

Hamas' Religious Ideology Reflected in the Planning and Execution of the Invasion and Massacre of October 7, 2023

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Overview¹

- ▶ Islam has been an integral part of Hamas' identity since its establishment in December 1987. The Hamas Charter states that Islam guides all the movement's actions, jihad is its path and death for the sake of Allah is the loftiest of its aspirations. The Charter is also virulently antisemitic and portrays the Jews as contemptible and inferior.
- ▶ Its ideas are based on the concepts of the Muslim Brotherhood, of which Hamas is the Palestinian branch, as well as on the religious rulings of preacher Yusuf al-Qaradawi and the teachings of Abdullah Azzam, who founded the global jihad movement.
- ▶ Hamas' absolute control of the Gaza Strip since 2007 has enabled it to impose its views on the formal and informal education system to fulfill its objective of raising generations of Islamist extremists who would later be integrated into the armed campaign against Israel. Religious indoctrination took place in schools and summer camps, which combined weapons training with religious studies, as well as in the training of terrorist operatives.
- ▶ The decision of the Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip, led by the head of the political bureau in the Gaza Strip, Yahya al-Sinwar, and the commander of the military wing, Muhammad Deif, to launch the invasion and massacre on October 7, 2023, the so-called "Tufan (Flood) al-Aqsa Campaign," was based on military and political considerations, such as the desire to upend the normalization process between Israel and Saudi Arabia and the effort to secure the release of the Palestinian prisoners incarcerated in Israel.
- ▶ The religious dimension had a decisive influence on their considerations, as emerged from documents retrieved from the Gaza Strip during the war and from statements by senior Hamas operatives during preparations for the invasion and massacre and at its outset, which included extensive use of Qur'anic verses and hadith [oral] traditions to frame the attack as a religious war for Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque. Often used was the Qur'anic term "the promise of the

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

second time," which also appeared in the original name of Hamas' invasion plan (the Wall of Jericho), and which was interpreted as meaning there was a divine promise to end the Jewish presence in the Land of Israel.

► The importance of religious preparation for the invasion and massacre was provided by a religious training kit discovered in the possession of *nukhba*² terrorists who invaded Israeli territory, which included a Qur'an as well as books and booklets on jihad, *istishhad* (martyrdom) and religious rulings on combat.

► The massacres and atrocities committed by Hamas terrorists in the communities and military bases near the Gaza Strip border and the western Negev in the October 7, 2023 invasion were the expression of Hamas' antisemitism and religious rulings, which did not distinguish between Israeli civilians and uniformed personnel. That was despite the fact that Islamic sources prohibited harming women, children and the elderly and abusing corpses.

► **In Amit Institute assessment, religious considerations played a significant role in the decision of the Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip to launch the invasion and massacre on October 7, 2023. Although Hamas understood that Israel would respond forcefully and Hezbollah and Iran were apparently not going to join the campaign, the belief that there was a divine promise of victory, and that martyrdom in battle for the sake of Allah was equivalent to victory, led al-Sinwar and Deif to make the decision to invade Israeli territory. The move reflected the shift in the center of gravity of Hamas' outlook from a movement whose activity was modeled on the Muslim Brotherhood, which combines charity and political activity with armed campaigns, to a jihadist movement inspired by al-Qaeda and ISIS.**

► **The religious concepts of jihad, martyrdom and the "struggle" for al-Aqsa have been motifs throughout Hamas' entire history, and were even when the movement downplayed them in an attempt to display pragmatic flexibility, as it did in 2017, when it was in strategic distress and published the Document of General Principles and Policies. In Amit Institute assessment, despite Hamas claims of being prepared to relinquish control of the Gaza Strip and disarm as part of the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip, Hamas does not intend to abandon its extremist religious-antisemitic ideology, which it instilled during two decades of rule in the Gaza Strip and which was implemented with bestiality and barbarity in the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre.**

² Hamas' elite military unit.

► Western intelligence services often find it difficult to understand the worldview of extremist organizations, apparently the result of a shortage of experts in the fields of language, culture and radical religious thought. Intelligence researchers are also sometimes caught in the "mirror-image trap," an attempt to analyze the behavior of the opposing side using assumptions, tools and considerations characteristic of themselves. The attempt to enter a mindset whose patterns of thought are fundamentally different and are sometimes perceived as irrational is challenging and often doomed to failure.

