

HAMAS:
**An organization working towards the goals of the
Palestinian people militarily, socially and politically.**

Project paper

Valerie Novak
Professor Abdelrahim Salih
Cultures of the Middle East
March 7, 2006

HAMAS: An organization working towards the goals of the Palestinian people militarily, socially and politically.

Introduction:

What exactly is Hamas? Average Americans will simply say it is a terrorist organization, an organization that encourages further conflict in the war torn area of Palestine and Israel. Some might even get it confused with Osama bin Laden's network of terror that caused the nine eleven attacks in 2001. Is it a political party, a terrorist organization, or is it a social institution? Many people are only presented with the information about the evil Hamas has committed. But it is important to learn more about this organization and all its activities in order to move further into the peace process over Israel and Palestine. Hamas is a complex organization that has done some good along with its many evils.

In Palestine, Hamas fulfills a number of duties and services to the people. While not all of them are honorable or virtuous, the organization of Hamas represents a certain amount of hope to the people of Palestine, who have become displaced and poverty stricken. Hamas has many duties and responsibilities in their new position in the Palestinian authority, but their origins have come from terror organizations. The organization of Hamas has evolved through time, starting as a terrorist group, adding social programs to help the Palestinian people and has recently won a political majority in the Palestinian Authority. Hamas, while presenting a terrorist threat, may help the Palestinian people work successfully towards their goals in a political manner, now that they have been elected into power.

What is Hamas?

Hamas is an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya, which means Islamic Resistance Movement. It is a Palestinian Islamist organization that in Arabic means zeal and fanaticism (Wikipedia 2006, *Name*). Ideologically and organizationally it is quite similar to the Muslim Brotherhood (n.d. Hamas). Its central goal is to establish a state of Palestine, directed by an Islamic centered government.

How was Hamas started?

Prior to the Hamas, it was an organization called the Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded in Egypt. This organization set up Islamic charities to help those in need.

Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was part of the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo and when he went to Gaza, he founded Hamas. Hamas became the Palestinian arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, starting as a charitable organization within Gaza (Wikipedia 2006, *Pre-1987*).

Originally it was supported by the Israeli military authority, as was the Islamic University in Gaza. Through Hamas' creation, there were many charitable actions to help the Palestinians within Gaza. The people were able to receive aid through the organization and the university from people abroad (Wikipedia 2006, *Pre-1987*). Its creation also developed a sense of Islamic stability within Gaza, which resulted in the creation of six hundred mosques, by 1992 (Wikipedia 2006, *Pre-1987*).

The presence of this Palestinian arm of the Muslim Brotherhood made the Muslims able to stress and be proud of their existence in the territories. A major source of support for Hamas and what in turn made it a successful institution was the Israelis, who wanted to undermine the Fatah movement, led by Yasser Arafat (Wikipedia 2006, *Pre-1987*). Hamas at this time was involved in social work only and their main social issue was the political corruption that was frequent within the community organizations (Wikipedia 2006, *Pre-1987*).

Hamas was formally established and named in 1987, when violence became a large part of the organization during the first Intifada (Wikipedia 2006, *1987*). The first Intifada was very intense and violent period between the Israelis and Palestinians. It consisted of killing on both sides, including young children. It was then that Hamas was established as a violent organization. Its first violent acts were against Palestinians working with the Israeli government and have since changed its attacks on Israeli military and civilians (Wikipedia 2006, *1987*).

What are the beliefs of Hamas?

The main beliefs of Hamas are written within their Covenant, which consists of thirty-six articles and was written in 1988 (Wikipedia 2006, *Beliefs*). Its main belief is that the present-day state of Israel, including the Gaza Strip and West Bank belong to the Muslims (Wikipedia 2006, *Beliefs*). It calls for every Muslim has a duty to fight the occupiers of Israel in order to reclaim it as their own, as it was before the English gave away Palestine to the European Jews. Hamas' constitution continues to call for the

removal of Israel and continues not to recognize them as a sovereign state (Wikipedia 2006, *Beliefs*).

The goals of Hamas, according to the covenant is to “raise the banner of God over every inch of Palestine,” meaning to replace both Israel and the Palestinian Authority with a new Islamic state (Wikipedia 2006, *Beliefs*). It asks all people, men, women and children to work towards this revolution. The slogan of Hamas is” God is its target, the Prophet is its model, the Qur’an its constitution and death for the sake of God is the loftiest of its wishes” (Wikipedia 2006, *Beliefs*). Another belief of theirs is that the solution to this conflict will come from nothing but a Jihad (Wikipedia 2006, *Beliefs*).

