

# Palestinian Duality: Territories, Governments, Agendas

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Since the June 2007 Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, the reality of two systems of Palestinian self-government, one in the West Bank under Fatah, and the other in the Gaza Strip under Hamas, has become ever more entrenched. The generation-based succession within the Fatah leadership during the movement's recent sixth general convention dramatized further the reality of fragmented Palestinian national unity. Thus for the first time in the history of the Palestinian national struggle against Israel, there are two separate leaderships pitted against one another that came of age in Palestinian territory and have, since 1967, experienced the struggle against the Israeli occupation.

Fatah, led by Abu Mazen, is trying to regain its stature at the helm of the Palestinian national leadership after years of the movement's ideological and organizational weakening, especially since the death of founding father Yasir Arafat. This past year it managed to strengthen its image as a governing body that maintains an effective governing bureaucracy in the West Bank, imposes law and order, and boosts the economy. More recently, the sixth general convention contributed to its organizational and ideological rehabilitation. The internal elections to the movement's institutions decided the inter-generational struggle that sapped the movement over the past 15 years, by weakening the old guard that came from Tunis and boosting the status of the younger generation born in the territories. In addition, a pragmatic national

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platform was adopted that replaces the previous platform (of 1989), which was not updated despite the far reaching political developments over the years, and will henceforth be an ideological basis for the movement. Nonetheless, Fatah's primary strength remains its control of the PLO, so that if from a political viewpoint its stature has dropped since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (1994), it still symbolizes representation of the diaspora and the problem of the refugees on the one hand, and the Palestinian national adherence to a political option on the other.

Hamas, which established a stable government in the Gaza Strip and survived Operation Cast Lead, is determined to prevent the Palestinian Authority from regaining control of the Gaza Strip. It is preparing for a confrontation with the new Fatah leadership over the Palestinian national leadership. In addition, it is struggling to gain formal Arab and international recognition of its rule of the Gaza Strip<sup>1</sup> by presenting softened stances regarding the conflict with Israel.

The leaderships of the two movements are awaiting the publication of President Obama's political program, particularly in the aftermath of Obama's meetings with regional leaders and the pressure exerted on Israel, which propelled Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to accept the principle of two states for two peoples.<sup>2</sup> Each side is trying to take advantage of the change in American policy to strengthen its status at the expense of the other: Fatah expects the United States to continue supporting the PA and its military power and renew the political process, while Hamas seeks recognition as a democratically elected legitimate political force, with positions that must be taken into account.

### **Fatah and Self-Rule on the West Bank**

The Palestinian Authority's governance of the West Bank has become a more effective bureaucracy that is managing – albeit gradually – to impose law and order and bring about social and economic stability. Yet while the PA is benefiting from the support of Arab countries, Israel, the United States, and the EU, it lacks the capability to usurp Hamas' rule of the Gaza Strip. Senior officials in the PA were disappointed that Israel opted not to topple the Hamas government during Operation Cast Lead. They fear that Israel's policy towards Hamas might encourage

the international community to recognize Hamas, which would then continue to entrench itself as a governing entity and amass legitimacy on the political level as well at the expense of Fatah and the PA.

The PA recognizes that Hamas, which is determined to expand its control to the West Bank, is a real threat to the PA's status and continued existence. The fierce violence that Hamas directed at various elements in the Gaza Strip has made it clear to the PA that Hamas will stop at nothing in order to consolidate its rule and suppress any locus of resistance. In the past year, the PA, through its security apparatus trained by US security coordinator Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, increased its control of Hamas' social, religious, political, and military activities in the West Bank. Young, professional, determined commanders (such as Majd Farraj, Ziad Hab al-Rieh, Kamal al-Sheikh, and Hazam Attalla) have been appointed to lead the PA's security apparatus. They cooperate with one another and coordinate security activity with Israel.

Indeed, concerns over the PA's survivability and the vitality of the security apparatus have sharpened the motivation among these commanders toward efficacy and professionalism. This was evident during Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip, when the security services continued to operate against Hamas on the West Bank, which included arresting activists, and did not respond to Hamas' demand to halt security coordination with Israel. In late May-early June 2009 the security services arrested Hamas military personnel in Qalqilya and Tul Karm, actions that were accompanied by exchanges of gunfire and fatalities; questioned professors at An-Najah University in Nablus and City Councils members identified with Hamas in Nablus and Bethlehem; and court-martialed a number of activists from El-Bireh and Nablus on charges of "disrupting public order" and "attempting to launch a military coup in the West Bank."