Introduction

► On October 7, 2023, Hamas in the Gaza Strip launched a large-scale invasion and massacre of Israelis in communities and military bases near the Gazan border and the western Negev, accompanied by rocket fire targeting extensive areas of the State of Israel. More than 1,200 civilians and soldiers were murdered and more than 200 were abducted to the Gaza Strip. The invasion and massacre, orchestrated by the head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, Yahya al-Sinwar,³ and by the head of Hamas' military wing, Muhammad Deif,⁴ was launched after several years of planning, coordination with Iran and Hezbollah and an extensive deception operation lulling Israel into a false sense of semi-security.⁵

► Al-Sinwar and Deif's considerations were based on a perception that had developed primarily since the Sword of al-Quds campaign (Hamas' name for Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021), according to which Hamas was capable of advancing a multi-arena campaign which would realize "the vision of the destruction of Israel." To it was added the desire to disrupt the normalization process between Israel and Saudi Arabia and exploit the internal rift within Israel over judicial legislation.⁶

³ Eliminated in October 2024.

⁴ Eliminated in July 2024.

⁵ See the March 13, 2025 report ITIC (Amit Institute since May 2026), [Hamas' strategy to destroy Israel: from theory into practice, as seen in captured documents](#), the July 2026 Amit Institute report, [Hamas' Perception of Hezbollah's Role in the Multi-Arena Hostilities as Reflected in Documents from the Gaza Strip](#), and the June 2026 report, [The Deception Plan Practiced by Hamas before the October 7, 2023 Attack \(Including documents from the Gaza Strip\)](#).

⁶ See the April 2026 ITIC report, [Operation Guardian of the Walls as a watershed moment in Hamas' strategy for the "destruction of Israel," as reflected in documents found by the IDF in the Gaza Strip](#), the June 2026 Amit Institute report, [The Israel-Saudi Arabia Normalization: A motive for the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack and massacre reflected in documents from the Gaza Strip](#) and the July 2025 ITIC report, [The Israeli protests against the judicial legislation as reflected in Hamas documents](#).

► **The decision to launch the invasion was also based on fundamental religious assumptions and views which had strongly influenced Hamas' decisions both before and during the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre**, as manifested by the brutal treatment of those attacked and massacred, including women, children and the elderly. The religious dimension appeared in the logo what Hamas called the Al-Aqsa Flood Campaign, and which incorporated the Qur'anic verse, "Assault them through the gate, for when you are in, victory will be yours, and put your trust in Allah if you are believers indeed" (Surah 5, verse 23).⁷ The verse also appeared on the cover of Hamas' invasion plan, which was called Wall of Jericho in Israel, and Hamas terrorists shouted it while invading Israeli territory (*New York Times*, November 30, 2023; Ynet, November 28, 2025). The choice of the word *tufan* (flood) also alluded to rocket and missile fire as analogous to the story of the Flood, which according to the Qur'an was punishment Allah visited on polytheistic sinners.⁸



**The logo of the Al-Aqsa Flood Campaign with the Qur'anic verse
(Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, October 7, 2023)**

► In addition, a religious training kit (*haqiba ta'bawiya*) was found in the possession of *nukhba* terrorists who invaded Israeli territory. The kit included a small Qur'an with a picture of al-Aqsa Mosque on the cover, as well as five books and religious law booklets dealing with jihad, *istishhad* (martyrdom) and *fatwas* (religious rulings) relating to combat, including *fatawa al-mujahidin* (Religious rulings for jihad fighters); *hayya 'ala al-jihad* (Come to Jihad); *al-mi'a lil-hiyad fi al-shahada wal-jihad* (The hundred best quotations on shahada and jihad); *nuzhat al-'ibad* (A program of worship for day and night); *ballighu 'anni* (Convey in My Name).

⁷ All translations of Qur'anic verses appearing in the study are taken from "A translation of the Quran by Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali," www.noblequran.com.

⁸ See Haim Nissim and Aliza Schnitzer, "'Al-Aqsa Flood': What Is Behind the Name?" IICC Perspectives, Issue 100 (April 2025), pp. 68–69. Hebrew only.



The religious training kit with the Qur'an and books (from the "Return to October " exhibition at the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center)

► The current study analyzes the deep-rooted religious ideology which were part of Hamas' preparations for and actions during the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre. It has been at the movement's core since its establishment and is reflected in all forms of its political and jihad activity and in the education and training it promotes from an early age through recruitment into the ranks of its military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. For the purposes of the study, public statements by Hamas members and documents retrieved by the IDF during the Gaza Strip War were used, alongside religious literature which influenced Hamas members, including books and booklets on religious law as it related to combat.

Islamic Fundamentals According to Hamas

The Hamas Charter

► The 1988 Hamas Charter is the movement's founding document. The movement was established in December 1987 as the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the charter presented the foundations of Hamas' Islamic ideology, as shaped and formulated by its founders, incorporating relevant Qur'anic verses and hadiths.⁹ The Charter defined the Palestine problem as a Muslim religious problem and characterized the conflict with Israel as a confrontation between Islam and the "infidel Jews." The territory of "Palestine" was represented in the Charter as Islamic *waqf*¹⁰ land, of which not even an inch can be

⁹ Hadiths: a collection of religious rulings and accounts concerning Muhammad and his way of life, and the second most important source of Islamic law after the Qur'an.