One of their beliefs that makes Hamas target the civilian targets during their attacks is their belief that there is no difference between a civilian and Israeli military (Wikipedia 2006, *The Covenant*). This is due to the Israeli mandatory military service for their Jewish men and women (Wikipedia 2006, *The Covenant*). If all men and women must serve within the military, during some part of their life, this makes all Israelis, in Hamas’ view, subject to military attacks (Wikipedia 2006, *The Covenant*). This is one of the distinguishing factors that make Hamas viewed more as a terrorist group than fighters for Palestinian freedom.

Another belief of Hamas and other Muslims not associated with the organization is that Israel is trying to take over more land. They believe the Zionist movement plans to invade Egypt all the way to Iraq (Wikipedia 2006, *The Covenant*). This expansion that is believed to occur if the Israelis continue to occupy this land is said to be stated in *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Wikipedia 2006, *The Covenant*). Thus, Hamas’ belief that Israel will try and take more land could be substantiated within this doctrine and also by the past actions, such as the Six Day war.

The extremism in the beliefs of Hamas seems as if no rational person would take part in such violence and unending hatred, however Hamas has many other social, economic, educational and ideological beliefs, which make it popular to the public (Wikipedia 2006, *The Covenant*). A good article of the Hamas constitution that renders public acceptance is that Hamas is a humanistic movement. It believes in human rights and tolerance, especially when dealing with other religions. Hamas does believe that it is possible for the people of separate faiths to live together in peace (Wikipedia 2006, *The*

Covenant). Included in the translation of the Hamas covenant is this quote, “Under the wing of Islam, it is possible for the followers of the three religions- Islam, Christianity and Judaism- to coexist in peace and quiet with each other (Wikipedia 2006, *The Covenant*).

Another article that gathers support for Hamas is their stance on education. They believe that all people should be educated not only in religious studies but also history and current events (Wikipedia 2006, *The Covenant*). While the reasons for education may be twisted in fulfilling their goal of wiping out Israel, a lot of Palestinians take advantage of Hamas’ offering to educate the poor Palestinians.

Hamas also stands for women’s rights and believes that educating them is of high importance. Hamas believes that an educated woman is imperative in the process of raising children (Wikipedia 2006, *The Covenant*). Children need to see a strong, educated mother in their childhood, so that they are raised with moral values, stemming from Islam. She must also be educated housekeeping (Wikipedia 2006, *The Covenant*). This is not how to clean and cook, but how to handle a family budget and eliminate waste of any resources. In such a misfortunate time for these people, it is imperative that a woman is capable of handling the family budget in order to use each resource to its capacity, especially in the case that their family is poor (Wikipedia 2006, *The Covenant*).

The last significant article in the Covenant of the Hamas is concerning civic culture and social responsibility. They stress that, as Palestinians should share in the lives of others, both in their happiness and in their sorrow (Wikipedia 2006, *The Covenant*). Hamas believes its important to be caring and cooperative, because only in this way will there be unity between the Palestinians and in this unity they can achieve one another’s goals (Wikipedia 2006, *The Covenant*). This includes fighting their enemies. Unity between Palestinians can be satisfied through assistance to fellow Palestinians both financial and moral.

What is Hamas’ military wing?

Hamas, as a terrorist group has several different levels to its structure, each with its goal to use violence to achieve its goal of creating a Palestinian state. Thus, there are many organizations within Hamas, with different duties that help to achieve their goal (n.d., *Structure*).

The Palestinian Holy Fighter, also known in Arabic as Al-Majahadoun Al-Falestinioun, which in the beginning of the organization of Hamas was the designated military. Its function was to prepare for the infrastructure for Hamas' activities (n.d., *Structure*).

The other military organization is called the Security Section of the Jehaz Aman. It gathered information on people suspected of helping Israel (n.d., *Structure*). They also targeted those that Palestinians that acted in a way that was against Islamic teachings. This included drug dealers and people that sold pornography. They would punish these people using murder and other violent acts. Through this organization came the Majd or the Majmouath Jihad u-Dawa. This means the Holy War and Sermonizing Group. It became the part of the Security Section that used violence, while the Security Section simply gathered the information. These sections of military came before the Intifada and the Izz al-Din al-Qassam hit squads (n.d., *Structure*).