Similarly, the PA *waqf* bureau recently published regulations for activity in mosques, including supervision of imams and preachers, uniform sermons during Friday prayer services, and bans on all activity other than prayer.<sup>3</sup> These guidelines join previous directives, including dispersing the Hamas-controlled religious charity

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committees (*lijan al-zaka*), and ousting Hamas personnel from the boards of directors of charitable institutions and appointing others in their stead.<sup>4</sup> Significantly, the PA has not met with public resistance to its anti-Hamas activity. It presents its accomplishments in this sphere to the international community as evidence of its uncompromising commitment to fulfill the security terms of the Roadmap in advance of the renewal of the political process.

The PA's control is essentially based on Salam Fayyad's government, which for now enjoys the support of Abu Mazen and some of Fatah's veteran political leadership. Prime Minister Fayyad, who himself does not come from within Fatah's ranks, is considered a technocrat with integrity who leans towards the nationalist stream but lacks a public power base. He has demonstrated his authority as an efficient prime minister, contributing to governmental stability: he dictates the policies of the government ministries and manages the economic and security systems. As such, Fayyad is gradually consolidating his status at home, despite the opposition of some central veteran Fatah figures such as Azam al-Ahmad, as well as some members of the intermediate and younger generations. Fayyad has managed to prove his commitment to PA interests and show governing capabilities, including the ability to stand up to the Hamas threat in the West Bank and to earn recognition as a partner fit for political and security talks with Israel.

The stability the PA has shown in the past year as a governing body that suits Israel, Arab states, and the international community could not compensate for the fact that the PA lacks both conceptual-ideological and organizational-political unity due to the organizational and ideological weakness that has plagued Fatah in recent years. The Fatah old guard continued to retain the movement's leadership, even though it lost public trust. Intermediate generation activists, wanting internal cohesion and a prominent leadership, knew full well that to a large extent the movement managed to survive in the West Bank because of Israel's presence there and because of the Olmert government's gestures towards Abu Mazen (such as prisoner releases) during their dialogue. For members of the intermediate generation, Fatah's sixth convention was the only opportunity to rescue the movement from its drawn-out decline and revive its ideology and crumbling institutions.

Their hope is that the movement's internal elections, which brought an end to the inter-generational struggle in the leadership and the adoption of an accepted platform, can help consolidate the movement's ranks and restore Fatah's position as a national movement leading the Palestinian people. Abu Mazen and Fatah's new leadership hope that the PA's achievements in stabilizing the workings of everyday life in the West Bank, along with the efforts to rehabilitate the movement's public standing, will be accompanied by a renewal of the political process and tangible progress towards an agreement with Israel. They understand full well that their ability to market Fatah as a viable alternative to Hamas depends on the success of the political process. They are banking on the policy of the new American administration, which is determined to bring Israel and the Palestinians back to the negotiating table. Yet therein lies the rub: the fact that Fatah's political power depends on an agreement with Israel relegates it to a position inferior to Hamas, which enjoys popular support and is not dependent on Israel.

### **Hamas and Palestinian Self-Rule in the Gaza Strip**

In the Gaza Strip, Hamas' hard line bureaucratic government is deepening its roots. The movement's leadership is determined to foil any Israeli or international attempt to wrest its power and enable the PA to regain control of the Gaza Strip. Hamas continues to struggle for its status as a legitimate political player that won free, democratic elections in the Palestinian system and thereby deserves recognition of its government. It does not accept the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, at least while reforms that would allow its inclusion in the organization at a level or proportion commensurate with its political strength have not been instituted. It does not recognize the lawfulness of the Fayyad government, which did not receive a vote of confidence from the Legislative Council,<sup>5</sup> and it is resolved to neutralize any Fatah or radical Islamic power base, using violence if necessary.<sup>6</sup>

