

SERVING JIHAD: HAMAS AND THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF VIOLENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Abstract:

Since its emergence on the international scene more than two decades ago, Hamas has stuck to its guns, labouring tirelessly to establish a Muslim state based upon the principles of Jihad, and to propagate Jihadi values in all aspects of life as outlined in its 1988 Charter. On its path to realize its ultimate goals, and acting upon the credo that “Islam is the Solution,” Hamas has persisted in killing and maiming Israelis, civilians and soldiers alike, through a variety of violent means. This article explores the Hamas as a longstanding terrorist organization and its instrumentality of violence in the Middle East. The argument is presented that although it is seen by some as a legitimate political and social movement Hamas has not departed from its violent practices in order to achieve its political objectives, and does not seem to qualify as a new and dynamic actor in the Middle East simply because it was elected to govern in Gaza.

Keywords: Arab nationalists; Gaza; Intifada; Israel Defense Forces (IDF); Palestinian fundamentalism; terrorist activities; West Bank “Before Israel dies, it must be humiliated and degraded. Allah willing, before they die, they will experience humiliation and degradation every day.”– Dr. Mahmud Al-Zahar, Hamas leader in Gaza

1. Introduction:

Hamas is neither unique nor inherently different from previous terrorist organizations witnessed in world affairs. While its history is undeniably jeweled with vicious tactics

intended to help achieve its political objectives, the group has become internationally disreputable for organizing itself around terror and the instrumentality of violence for political effect. Yasser Arafat once remarked that, “we the Palestinians are the victims of the victims of European history. We have become the Jews of the Jews. But we do not want to make them the Palestinians of the Palestinians” (Arafat Quoted by Safieh in *The Guardian*, 2004). As such, many have drawn upon instances in which Hamas appears to revolve around more than mere aggression and bloodshed. Various commentators, including states and international organizations have taken note of Hamas delivering a host of social, political, health, and educational services to Palestinians, offering the dissenting view that Hamas either represents more than a terrorist organization or is not a terrorist organization at all.¹

Few would likely contest the view that terrorism and terrorist movements have proved controversial issues in the past and in the contemporary international political and security environments. Yet, discussions pertaining to the formulation and activity of such terrorist movements, including their practice of political extremism, will likely continue to reveal both support and rejection of terrorism as a radical and violent movement, particularly in the context of Hamas. Dagblad (1989) in Weinberg (2005: p. 1) noted that terrorism may be seen as “a snare and delusion, a way of diverting the public’s attention from the failings of Western governments,” while would-be detractors of this perspective might view terrorism and terrorist organizations as the “logical and just resistance of the people against state terrorism, capitalism, racism, sexism, and imperialism” (Schmid, 1993: p. 11).

In spite of growing views about Hamas’s role beyond the terrorism paradigm, one might aptly contend that a democratically elected Hamas, especially given that it continues to conduct violent action against both military and civilian targets, is still a terrorist organization. The group’s activities and techniques enshrine these sentiments offered by Weinberg and Schmid, and convey a sense of obligation to either fight in favor or against the ideals upheld by Hamas or any other terrorist organization employing terrorist tactics in an attempt to further their eventual ambitions.

This article presents an account of Hamas as a feature of the grand mosaic of terrorist organizations operating in the Middle East. The analysis presented in the following pages calls attention to the view that while Hamas has increasingly been seen as a social and

¹ There are currently a number of competing international designations of Hamas, with some states seeing the group as a terrorist organization while others do not. Australia considers the military wing of Hamas a terrorist organization. Canada, the European Union (EU), Israel, Japan, Jordan, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US) all consider Hamas a terrorist organization while Norway, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, and Turkey do not currently designate Hamas as such.

political movement that is capable of engaging in the political processes of bargaining and power brokering while delivering a wide range of community services, it has not escaped the practice of violence and a sweeping violation of human rights and regional peace. In a sense, the current of politics in the Middle East has forced Hamas to choose between absolute *Jihad* against the state of Israel and Israelis and the path of tempered or controlled violence. In both cases, it is evident that the existence of Hamas is fundamentally based upon the use of violence and terrorism regardless of which path it ultimately chooses to pursue.

2. The Making of a Terror Organization:

Hamas, a Palestinian fundamentalist socio-political organization and product of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, is currently the Palestinian Islamic political party that governs the Gaza Strip in the Middle East. Hamas made its first appearance during the *Intifada* (1987-1993) – the Palestinian popular uprising against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Carroll, 2005). It has been classified as a terrorist organization by a number of national bodies that include, in particular, the European Union (EU), United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), Canada, Israel, and Japan. However, this classification is not universally shared; neither the United Nations (UN), nor the governments of the Russian Federation, Turkey, or Switzerland apply the terrorist label to Hamas.

Fuelled by the values and doctrines propagated through Islamic Fundamentalism that spread throughout the Arab world in the final decade of the Cold War, the Hamas movement was co-founded in 1987 by Sheik Ahmed Yassin, who established the Islamic Center more than a decade prior in 1973 and was heavily influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood. With the official Charter of Hamas created in 1988, Yassin proclaimed that Hamas would establish an Islamic state in the area that is now Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. In seeking to establish his order, Hamas brazenly violated and continues to violate both Palestinian Basic law and international human rights standards in West Bank as well as Gaza. Even after gaining official governing status, Hamas “security forces have committed grave offences against supporters of the opposing party, their families, and media representatives throughout Occupied Territories” (Freed, 2007: p. 13). Thus, part of Hamas’s character may be defined by through its violations of even its own supporters.

Initially, the Israelis who wanted to see the Palestinian movement split actually tolerated Yassin’s activities and the influence of the PLO (Fatah). This is interesting to note particularly when taking into consideration the fact that the official Hamas Charter is inherently and virulently anti-Semitic, presenting absolutely no conditions under which the

terrorist group is or would ever be willing to compromise over its goal of removing each and every Jew from Palestine (Isseroff, 2004). Hence, the violent intentions of the group were made apparent upon the very inception of this ideological construct and movement nearly a quarter of a century ago.

Hamas has been the governing body of the Palestinian Territories since June 2007, following the victory that it won in securing the majority of seats in the Palestinian Parliament during the January 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections. The victory came as a shock even to Palestinians living in Gaza who would not have conceived of Hamas ever possessing the ability to govern the territory. As noted by Milton-Edwards and Farrell (2010):

Hamas was running in its first-ever national after two decades as a pariah. In the five years leading up to the elections its armed militants had killed more than 400 people – including Israeli soldiers, settlers and civilians, foreign tourists and immigrant workers – and carried out more than fifty suicide bombings. During this period Israelis from all walks of life were targeted, and treated as a monolithic mass by Hamas’s enmity (p. 1).

The military side of Hamas, known as the *Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades* (named after the Arab nationalist who was responsible for leading violent and militant activities against both the British and pro-Zionists operating in British Palestine), emerged just over a decade prior to the group being elected. This tradition, however, has been carried even beyond the 2007 election period; while it maintains a focus on occupying forces; the Israelis are now the primary occupiers that Hamas violently engages.

