After the Israeli war on GS, the Battle of al-Furqan [Operation Cast Lead] 2008/2009, reconciliation efforts were immediately launched at the invitation of Egypt. The talks included all Palestinian factions, after a time in which Mahmud ‘Abbas had insisted on maintaining the status quo, to force Hamas to back down. There had been various attempts to exclude Hamas or thwart its administration of GS, for example by closing the crossings, tightening the blockade, and asking civil servants not to show up for work, under threat of suspending their wages. After the end of the war, in order perhaps to avoid bearing the consequences of the war, and after long and arduous talks, our brothers in Fatah proposed reattaching GS to WB, whereby everyone would be equal under occupation. For its part, Hamas believed that national accord and partnership should be the basis of political consensus.

The clearest evidence that supports Hamas’s position was Mahmud ‘Abbas’ refusal to implement a UN Human Rights Council report condemning the Zionist entity for its war on GS (Goldstone Report), despite popular consensus regarding the need to hold Israeli accountable. ‘Abbas then went to negotiations amid popular and factional opposition and rejection.

Hamass insists on accord and partnership. This is what prevented it, for many months, from signing the Egyptian document. When Mahmud ‘Abbas approved, the Egyptian document was signed with some notes added regarding accord on national partnership in all affairs. After the document was signed, a large number of amendments, measures, and details were signed, but we have yet to realize the real goal of ending division and restoring national unity (early 2014).

Regarding the accusation against Hamass of obstructing national reconciliation, this was a baseless allegation; both sides have committed mistakes, some were addressed and others were not. There were positive aspects that followed a political gain on 29/11/2012, when Palestine obtained the status of a non-member observer state at the United Nations, and then the victory of the resistance against Israeli aggression on GS (Operation Stones of Baked Clay) in November 2012. Steps were taken including releasing detainees, reducing media bickering, and allowing each side to organize rallies in WB and GS. The central electoral commission returned to GS, suggesting the split was about to end and a technocratic National Unity Government was going to be formed, chaired by Mahmud ‘Abbas.

There were many obstacles that blocked reconciliation, which I summarize as follows:

1. The external factor: By which I mean the “Zionist entity,” which controls several important areas: security, elections, and political, media, and electoral freedoms. Israel is also able to freely arrest ministers and MPs in WB. Another actor is the US, who is able to put pressure on donors and restrict payments to the PA. Both the “Zionist entity” and US are against reconciliation.

The “Zionist authorities” have frequently taken punitive measures, such as withholding tax receipts, arresting Palestinian ministers, MPs, and municipal officials. Netanyahu has threatened ‘Abbas, saying he must choose between Hamass and peace, and that he can’t have both ways.

2. Political programs: There are two political programs in the Palestinian arena: resistance and negotiations. The first is based on not recognizing the “Zionist entity,” resistance against its occupation of the land and the holy sites, and rejection of security coordination, negotiations, and the two-state solution. The second program is based on political settlement, recognition of the “Zionist entity,” negotiations with the occupation, security coordination, land swaps, and

cracking down on the resistance. For this reason, we find it extremely hard to find common ground and language to deal with one another. In this regard, the National Accord Document was probably one of the most successful approaches, though this obstacle of the political program remains significant.

3. The political priorities of Mahmud ‘Abbas: ‘Abbas does not want a confrontation with Israel or with the US, the sponsor who rejected reconciliation. His priority is negotiations, which is why he usually resorts to internal dialogue when negotiations are at an impasse, and backtracks when negotiations resume, making reconciliation a secondary issue for him.

As for the ways to overcome the division, it is through:

1. Political will: With enough political will, we can overcome many difficulties. But political will has not yet reached the level needed to reach political accord. If this were made a priority, things would be different, and better for the interests and rights of the Palestinian people.
2. Implementing what has already been agreed on, not stopping each time a major event takes place in the Arab world, and not waiting for negotiations with Israel.
3. Agreeing to a unified political program. I believe the National Accord Document could be a good basis for this.
4. Seeking Arab support and an understanding of the real depth of our cause. This needs to be revived and the cause of Palestine should not be left for US and international organizations.

Eighth: Revolutions and Changes in the Arab World

The changes in the Arab world have been profound. Hardly any regime can be exempted from questions about its future and about difficult internal challenges, whether in countries directly affected by the so-called Arab Spring or other nearby countries with different internal circumstances.