The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Squads is the latest form of all these military groups (n.d., *Structure*). It is now responsible for the attacks on Israel. It has changed several times since the Intifada and its latest form has been in effect since 1992. They work within Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, recruiting for and executing terrorist acts. Many of its members have been killed or taken into custody, others have escaped, but even more are still active in those areas (n.d., *Structure*).

How is Hamas funded?

Hamas gets a lot of funding and support through many places (n.d., *Structure*). They receive money from secret donors in Saudi Arabic and some of the Gulf States. They have gotten a lot of money publicly also from Iran. The biggest influx of money comes from charities. Charities have been a great cover for the terrorist activities of Hamas. A large amount of the money is indeed used for charity, but it very hard to distinguish what all of the money is actually being used for (n.d., *Structure*).

Some funding in the beginning of Hamas came from the Israeli government. The Israeli government liked the grassroots organization that was based on the charitable activities that Hamas operated. Funding Hamas was also another form of political sabotage, because Hamas in the beginning formed as a counterweight for the Palestinian Authorities main party, the Fatah party (Wikipedia 2006, *Pre-1987*)

Some of the funding that Hamas receives is from other countries. The largest disclosed source is from Iran (n.d., *Structure*). They give about three million dollars to Hamas per year. Other countries that give to Hamas through charities are Great Britain, through the Palestine Relief and Development Fund. The United States give charity through the Holy Land foundation and Germany through the Al Aqsa Foundation. Holland and Belgium also give through branches of the Al Aqsa Foundation and France gives through the Comite de Bienfaisance et solidarite avec la Palestine (n.d., *Structure*).

Other Islamic organizations give to Hamas (n.d., *Structure*). These are nongovernmental agencies in the Gulf States. They give to Hamas in order to keep the social and welfare institutions that Hamas run, functional. They give so that needy Muslims in Palestine will benefit from charity. The Islamic community in the West also gives a great deal of money to Hamas. Their supporters are the 15 million Muslims living in West. Some organizations that they give to are Muslim Aid and the Islamic Relief Agency. Lastly, there is the Muslim Brotherhood, which stated a committee to aid Hamas in the late 1980s (n.d., *Structure*).

Hamas also has a limited amount of profitable economic projects that helps Hamas function (n.d., *Structure*). They are involved in a few projects such as sewing and weaving centers, cattle farms and symbolic payment for services. They also do fundraising throughout the territories. They recently have been under a lot of pressure for fundraising within the Gulf States and have had to fundraise mostly within their own territories (n.d., *Structure*).

Israel has also closed to charitable foundations that have worked through Israel to channel the transfer of money. These organizations are the Committee for Aid to Orphans and Prisoner and Islamic Aid. Due to the closing of these organizations, the use of Israel as a channel for aid has dwindled.

What is funding to Hamas like now?

Since their ascent to political power, Hamas' finances have been under scrutiny by Western intelligence (n.d., *Structure*). The United States passed a piece of legislation to stop funds from America from going to any terrorist organization, including Hamas. Britain has audited Interpal's relief foundation, viewing where the money has allotted. The audit turned up with no link to terrorist organization. Lastly, Israel has claimed that

four major operations of charity have been outlawed due to their illegal associations with Hamas (n.d., *Structure*).

What has Hamas done as a terrorist group?

Hamas is most known throughout the world as a terrorist organization, through its extensive use of violence against Israel's military and to the Israeli citizens. Violence became a trademark of Hamas when it was officially established in 1987.

The first suicide bombing, used by Hamas occurred during the second Intifada on April 16, 1993 (Wikipedia 2006, *Attacks Against Israel*). A suicide bomber drove a van between two parked buses and detonated the bombs within his van. It was a response to the killing of twenty-nine praying Palestinians in the Hebron Mosque, which happened forty days earlier (Wikipedia 2006, *Attacks Against Israel*). This was Hamas' 19th attack since it was outlawed by Israel.

Before suicide bombing started most of the attacks had been shootings, kidnappings and knife attacks. All of the Hamas attacks, including the suicide bombings come from their military wing, called the Ezzedeen-al-qassam Brigades (Wikipedia 2006, *Attacks Against Israel*).