3. Hamas’s Violent Ideology:

The modus operandi of Hamas centers on the principle of formulating a coherent military organization with the overall interest of supporting its primary aims and objectives; both may be regarded as forming a very conspicuous relationship of violent intention. Accordingly, Hamas’s political and military philosophical structures combined with the determination of Israeli and other Western democratic communities that oppose it, present a caustic mixture that ultimately paved the way for a lengthy and vehement relationship.

The Hamas Charter of 1988 is the primary document on which the group operates. It is within this document that the essential aims and objectives of the group are portrayed. Hamas’s Charter calls for the replacement of the state of Israel and the Palestinian territories with a new Islamic Palestinian State. The violent foundations on which Hamas was built are evident through the slogan that appears in the Charter that, “Allah is its target, the Prophet is its model, the Koran its constitution: Jihad is its path and death for the sake of Allah is the

loftiest of its wishes (Article 8)” (Times Online, 2006). In 2006, the current political leader of Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, asserted that Hamas was willing to call a truce with Israel that could last up to 20 years if a Palestinian state was formed within the 1967 lines, but added that Hamas would not recognize the “usurper Zionist government” and would carry forward its “jihad-like movement until the liberation of Jerusalem” (Haaretz Service & The Associated Press, 2006).

In spite of this sharp statement, Haniyeh claimed on December 1, 2010 that, “Hamas will respect the results (of a referendum) regardless of whether it differs with its ideology and principles” and that “[w]e accept a Palestinian state on the borders of 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital, the release of Palestinian prisoners, and the resolution of the issue of refugees” (Reuters, 2010). Consequently, it was during this time that Hamas revealed a fragment of doctrinal malleability and potential willingness to work with instead of fight against its neighbor(s).

4. Understanding the Structure of Hamas:

It is essential to consider the overall structure of Hamas in order to see that the group’s arrangement puts it in good standing to engage in militant operations. A good way to understand Hamas’s structure is to begin by dividing the group into various wings. Hamas is comprised of three interrelated wings that include: (1) the political wing, (2) the social welfare wing, and (3) the military wing (Levitt, 2009). The military wing is by far the most active within the occupied territories, especially given that the central goal of Hamas is to physically engage Israeli occupation forces. Subsequently, the occupied territories represent the frontlines of the organization.

4.1 Political Wing:

The Majilis al-Shura (Consultative Council) is Hamas’s central political and decision-making body, which is made-up of representatives from Gaza, the West Bank, Israeli prisons as well as the exiled leadership – the Political Bureau. Further embedded within the political wing of the group are various committees and subgroups responsible for supervising the range of activities that Hamas undertakes – from media relations to military operations (Levitt, 2009).

The most senior decision-making entity within the organization is the Political Bureau. All of the Bureau’s 15 members operate from their headquarters, which is currently located in Damascus, Syria. Through what might be construed as something resembling a

quasi-democratic process, members who select their representatives in local Consultative Councils in specific geographic regions elect Hamas's Bureau. The councils then nominate representatives to the General Consultative Council, and members of the General Consultative Council subsequently elect the Political Bureau (Ma'an News Agency, 2009).

4.2 Social Welfare Wing:

As the name of this wing implies, it is responsible for the social and welfare initiatives of Hamas. The social welfare wing is responsible for much of the popularity that Hamas receives in Palestinian territories, and to a lesser extent, throughout the Middle East, due in part to the social services that it provides to Palestinians in the occupied territories. The various services that this wing provides, includes the construction of schools and hospitals; Hamas spends approximately 90% of its annual \$70 million operating budget on an extensive and rather impressive social services network (World Tribune, 2004). This expense constitutes a major pillar of support for the Hamas organization overall. In addition to the construction of vital services buildings, Hamas funds many relief and education programs, schools, orphanages, mosques, healthcare clinics, soup kitchens, and sports leagues, which do not necessarily receive financial assistance from the current Palestinian government (Council on Foreign Relations, 2006). In spite of its generous work, it dubious whether or not Hamas actually uses this these efforts as a marketing tool for augmenting the influx of external funding, including donations, in order to fuel its bellicose operations

Hamas has demonstrated its capacity to implement somewhat progressive and what might otherwise be considered "humanitarian" programs through its social welfare wing such as the funding of libraries as well as education centers for women, nurseries, kindergartens, and supervised religious schools that are able to provide meals to those attending and in need (Hilsenrath, 2005). One of this wing's more controversial programs, however – and one that brings into question the true intentions of the group, is the monetary support offered to the families of suicide bombers, particularly those who gave their lives in support of the primary cause of Hamas while other financial support is in place for families of militants who are not associated with the group (Levitt, 2007).

One rather appropriate question raised as a result of these operations is the extent to which Hamas-funded education initiatives and programs support anti-Israeli, anti-Jewish, and anti-Western pedagogy. According to Robinson (2006), "Hamas is also well regarded by Palestinians for its efficiency and perceived lack of corruption compared to Fatah." As a result of these efforts and since the Israeli military operation in Gaza, Palestinian public

opinion polls have shown that the popularity of Hamas is rising at a steady pace and is currently sitting at roughly 52% support compared to 13% support for its competitor, Fatah (Rubenstein, 2005). The same report fails to show whether the same group of votes supports the use of violence as legitimate means to achieving desired political objectives.

4.3 Military Arm:

As tends to be the case with any terrorist organization, the military wing is of great importance. It is responsible for recruiting and training new fighters as well as procuring new instruments with which to meet the objectives as established in Hamas's Charter. Armed Hamas cells have previously referred to themselves as "Students of Ayyash," "Students of the Engineer," or "Yahya Ayyash Units" to commemorate Yahya Ayyash, one of Hamas's early bomb-maker who was killed in 1996 (Kushner, 2002: p. 160; BBC News, 2006). Over time, the weapons capability of Hamas has increased considerably, and the military arm of the organization has been responsible for this development. Since Hamas's founding, the group has moved from the use of mere rifles to highly sophisticated weaponry such as self-propelled rockets and mortars (Chosak and Sawyer, 2005).

Another shift in the acculturation of violence and violent acts against military and unarmed targets can be seen in Hamas's movement from the use of suicide bombers to the use of Qassam Rocket Brigades against residential areas of Israeli communities. It is likely, though, that given the opportunity to employ more advanced weapons capabilities, Hamas would not hesitate to do so. A statement made by Dr. Abdel Aziz Rantissi in 2002, reveals the intentions of the group's leadership, which urged that, "[s]ince we don't have F16s or Apache missiles or tanks we have our own weapons to defend ourselves. Believe me, if we had F16s we would never use suicide attacks" (Milton-Edwards and Farrell, 2010: p. 110).

