

**HAMAS: TEN YEARS OF ANTI-ISRAEL VIOLENCE AND
OPPRESSIVE RULE OVER GAZA**

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QATAR ENABLES HAMAS'S GAZA OPPRESSION

David Ibsen

[Jerusalem Post](#), June 18, 2017

In the 10 years since Hamas forces violently expelled the Palestinian Authority from the Gaza Strip, the terrorist group has brought the coastal enclave to ruin through mismanagement, violence and neglect; an essential service as basic as electricity has been cut to no more than four hours a day. If not for the political and financial lifeline provided by Qatar, Hamas's rule would likely have collapsed years ago.

Last week, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and other countries severed diplomatic and commercial ties with Qatar. Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir specifically cited Qatari support of Hamas and its parent group, the Muslim Brotherhood, as the impetus for the current diplomatic crisis. In response, Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani defended Hamas as a "legitimate resistance movement." It is time for Qatar to recognize Hamas for what it is: a murderous terrorist group that has set back the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and stolen precious resources from the Gazan people.

Hamas first came to power in 2006's Palestinian legislative elections. The international community largely shunned the new Hamas-led Palestinian government. The United States, European Union, Russia and the United Nations - the so-called quartet of Middle East peacemakers - demanded Hamas renounce violence, recognize Israel and abide by past Palestinian agreements in order to receive recognition.

Hamas chose to do none of the above. And after a year of factional fighting (political and physical) with rival Fatah, Hamas forces drove Fatah and the PA from Gaza on June 15, 2007. Cut off from the West Bank, the PA and the international

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community Hamas's rule should have quickly ended, particularly after Hamas rocket fire into Israel the following year sparked the first of three wars with Israel.

Instead, Qatar continued to provide Hamas with hundreds of millions of dollars to pay salaries and to rebuild Gaza after the devastating wars Hamas initiated with Israel. In October 2012, then-Qatari emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani even defied Hamas's international isolation and became the first foreign head of state to visit the Gaza Strip after Hamas violently seized control.

In Qatar itself, now-former Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal has been a "dear guest" of the Qatari government, despite US sanctions against him. Last month, Mashaal and Hamas held a press conference at the Sheraton hotel in Doha to announce the group's new guiding political document, which Hamas heralded as a sign of its moderation. However, the new document simply reiterated Hamas's commitment to armed jihad in order to replace all of Israel with a Palestinian state "from the river to the sea." According to the new document, "armed resistance" remains Hamas's "strategic choice."

In the same week that Qatar's neighbors determined its support for terrorism could no longer be tolerated, the United Nations discovered Hamas tunnels beneath one of its schools in Gaza. As the summer months threaten sweltering temperatures, Gazans have fewer than four hours of electricity each day to run refrigeration or air conditioning. The responsibility of governance has not moderated Hamas, and the leaders of the Arab world now recognize the disastrous consequences of Hamas's violent coup. All except one. Despite Hamas's continued commitment to terrorism and its blatant disregard for the people of Gaza and international institutions, Qatari support for Hamas remains steadfast. As the Gazan people mark 10 years of oppressive Hamas rule by candlelight, they have Doha to thank for their continued suffering. Qatar's purse strings must first be closed if Gaza is to ever break free.

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HAMAS: STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Maj. Gen. (res.) Yaakov Amidror

[BESA](#), June 19, 2017

The first and most important element currently putting pressure on Hamas is the loss of Qatar. Under pressure from its Arab Gulf neighbors, Qatar has expelled several Hamas leaders and is leaving open the possibility that the organization's entire leadership will eventually need to leave the country. If Qatar ceases to provide economic aid to the Gaza Strip due to this pressure, residents of Gaza and Hamas will have lost what has been their primary source of help in recent years.

The second source of pressure is the recent decisions of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. First, the PA will reduce or has already significantly reduced salaries to people it considers its enemies in Gaza, and these cuts will have a considerable impact on the economic situation. Abbas has also decided not to pay for a large portion of the electricity Gaza consumes, leading to the Israeli cabinet's decision on Sunday to reduce the amount of electricity Israel transfers to Gaza. As a result, the people of Gaza will be left without electricity for much of the time.

There is no alternative to Israeli electricity, because the Egyptians, too, are denying Gaza more electricity. As to who will supply the salaries, there is no alternative there either. No one will fill the void left by the PA on this matter and it does not appear that anyone will step into Qatar's shoes if it has to discontinue its economic support.