Since the first suicide bombing there have been many more devastating attacks on Israel, including civilians. The most deadly suicide bombing was of the Netanya hotel on March 27, 2002 (Wikipedia 2006, *Attacks Against Israel*). Thirty people were killed and the wounded count was about one hundred and forty. This has also been called the Passover massacre, because it occurred on the first night of the Jewish holiday of Passover (Wikipedia 2006, *Attacks Against Israel*). Hamas targets these civilian targets without regret, claiming that due to the mandatory military service of Israelis, that everyone is part of the military, thus all are military targets.

The first female suicide bombers that were used in Hamas attacks were a mother of six and a mother of two. While there is some speculation of whether their acts were forced, Hamas claims that they were completely voluntary (Wikipedia 2006, *Attacks Against Israel*). An Israeli military source however states that he knows one of the women was forced to commit these acts and was threatened that if she did not she would be killed (Wikipedia 2006, *Attacks Against Israel*).

Hamas also attacks military and security, mostly within the West Bank and the Gaza strip. They also use homemade mortars to discourage strongly the settlement of Israelis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (Wikipedia 2006, *Attacks Against Israel*). The settlement of Gush Katif was taken apart after Hamas attacked the settlement with 5500 mortar shells (Wikipedia 2006, *Attacks Against Israel*). They killed three people during this attack. In 2002, they made and used Qassam rockets to hit towns within Israel. They hit towns within Negev, like Sderot. They have also hit larger cities like Ashkelon, with their Qassam-2 rockets (Wikipedia 2006, *Attacks Against Israel*). This has made the Israeli populace frightened at the amount of damage Hamas can do. It has also influenced the Israeli military to hinder production and use of the rockets within their own military organization (Wikipedia 2006, *Attacks Against Israel*).

A complete list of the Hamas attacks is being kept track of by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Their website is <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Terror+Groupd/Hamas+terror+attacks+22-March-2004.htm> (Wikipedia 2006, *Attacks Against Israel*). According to the Council of Foreign Relations, Hamas is responsible for the death of more than 500 people and has orchestrated more than 350 separate attacks since 1993. (Council on Foreign Affairs 2004, *What Attacks is Hamas Responsible For?*)

What has Hamas done as a social institution?

Along with Hamas' terrorist wing, Hamas is also a social institution. It gives \$70 million annually to a large network of social services. Ninety percent of the work done by Hamas is social activities to help the Palestinians (Wikipedia 2006, *Support for*). They fund schools, orphanages, mosques, and healthcare clinics, soup kitchens and sports leagues. They also manage relief and education programs (Wikipedia 2006, *Support for*). Results of Hamas work can be seen as the literacy rates have climbed high, where places Hamas has been working (Wikipedia 2006, *Support for*). They fund many other charities in Gaza Strip, which include religious, medical and social institutions.

Hamas' good deeds can be seen in three ways. The first is that Hamas is dedicated to the people. They want to make this sort of contribution to the people as part of a sincere help to a society that is crestfallen and also to show the people the sort of political agenda they have in mind as for the social programs they would like to provide

(Wikipedia 2006, *Support for*). Another idea is that Hamas recruits through these social programs. Some think that it is through these activities that present themselves to the people and how they gain support for their terrorist activities (Wikipedia 2006, *Support for*). Lastly, people believe that this is propaganda for their cause. People believe that throughout these activities, they are advertising their goals and ways to achieve these goals (Wikipedia 2006, *Support for*). Forgetting the reason for their deeds Hamas is the second biggest organization helping the Palestinians, besides the support provided by the United Nations Relief Works Agency (Wikipedia 2006, *Support for*).

What is Hamas' political position at this point 3/21/2006?

As far as my understanding of the Palestinian Authority goes, the parliament, called Palestinian Legislative Council, is directly elected by the people. Hamas has won the Palestinian elections in January of 2006. Now, they have been invited by Prime Minister Mamoud Abbas to form their government (People's Daily 2006). Prime Minister Abbas is from the Fatah party, but the relations between Abbas and the Hamas delegate to the prime minister, Ismail Haneya are good (People's Daily 2006). The leading party in the Parliament, Hamas then selects people for the Prime Minister's cabinet. The cabinet members were proposed to Prime Minister Abbas on Sunday March, 19th, 2006 (People's Daily 2006). All of the proposed cabinet members were of the Hamas party, due to the unwillingness of other parties to get involved with Hamas. It was Hamas' plan to incorporate the other parties into the cabinet selection in order to diminish their aggressive reputation (NPRb. 2006, Hamas). If or when the cabinet and government are approved by the Palestinian Parliament, the aid for Palestine from the world is expected to be completely cut off (NPRa. 2006, Aid). The current situation for Hamas politically is that if they continue to act militantly and do not become a Palestinian government, then they will have to face even more political pressure from the world (People's Daily 2006). Hamas as a political entity will also have to interact with the Israeli government, because they are responsible for the daily life of the Palestinians. This will be their first test as a government, to see if their best interest is for the Palestinians, rather than their vendetta against Israel (People's Daily 2006).