¹⁰ The *waqf* is a charitable endowment under Islamic (Wikipedia). Some religious and political figures view the entire geographic expanse of historical Palestine as a collective *waqf* under Islamic law, rendering the transfer or sale of any portion of it impermissible.

relinquished, and the obligation to wage an uncompromising jihad war against Israel was emphasized. The following are examples from the Charter:¹¹

- ◆ Article 1: The path of the Islamic resistance movement is the path of Islam, from which it derives its ideas, concepts and perceptions of the world, life and man, to which it turns for rulings in all its affairs and from which it seeks inspiration to guide its steps.
- ◆ Article 4: The Islamic resistance movement welcomes every Muslim who embraces its worldview, accepts its way of thinking, adheres to its path, keeps its secrets and wishes to join its ranks to fulfill his duty [of jihad], and Allah will grant him his reward.
- ◆ Article 6: The Islamic resistance movement is a unique Palestinian movement. Its allegiance is to Allah and it adopts Islam as a way of life. It strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of the land of Palestine, for under the protection of Islam people of all religions can live in peace and know security for their lives, property and rights. Conflict develops in the absence of Islam, oppression spreads, corruption becomes rampant, disputes arise and wars break out.
- ◆ Article 8: Allah is its [the movement's] goal, the Prophet is its role model, the Qur'an is its constitution, holy war [jihad] is its path and death for the sake of Allah is the loftiest of its aspirations.
- ◆ Article 11: The Islamic resistance movement believes that the land of Palestine is Islamic waqf land for generations of Muslims until the day of resurrection. It is forbidden to abandon it or any part of it or relinquish it or any part of it. It is not the property of any Arab state, or of all the Arab states, nor of any king or president, or of all the kings and presidents, nor is it the property of any organization or all the organizations, whether Palestinian or Arab.
- ◆ Article 13: There is no solution to the Palestinian problem except through jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are empty and a waste of time.
- The Charter included blatant antisemitism which employed myths from classical European antisemitism, with explicit reference to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and antisemitism with Islamic roots (in the Qur'an and hadith). Jews were described as having identified women as the weak link in Muslim society and therefore influenced them to stray from the path of Islam. Jews were also described as displaying "Nazi behavior." The Charter also quotes the stone and tree hadith concerning Jews: "The hour [Judgment Day] will not come until the

¹¹ See the March 2006 ITIC report, "The Hamas Charter (1988)."

Muslims fight the Jews and the Muslims kill them, and until the Jew hides behind the stones and trees, and the stones and trees will say: 'O Muslim, O servant of Allah, there is a Jew hiding [behind me], come and kill him.' "¹²

► A leading exponent of antisemitic positions in Hamas is Dr. Mahmoud al-Zahar, one of the movement's founders and senior spokesmen, who is considered Hamas' "expert" on Jewish affairs. He regularly uses antisemitic motifs to "justify" the need to expel the Jews from "Palestine." In his most prominent antisemitic diatribe, the 2020 book *Hatred of the Jews – A Historical Legacy*, he described the Jews as greedy, immoral, cruel and treacherous, and used blood libels and conspiracies based on *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.¹³

► In May 2017, Hamas published a political tract entitled "A document of general principles and policies." Its objective was to update the ideology and fundamental perceptions that appeared in the 1988 Charter and adapt them to the strategic situations which had changed since it was written. In the updated document, Hamas expressed qualified and conditional agreement to the establishment of a Palestinian state within the June 4, 1967 borders, but retained its rigid fundamental positions, that all "Palestine" belonged to the Palestinians; Jerusalem was the capital of Palestine; the so-called "right of return" of the Palestinian refugees;¹⁴ denial of the legitimacy of the Zionist movement and the State of Israel; active "resistance"¹⁵ (*al-muqawama*) and jihad as a "legitimate right" of the Palestinians in their campaign to "liberate Palestine." The tract adapted and changed the original Charter:¹⁶

◆ It claimed Hamas was "a Palestinian Islamic national liberation and resistance movement" whose source of authority was Islam, and the Islam in which Hamas believed was a "religion of peace and tolerance," a balanced Islam which followed the "middle path" and [allegedly] opposed all forms of religious extremism. The statement that Hamas was the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood was removed, although no mention was made of severing ties with the global movement.

¹² See the April 2008 ITIC report, [Contemporary Arab-Muslim anti-Semitism, its Significance and Implications \(Updated to March 2008\)](#).

¹³ See the December 2025 ITIC report, [The Doctrine of Dr. Mahmoud al-Zahar, Hamas' "Expert on Jewish Affairs"](#).