Until Hamas is able to procure weapons capable to inflicting greater casualties against the state of Israel, the group continues to rely on a diverse arsenal. In one bloody instant, at Passover on March 27, 2002, 250 Jews gathered in a ballroom in the seaside town of Netanya to celebrate one of the holiest days in the Jewish calendar. Shortly after 7 p.m., 25-year-old Abdel Baset Odeh entered into the Park Hotel and detonated a suicide device that was so powerful as to kill 30 guests and 140 wounded (Milton-Edwards and Farrell, 2010: p. 110).

Since the massacre at Netanyu, Hamas has demonstrated an escalation of violence and the use of force against both military personnel and civilians. Hamas's military wing and Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades have recently committed the deadliest assault against Israelis in their history of violent activity, which was reported as even atrocious than the massacre of 21

young Israeli men and women and injuring 132 in Tel Aviv less than a year prior (Fisher, 2006; Milton-Edwards and Farrell, 2010). The slaughter of the partygoers outside the Dolphinarium in the Israeli capital is often considered equal in scale of atrocity to that of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Japanese Red Army massacre at Lod Airport (now Ben Gurion International Airport) on May 30, 1972 in which 26 innocent bystanders were brutally killed in a shooting spree and another 79 wounded (Sloan, Bersia, and Hill, 2006; Milton-Edwards and Farrell, 2010).

Western democracies do not currently retain a complete picture of the military arm of Hamas. For instance, only an approximate estimation of the force size of the Brigades is currently known. The number is thought to rest somewhere in the neighborhood of several hundred members. Of these, all or a great deal of them receive military-style training, and receive their training in camps located in Iran and Syria (Australian National Security). According to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2008), Hamas “has more than 10,000 operatives in the Gaza Strip. That figure may be larger because of Hamas’s intense recruiting process since it took over the Gaza Strip.” Yet, an extensive number of operatives that form part of the group’s military wing serve in the internal security forces, therefore, “the total number of *Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades* and internal security force operatives controlled by Hamas,” according to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2008) “is, in our estimation, about 15,000.”

Hamas’s military wing is not a classic military organization; rather, it should be considered an asymmetric force because of the tactics of warfare that it employs when under force. Such tactics include: the operation of small fighting units, the employment of guerrilla warfare, concealment among the civil population, the controversial use of civilians as human shields, and the recruitment of child soldiers (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008). All of these elements contribute to the escalation of Hamas’s violent capabilities as well as their recent track record.

5. Leading the Islamic Militant Group:

With its Charter in place, Hamas was formed around February 1988, at which point the founding leaders of the organization included Ahmad assin, ‘Abd al-Fattah Dukhan, Muhammed Shama,’ Ibrahim al-Yazuri, Issa al-Najjar, Salah Shehadeh (from Bayt Hanun) and Abd al-Aziz Rantisi. However, Dr. Mahmud Zahar is also typically considered one of the original leaders of Hamas (Isseroff, 2004). Subsequent leaders of the organization also

include, Sheikh Khalil Qawqa, Isa al-Ashar, Musa Abu Marzuq, Ibrahim Ghusha, and Khalid Mish'al (Isseroff, 2004).

Even though the overall structure, including the leadership structure of Hamas, may be divided into three separate wings, understanding Hamas's leadership edifice has proven rather problematic. At best, its leadership could be seen as having a minimal level of organized leadership (Carroll, 2005). In February 2005, Israel ceased targeting the various leaders of Hamas since a ceasefire was declared just prior to that date. However, before the ceasefire, Israel was engaged in a campaign to completely annihilate the leadership of the Islamic militant group ahead of Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in August 2005 (Global Security, 2011).

The Israeli government's efforts proved quite successful between 2003 and 2004, during which time Israel claimed the lives of several Hamas leaders and high-ranking officials. After Hamas's Abdel Rantisi was killed on April 17, 2004, the decision was taken to avoid the creation of further leadership targets for their opponents (Global Security, 2011). This step had simultaneously robbed Israel of the option to target specific leadership elements within the Hamas movement, which subsequently deprived Hamas of any single and clear individual with whom to lead the organization.

Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the founding-leader of Hamas, was killed on March 22, 2004 in the northern Gaza Strip (Hunter, 2009). His death, the result of an Israeli retaliation strike against Hamas's deadly attack that killed four Israeli border guards, radically altered the nature of Hamas's leadership matrix (Global Security, 2011). Since its founding, Yassin had been the organization's central authority. In addition to being the senior authority in the decision making process in implementing terrorist attacks, Yassin was the main address in matters that ultimately determined the policy for terrorism and indiscriminate targeting of Israelis with the intent of causing massive scale of casualties. Many within and beyond Hamas regarded Yassin as a charismatic individual and the primary mechanism in the many terrorist assaults that were carried-out against Israel.

Following Yassin's assassination, Abdel Aziz Rantisi was chosen to assume the leadership role of Hamas due to his history as one of the original six founders of the organization. Rantisi has been responsible for new terrorist policy undertaken by the organization and acted as its main spokesperson (Global Security, 2011). His position within Hamas was firmly established following his move to the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza in September 2000. After he moved and solidified his position, Rantisi immediately fulfilled the role of "virulent incitement, repeatedly calling for suicide attacks inside Israel,

continued attacks in Gaza, kidnapping of Israeli soldiers, and firing of mortar shells into Israel” (Global Security, 2011).

Abdullah Qawasmeh masterminded a campaign of suicide attacks undertaken by the Hamas movement that, among other deadly attacks, resulted in the destruction of a bus that killed 17 innocent people (Global Security, 2011). Israeli Border Police that entered Hebron on June 21, 2003 killed Qawasmeh, a high-ranking official within the group. His death was preceded by Yasser Taha’s – a leader of Hamas’s military wing that took place on June 12, 2003 when an Israeli helicopter gunship launched several missiles at a car identified for carrying Hamas activists (Global Security, 2011).

Khaled Mashal, an instructor of physics and director of Hamas’s Political Bureau from Damascus referred to himself at the group’s “first head” after the killing of Rantisi in 2004 (Global Security, 2011). Mashal is considered the highest-ranking member of the organization. Working with the Fatah to forge a partnership in an attempt to govern Palestinians, and suggesting the need to form a Palestinian army in order to defend what is referred to as Palestine from future aggression, Mashal cannot be considered Hamas’s primary leader. Mahmoud Zahar is another one of Hamas’s top-ranking officials as well as one original founders of the group. He was the original public spokesperson for the organization when it was established, and he is often considered a rival of Rantisi and Mashal (Global Security, 2011).

Following the killing of Rantisi in 2004, Hamas’s Damascus-based leader, Mashal, instructed the group to keep the name of its new Gaza leader secret. But it soon came-out that Mahmoud Zahar, who had been Rantisi’s second in command, was part of a “collective leadership” of Hamas’ Gaza Strip stronghold. The other members of this leadership include Ismail Haniyeh. Zahar, though, he is considered the most senior member of the leadership (Global Security, 2011).