All these factors will lead to immense pressure on the Gaza Strip in general and on Hamas, which is responsible for Gaza, in particular. This is a classic example of a situation in which Israel has no “good decision” to make. On the one hand, Israel has a great interest in pressuring Hamas to sacrifice its military investments. On the other hand, the worse the situation in Gaza becomes, and the less Hamas has to lose, the greater the risk of a violent outburst from inside Gaza. This outburst will be aimed at Israel, not Hamas.

What is the right balance between pressure on Hamas and the building of hope for the citizens of Gaza? The answer to this question is entirely unclear. How can pressure be applied without causing an eruption? To do so is an art, and it is difficult to provide good advice. It is exceedingly clear, however, that once the three prongs of pressure - less electricity, lower salaries, and reduced economic aid - affect life in a tangible manner, the Gaza Strip will become far more combustible. This has to be taken into account.

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MARKING A DECADE OF HAMAS RULE IN GAZA

Dr. Mordechai Kedar

[*Arutz Sheva*](#), June 16, 2017

Characteristically, writing that appears in the media tends to be negative and critical, because journalists generally deal with disasters, wars, disputes, problems and all kinds of trouble - and not with, let's say, the dedications of new kindergartens or cornerstone laying ceremonies for new neighborhoods.

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Sadly enough, the Arab world provides a good deal of depressing subject matter, especially since the last months of 2010. Late 2010 is when the terrible tempest known at first as the Arab Spring began, leading to hundreds of thousands of deaths, millions of injured and over 10 million refugees, mostly Syrian. No one has any idea when - or if - this horrible tragedy will come to an end.

In this article, I want to deal with something that has some positive sides to it, even though my country, the State of Israel, suffers not a little from it - and that is Gaza, the state established exactly a decade ago during June 2007 by Hamas. I am certainly not a supporter of Hamas, since one of its main goals is to eliminate me, my family and my country. Still, one must salute this movement which, against all predictions, managed to establish a state, administer it, defend it and turn it into a fait accompli on the political map of the Middle East.

I consider Gaza a state, because what has been established in that geographical strip over the past decade is, for all intents and purposes, a state. It is a governmental entity with a leader, law enforcement agency, army, military industry, internal security and intelligence agencies, legal system, media, tax structure, legislature, education and health ministries, infrastructure - and every other institution a state needs. The State of Gaza even has marked borders, as well as border crossings to Israel and Egypt, its surrounding states, and it has reached agreements with those countries and others that allow for the management of daily life.

The establishment of a state, however, does not change the fact that Hamas is a terror organization through and through, not only because of its acts of terror against Israel and its Jewish population, but because of the terrible means it employs against its own residents in order to maintain its rule over them. Israel is well aware of this, but its political echelons have no intentions of bringing down the Hamas government, and even countries like Egypt which is conducting an all-out war against the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas' birth mother, conducts

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negotiations with Gaza State representatives who arrive as official guests to its capital city.

Furthermore, the State of Gaza has succeeded in forcing Israel, its arch-enemy, to provide it with food, fuel, medicine and building materials, some used to dig attack tunnels against Israel itself. There is no other country in the world that has succeeded in getting another state - for whose destruction it continues to call - to provide it with goods. Can anyone imagine the United Kingdom, France or the USA sending so much as an overripe banana to a country which has vowed to destroy them? Israel does. It sends hundreds of tons of perfectly edible bananas to Gaza every day, despite the fact that the Islamic Covenant of Hamas - its founding document - calls in no uncertain terms for Israel's destruction.

Every single day, over a thousand trucks piled with every kind of merchandise, enter the State of Gaza from Israel. Hamas immediately confiscates anything that can be of use to its members and leaves the leftovers for the general population. In addition, Hamas levies taxes to fund its activities, and while the smuggling tunnels connecting Egypt and Gaza remained open, until Egypt destroyed them, Hamas ran the smuggling industry: it allowed only its members to dig the tunnels, forbade anyone on its black list to do so, and was given a portion of the contraband goods as a form of tax.

From a political standpoint, Hamas has managed to achieve a position on the same level as that of the PLO, that of representing the "Palestinian people." Hamas, impressively, won most of the Palestinian Legislature seats in the first elections in which the organization took part. Another, just as important, achievement is the fact that Hamas leaders managed to get Qatar, with all the massive economic ability of that gas-rich emirate, on their side. The Qatari Emir is the first Arab ruler, and so far the only one, who visited the State of Gaza while it is under Hamas rule - and without asking the Palestinian Authority for permission to do so.

