

The Hamas Document of January 21, 2024—Its Aspects and Meanings

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On January 21, 2024, Hamas published a document in English bearing the title “Our Narrative—Operation Al-Aqsa Flood.” The document is a narrative replete with false or partially true images and figures, devoid of historical context and references to religious sources or rulings, and fails to mention Hamas’s allegiance to the Muslim Brotherhood. The document also does not address how Hamas perceives itself as leading not only the armed struggle of the Palestinian people against Israel but also the Islamic nation on its way to realizing the reestablishment of the Islamic caliphate, which begins with the destruction of Israel and the liberation of Jerusalem—particularly the al-Aqsa Mosque. Since we are dealing with cognitive warfare, it is important for Israel to counter the Hamas document, and it is not difficult to refute its claims. Israel must use this document as a boomerang, to publicly expose Hamas’s falsehoods, its character, and goals.

On January 21, 2024, Hamas published a document in English bearing the title “Our Narrative—Operation Al-Aqsa Flood.” This document was issued by Hamas’s leadership abroad—and to what extent it was coordinated with and approved by the organization’s leadership in the Gaza Strip is not clear—is written in polished English and divided into five chapters:

The first chapter is presented as an explanation of Hamas’s October 7 operation, in an attempt to present it within the broader historical context of the Palestinian national struggle against the evils of imperialism and global colonialism in general, and Zionism in particular. Nonetheless, basic facts that do not serve the narrative are omitted. In this context, it is important to stress that the choice of the term “narrative” means an exemption from the responsibility of presenting the truth—after all, a narrative does not have to be faithful to historical facts.

The second chapter refers to the accusations of murder against Hamas and the murderous nature of Hamas, as shown on October 7.

The third chapter focuses on the necessity of investigating the war crimes that Israel has committed during the war in Gaza, which broke out following the October 7 attack, and the call to all countries, particularly the peace-loving

countries of the free world, to act against Israel, to exact a price from it for its crimes, to restrict its moves, and to stop supporting it.

The fourth chapter presents Hamas as a moderate, peace-loving national-religious movement, which leads the Palestinian people in its struggle for independence and supports the use of all means of resistance against the occupation, its repression and wrongs, including armed struggle.

The document concludes with a chapter in which the organization presents a list of steps it believes should be taken to stop the war and to realize historical justice for the Palestinian people.

As its authors declare, the document is a narrative and it is replete with false or partially true images and data, devoid of historical context and references to religious sources or rulings, and fails to mention Hamas's allegiance to the Muslim Brotherhood. The document also does not address how Hamas perceives itself as leading not only the armed struggle of the Palestinian people against Israel but also the Islamic nation on its way to realizing the reestablishment of the Islamic caliphate, which begins with the destruction of Israel and the liberation of Jerusalem—particularly the al-Aqsa Mosque. In this context, we should also remember the [speech by Ismail Haniyeh](#), head of Hamas's Political Bureau, to an audience of Islamic scholars after the attack (it was broadcast on Al Jazeera on January 9, 2024), in which he sets out the ideological teachings of Hamas and explains why it launched the attack on October 7, as the spearhead of the struggle of the entire Islamic nation.

In addition, the document makes no mention of the Hamas charter and the organization's aim of destroying Israel, of its unwillingness to recognize the Oslo Accords and Israel's right to exist, and its historical and stubborn refusal to accept the three conditions of the Quartet, presented as the conditions for discussions with it—accepting the existing agreements, namely the Interim Agreement, recognizing Israel's right to exist, and renouncing terror. Showing the true spirit of Hamas, unaltered for image purposes, senior Hamas official Khaled Mashal clarified [in an recent interview with an Arab blogger](#) that the organization—representing the consensual Palestinian position, including that of the Palestinian political leaders, who are obliged for political reasons to sing a different tune—will never recognize the State of Israel's right to exist and seeks to liberate all of Palestine from the river to the sea, from Ras al-Naqura (Rosh Hanikra) in the north to Umm Rashrash (Eilat) in the south.