What is the world's reaction?

There are many members and even more sympathizers that support Hamas. At its present state however there is not a lot of governmental support. One place it has received support for is from Russia. President Putin has met with Hamas leaders and officially stated he was in support of the regime, because they won fairly and democratically (Wikipedia 2006). Saudi Arabia also supports Hamas, as it rejects the United States' request to isolate Hamas. They did in hopes that Hamas would become a legitimate government (BBC News A 2006). The Saudi Arabian government itself states that they would not prejudge the Hamas government, giving it a chance to lead the Palestinian people and represent their interests (BBC News A 2006). Hamas is still funded by Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. According to Hamas, Saudi Arabia has declared that they will support the Palestinian people and its government generously (BBC News A 2006). United States Secretary of State, Condelezza Rice recently went on a tour of the Arab states trying to persuade the governments to stop providing funds to the Hamas organization (BBC News A 2006). The European Union promises to cut off aid if the violence associated with the Hamas party doesn't stop (BBC News A 2006). At this moment the European Union and the United States gives one billion dollars combined to Palestine, through various associations. Because the United States is restricted by U.S. law to provide money to a terrorist group, any aid which they give to Palestine must be in humanitarian aid that is strictly given to the people and not to Hamas or its government. (BBC News B 2006). Egypt's stance on the execution of financial threats would only spur more terrorism and create suffering among the Palestinians (BBC News B 2006).

Conclusion

Hamas is a complex and important organization to the Palestinians. This group was fairly elected into power at the end of January 2006. Their election to power has caused uproar by electing a terrorist group to head up the Palestinian Authority and sustain a peace process with Israel. Whether this will happen or whether terrorism will continue is increased numbers, no one knows.

However, some believe that Hamas, coming into this power in their own right has a responsibility to the Palestinian people, to represent them fairly. Some believe Hamas will stop their violent acts, in order to receive aid and support from the rest of the world. It also puts them in a position that pressures them to talk and work with Israel, which

could work to the advantage of peace. If pressured to speak with Israel on matters of the wellbeing of the Palestinian people, they might be forced to recognize Israel, even in the slightest sense and maybe could start down the road of peace. Or perhaps they will continue down their road of violence, their funding may begin to dwindle and may lose its Palestinian support because it did not fairly represent the people, not giving them stability or peace.

Hamas is a terrorist, social and politically organization that have the support and votes of the Palestinian people. They orchestrate public works to increase the quality of life that the Palestinians have and they also kill many people in an assortment of ways. They have many positions within their society and face many obstacles in ensuring their own support and for the happiness of the people they have been elected to represent. There is no way to tell what will happen, just that this group whether through terror or through peace, will have a large part to play in it.

Reference List

- “Aid Remains as Issue with New Hamas Cabinet.” 2006. NPR. A
<<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5289152>>. (accessed 26 March 2006).
- “Egypt Warns Against Hamas Embargo.” 2006. BBC News B.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4801066.stm#piechart>. (accessed 26 March 2006).
- “Hamas.” 2006. Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation Inc.
<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamas>>. (accessed 28 February 2006).
- “Hamas Claims Strong Saudi Support.” 2006. BBC News A.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4795574.stm>. (accessed 26 March 2006).
- “Hamas, Islamic Jihad: Palestinian Islamists.” 2004. Council of Foreign Relations.
<http://cfrterrorism.org/groups/hamas_print.html>. (accessed 28 February 2006).
- “Hamas Presents Proposed Palestinian Cabinet.” 2006. NPR. B
<<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5289429>>. (accessed 26 March 2006).
- “New Analysis: Hamas Seems to Go Alone Despite Pressure.” 2006. People’s Daily Online. <http://english.people.com.cn/200603/19/eng20060319_251750.html>. (accessed 26 March 2006).
- n.d. “Hamas.” <http://www.ict.org.il/inter_ter/orgdet.cfm?orgdet.cfm?orgid=13> (accessed 28 February 2006).