Given that Israeli forces eliminated the original founding-leader of Hamas in 2004, and that several other high-ranking officials within the organization have also been killed, the conjecture can be safely cast that the overall leadership structure of the group has been shaken, if not weakened. Thus, referring to the leadership structure of Hamas as “vertical” might be somewhat remiss. Instead, it might be seen as a horizontal terrorist organization not unlike that of al-Qaeda, with cells operating in different and varying locales but still adhering to the same ideological doctrine, and striving to meet the ultimate objectives as established in Hamas’s Charter.

Following the overwhelming victory that Hamas experienced during the Palestinian elections of January 26, 2006, Zahar made the announcement that the group would seek to extend its year-old truce with the state of Israel but only in the event that the Israeli government reciprocated (Global Security, 2011). In this vein, it is clear that steps have been taken that have resulted in a gap, and subsequently a widening of that gap, between Hamas and its original Charter declaring the destruction of Israel and the removal of every Jew from its territory. The result might be an increased schism within the leadership structure of Hamas as some adhere to the principles of the Charter, while others seek to establish the organization as what international actors and communities perceive of as a more “legitimate” element of political representation. In spite of this, even those who do not adhere to the original principles of the Charter have failed to condemn the violent tactics frequently employed by the group overall.

6. Funding Hamas’s Operations:

Hamas has consistently received much of its funding from Palestinian expatriates and Muslim donors living overseas. Since 9/11, the US government has sought to interdict the flow of funds to Hamas and other transnational terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda by freezing the assets of organizations, charities, banks, as well as front companies thought to be mechanisms of funding Hamas.

The reduction of funding to Hamas as a result of American pressure on states that were previous donors to Hamas has shown that Hamas need to rely on sources that share Hama’s ideological bases. Thus, Iran has become the largest support of Hamas, having also stated its intention to see the state of Israel wiped from the map. Considering the contributions made by Iran and other Gulf States, some have estimated the Hamas receives anywhere from \$20 million to \$30 million per year (Council on Foreign Relations, 2006).

7. Hamas’s Reign of Terror:

As shown by its long-term history, Hamas has proven itself as one of the most extreme and violent terrorist groups to operate against the state of Israel. Leaflet #65 (October 1990) urged local residents to undertake malicious and heinous acts against Jews, including murder and the destruction of Jewish-owned property. According to the leaflet, “[e]very Jew or settler is a target and must be killed. Their blood and their property are forfeit” (Ganor, 1992).

Remaining loyal to their religious duty, as outlined in the Charter, followers of Hamas have carried-out such attacks as the murder of workers at a factory in Jaffa in December 1990, the infiltration of a six-man terrorist squad from Jordan in March 1991 that wounded three Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers before they were caught in the vicinity of Kibbutz Tirat Zvi, and whose members carried Korans and photographs of Yassin in addition to weapons, the murder of Shlomo Yehiya from Moshav Kadima in September 1991, and the attack at Tel Hashomer junction in October 1991 in which two IDF soldiers were killed and 11 others seriously wounded (Ganor, 1992).

Hamas has also been responsible for the kidnapping and murder of Israeli soldiers. Avi Sasportas and Ilan Saadon were among the most serious carried-out by Hamas in 1989. Another two soldiers were murdered after they were picked-up as hitchhikers on the side of a road. Both were shot and later buried by their assailants (Ganor, 1992). Even though Hamas has been responsible for the serious attacks launched against Israeli citizens and soldiers, the group has not, however, limited its violent and murderous acts to Israeli targets. Hamas's operatives were also involved in many murders of Palestinians who were deemed disloyal or operated against Hamas in the territories (Ganor, 1992) as is the case with members of al-Qaeda targeting other Muslims considered traitors for aiding the American infidels and their allies.

Since Hamas launched its campaign of violence against Israeli soldiers and civilians, hundreds of attacks have been carried-out. Appendix 2 illustrates some of the major attacks included in Hamas's extensive campaign of violence between 2001 and 2010. Further to Hamas's radically violent nature, as highlighted in previous sections of this article, Qassam rockets launched against Israel have resulted in 21 deaths between November 2001 and June 2008. These rockets have been fired at residence buildings, kindergartens, nurseries, settlements, military establishments, and other targets that host a concentration of Israeli citizens or military personnel (The Israel Project, 2009).

8. The Strategic Impact of Hamas's Terrorist Activities:

Hamas has made its mark, not merely as a terrorist organization, but also as a unique political actor in the Middle East – an Islamic movement that seeks to make strident change in domestic policy. Hamas, as a traditional and not-so-traditional actor, has been quite successful of impacting a great deal of the Middle East and Middle Eastern politics and political relations, if regrettably in very hostile and destructive manner. Indeed, the “impact

of its ideology and tactics has inadvertently and indirectly risen to a regional scale” (Carroll, 2005).

Due to the malicious and contentious nature of Hamas’s activities enacted against a state system, Hamas might well be regarded as one of the most destabilizing force for the power of Middle Eastern governments and states. Since Hamas’s threat potential has a direct impact on the interests of Western democracies and their allies (such as Israel), enhanced security and defense capabilities rests on all states’ and their citizens’ heightened awareness of Hamas’s direct and indirect ability to fundamentally and effectively alter regional security. The group’s awareness of its influence in these ways also greatly leverages its power, which is often understated by a number of international actors.

As made apparent in the preceding pages, terrorism is a form of violence or threatened violence that seeks to deliver a message to a broader audience. As with any terrorist organization, Hamas has incorporated innocent bystanders as the medium through which to send its message(s). The victims represent the means to an end, and the group is well aware of its targets and the impact that is ultimately has on those and the still living targets. However, in its attempt to impact the structure of governance and power in the Israel and the Palestinian territories, Hamas’s actions have inadvertently led to a negative impact on its own existence. This is best depicted through the strain that it experiences as the new governing body in Gaza – a role for which it was never properly prepared, and which stunned even the Palestinian community.

Hamas has made a further and, if lamentably, positive impact on the field of terrorism through its various methods and tactics. The group has become highly innovative in its use of weaponry, escalating from the use of rifles, and simple bombs to more sophisticated suicide belts and devices, and even to the use of mortars hurled at civilian targets. Most terrorists in the modern world prefer the use of the bomb and the gun, Hamas has not only shown that it incorporates a wide array of tactics that range from kidnapping to suicide bombings, it has also moved beyond the bomb and the gun and even the basic mortar, putting to work sophisticated rocketry in its bid for power. While many terrorist organizations across the globe continue to use precisely the same type of weapons that anarchists and revolutionaries used centuries ago, Hamas has been a “leader” in its use of miniaturized and sophisticated weaponry as illustrated through its Qassam rocket campaigns, and the frequency with which it continues to molest Israeli society.

