

## HAMAS BACKGROUNDER

Since the October 7 attack on Israel, JCRC Bay Area has seen an increasing amount of confusion about the terrorist organization Hamas and how it is related to the Palestinians in Gaza. There has also been conflation, both intentional and due to ignorance, of Hamas with the Palestinian Authority, which governs the West Bank. In order to clear up these misconceptions, JCRC created this compilation of facts about the organization, its history, and its goals, drawn from reputable sources and vetted for accuracy.<sup>i</sup>

### Overview

- Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) was founded in the 1970s by the Muslim Brotherhood<sup>ii</sup> as a social-religious charity called *al-Mujama al-Islamiya* (Islamic Center). After the outset of the First Intifada (uprising) in 1987, the group changed its name to Hamas and formulated its “Covenant” (see next page).
- Since that time, it has carried out hundreds of attacks, primarily against Israeli civilians. These attacks are why Hamas is designated as a terrorist organization by the United States<sup>iii</sup>, European Union<sup>iv</sup> and others.
- In its ideological manifesto, publications and speeches by its leaders, Hamas promotes a radical Islamist ideology that explicitly calls for killing Jews and destroying the State of Israel. Central to this ideology is blatant European-style antisemitism such as the blood libel (see examples below).
- Hamas is supported militarily by Iran’s “Axis of Resistance” terrorist proxies: Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hezbollah in Iraq and Houthis in Yemen.<sup>v</sup> Iran provides weapons, financing and training to Hamas. Qatar provides financing to Hamas, as well<sup>vi</sup>. The Qatari state-owned Al Jazeera<sup>vii</sup> in Arabic and English provides propaganda support.<sup>viii</sup>
- Women, LGBTQ+, and other vulnerable groups have little legal protection against discrimination and harassment in Gaza and are excluded from political power. LGBTQ+ people face widespread discrimination and threats of violence.<sup>ix</sup> Homosexuality is punishable by imprisonment for up to ten years.<sup>x</sup>

### Record of Terrorism<sup>xi</sup>

- **During the Oslo peace process** (1993 – 2000): Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad together carried out at least 30 suicide attacks, killing 120 Israelis, mostly civilians. These attacks were aimed at stopping or slowing the Oslo peace process, and were a major contributing factor to Oslo’s failure. For these attacks, deliberately aimed primarily at non-combatants with the aim of killing as many civilians as possible, the U.S. and European Union have declared Hamas a terrorist organization.
- **During the Second Intifada** (2000-2005): Hamas was responsible for 426 terrorist attacks since 2000, primarily targeting civilians. Fifty-eight of these attacks were suicide bombings, resulting in 377 deaths and 2,078 injuries (other terror groups murdered an additional approximately 800 Israelis, mostly civilians.)
- **On October 7, 2023:** Hamas launched a pre-planned attack on Southern Israel in which over 1,400 Israelis, mostly civilians were murdered. Around 5,600 people were wounded and 241 Israelis and foreign nationals were kidnapped to Gaza.

- **Hamas has also launched thousands of rockets, mortars<sup>xii</sup>** at Israeli cities and towns, and incendiary balloons at Israeli agricultural and nature areas over the past two decades.<sup>xiii</sup> The Iron Dome defensive system<sup>xiv</sup> and bomb shelters or safe rooms in most Israeli homes have saved countless lives, but dozens of Israelis have been still been killed and thousands injured by these attacks.

## Ideology

Hamas draws primarily from two ideological sources: the universalistic Islamic principles of the Muslim Brotherhood, which endeavors to return Arab-Islamic society back to a traditional Islamic state, and the Palestinian tenet of popular liberation coupled with the goal of establishing an Islamic state in all of Palestine.

### **Hamas Covenant (1988)<sup>xv</sup>**

- “Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it.” (Preamble)
- "The Day of Judgement will not come about until Muslims fight the Jews, when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say ‘O Muslims, O Servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.’” (Article 7)
- The Jews “were behind the French Revolution, the Communist revolution... were able to control imperialistic countries... were behind World War I, when they were able to destroy the Islamic Caliphate... were behind World War II, through which they made huge financial gains... There is no war going on anywhere, without having their finger in it... Their plan is embodied in the ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion’... [Hams] considers itself to be the spearhead of the circle of struggle with world Zionism...Islamic groupings all over the Arab world should also do the same, since all of these are the best-equipped for the future role in the fight with the warmongering Jews.” (Article 32)