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Qatar has invested billions so far in the State of Gaza, its money funding significant portions of the local arms, rocket and tunnel-digging industry. The economic backing Qatar provided for Hamas enabled it to survive three violent clashes with Israel, Operations Cast Lead in 2008-09, Pillar of Defense in 2012 and Protective Edge in 2014. Qatar's media outlet *Al Jazeera* served Hamas interests during each one of these operations, broadcasting non-stop anti Israel reports that turned Arab and international public opinion against Israel.

The State of Gaza has fallen upon hard times recently as a result of Qatar's altercation with other Arab states, Trump's inclusion of Hamas on his list of terrorist organizations in his Riyadh speech and now because of PA refusal to continue paying for the Hamas State's electricity supplied by Israel. Hamas can easily afford to pay for its own electricity whose entire annual cost is about a tenth of the amount Hamas invests in its members welfare, in military industry and tunnel infrastructure, but Hamas leaders have reacted with utter cynicism: for all they care, the Gazan population can continue suffering in darkness and without refrigeration in the torrid summer weather, while they carry on with their comfortable lives and continue digging tunnels.

Gaza's population has not said a word. They all know what happens to anyone who criticizes Hamas - he is first arrested, then taken to the torture chambers in Hamas' dungeons, and is never heard from again. Anyone suspected of collaboration with Israel is summarily executed - this happened just a few weeks ago. Sinwar, the new Hamas leader, is himself accused of killing someone he suspected of treason. In extreme cases, masked men appear at suspects' homes in the dead of night and humiliate their families in various ways.

All this aside, the Hamas State's greatest accomplishment is the security standoff it has reached with Israel. Taking advantage of Israel's sensitivity to human life, Hamas places its rocket launchers in the midst of civilian areas so that its citizens form human shields. In emergencies, Hamas leaders hide in bunkers built underneath hospitals, knowing that Israel will never bomb them. The Hamas regime digs its attack tunnels underneath UNWRA schools because the UN will not allow Israel to hit them. Just recently, the UN organization discovered one of these tunnels, and its Secretary General did not even bother to condemn Hamas for

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digging it. After all, Qatar funds certain UN organizations, such as UNESCO, so the secretary general knows enough to refrain from offending the source of his budget.

Israel is concerned about security for the Israeli population near Gaza, leading it to try to avoid friction with the Hamas State as much as possible. Every time someone fires a shot from the Gaza Strip to Israel, the Israeli reaction is immediate and painful, and the Hamas government has learned that lesson. Israel has also built underground obstacles to tunnel digging from Gaza into Israeli territory, but my heart tells me that Hamas will search for, and possibly find, ways to get around these obstacles, either by destroying them or digging under them.

Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz has called for building a Gazan seaport and perhaps even an airport on an artificial island opposite Gaza, so that everything that arrives to Gaza would first have to pass Israeli scrutiny before reaching the coast. There is logic in this idea, but it is hard to believe that the Hamas government will agree to it. The terrorist regime doesn't care much for its citizens' welfare and is interested in running its own port, not one built out in the sea where it cannot import weapons and rockets because Israel is in control...

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LEADERSHIP

 PALESTINIANS' REAL TRAGEDY: FAILED

Khaled Abu Toameh

[Gatestone Institute](#), June 15, 2017

The Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip may

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be at war with each other, but the two rival parties seem to be in agreement over one issue: silencing and intimidating their critics. Of course, this does not come as a surprise to those who are familiar with the undemocratic nature of the PA and Hamas. Under the regimes of the PA and Hamas, Palestinians are free to criticize Israel and incite against it. But when it comes to criticizing the leaders of the PA and Hamas, the rules of the game are different. Such criticism is considered a "crime" and those responsible often find themselves behind bars or subjected to other forms of punishment.

This, of course, is not what the majority of Palestinians were expecting from their leaders. After the signing of the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the PA more than 20 years ago, Palestinians were hoping to see democracy and freedom of speech. However, the PA, first under Yasser Arafat and later under Mahmoud Abbas, has proven to be not much different than most of the Arab dictatorships, where democracy and freedom of expression and the media are non-existent.

If Palestinians had in the past to deal with only one regime (the PA) that does not honor freedom of expression, in the last 10 years they have fallen victim to another repressive government (Hamas) that rules the Gaza Strip with an iron fist and suppresses any form of freedom of expression and targets anyone who dares to speak out.

The Palestinians in PA's West Bank-controlled territories and Hamas's Gaza Strip can only look at their neighbors in Israel and envy them for the democracy, free media and rule of law. Hardly a day passes without the Palestinians being reminded by both the PA and Hamas that they are still far from achieving their dream of enjoying democracy and freedom of expression. A free media is something that Palestinians can only continue to dream about.