Hamas further impacts the role of the media in terrorism as well, portraying its own performances and initiating its own websites as a means of amplifying its potential and

power. Even given the role of its media base as well as its many tactics, strategies, and innovations, Hamas has made perhaps its most significant impact by compelling Western governments' consideration to its cause and its deadly effect. So convincing have the efforts of Hamas been in this manner, that it has been able to win the support of a great deal of Palestinians and earn a role in political representation and responsibility – an achievement rarely, if ever, witnessed in the realm of terrorism. In spite of its moderate and still short-term success, the future of Hamas's emerging roles, however, are likely to remain as contentious and hotly challenged as its traditional ones.

9. The Future of Hamas:

Although there seems to be no clear or definitive leadership within the Hamas organization, a quasi-seniority-based leadership structure appears to be in place. Some might consider the lack of an official and single authority within the organization a great disadvantage to the overall operation and capacity of Hamas to function and meet its ultimate aims and objectives as laid-out in its Charter.

The credibility of any sort of rebuttal to this belief might rest in the essential lack of a central figure, and further draw on the group's cooperation with government forces in Palestinian territories, supporting the idea that Hamas's real strength could lie in its representation among local populations throughout region. As such, the true power of Hamas seems to resonate with average Palestinians for whom the group fights but even average Palestinians were shocked when Hamas was elected as the governing body of Gaza.

As illustrated previously, Fatah is supported by only a small fraction of the Palestinian population, whereas Hamas presently boasts the support of over half of these people. As Hamas works closer with political authorities, and given its recognition by a number of main actors in world affairs like the UN, Russia, and the Norwegian government, among others, Hamas might very well remain a permanent feature of the political landscape within the Middle East in spite of the propensity to indiscriminately slaughter innocent bystanders in Israeli communities in order to gain support for its cause.

Hamas's Charter constitutes one of the main challenges to its own existence. Even as many within the international community, particularly the UN, refuse to brand Hamas as a terrorist organization, they continue to challenge Hamas's authority simply because of its murderous edicts such as the destruction of Israel and the death of innocent Jews. The very people and institutions that Hamas might ultimately have to work with cannot simply or readily endorse the indiscriminate violence, in which Hamas engages and sponsors. This is

particularly the case if Hamas should like to achieve a greater sense of representation and legitimacy in the current geopolitical realm.

Despite the many roadblocks that Hamas faces, whether self-imposed or not, it has attempted to reconcile ideological thorns and engage in a courtship with political realism. Its election victory can be seen as the move promising, even if unexpected, stride towards a different brand of existence with its opposition. Hamas, according to Amayreh (2007), “has been debating ways and means to reconcile its erstwhile radical Islamist ideology with the pressing need to meet practical political requirements.” Many have argued that the political relevance of Hamas’s original charter has become stale and is now past its own expiration date, no longer able to appropriately dictate the political comportment of the group. Islamists have used such words as “anachronistic,” “outdated,” and “historical” to describe the 1988 Charter (Amayreh, 2007).

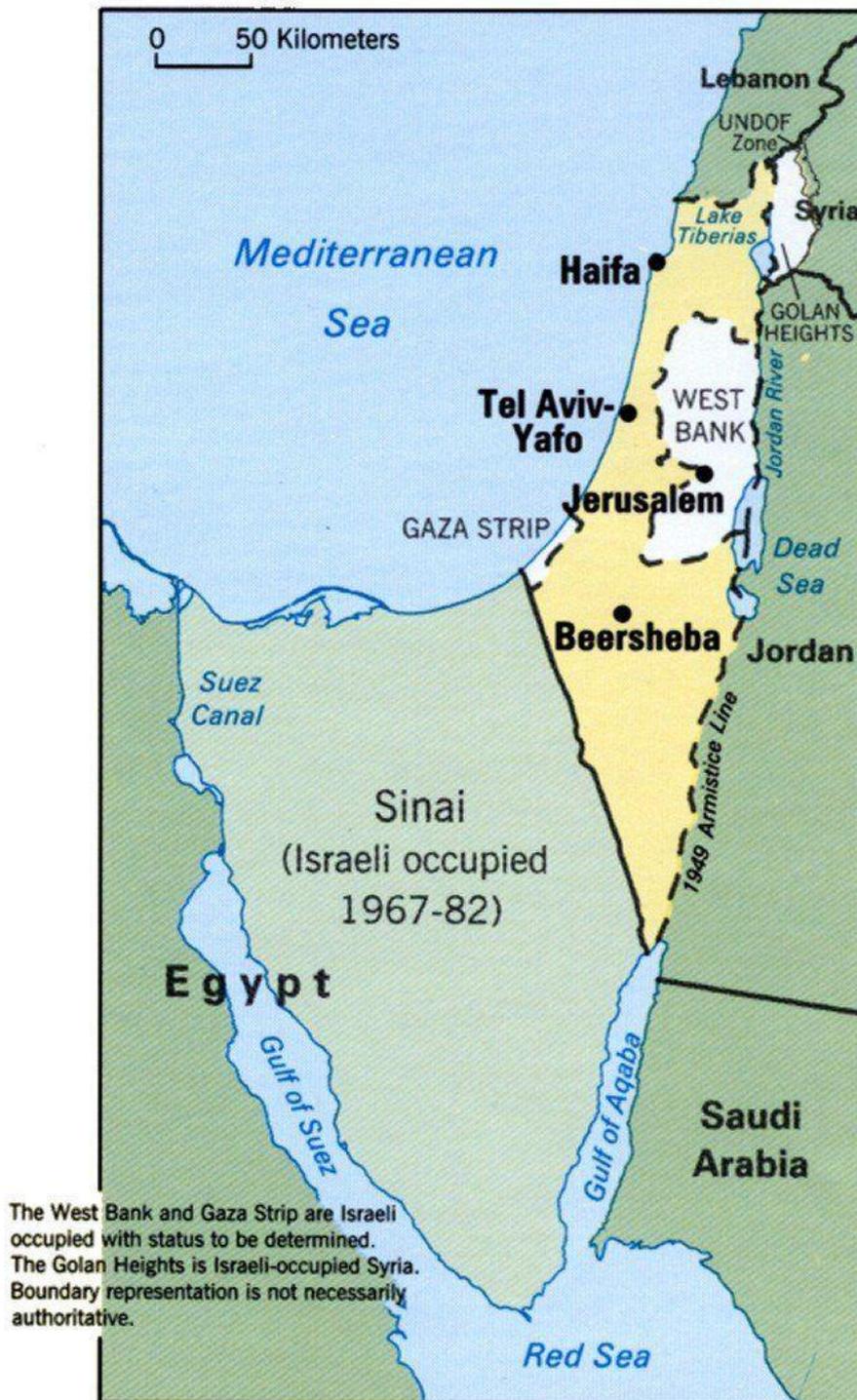
The National Reconciliation Accord, a document created in the summer of 2006, stated that Palestinian national and Islamic factions agreed to “respect” every relevant UN resolution, including UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 194, which calls for repatriation of and indemnification for Palestinian refugees uprooted from their homes in 1948 in what is now Israel (Amayreh, 2007). As such, the acceptance of this document can be seen as a fundamental ideological concession made by Hamas but cannot be seen exclusively as the means by which Hamas is “changing its ways.”