Hamas continues to struggle against the embargo imposed on the Gaza Strip and the closed border crossings. It currently seeks to concentrate on civilian activity and avoid another military confrontation with Israel, which might threaten its government. It has attempted to

restrain the various organizations active in the Gaza Strip and prevent terrorist attacks against Israel, including rocket attacks. Senior Hamas personnel explain that the movement will maintain the calm as long as this serves the interests of the Palestinian people. They point to the fact that Israel too is careful to preserve the calm and is working through Egypt to extend it, and emphasize that it is precisely now, with a new, right wing Israeli government, that the crossings do not close the moment there is rocket fire at Israel.<sup>7</sup>

While the military option failed to lift the embargo and open the crossings, other ways have so far similarly not borne fruit: the national dialogue has not led to the establishment of a unity government, which might have been able to pave the way to opening the crossings with Israel and Egypt, and an agreement about renewing the calm with Israel and opening the crossings seems distant given the right wing government in Israel. In addition, Hamas' attempts to begin rebuilding the ruins of Gaza in the wake of Operation Cast Lead are delayed because of insufficient construction materials, such as iron and cement, that Israel has not allowed into the Strip in the quantities required (the crossings are open for humanitarian needs only). Under these circumstances, Hamas is counting on the international community: it expects that the pressure leveled on Israel by the American administration and the European Union to expand the border openings to include construction materials for rebuilding the Strip will bear practical fruit.<sup>8</sup>

Amidst all this, Hamas is working to restore its damaged military power and rebuild its military wing in the form of a regular army whose primary long term goal is to be a defensive force. With the help of its rocket and surface-to-air missile systems, this force is supposed to create deterrence vis-à-vis Israel in order to avoid an extensive military confrontation, and thus prevent the bombing of government and military installations. Hamas estimates that such a balance of deterrence would allow for stability and calm over a long period, even in the absence of an agreement with Israel, and would allow the movement to consolidate its rule of the Strip and focus on the work of reconstruction.

## The National Dialogue

After Operation Cast Lead, and in light of the possibility that Israel and Hamas would progress towards a deal on prisoner release and regulate the calm between them, the PA evinced interest in promoting the national dialogue and forming a unity government. The PA is aware of the growing popular support for Hamas in the Gaza Strip and West Bank after what was seen by the Palestinian public as refusal to capitulate to the IDF, and sought to defend its public status. However, the rounds of talks that have so far taken place in Cairo between Hamas and Fatah with Egyptian mediation have generated only partial agreements over the disputed issues, including establishing a unity government, adopting an electoral system,<sup>9</sup> setting a date for the elections,<sup>10</sup> and reorganizing the security apparatus.

Although the sides have declared that the national dialogue is a priority, thereby appeasing the Egyptians and responding to respective public sentiments, it seems that they harbor only limited interest in the subject. Fatah estimates that the chances for achieving understandings between Israel and Hamas about a period of calm and prisoner releases have narrowed, whereas Hamas prefers to shrug off the pressures on it to accept a formula that would allow the PA a foothold in the Gaza Strip, have it compromise its refusal to accept Israel, and commit itself to agreements signed between Israel and the PLO. Different formulae suggested by the Egyptians to settle the disputes between the sides, such as leaving the governments of Hamas and the PA in place and establishing a supreme body to coordinate between them, or establishing an inter-organizational council subject to Abu Mazen to supervise the rebuilding of Gaza, have been rejected.

One way or the other, Egypt is continuing its efforts to bring the two sides closer, knowing that it cannot impose its stances on them. The committees established to settle the outstanding problems between Hamas and the PA continue to operate; in addition to these, a reconciliation committee convenes in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank under Cairo's aegis and with Egyptian representation. The purpose of the committee is to dispel the tensions

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between the sides in both regions in all matters pertaining to mutual attacks: political arrests, infringements of human rights, and the closings of institutions.<sup>11</sup> According to the Egyptian plan, once the committees complete their work, the sides, under Egyptian sponsorship and with the support of the Arab League, will announce an agreement in Cairo that will mend the rift in the Palestinian nation.