The Arab world is undergoing big changes, and it will take years before it settles on clear political foundations. Rival factions inside every country are strong enough to make them hard to dislodge from the scene, but weak enough to make it difficult for them to contain others, too.

Naturally, there are external actors influencing events in these countries too. The negative effects of the conflict and unrest are multilayered, and affect security, economy, poverty, unemployment, import, export, education, and social cohesion. The time in which we live makes it harder for minorities, be they religious, ethnic, or class-based, to rule by themselves. In the end, the will of the people will triumph, but this will likely have a huge price in blood and treasure. We ask *Allah* for pardon, well-being, and the recovery of our shared purpose.

Ninth: The Relationship with Iran, Syria and Hizbullah (Refusal Front)

1. The Relationship with Iran

The policy of the movement is to engage with all parties and forces of different creeds, sects, customs and races, and of all backgrounds, with the exception of the “Zionist entity.” Hamas’s established policy is that there can be no dialogue, meeting, or agreement with the “Zionist enemy.”

A criterion governing relations with these forces is based on their proximity and support for the Palestinian cause, people, and their resistance. Another would be non-interference in the internal affairs of the movement. Likewise, Hamas does not interfere in the internal affairs of these nations and parties. We need the support of all these actors, and the extent of their support is usually indicative of the level and depth of the relationship.

Our relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on its position on the Palestinian issue and its support for the people and resistance of Palestine, Iran being one of the leading nations in this regard. However, our relationship with Iran is not indicative of identical policies. We have differed with some of Iran’s policies, and Iran has objected to some of our policies. For example, we have diverged on Syria, and Iran was not in favor of our participation in the election in 2006. Despite all these differences, the relationship continued and Iran has never interfered in any of the movement’s internal affairs.

2. The Relationship with Syria

We have stressed on more than one occasion the following points regarding our relationship with Syria:

- a. Syria and President al-Assad have supported Hamas in all its positions and in its resistance. The relationship between us was special, standing in defiance of major powers, who pressured Syria to expel us or close down our offices.
- b. Throughout our relationship, the Syrian regime did not interfere in our internal affairs. The regime never asked us to do anything against our will.
- c. Hamas respected this relationship, and was grateful for the regime's support and cooperation. We considered our relationship exceptional because we valued the regime and its leadership.
- d. Upon the start of the unrest in Syria, the regime asked us to determine our position. We determined our position, which the regime accepted in April 2011, and which was consistent with our policy of non-interference. Our position was both in gratitude of the regime's support for us, and in support of the Syrian people's aspirations and rights.
- e. We tried, in good faith, to mediate between the regime and the opposition, based on advice from Hizbullah and with the approval of President al-Assad. As soon as we started moving, we were asked to stop at the request of President al-Assad himself, as conveyed to us by Maj. Gen. Ali Mamlouk.
- f. Hamas remained until November, without taking any decision to leave dear Syria. That is, until the regime proposed a meeting with the Syrian president, the Palestinian factions, and Hizbullah. We proposed a Palestinian meeting with the president alone, and then another Lebanese meeting, to avoid giving anyone a negative impression.
- g. The regime rejected the proposal and the meeting was canceled.
- h. The regime asked us to decide Hamas's position with it or against it, and did not accept our neutral posture regarding what was happening in Syria. Our position after the regime adopted the military solution was to reject that policy. Our advice was that the regime should adopt a political solution and not involve the army and security forces. This would have been reasonable, particularly since President Bashar al-Assad was not the subject of contention for almost all forces, throughout the first few months of the revolution.
- i. We were asked to meet with the president by ourselves. We tried to decline in various ways, to avoid giving out the impression that the movement had sided with the regime and its policies. We took the decision in this regard; we had no choice, either take a side, meet with the president or decline, and leave in line

with our policy not to intervene in Syrian affairs and to spare our Palestinians camps from the repercussions of the conflict in Syria.