Additionally, one must consider the financial capacity of Hamas to continue operating in accordance with its historical character. The West’s crippling sanctions, which were enforced by local and regional banks, have drilled the fundamentalist movement into a state of bankruptcy (Amayreh, 2007). Hamas leaders have also admitted that it was largely unprepared for the governing responsibilities that it inherited when it assumed possession of the Gaza Strip in mid-June of 2007. The strain of civil governance and continued conflict with Fatah amid a bleak financial state has caused what Amayreh (2007), has referred to as a “political and social implosion.”

As many Hamas members and high-ranking officials increasingly recognize the importance of initiating dialog with the West, especially given the growing state of interdependency in the intricate global village in which all political, social, and economic actors now operate, there is growing proof that Hamas has and will continue to effectively scrap a great deal of its self-injurious ideological rigidity and superficial power. What remains to be seen, is whether Hamas is able to shed its identity as a terrorist organization, which is anything but an unfair sobriquet

10. Conclusion

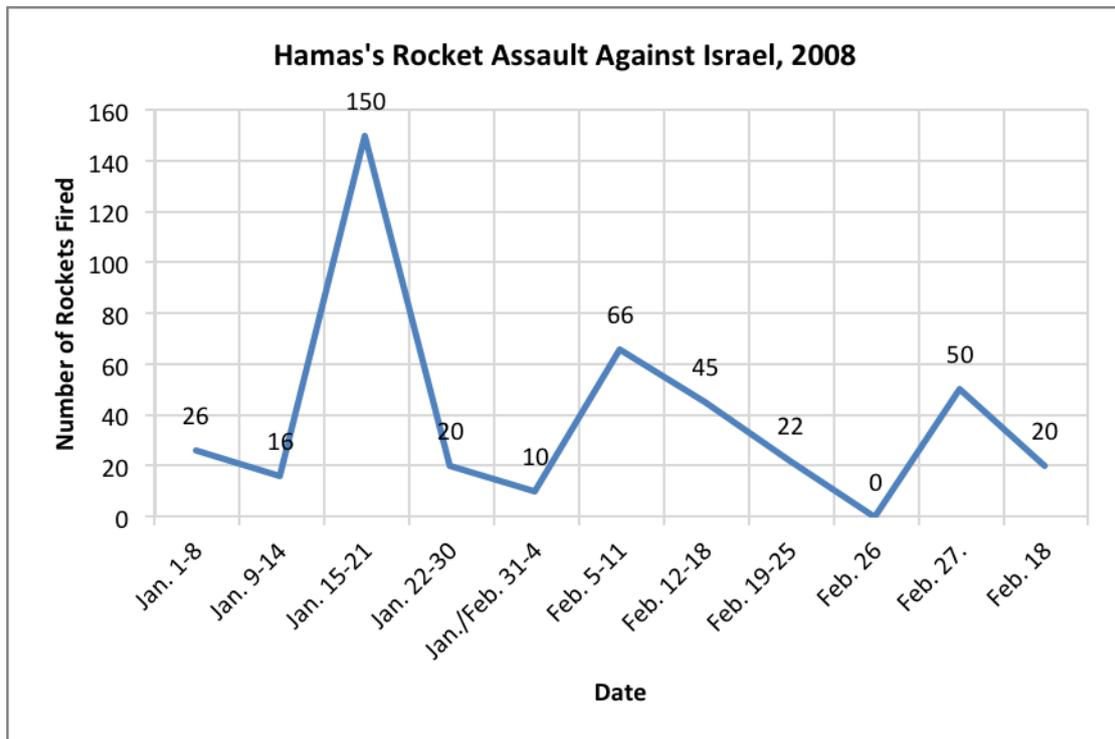
In general, Hamas does not appear to qualify as a new and dynamic actor in the Middle East simply because it was elected to govern in Gaza. As many might see it, a terrorist group that is democratically elected, is still a terrorist group. However, Hamas have proved itself a group that has a particular degree of influence over the population that it purports to represent, even if not all Palestinians necessarily support their beliefs and the manner the group seeks to realize its political aims. Moreover, Hamas has persisted in killing and maiming Israelis, civilians and soldiers alike through a variety of violent means, and no signs have surfaced as of late to indicate that Hamas will depart from such tactics in the near future. Much of Hamas's track record, even as recent as 2002, lends credibility to the view that Hamas is likely to hold on to its terrorist actions and, according to the statements offered by Rantissi, escalate its instrumentality of violence should it be able to procure the means to adequately do so.

Appendix 1:**Israel and Occupied Territories Sine 1967**

Source: (Global Security, 2011)

Appendix 2:

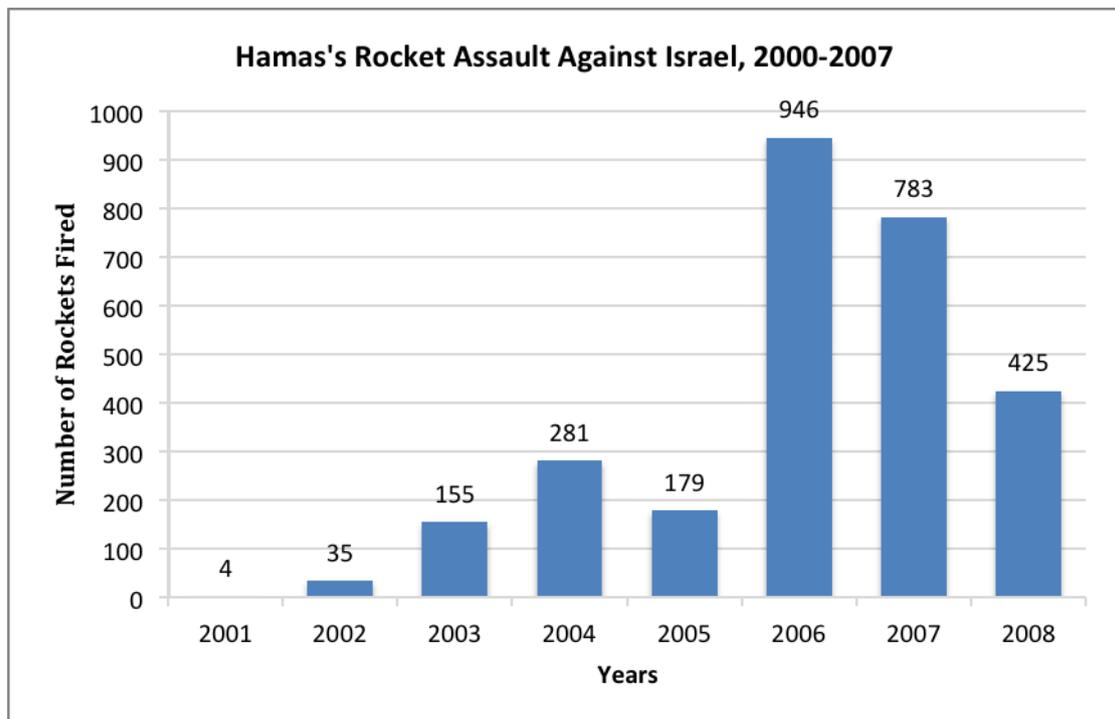
Hamás’s Rocket Assault Against Israel, 2008



Source: (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2008).