## The Political Process

### *Fatah's Position*

The PA is currently actively engaged in two parallel efforts: one, led by Abu Mazen and the Fatah leadership, is geared at attaining a comprehensive political settlement with Israel while opposing partial agreements and the establishment of a state with temporary borders. The second effort, led by Prime Minister Fayyad, focuses on implementing the work plan aimed at building government institutions and strengthening the PA's economic, social, and security foundations, so that a Palestinian state will become a fact in at most two years. Fayyad attributes double importance to this: first, the ability of the PA's institutions to become the institutions of a future state will forestall any Israeli or international protestation that the Palestinians are not ready to establish a state; and second, it will imbue in the Palestinian people the belief that it is capable of realizing its desires on its own.<sup>12</sup>

Abu Mazen and other Fatah leaders are encouraged by the new winds blowing from the Obama administration regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, including a qualitative change regarding the settlements in the territories – from “an obstacle to peace” to the concept that the settlements are illegal and therefore require removal; disregard of guarantees given to Israeli governments by the previous administration; and legitimization of popular resistance to the Israeli occupation in the spirit of America's idealization of human rights. Abu Mazen believes that in his meeting with President Obama at the White House he succeeded in proving that the PA is a mature entity managing security and social issues and is a fitting partner for political and security dialogue.

Abu Mazen hopes that increased American involvement in the Palestinian arena, reflected so far in generous assistance to the PA's budget, continued building of the PA's military force – used primarily



against Hamas' civilian and military infrastructures in the West Bank, and the administration's interest in rehabilitating Fatah will continue to expand. Abu Mazen believes that the new American administration is interested in strengthening the PA and Fatah in their confrontation with Hamas, and in creating the conditions that would restore the PA to power in the Gaza Strip. In addition, Abu Mazen estimates that the PA is in a superior political position compared to Israel's in terms of fulfilling its part of the Roadmap, even though the administration has urged it to step up its activities in preventing incitement and fighting terrorism.

This approach of the American administration, which places the ball in Israel's court, has prompted Abu Mazen and fellow Fatah leaders to remain locked in a holding pattern while enjoying pan-Arab support. They expected that American pressure exerted on Israel would end construction on West Bank settlements and pave the road to a renewal of the political process from the point at which it was halted. These expectations, however, were challenged following Netanyahu's Bar Ilan speech on June 14, 2009 and the American-Israeli dialogue to formulate understandings on these issues. Fatah's leadership argues that Netanyahu has no intention of stopping settlement construction, has emptied any future Palestinian state of value, and has added the provocative demand that Israel be recognized as a Jewish state: previous documents and agreements, including the peace agreements between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Jordan, the Oslo Accords, discussions about the permanent agreement, and the Roadmap all deal with the recognition of Israel's right to exist in peace and security and without reference to its Jewish character.

Fatah fears that the positions and demands presented by Netanyahu in his speech were meant to set conditions that will preempt a political settlement, and that the inevitable outcome will be the strengthening of Hamas. In the sixth general convention, the new leadership, based largely on the local representation, adopted a national agenda that seeks to end the occupation and establish a state within the 1967 borders, but at the same time emphasizes the legitimacy of the struggle. It distinguishes itself from Hamas by affirming its commitment to the Roadmap and the Arab peace initiative, which stresses the Arab world's commitment to the two-state solution on the basis of the 1967

borders. The Fatah leadership made it clear that it would not request a revision of the Arab initiative in order to make it easier for Israel to accept it, particularly regarding the issue of the right of return.<sup>13</sup> Fatah also declared at the convention that in the absence of progress towards ending the occupation, it retains the right to struggle through civilian revolt (*atzian madni*) and popular unarmed resistance (*muqawama jamahiriya*) against settlements and the security forces protecting them. Barring progress towards a two-state solution, it would struggle for a bi-national state between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, or for the unilateral declaration of an independent state in the 1967 borders.

Fatah's leadership now expects the American administration and the international community to act determinedly and nullify Netanyahu's conditions for the renewal of the political process, as well as impose a freeze on construction in the settlements and renew the political process. It also hopes that its opposition to recognizing Israel as a Jewish state will not be interpreted as a Palestinian preference, but rather as a pan-Arab principle.