- j. The political bureau decided to leave but not to boycott. A member of the political bureau and a field official remained behind while the rest of the political bureau and Hamas members who were not Palestinian Syrians left. We declared that the reason was the leadership's inability to run the internal and external affairs of Hamas because of the events in Syria, which was also correct.
- k. When we left, we did not criticize the regime and we recalled its support, but we also stressed our policies and principles in siding with the people and their aspirations.
- l. In fact, serious damage was caused to the movement, whose leaders and cadres were scattered, and whose relations with other forces and parties in our nation were hurt.
- m. Hamas did not take any position or decision in the direction of taking part in the conflict in Syria. All claims that members of the group under different names fighting and dying in the field, or training rebels on digging tunnels and planting bombs, were baseless. Those who claimed they were Hamas fighters were insincere. Those who fought and who had had a history with Hamas had already left the movement, and went to fight out of their own personal convictions that we had nothing to do with. Hamas's operations in Syria were limited to relief work in Refugee Camps, albeit many relief workers were killed or detained.
- n. The Palestinians cannot fight their cause on their own without Arab and Muslim support. Arabs and Muslims have been the depth of the cause, having considered Palestine their central question, sacrificing thousands of martyrs for its sake. Whatever happens, countries like Syria and Egypt, and all countries surrounding Palestine, are indispensable. Our people live in these countries, and their peoples have embraced our revolution throughout history. We cannot drop Syria from our minds or reality, and this is but a temporary situation where we had to adopt a certain position in line with our strategic policy of not interfering in others' affairs for the sake of our cause's future.

3. The Relationship with Hizbullah

Our relationship is one of shared struggle and jihad against the Zionist project. Perhaps the victories achieved by Hizbullah and Hamas were a milestone in the

history of the Arabs and the Muslims, against a tyrannical behemoth supported by the world's preeminent superpower. We work together to strengthen resistance at all levels, and we continue to hold meetings with Hizbullah. It has shown understanding of our position on Syria, but after we left Damascus, the relationship became somewhat tense, with differences emerging on how to deal with the crisis and then their participation in the conflict. In all cases, the ties have since improved, and there are efforts underway to restore healthy relations. We are keen on preserving this relationship despite our differences on some issues.

Tenth: Hamas's International Relations

Hamis is open in its international relations and contacts with most Western, Asian and African countries, as well as some Latin American countries. The main foundation of the relationship is political related to the conflict with the "Zionist entity" and the issue of Palestinian refugees.

We have public relations, contacts, and routine meetings with Western countries that are not part of the EU, which has had a positive impact on the Palestinian people, especially in terms of their understanding of the conflict and its instruments, and the interest of the Palestinian people and their needs.

Concerning EU nations, Hamas has been placed on the list of terrorist sponsors. Contact with most of them is carried out by academics, retired diplomats and study centers and advisers close to decision-making centers.

The problem is that putting a name on the list is easier than taking it off, because the decision is made unanimously. That's why Europeans are dealing with Hamas not as a national liberation movement but as a "terrorist" group.

In any case, such politicized labels are imposed by the strong who force others to accept it, but it is unfair and unjust. This is the case of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê—PKK*) in Iraq, which they see as a liberation movement, while they consider the Turkish branch of the same party a terrorist group. Consider the PLO, which the US has yet to remove from its terror list. Nelson Mandela himself left the presidency with his name still on the terror list.

The label caused them embarrassment when Hamas won the elections in early 2006. Nevertheless, the West sided with the US in agreeing to impose three conditions on Hamas before dealing with it after its election victory:

1. Recognizing the “Zionist entity.”
2. Renouncing violence.
3. Recognizing agreements signed by the PLO.

In other words, despite recognizing that there are occupied areas, where international law allows resistance against occupation, they deem it [illegitimate] “violence.” Israel did not deal with any of the agreements signed in a transparent or credible way, turning all agreements into worthless pieces of paper and the same goes for the deadlines agreed. And yet, Palestinians are expected to recognize agreements signed by the PLO.

Finally, should they ask Palestinians to recognize Israel, when it is Israel that must recognize the Palestinians and their rights, before asking the oppressed to recognize the oppressor who occupied their land and expelled them to refugee camps that still bear witness to the injustice and tyranny of the occupation?

Hamas spares no occasion for upholding Palestinian rights and their legitimacy. Here, we must acknowledge that liberation forces, including many youth, human rights, and leftist groups in the West have come a long way in supporting the cause of Palestine.

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

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