The Hamas narrative, as presented in the document, does indeed reflect the broad Palestinian consensus, certainly after October 7, which was a seminal event in the

Palestinian national consciousness, symbolizing Israel's humiliation and proof of its vulnerability by crushing its defense doctrine and overcoming its military superiority. The target audience for this document is not the Palestinian public, which Hamas does not need to persuade; rather, the target audience is the international community, and the timing of the publication is apparently also linked to the proceedings against Israel in the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Therefore, the document has an apologetic tone. Its purpose is to try to minimize the damage caused to the organization in the international arena. For that reason, it can be understood as an expression of distress, as a response to Hamas's loss of legitimacy within the international community, and even to the criticism in the media of Hamas's conduct. The document can also be understood as an attempt to distinguish the Hamas leadership abroad from Hamas's military arm in the Gaza Strip, especially when it presents itself as not being directly involved in the events of October 7. Some may adopt this document, endorse and recite its contents, while avoiding or refusing to face the historical facts, due to criticism of Israel and hostility toward it.

At the same time, this document should be seen as another high-quality product of the cognitive campaign waged by Hamas and as an integral part of its fight against Israel. It also contains some implicit, barbed, and defiant statements against the Palestinian Authority, with Hamas presenting itself as the representative of the Palestinian people and its position as reflecting the Palestinian people in its entirety. The Hamas narrative piggybacks on the Palestinian national narrative, while also expanding it and referring to distant historical sources that are no longer relevant to the contemporary Palestinian national discourse. In this document Hamas harks back 105 years, in order to establish its historical narrative of victimhood, abuse, deprivation, and killing, and of course without omitting the refugee ethos.

The document also has a version in Arabic, and Hamas is likely distributing it to every possible platform, particularly Al Jazeera, which reaches nearly every Arab household in the region and will join the efforts to repeat the message, as it has effectively done over the years with respect to Hamas.

The document is a masterpiece when it comes to mixing facts and half-truths with unfounded data and far-fetched conclusions. Take, for example, the figure of 136 children on average killed each day by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in the Gaza Strip. This means that 14,000 out of all those killed are children, while according to Hamas's own reports the total number of dead is about 25,000, and this

includes over 9,000 Hamas activists classified as civilians. At the same time, and for obvious reasons, the document contains no accounts of the barbarity of the organization, and there is a clear and clumsy attempt to present it as a legitimate resistance organization, working on behalf of Palestinian national liberation from the yoke of the Zionist occupiers, and all its paths and methods are ways of peace. The spirit of the document is no less than an oxymoron: “We are a peace-loving terror organization” (as they are depicted in the Israeli satirical program, “Eretz Nehederet” [A Wonderful Country]).

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The distortions and lies in the document, reflecting its propagandizing and apologetic purpose, can and must be refuted—tantamount to fighting back. First, the dishonest character of the document can be illustrated by the aforementioned interview with Khaled Mashal (who was seen by some as the standard bearer for the pragmatic wing of the organization following publication of Hamas’s policy document in May 2017) and also the previously mentioned speech by Ismail Haniyeh to the group of Islamic scholars. Haniyeh stressed that Hamas’s attack on October 7 was not about Gaza or the Palestinians, but rather it was on behalf of the Islamic Nation (al-Umma) and part of the al-Aqsa campaign, spearheading the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate and restoring the glory of the Islamic nation as a whole. These statements also reflect the expectation of the Hamas leadership in Gaza that all the other fronts will join the “storm” or the “flood,” to bring about the collapse of the “Zionist project.” It is superfluous to note that these words do not reflect the explanations for the October 7 attack given in the document.