### *Hamas' Position*

Hamas continues to adhere to its ideology and has not changed its political positions: it opposes recognition of Israel and a political settlement with it, and does not support the Arab peace initiative.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for the moment serves the interests of Hamas' leadership because it lowers the chances for a real political process culminating in a settlement. Hamas' political ambition is to lead the Palestinian people and stop the trend that began with the Oslo process of narrowing the Palestinian issue to the West Bank and Gaza Strip alone. As far as Hamas is concerned, the Palestinian question must encompass all of the Palestinian diaspora and present the refugees' right of return as the key issue in the conflict with Israel, which in effect undermines the legitimacy of Israel's existence.<sup>15</sup> Therefore Hamas' leadership was pleased that President Obama referred to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as starting in 1948 rather than in 1967.

At the same time, Hamas' leadership is facing regional and global developments that impact on its status in various ways and are likely

to influence its positions. On the one hand, it enjoys support among Islamic elements in Jordan and Egypt,<sup>16</sup> urging it to cling to its rigid political positions. Hamas' leadership has also been encouraged by what it sees as the gradual recognition of Hamas by the international community: the fact that Obama avoided calling Hamas a terrorist organization; meetings of former President Jimmy Carter and British members of parliament with Hamas' leadership in Damascus and the Gaza Strip; the meeting between American diplomat Thomas Pickering and senior Hamas officials in the Gaza Strip; the meeting of Judge Richard Goldstone, the head of the commission of inquiry on the war (Operation Cast Lead) in the Gaza Strip and the UN's Human Rights Council with Ismail Haniyeh – all of these imbue Hamas with hope for a change in international attitudes towards it. On the other hand, the movement's leadership is well aware that the chances for a change in the American and international community's stance towards Hamas are slim as long as it continues to reject the Quartet's three conditions: recognition of Israel, honoring signed agreements with Israel, and renouncing terrorism.

The internal strife in Iran, Hamas' (logistical) ally, and the results of the Lebanese elections create the impression that the fundamentalist movements in the region are weakening. These developments highlight the close connection between Iran (which is neither Arab nor Sunni) and Hamas, and contribute to the isolation of Hamas, which is also opposed to the Arab peace initiative, thereby cutting itself off from the Arab consensus. This state of affairs forces the leadership of Hamas to present an approach to the United States and the international community that is pragmatic, at least according to its own definitions.

Hamas is currently seeking to present a new face to the international community in order to be accepted as a legitimate political player, and thus ensure its continued existence, an end to its pariah status, and an end to the embargo of the Gaza Strip. The leadership looks favorably on efforts by various elements in the international community to find a formula that would allow Hamas to meet, in one way or another, the conditions set down by the Quartet.<sup>17</sup> In recent months, Hamas leaders have been issuing political declarations with what they think of as pragmatic contents on political issues. In interviews with the media, Khaled Mashal, the head of the Political Bureau, muted the importance of

Hamas' charter and said that the formula was two decades old, whereas Hamas is currently operating on the basis of reality on the ground and in a manner that is likely to serve its immediate interests. He declared that the movement would not recognize Israel, but promised that Israel would be part of the solution: Hamas is interested in a ceasefire agreement with Israel and in a deal over prisoner exchanges, and is prepared to establish a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders in exchange for a ten year *hudna*, on condition that this include East Jerusalem, the dismantling of the settlements, and the right of return.<sup>18</sup> After meetings in Egypt with the minister for intelligence and the general secretary of the Arab League, Mashal noted that he conveyed a message regarding Hamas' agreement to political negotiations over the establishment of a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders.<sup>19</sup> From Hamas' perspective, this positive attitude was already expressed in the National Conciliation Document ("Prisoners Document"), formulated in 2006.

On the other hand, Hamas' leadership continues to oppose the minimalist demand proposed in the national dialogue, whereby a unity government, to be established with its participation (though not with Hamas as a movement), would commit itself to all the agreements the PLO has signed with Israel. For now, it is avoiding such a move – even though it might lead to recognition by the United States and the international community in general – because it views that step as deviating too far from its ideology, necessitating the recognition of the State of Israel. Recently, Haniyeh even made it clear that the openness Hamas has displayed with regard to the end of the occupation and a settlement with Israel is linked to Hamas' "stages" plan.

