

## Hamas Success

Hamas capitalized on the failure of the “international community” to protect the Palestinians from Israel’s daily terror

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Global Research, January 28, 2006  
28 January 2006

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

The Arabic word *Hamas* means courage and bravery. It is also an abbreviation of the Arabic *Harakat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamiyya* (Islamic Resistance Movement).

Hamas was formed in the 1980s during the *Intifada* to counter Israel’s brutality against the Palestinian people. Hamas uses the armed struggle against far more violent and brutal force; the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF). Let’s hope that Israel rethinks its brutal policies and chooses peace over violence.

The recent Palestinian legislative elections were a smokescreen to divert public attention from Israel’s brutal treatments of the Palestinian people. More than two thirds of Palestinians living in refugee camps were not allowed to participate in these elections. In addition, some 95 per cent of Palestinians in East Jerusalem were prevented from voting. Israel allowed small number of Palestinians in Jerusalem to vote in order to fool the outside world. Elections are illegitimate under foreign military Occupation. Nonetheless, the elections reflect the wishes of the Palestinian people under Israeli military Occupation and must be respected.

However, massive interference by the U.S. and Israel didn’t prevent Hamas from wining the popular vote, suggests a complete change of attitudes toward the Occupation. “Many of the votes given to Hamas had nothing to do with peace, religion and fundamentalism, but with protest” wrote Israeli peace activist Uri Avnery. “Hamas had more creditable candidates, untainted by corruption. Its party machine was far superior, its members far more disciplined”, added Uri Avnery. Israel created the conditions for Hamas’ victory. It is also an indication of Palestinians determination to ongoing struggle against the Israeli Occupation.

Furthermore, Palestinians have become disillusioned with the fraudulent “peace process” used by Israel to annex Palestinian land and water resources, and to implement a system of collective punishment and control. The building of the Apartheid Wall – condemned by the International Court of Justice in The Hague – is fractionating and isolating the Palestinians into closed ghettos, reinforces the annexation of more Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem, and makes a viable and independent Palestinian state impossible. All this happen with the full knowledge of the “international community”, led by the U.S. and the European Union.

Hamas capitalized on the failure of the “international community” to protect the Palestinians from Israel’s daily terror, and on a widespread discontent of corruption and ineffectiveness in the Palestinian Authority (PA) – favoured by the U.S. and its allies. Hamas has built an effective Resistance and social movement not only against the Israeli Occupation, but also

against the deteriorating living conditions created by Israel closure of the Occupied Territories.

Hamas Resistance to Israel's brutal policy and Hamas social work, which includes providing health care and education to needy Palestinians in Gaza and the Occupied Territories were factors in its popularity. Hamas is "a vibrant political and social movement. It has kindergartens and schools that offer free meals for children, education centers for women, and youth and sports clubs. Its medical clinics offer subsidized treatment to the sick and it extends financial and technical assistance to those whose homes had been demolished and to refugees living in sub-standard conditions. Thus, ever since its establishment, Hamas has offered Palestinians extensive community services and has responded constantly to the changing political reality by making pragmatic decisions", wrote Neve Gordon of Ben-Gurion University in Israel.

Hamas is a heterogeneous democratic movement, with well-educated and dedicated people. The labels of "Islamist" and "terrorist" are the creation of a racist Western propaganda derived from the anti-Arabs and anti-Muslims colonial ideology of deep-seated belief in cultural superiority. It is designed to associate an Islamic Resistance movement with terrorism and violence. Today, Westerners see Muslims and Arabs as they saw Jews in the past. Further, political Islam is used as an excuse by Western "progressive" elites to dissociate themselves from legitimate liberation movements such as Hamas and the Iraqi Resistance movement.

Hamas has very little to do with religious fundamentalism, and has less in common with Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. It is an independent movement constitute of Muslim and Christian Palestinians united against the Israeli Occupation. In fact Hamas is far less religious than many of the West's right-wing religious parties. For example, the current U.S. Administration is much more religious fundamentalist than Hamas. The Republican Party is supported by roughly 50 million right-wing fundamentalist Christians. The 20 million fundamentalist voters helped sweep Bush back into office on 02 November, 2005, and maintained a Republican majority in Congress. Equally, Israeli politic is far more right-wing and religious extremist than Hamas. Indeed, Israel is moving very rapidly toward a Jewish fundamentalist state, which worries many liberal Jews around the world.

Israel was created based on a religious-imperialist ideology, and continues to this day to use violence and religion to annex Arab land and increases its size. Time and again, Israel has rejected all peaceful solutions offered by Arab governments and instead resorts to the use of force. To counter Palestinian Resistance and unity, Israel has incited Palestinian groups against each other, including Hamas to create divisions and foment civil strife among the Palestinian people.

Hamas has always called for peace with Israel. Hamas founder, the late Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who was murdered in a cold blood together with a number of innocent civilians by Israeli forces, said that; "If the Zionist entity completely evacuates...all the Jewish settlements and military bases...on the Gaza Strip, we can start a new phase of calmness in order to discuss the issues of Jerusalem, the West Bank, the prisoners and the refugees... Hamas was willing to stop its operations if the Zionists ended its occupation of Palestinian territories and stopped killing Palestinian women, children and innocent civilians". It is evident that Israel prefers violence to peace.

It is Israel which continues the destruction of Palestine, and refuses to recognise Palestinians' right to exist, not the opposite way around. Israel has always hindered and derailed any negotiation for peaceful settlement. Israeli leaders have always found pretext not to negotiate. They didn't negotiate with the late Yasser Arafat; they refuse to negotiate with Mahmud Abbas. Whether it is Hamas or not Hamas, Israel has always refused to deal directly with any Palestinian government. Israelis have refused to deal with the Palestinians as negotiating partners and prefer to continue with their unilateral ways of occupying Palestinian land. It is rightly argued that Hamas victory in the elections fulfils Israel's dream not to negotiate with the Palestinians and instead continues with the violence and destruction. With the financial, military and political support provided by the West and the U.S. in particular, Israel continues its brutal policies against the Palestinian people.

As I write these lines, the Israeli Occupation Forces shot dead a 9-year old Palestinian schoolgirl in cold blood inside Gaza (*Ha'aretz*, 27/01/06). Here is an opportunity for the U.S. and the European governments to show the world that they really believe in peace and democracy, not in violence.

Hamas had won the elections so overwhelmingly and fairly should encourage the West, and the U.S. in particular, to reach out to the Palestinian people, and act as honest brokers for a just and lasting peace in Palestine.

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