Moreover, it is important to show evidence of life in Gaza—the world’s largest “open prison”—including videos of full, active, and even luxurious lifestyles in some parts of the Strip (see, for example, the publications of [MEMRI](#)). The abundance in the markets of the Gaza Strip, including the gold market, must be shown. Moreover, the tunnel project—“Lower Gaza”—throughout all of the Strip is proof of the theft of funds from Gaza’s residents by the Hamas leadership. We can also refer to the entry of goods into Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing on the Gaza-Israel border and through the Rafah crossing with Egypt, as well as the ability of Palestinians to leave Gaza through the Egyptian crossing and the daily entry of some 20,000 Gazans to work in Israel, in addition to the provision of medical treatment to Gazan residents in Israeli hospitals. Furthermore, it is important to show the extensive documentation of the wealth of Hamas leaders, their assets and fortunes, the wasteful and ostentatious lifestyle they and their families had, and Hamas’s priorities regarding national and financial resources,

which were used to acquire weapons and build a terror infrastructure instead of providing welfare for their people and subjects.

To all this, the following fundamental points should be added:

Hamas is a criminal and murderous terrorist organization that continues to support violent resistance and terror to undermine the stability of the region and the world, using civilian facilities (schools, hospitals) for terrorist purposes and civilians as human shields.

Hamas is a component of the Iranian axis of resistance, which seeks to undermine regional stability and frustrate the normalization processes between Israel and the Arab countries that are striving to create a new regional architecture that will serve, inter alia, as an effective response to Iran's hegemonic aims in the region and to counter the risks and security threats that Iran poses both directly and through its proxies.

The Hamas charter and its significance: Hamas has never recognized Israel and its right to exist and calls for its destruction. This is also an opportunity to point out the falsehoods and deception related to the policy document that Khaled Mashal formulated and published in May 2017, which some perceived as Hamas's consent to a two-state arrangement based on the June 4, 1967 borders, while ignoring his explanation that this was an interim stage along the way of taking over all of Palestine.

The Hamas denial of antisemitism is false and deceitful. Old and new documents show otherwise, from the Hamas charter to the notes (revealed by the National Security Council and the [IDF spokesperson](#)) carried by the Hamas fighters on October 7, calling for the merciless slaughter of Jews, who are described as the eternal and historical enemies of the Muslims from the days of Muhammad until the present.

The document claims that Hamas is opposed to killing civilians and that the October 7 attack was only aimed at military targets. But the past and the present conduct of the organization (including the October 7 attack and the murder of kidnapped Israelis during the war that followed the attack) is fraught with the murder of civilians. Moreover, Hamas uses religious rulings to justify killing Israeli citizens without distinction, such as the fatwa issued by the most important Sunni religious leader, the late Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who ruled that all Israeli citizens are potential soldiers, and it is therefore permitted and even a religious duty to kill them (for more on the religious approval to kill Jews wherever they are, see the article by [Jonathan Dahoah Halevi](#), published in Hebrew by the Meir Amit

Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center). It is also important to stress Hamas's indiscriminate firing of rockets at civilian targets, including hospitals (over 13,000 rockets since the start of the war, and many more before that). Their limited success in killing citizens, thanks to the Iron Dome, does not exempt Hamas from the being responsible for this war crime against citizens.

In spite of Hamas's claims, the organization as presented in this document and by its leaders in their other pronouncements does not represent all Palestinians, or even the majority. Since the beginning of the Oslo process and even more so since June 2007 when it took military control of the Gaza Strip, Hamas has operated against the legitimate Palestinian representative. It denies and rejects the Oslo Accords and is not prepared to accept the two-state solution, which was adopted by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the formula for a permanent peace agreement and has been supported by the entire international community.

In this document Hamas does not reveal its ideological and political ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, as mentioned in its charter from 1988, which has never been repudiated.

Since Qatar is working to isolate the political leadership of Hamas from its military wing in order to maintain the organization's status as a legitimate national resistance movement, it is extremely important not to allow Qatar to establish this modus operandi and point to the fact that this document pertains to the Hamas leadership—both military and political.

Since we are dealing with a cognitive war, it is critical that Israel counters the Hamas document. It is not difficult to refute its claims, and it should be turned into a boomerang, publicly exposing Hamas's lies and the nature and goals of the organization.

Editors of the series: Anat Kurtz, Eldad Shavit and Judith Rosen