### Implications for Israel

The victory of the intermediate generation in Fatah's inter-generational struggle deepened the historical process of weakening the Palestinian diaspora as a political force and entrenching the West Bank and Gaza Strip as the Palestinian center. The Palestinian system that Israel faces today comprises two rival national movements, Hamas and Fatah, that are led by members of the same generation that came of age in the territories and whose consciousness was molded by life under Israeli occupation and the struggle against it. However, even if the Palestinian diaspora lost much of its political power, it retains its value as

representative of the charged refugee question: the platforms of Hamas and Fatah alike, whether as a means of securing public legitimacy or in order to preserve their national identity, are adamant on the centrality of the right of return.

Theoretically, the territorial and political split allows Israel to enjoy relative calm and stability in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and continue a no-war-no-peace situation. Israel's interest in strengthening the economic and social situation in the West Bank in the last year offered Fatah an opportunity to present itself to the Palestinian people as an alternative to Hamas that is better able to advance Palestinian national political interests and effect a change in daily life (e.g., removal of roadblocks, greater freedom of movement, and an improved economic situation). Fatah's leadership now expects that this development, along with efforts to rehabilitate the movement's ideological and organizational frameworks – as expressed in the sixth convention – will help it regain the public's confidence. However, while Fatah's success largely depends on a renewal and successful conclusion of the political process with Israel, the conditions for this do not currently exist. Israel demands that Fatah recognize its Jewish character and agree to an end to the conflict, yet at the same time continues with settlement expansion. The Fatah leadership lacks any real potential to relax its principles regarding the permanent agreement's core issues, such as Jerusalem and the right of return.

In the wake of Operation Cast Lead, Hamas has been deterred from any further military confrontation with Israel that might topple its government, and aspires to preserve security calm. Israel appears interested both in weakening Hamas' rule and preventing its military resurgence, but in fact has adopted a policy that strengthens it both at home and abroad: through Egypt it is conducting an indirect dialogue with Hamas to formulate a deal for the release of the captive soldier Gilad Shalit, and it is avoiding military action to defeat it. A change in Israel's position on the crossings, such as opening them to let in cement, iron, and other materials necessary for the reconstruction of the Strip, alongside anchoring

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the situation of calm in an (indirect) arrangement between Israel and Hamas, presents Israel with both advantages and risks: while stability in terms of security is possible, it also gives Hamas the breathing space it needs to improve its standing in the public eye and rebuild its military, and decreases international legitimacy for Israel undertaking an extensive military operation to topple Hamas' government.

In Fatah's eyes, Israel's present policy vis-à-vis Hamas serves the Israeli interest in a continued Palestinian territorial and national division, since it allows Hamas' strengthening and continued hold on the Gaza Strip at Fatah's expense. Indeed, Hamas has succeeded in preserving its public status despite its political ostracism, the embargo on Gaza, and anti-Hamas moves by PA security services in the West Bank. The damage to the military and organizational infrastructures did not alter its ideological bases and did not undermine its stature. Its principles are still accepted by many sectors within the Palestinian community, including in the West Bank.

The impression that Israel's current policy contributes to stability and calm and may bring about a change in the balance of power in the Palestinian arena in favor of the nationalist stream is misguided. The PA's security coordination with Israel is deemed by Palestinians as cooperation for the purpose of enforcing its rule and battling Hamas, even though Israel continues with its settlement project and refuses to renew the political process. Continuation of this policy will deepen the damage in public stature to Abu Mazen and Fatah and will erode value earned by the transfer of authority to the security forces in the West Bank, from the removal of roadblocks to normalizing daily life. Moreover, it will underscore to the Palestinian population that yet once more Fatah cannot end the occupation or conclude a political agreement.

A process of this nature, along with the fact that the Fayyad government lacks broad popular support, may enhance Hamas' relevance as an alternative and increase the danger of a renewed outbreak against Israel. In these circumstances, Fatah and Hamas might well find it in their interests to pool their efforts and cooperate against Israel.