### **Document of General Principles (2017)<sup>xvi</sup>**

- “Hamas rejects all the agreements, initiatives and settlement projects that are aimed at undermining the Palestinian cause and the rights of our Palestinian people.” (Paragraph 22)
- “There shall be no recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist entity.” (Hamas Document of General Principals and Policies)
- “Palestine, which extends from the River Jordan in the east to the Mediterranean in the west and from Ras Al-Naqurah in the north to Umm Al-Rashrash in the south, is an integral territorial unit... the establishment of the Zionist entity therein do not annul the right of the Palestinian people to their entire land.” (Paragraph 2)
- “Hamas believes that no part of the land of Palestine shall be compromised or conceded... Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea.” (Paragraph 20)
- “The Zionist project does not target the Palestinian people alone; it is the enemy of the Arab and Islamic Ummah... [it] also poses a danger to international security and peace and to mankind and its interests and stability. (Paragraph 15)
- “Resisting the occupation with all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws. At the heart of these lies armed resistance, which is regarded as the strategic choice for protecting the principles and the rights of the Palestinian people.” (Paragraph 25)

## Statements by Hamas Leaders

- "Hamas has just one 'no' – no to the existence of Israel." Osama Hamdan, Hamas Political Bureau Member, October 11, 2023.<sup>xvii</sup>
- "Oh, you seven million Palestinians abroad, enough warming up! there are Jews everywhere! we must attack every Jew on planet earth – we must slaughter and kill them." Fathi Hamad, Hamas Political Bureau Member, July 12, 2019.<sup>xviii</sup>
- "Hitler may have hated [the Jews], but it was because of their deeds and crimes." Hamas MP Marwan Abu Ras, June 23, 2019.<sup>xix</sup>
- "You know who the apes and pigs are? They are the Jews, whom Allah transformed into apes and pigs." Ismail Radwan, Senior Hamas official, November 5, 2018.<sup>xx</sup>
- "The Jews are the most despicable and contemptible nation to crawl upon the face of the Earth." Atallah Abu Al-Subh, former Hamas minister of culture, April 8, 2011.<sup>xxi</sup>
- "By God, we will not leave one Jew in Palestine." Abdel Aziz Rantisi, Hamas leader, June 10, 2003.<sup>xxii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Special thanks to Yitzhak Santis, JCRC's former Middle East Project Director, for his assistance putting this together.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/egypts-muslim-brotherhood>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

<sup>iv</sup> [https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping\\_palestinian\\_politics/hamas/](https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/hamas/)

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20231014-qatar-iran-turkey-and-beyond-the-galaxy-of-hamas-supporters>

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.france24.com/en/middle-east/20231014-qatar-iran-turkey-and-beyond-the-galaxy-of-hamas-supporters>

<sup>vii</sup> <https://www.axios.com/2023/10/25/tony-blinken-qatar-israel-hamas>

<sup>viii</sup> <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-hamas-propaganda-war>

<sup>ix</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/country/gaza-strip/freedom-world/2023>

<sup>x</sup> <https://www.equaldex.com/region/palestine>

<sup>xi</sup> <https://embassies.gov.il/MFA/FOREIGNPOLICY/Terrorism/Palestinian/Pages/Suicide%20and%20Other%20Bombing%20Attacks%20in%20Israel%20Since.aspx>

<sup>xii</sup> <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/palestinian-rocket-and-mortar-attacks-against-israel>

<sup>xiii</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/16/middleeast/israel-gaza-incendiary-balloons-cmd-intl/index.html>

<sup>xiv</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/israels-iron-dome-never-important-fends-hamas-attacks-rcna119782>

<sup>xv</sup> [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/hamas.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp)

<sup>xvi</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20170623063620/http://hamas.ps/en/post/678/a-document-of-general-principles-and-policies>

<sup>xvii</sup> <https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-official-osama-hamdan-israel-heart-problems-region-return-countries->

<sup>xviii</sup> <https://www.memri.org/reports/hamas-political-bureau-member-fathi-hammad-calls-palestinians-all-over-world-slaughter-jews>

<sup>xix</sup> <https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-mp-marwan-ras-hitler-criminal-hated-jews-holocaust-lies>

<sup>xx</sup> <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/senior-hamas-figure-delivers-speech-replete-anti-semitic-motifs-yet-another-expression-hamass-long-standing-tradition-anti-semitism/>

<sup>xxi</sup> <https://www.adl.org/resources/news/hamas-their-own-words>

<sup>xxii</sup> <https://www.adl.org/resources/news/hamas-their-own-words>