Appendix 3:

Hamás’s Rocket Assault Against Israel, 2000-2007



Source: (Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, 2008).

Appendix 4:**Select Hamas Terrorist Attacks against Israel**

September 1, 2010	Two Israelis were wounded, one seriously, when Hamas terrorists ambushed their car as the couple was driving near Kochav Hashachar.
August 31, 2010	Four Israelis, including a pregnant woman, were murdered when terrorists ambushed their car as they were driving near Kiryat Arba in the West Bank. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack, which coincided with the restarting of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.
August 28, 2005	A suicide bombing outside the Central Bus Station in Beersheba severely injured two security guards who stopped the bomber from entering the bus station.
January 13, 2005	Six Israelis were killed and five other civilians were wounded in a double suicide bombing at the Karni crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. The two suicide bombers used a very large explosive device to blast through a defensive wall that separates the Israeli and Palestinian sides at the crossing. Following the blast, the bombers crossed into the Israeli side, carrying explosives on their bodies, which they detonated.
August 28, 2004	16 people, including a 3-year-old, were killed and about 100 injured when two buses in Beersheba were attacked within minutes of each other by suicide bombers.
June 28, 2004	A Qassam rocket fired by Hamas terrorists in the Gaza Strip struck near a nursery school in the northern Negev town of Sderot, killing an Israeli man and a 4-year-old Israeli child.
April 17, 2004	A border policeman was killed and three others wounded when a Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up at the Erez Crossing in Gaza.
March 14, 2004	10 people were killed and 16 wounded in a double

	suicide bombing in the area of the Ashdod Port. Hamas and Fatah claimed responsibility for the attack.
January 14, 2004	A female suicide bomber killed four people and wounded 20 at the Erez Crossing in the Gaza Strip. Hamas and the Fatah Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack.
October 15, 2003	Three Americans were killed and one wounded at the Beit Hanoun junction in the Gaza Strip when a massive bomb demolished an armor-plated jeep in a convoy carrying US diplomats and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) personnel. Both the militant Islamic Jihad and Hamas movements denied responsibility for the attack.
September 9, 2003	Hamas claimed responsibility for two suicide bombings, the first at an entrance to the Tzrifin army base near Rishon Lezion and the second at Café Hillel in the German colony neighborhood of Jerusalem, which killed a total of 15 people and wounded at least 80.
August 19, 2003	Hamas and Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing of a bus in Jerusalem killing at least 18 people and wounding nearly 100.
August 12, 2003	Suicide bombers killed two Israelis and wounded more than a dozen people in two attacks within a half hour of each other, one at a shopping mall in the Tel Aviv suburb of Rosh Ha'ayin and the other at the entrance of the West Bank town of Ariel. The Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade claimed responsibility for the Rosh Ha'ayin bombing and Hamas claimed to have carried out the Ariel attack.
June 20, 2003	An Israeli motorist was shot dead and three of his passengers were wounded when their car was fired upon by Palestinian terrorists near Ofra, north of Ramallah. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.

June 11, 2003	16 people were killed and more than 80 wounded when a suicide bomber blew up a Jerusalem city bus during the afternoon rush hour. The bomber was disguised as an ultra-orthodox Jew. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.
May 19, 2003	A Palestinian suicide bomber on a bicycle attacked an Israeli checkpoint on the Gaza Strip, wounding three Israeli soldiers. Hamas claimed responsibility.
May 18, 2003	Seven people were killed and more than 20 wounded when a suicide bomber blew up a Jerusalem city bus at the start of the Israeli work-week. The bomber was disguised as an ultra-orthodox Jew. Soon after, a suicide bomber carrying explosives and dressed in the garb of an ultra-orthodox Jew was stopped at a roadblock. The Palestinian detonated his explosives, killing only himself. Hamas claimed responsibility in both attacks.
May 17, 2003	A pregnant Israeli woman and her husband were killed when a suicide bomber detonated himself next to them in a public square in Hebron. Hamas claimed responsibility.
April 30, 2003	Three people were killed and dozens wounded in a suicide bombing at a beachfront pub in Tel Aviv. The Fatah Tanzim and Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack, carried out as a joint operation.
March 7, 2003	Two Israelis were killed and five were wounded when armed terrorists infiltrated the community of Kiryat Arba and attacked during Shabbat. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.
March 5, 2003	16 people were killed and more than 30 wounded when a terrorist detonated a powerful bomb on a bus en route to Haifa University. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.

January 5, 2003	22 people were killed and about 120 wounded in a double suicide bombing near the old Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv. The Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, Islamic Jihad and Hamas all claimed responsibility for the attacks.
November 21, 2002	Eleven people were killed and 47 injured when a Palestinian suicide bomber exploded on a bus filled with passengers, including schoolchildren, in the Kiryat Menahem neighborhood in Jerusalem. The bus was traveling toward the center of the city during the morning rush hour. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.
October 27, 2002	Two Israeli police officers and a soldier were killed, and 20 bystanders were wounded in a suicide bombing at a gas station near the settlement of Ariel in the West Bank. The two officers and soldier were killed while trying to prevent the terrorist from detonating the bomb. Hamas and the Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack.
September 19, 2002	Six people were killed and 60 wounded when a terrorist detonated a bomb on one of Tel Aviv's busiest streets, in a bus opposite the Great Synagogue. Many of the wounded were in critical or serious condition. Both Islamic Jihad and Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.
August 4, 2002	Nine people were killed and about 50 wounded in a suicide bombing of an Egged bus at the Meron junction in northern Israel. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.
July 3, 2002	Eight people were killed and 86 injured, 14 seriously, when a bomb went off at the Frank Sinatra Cafeteria on the Hebrew University Mt. Scopus campus during the busy lunchtime rush. Israeli authorities reported that the