## Notes

- 1 The Egyptian foreign minister announced that Egypt considers Hamas a Palestinian faction and does not recognize its rule of the Gaza Strip.
- 2 It is unclear whether Prime Minister Netanyahu meant an independent, sovereign Palestinian state, or a protectorate lacking these characteristics. The Palestinians object to the latter option.
- 3 Palestine News Network, August 5, 2009.
- 4 Palestine Ala'an, July 19, 2009; and Palestine-info, August 8, 2009. The PA appointed trusted associates to institutions and non-profit agencies instead of Hamas loyalists. However, for the most part the administration is less efficient and contributors' willingness to continue offering financial support has decreased.
- 5 See interview of senior Hamas member Iman Tah, al-Jazeera, June 13, 2009.
- 6 In response to the recent extensive arrests made by the security apparatus in the West Bank, Hamas' apparatus retaliated against Fatah in the Gaza Strip and arrested movement activists and senior personnel. Hamas leaders repeated their threats to the PA's security apparatus leaders and senior Fatah members wherever they may be found. In mid August Hamas security services acted against a radical Islamic group (Jund Ansar Allah) that announced the establishment of an Islamic emirate in Rafah, and killed its leaders and some of its operatives.
- 7 Al-Jazeera interview with Iman Tah, June 13, 2009.
- 8 *Haaretz*, June 18, 2009. For the moment, the American administration has refrained from throwing all its weight into pressuring Israel about the border crossings as long as Hamas refuses to accept the Quartet's conditions.
- 9 Fatah's leadership demanded that a system of proportional representation be adopted. Egypt suggested a compromise to introduce a mixed election system, with dominance given to the proportional method (75 percent proportional and 25 percent regional).
- 10 It was recently reported that Hamas and Fatah have agreed to postpone the elections until a rapprochement is reached or until January 2011. Earlier, Abu Mazen had announced his determination to hold the elections for the presidency and the Legislative Council at their legally stipulated date (January 2010) in order to maintain the legitimacy of the Palestinian institutions and renew the activity of the Legislative Council, which came to a halt with Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip.
- 11 This tension was exacerbated when Fatah activists were denied exit from the Gaza Strip to attend the Fatah convention in Bethlehem.
- 12 On various occasions, Salam Fayyad has expressed his opinion that the negotiations over a permanent settlement with Israel are less important than the construction of the institutional infrastructure of the PA, which is a precondition for establishing a Palestinian state. See, for example, Fayyad's speech at al-Quds University on June 22, 2009, *The Voice of Palestine* (in Arabic), June 23, 2009.



- 13 The Fatah leadership insisted that the Arab peace initiative not be revised; this has been a consistent Fatah position. See al-Jazeera, April 21, 2007, <http://www.aljazeerataalk.net/forum/showthread.php?t=21856/>.
- 14 Some 70 senior Sunni clerics, headed by Sheikh Yousouf al-Kardawi and Dr. Suleiman al-Ouda, recently published a religious ruling backing Hamas' positions and challenging the American administration and the PA adopting the Arab peace initiative, which calls for normalization with Israel in return for Israel's withdrawal to the 1967 borders. The religious ruling opposes the internationalization of Jerusalem or the holy sites because it would mean conceding Muslim sovereignty, and it opposes normalization with Israel because it would mean supporting the Israeli conquest of al-Aqsa. Clerics have authorized Sheikh Raed Salah, head of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel, to distribute the religious ruling inside Israel and the territories. See [http://www.shams.co.il/Read.php?category=news\\_women&article\\_id=2711](http://www.shams.co.il/Read.php?category=news_women&article_id=2711).
- 15 Senior Hamas official Iman Tah said recently: "Hamas came into being with the goal of preserving the national rights and principles of the Palestinians, topped by right of return, and will not concede this right nor give in to pressure ...until the return of all the refugees to our homeland and the birthplace," al-Jazeera, June 13, 2009.
- 16 The Muslim Brotherhood, led by the Brotherhood's general supervisor, Hamam Sa'eed, held a demonstration in Amman. During the demonstrations, the authorities were denounced for having the Jordanian security forces train the Palestinian policemen because the latter would be sent to act against Hamas in the West Bank. In Egypt, a religious ruling by the former mufti of Egypt was made public; it prohibited Egyptian security services from destroying the tunnels between the Gaza Strip and Egypt.
- 17 E.g., regulating a long term period of calm with Israel and arriving at understandings regarding management of the daily life of the population, which would amount to de facto recognition of Israel.
- 18 See interview with Khaled Mashal in *New York Times*, May 5, 2009.
- 19 Ahmad Yussuf, Ismail Haniyeh's advisor, stated that Hamas is prepared to work in every possible way with the American administration to establish a Palestinian state. See *Haaretz*, June 18, 2009.