



PERSPECTIVES

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Hamas's Relentless Jihad

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: While many in the West were quick to condemn Israel for its response to Hamas's attacks on its population centers, they must face up to the fact that there is no difference between the Islamist terror organization's commitment to Israel's destruction and its plans for the West. As its long-time leader Khaled Mash'al warned the Western nations amidst the world crisis over the satirical depictions of Muhammad in a Danish newspaper: "By Allah, you will be defeated... Tomorrow we will lead the world, Allah willing."

Do Hamas's supporters in the West know what this organization really stands for? The reality is that Hamas is no liberation movement in search of a Palestinian nation. Instead, it seeks the destruction of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic state on its ruins. How do we know? Because senior Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Zahar has said so:

Islamic and traditional views reject the notion of establishing an independent Palestinian state... In the past, there was no independent Palestinian state... This is a holy land. It is not the property of the Palestinians or the Arabs. This land is the property of all Muslims in all parts of the world... [Hence] our main goal is to establish a great Islamic state, be it pan-Arabic or pan-Islamic.

Understanding this makes it clear that the most recent bout of fighting—in which thousands of rockets have been fired and dozens killed—has little to do with freeing Palestinians from Israeli domination. It is inspired instead by the idea of freeing the Holy Land from Israel.

The violence has even less to do with the supposed threat to the al-Aqsa Mosque, let alone with the court proceedings to evict six Palestinian families

from illegally occupied residences in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah.

For over a century, Palestinian leaders have repeatedly used the Temple Mount, or al-Haram al-Sharif as it is known to Muslims, as their foremost rallying cry for anti-Jewish violence. The Jerusalem Mufti Hajj Amin Husseini, leader of the Palestinian Arabs from the 1920s to the late-1940s and Adolf Hitler's close Middle Eastern collaborator, exploited a religious Jewish event near the Wailing Wall in 1929 to unleash nationwide massacres that saw 133 Jews killed. Seventy-one years later, Yasser Arafat exploited Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount to wage a meticulously prepared war of terror, pointedly euphemized as the "al-Aqsa Intifada"—which lasted for four years and pitted Palestinians and Israelis in their bloodiest confrontation since 1948.

When Mahmoud Abbas, Arafat's successor as PLO chairman and president of the Palestinian Authority, recently called off the first elections in 15 years—out of fear that Hamas might seize control once again—the Islamist group swiftly played the Jerusalem trump card. First, Hamas drew thousands of rioters to the Temple Mount by using the age-old lie of an imminent Jewish threat to the Mosque. Then it fired a barrage of rockets at Israeli towns near Gaza under the false pretense of protecting the Jerusalem rioters.

Israel's restrained response indicated a clear reluctance to escalate. The government used minimal force to restrain the Temple Mount rioters. But Hamas upped the ante and threatened a missile strike on Jerusalem. The terror group demanded the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the cessation of the Sheikh Jarrah court proceedings.

No sovereign state can accept a dictate by a terrorist organization, especially one committed to its destruction. And given that a liberal state cannot order its judiciary to cease a court hearing for political reasons, Israel declined and Hamas made good on its threat. On May 10, it bombed the Holy City as Israelis were celebrating Jerusalem Day. This armed attack on the nation's capital left Israel's government little choice but to respond robustly. After all, what else can be done when terrorists try to kill your citizens?

What made this latest conflagration particularly traumatic for Israeli Jews was not Hamas's missiles, but rather the tidal wave of violence unleashed by their Arab compatriots in support of Hamas. The cities of Jaffa, Haifa, Acre, Ramla, and Lod—once considered showcases of Arab-Jewish coexistence—were rocked by mass violence and vandalism. Synagogues and religious seminaries were torched and Torah scrolls desecrated. Cars were stoned and torched, private establishments were ransacked, and transportation arteries were

blocked, cutting off Jewish localities. Mobs of Arabs wielding iron bars, Molotov cocktails, stones, and even firearms roamed the streets in search of Jewish victims. Jewish residents were attacked in their homes, at times with firearms, by Arab neighbors with whom they had coexisted peacefully for decades. When hundreds of Jewish families fled the cities in fear for their lives, their homes were swiftly plundered and ravaged.

Reluctant to acknowledge this volcanic eruption for what it is and what it portends—a nationalist/Islamist insurrection rejecting Arab minority status in the Jewish state—the Israeli media and chattering classes quickly attributed the uptick in violence to the supposed longstanding discrimination and marginalization of the Arab minority. But the idea of discrimination couldn't be further from the truth. Why? Because the riots came after a decade of unprecedented government investment in Arab neighborhoods and businesses, including a 15 billion-shekel (\$3.8 billion) socioeconomic aid program.

Of course, many Israeli Arabs would still be content to get on with their lives and take advantage of the freedoms and opportunities afforded by Israel, no matter how much they might resent their minority status in a Jewish state. Yet from the start of the Arab-Israeli conflict a century ago, Palestinian Arab society has always been led by extremist leaderships. It has been swayed, too, by a militant minority that was sufficiently large to impose its will on the silent majority at the cost of repeated disasters.

No less galling are the anti-Israel hate fests that pop up with sickening regularity in Western cities whenever the Jewish state responds in strength to Palestinian terrorism. If it were not so appalling, one might marvel at the irony of western democracies sending their armies to fight al-Qaeda and ISIS terrorists thousands of miles away while allowing hordes of hateful, violent “demonstrators” to flock to their streets to demonize a fellow Western democracy fighting a jihadist terror organization on its own doorstep, one that is committed not only to the total destruction of a longstanding member of the international community but also to global Islamic hegemony, just like its Iranian paymaster.

As Khaled Mash'al, Hamas's long-time leader, put it in 2006, when a tidal wave of Muslim violence swept across the world in response to satirical depictions of Muhammad in a Danish newspaper:

By Allah, you will be defeated... Hurry up and apologize to our nation, because if you do not, you will regret it... Tomorrow, our nation will sit on the throne of the world. This is not a figment of the imagination but a fact. Tomorrow we will lead the world, Allah willing.

Mash'al's words make it clear there is no difference between Hamas's commitment to Israel's destruction and Islamists' plans for the West. To imagine that Hamas can be appeased or deflected is to make a huge mistake. The western democracies must stand by Israel—and be prepared to call out Hamas for what it is.

This is an expanded version of an article published in The Spectator on 22 May.

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