	<p>explosive device had been planted ahead of time, with the terrorist possibly detonating it by remote control. Five Americans were among the dead. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.</p>
June 18, 2002	<p>19 people were killed and more than 70 were injured, in a suicide bombing on a bus just outside of Jerusalem. The bus, which was completely destroyed, was traveling from Gilo to Jerusalem and had many students on board. In addition to the bus, at least two other vehicles were severely damaged in the attack. Hamas claimed responsibility.</p>
June 8, 2002	<p>Three Israelis, including a pregnant woman, were killed, and five were injured when an armed terrorist infiltrated the community of Carmei Tzur, south of Jerusalem. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.</p>
May 19, 2002	<p>Three Israelis were killed and more than 50 injured in a suicide bombing at an open-air market in Netanya. A Palestinian disguised as an Israeli soldier carried out the attack. Both Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility. Two of the victims were identified as Yosef Haviv, 70 and Arkadi Wiselman, 40, both of Netanya. Wiselman, a chef at the Park Hotel, survived the Passover bombing on March 27.</p>
April 27, 2002	<p>Three Palestinian gunmen disguised as Israeli Army soldiers cut through the perimeter fence of Adora, a settlement on the West Bank, and entered several homes, firing on residents in their bedrooms. Four people, including a 5-year-old girl, were killed in the attacks. Another seven were injured, including one seriously. Both Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed responsibility.</p>
March 31, 2002	<p>Fourteen people were killed and more than 40 injured</p>

	in a suicide bombing in Haifa, in the Matza gas station restaurant near a shopping mall. Several of the injured were in serious to critical condition. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.
March 27, 2002	22 people were killed and 140 injured – 20 seriously – in a suicide bombing at the Park Hotel in the coastal city of Netanya, in the midst of the Passover holiday seder with 250 guests. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.
March 19, 2002	1 st Lt. Tal Zemach, 20, of Kibbutz Hulda, was killed and three soldiers were injured when Palestinian terrorists opened fire at the paratroop training compound in the Jordan Valley. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.
March 9, 2002	Eleven people were killed and 54 injured, 10 of them seriously, when a suicide bomber exploded at in a crowded cafe at the corner of Aza and Ben-Maimon streets in the Rehavia neighborhood in the center of Jerusalem. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.
March 7, 2002	Aharon Krogliak of Beit El, Tal Kurtzweil of Bnei Brak, Asher Marcus of Jerusalem, Eran Pikar of Jerusalem, and Ariel Zana of Jerusalem, all aged 18, were killed and 23 people were injured, four seriously, when a Palestinian gunman penetrated a highschool that combines religious studies and military training in the Gush Katif settlement of Atzmona late Thursday night. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.
March 5, 2002	Palestinians fired two Qassam II rockets at the city of Sderot shortly before 18:00 PM on Tuesday. One of the rockets hit a residential building, moderately wounding a 16-month-old infant. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.
February 10, 2002	A drive-by terrorist shooting at the entrance to the IDF

	<p>Southern Command base in Be'er Sheva killed two female soldiers and injured four others. One of the Palestinian terrorists was killed at the scene; the second, wearing an explosives belt, fled in the direction of a nearby school when he was shot and killed by a soldier and police officer. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.</p>
December 2, 2001	<p>A suicide bombing on a No. 16 Egged bus in Haifa killed 15 people and injured about 40 people. Hamas claimed responsibility for the Haifa blast, while Hizbullah's radio and television stations expressed support for the attacks.</p>
December 1, 2001	<p>A double suicide bombing at the Ben-Yehuda pedestrian mall in Jerusalem at 11:30 p.m. on a Saturday night killed 11 people, aged 12-21, and injured 188 people. A car bomb exploded 20 minutes later. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.</p>

Source: (Anti-Defamation League, 2006).

Appendix 5:**Timeline: The Evolution of Hamas**

From December 24, 2008	The rocket attacks from Hamas increase and so do the retaliation air strikes from Israel.
December 19, 2008	Hamas formally ends cease-fire with Israel. Attacks between the two had continued the entire time to some degree, escalating more in November.
June 2008	Cease-fire truce between Hamas and Israel negotiated by Egypt goes into effect. Hamas agrees to stop firing rockets at Israeli border communities and Israel will allow limited trade into and out of Gaza. The cease-fire has a six-month deadline.
April 18-19, 2008	Former US President Jimmy Carter meets with exiled Hamas leader Khalid Meshaal, in Damascus, Syria.
June 14, 2007	Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas dissolves the government and dismisses Ismail Haniya as Prime Minister. Haniya rejects this and remains the de facto leader in Gaza.
Early June 2007	After a week of battles between Hamas and Fatah, Hamas seizes control of Gaza.
June 25, 2006	Hamas militants attack an Israeli military post and kill two soldiers. A third, Gilad Shalit, is kidnapped. The Palestinian government denies any knowledge of the attack.
March 29, 2006	The new Palestinian Prime Minister, Ismail Haniya, and his cabinet are sworn in. The governments of the United States and Canada say they will have no contact with the Hamas-led Palestinian government.
January 26, 2006	Hamas wins a landslide victory in the Palestinian legislative elections. Hamas wins 76 seats, and Fatah 43 seats in the 132-seat Palestinian Legislative Council, giving Hamas a majority.
January 25, 2006	Hamas, running as the “Change and Reform Party,”

	participates for the first time in Palestinian parliamentary elections. The group is fielding 62 candidates.
January 14, 2005	A bomb at the Karni crossing at the Israel-Gaza border kills six Israelis. Hamas claims responsibility.
December 12, 2004	An attack at a checkpoint on the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt kills five Israelis. Hamas claims responsibility
September 26, 2004	A leading member of Hamas, Izz Eldin Subhi Sheikh Khalil, is killed by a car bomb as he leaves his home in Damascus, Syria.
August 31, 2004	The Islamic militant group Hamas claims responsibility for deadly simultaneous explosions on two buses in the southern Israeli city of Beer Sheva that killed at least 14 people and wounding more than 80.
April 17, 2004	Rantisi is killed by an Israeli air strike on his car.
March 23, 2004	Dr. Abdel Aziz Rantisi is named as Yassin's successor.
March 22, 2004	Hamas leader Yassin is killed by Israeli air strikes.
March 14, 2004	Hamas and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claim responsibility for a double attack at the Israeli port of Ashdod that kills 10 Israelis.
January 2004	The first Hamas female suicide bomber kills four Israelis at Erez crossing in a joint operation with the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades.
August 20, 2003	A suicide bomber detonates himself on a bus killing at least 20 Israelis. Hamas and Islamic Jihad claim responsibility
June 12, 2003	A suicide bomber disguised as an ultra-orthodox Jew detonates himself on a Jerusalem bus, killing 16 Israelis. Hamas claims responsibility.
2001	The US State Department lists Hamas on its official

	list of terrorist groups.
1999	King Abdullah of Jordan closes down Hamas headquarters in Jordan.
1997	Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin is released from prison.
February to March 1996	The Palestinian Authority cracks down on Hamas, after a series of Hamas-orchestrated suicide bombings in Israel kill more than 50 people. Palestinian President Yasser Arafat condemns the bombings, referring to them as “a terrorist operation.” Later, the PNA arrests approximately 140 suspected Hamas members.
April 1994	Hamas orchestrates its first suicide bombing. Five are killed in the Israeli city of Hedera.
1989	An Israeli court convicts Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin of ordering Hamas members to kidnap and kill two Israeli soldiers.
1988	The covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement is published. The group presents itself as an alternative to the PLO.

Source: (Wilkinson, 2008).

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