The Palestinian media in the West Bank serves as a mouthpiece for the PA and its leaders. Even privately-owned television and radio stations in the West Bank have

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long learned that they must toe the line or face punitive measures and feel the heavy hand of the PA security forces. This is why Palestinian media outlets and journalists in the West Bank refrain from reporting about any story that may reflect negatively on Abbas or any of his cronies. In the world of the media, it is called self-censorship. In the Gaza Strip, the situation is not any better. In fact, it is hard to talk about the existence of a media under Hamas. Hamas and its security forces maintain a tight grip on local media outlets and journalists are subjected to tight restrictions. Criticism of Hamas is almost unheard of and could land those responsible in prison.

In the absence of a free and independent media in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, some writers, journalists and political activists have resorted to social media to air their views and share their grievances with their fellow Palestinians and the outside world. But the PA and Hamas have discovered the power of Facebook and Twitter, and have taken the battle against their critics to these two platforms. Posting critical or controversial postings on social media is considered a serious offense under the PA and Hamas. The leaders of the PA and Hamas accuse those who dare to criticize them on Facebook of "extending their tongues" and "insulting" representatives of the Palestinians.

In the past few years, dozens of Palestinian journalists, bloggers, academics and political activists have been imprisoned or summoned for interrogation by the PA and Hamas over their Facebook postings. International human rights organizations and advocates of free speech and media around the world prefer to look the other way in the face of these human rights violations by the PA and Hamas. Moreover, "pro-Palestinian" groups and individuals in the West do not seem to care about the sad state of affairs of the Palestinians under the PA and Hamas. The only "wrongdoing" and "evil" they see is on the Israeli side. By ignoring the plight of the suppressed Palestinians, these "pro-Palestinian" activists and groups are actually aiding the PA and Hamas in their efforts to silence the voices of dissent and criticism.

The absence of international criticism allows the PA and Hamas to continue their

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policy of silencing and intimidating Palestinians who dare to speak out against the lack of freedom of expression and democracy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Recently, for example, Hamas arrested two Palestinians in the Gaza Strip who posted critical remarks on Facebook: Abdallah Abu Sharekh and Shukri Abu Oun. Abu Sharekh, a prominent writer, was arrested shortly after he posted a comment on Facebook criticizing senior Hamas official Salah Bardaweel. "You are ruling the Gaza Strip with an iron fist and fire," Abu Sharekh wrote. "The state of oppression (in the Gaza Strip) is intolerable. You (Hamas) have taken the Gaza Strip back to the Middle Ages."

Abu Sharekh's criticism came in response to the electricity crisis in the Gaza Strip. Thousands of families in the Gaza Strip spend most of the day without electricity as a result of the power struggle between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. Last month, the PA announced that it would stop paying Israel for the fuel supplied to the power plants in the Gaza Strip. The PA's move is designed to punish Hamas. But Abu Sharekh and other Palestinians in the Gaza Strip hold Hamas responsible for the crisis. They argue that Hamas' corruption, specifically the embezzlement of Qatari funds intended to purchase fuel for the power plants, is the main reason behind the crisis. Abu Sharekh, in his Facebook comment, pointed out that Hamas leaders have installed private generators that supply their homes with electricity even during the power outages...

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Friday, a small group of assailants launched an attack near Jerusalem's Old City. Wielding guns and knives, they killed a female police officer and wounded three other people.

[Gaza in the Dark Is Not So Terrible](#): Prof. Efraim Inbar, *BESA*, June 18, 2017—The Hamas leadership in Gaza has threatened Israel with “an explosion” if it does not supply electricity to Gaza at the expense of Israeli taxpayers. Blackmail is, of course, part of the Hamas repertoire. One of the main reasons why Hamas launched thousands of rockets and sent terrorists into Israel via tunnel in the summer of 2014 was to solve its dire economic problem. Hamas needs electricity to build terror tunnels and produce weapons.

[Qatar vs. Saudi Arabia: How Iran and the Brotherhood Tore the Gulf Apart](#): David Andrew Weinberg, *National Interest*, June 8, 2017 —The Gulf monarchies face the most serious crisis in their history. It is largely being covered as a diplomatic spat, since several Arab nations terminated their relations with Qatar on Monday to protest its support for radical Islamists. But the crisis has an economic component as well. Saudi Arabia severed Qatar's access to its only land border, across which roughly 40 percent of Qatar's food needs are imported.

[Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Iran's 'Preferred Proxy,' Arming in Gaza](#): Yaakov Lappin, *IPT News*, June 5, 2017—Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the second largest terrorist army in Gaza, recently issued a video threat about its willingness to end the three-year truce in place with Israel.