¹⁴ The "right" of the Palestinian refugees and all their descendants to return to their 1948 places of residence, that is, the destruction of the State of Israel.

¹⁵ Violence and terrorism.

¹⁶ See the May 2017 ITIC report, [The goals and significance of Hamas's new political document](#).

- ◆ A distinction was made between the campaign against Zionism and the State of Israel and the attitude toward Jews as a religion. Hamas claimed its "struggle" against the "Zionist project" was not against Jews because they were Jews, but rather against the "Zionists, occupiers and aggressors." Various passages were removed to counter accusations that Hamas was antisemitic, and it was stated that antisemitism and the persecution of Jews were associated with European history and not with the history and heritage of the Arabs and Islam.
- ◆ Willingness to show flexibility regarding how "active resistance" against Israel was conducted without relinquishing the principle of "armed resistance"¹⁷ as an alternative (implicitly the preferred one) for the "liberation of Palestine." Hamas' claimed was that there were periods of escalation in the terrorist campaign against Israel and periods of calm, all in accordance with circumstances and the changing situation, as part of managing the campaign.

The Influence of the Muslim Brotherhood

- Hamas, as the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, bases its principles on the ideas of the movement's prominent thinkers. At the beginning of the Hamas Charter, a statement attributed to the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna (1906–1949), is quoted, "Israel will arise and continue to exist until Islam obliterates it, just as it obliterated what came before it."
- The antisemitism of the Hamas Charter echoes Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966),¹⁸ who published the article "Our War with the Jews" in the Islamic weekly *al-Da'wa* on November 20, 1951. According to Qutb, who frequently quoted from the Qur'an and the hadiths, and incorporated motifs from European antisemitism to reinforce his arguments, the objective of Jews is to distance Muslims from their religion and destroy Islam, which they do by deception and impersonating Muslims. He described the Jews as atheists, materialists, morally corrupt and behind the destruction of the institution of the family. He wrote, "Today the war with them has become more brutal and overt. They have emerged from every direction and declared the establishment of the State of Israel.... Their greed has reached from afar as far as the Temple."

¹⁷ Violence and terrorism.

¹⁸ An activist and ideologue in the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt.

Today they are only a few steps away from it, and their greed will not be stopped unless Islam defeats them."¹⁹

► Sheikh Dr. Yusuf Mustafa al-Qaradawi (1926–2022), an Egyptian preacher who was considered the most important religious authority for Sunni Muslims and the religious and ideological authority of the Muslim Brotherhood, was also a religious authority for Hamas. Al-Qaradawi, who was forced to live in exile in Qatar from 1961 because the Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed in Egypt, was an ardent supporter of Palestinian terrorism, including attacks on civilian targets, claiming the attacks were a "legitimate expression of resistance" because Israel was a militaristic society in which every civilian was a potential soldier. He issued fatwas calling for jihad against Israel and the Jews and permitting suicide bombing attacks, even if women and children were victims. He also issued a fatwa permitting attacks targeting Jews abroad because for him there was no fundamental distinction between Judaism and Zionism and therefore every Jewish target was equivalent to an Israeli target.



Right: Al-Qaradawi with Isma'il Haniyeh during a visit to the Gaza Strip (Al Jazeera, May 9, 2013). Left: Al-Qaradawi (standing, fourth from left) at a meeting in Qatar with a Hamas delegation led by Haniyeh (third from left) and Yahya al-Sinwar (first from left) (al-Qaradawi's official website, March 2, 2012)

► In March 2009, an Al Jazeera asked him asked about the role of the righteous (*al-salihun*) in the Qur'an in liberating the Islamic holy places and achieving the victory of the [Muslim] nation. He said the righteous were the source of hope and aspiration through whom Jerusalem would be "liberated," "Palestine" would be "liberated," Gaza would be "liberated" and all the lands controlled by the enemies of the Muslims would be "liberated." He said the war against the Jews was not a war of only the Palestinians but a war of all Muslims. He relied on the "stone and tree" hadith, saying it referred to how everything standing beside those who would fight

¹⁹ See the November 2024 ITIC report, [Antisemitism in the Arab-Muslim World during the Gaza Strip War](#).

the Jews and liberate the land, even the stone and the tree, would point out [the location of] the Jews.²⁰

The Influence of Abdullah Azzam²¹

► Dr. Abdullah Azzam (1941–1989) was the founder of the global jihad movement and established *maktab al-khidamat* ("Services Bureau"), whose name was changed to al-Qaeda (the Base) in 1998. Azzam, a Palestinian from a small village near Jenin, pursued an academic career in Islamic studies, initially in Jordan and later in Saudi Arabia, where he wrote a book called *Defense of the Muslim Lands Is the Most Important Individual Duty*.

► According to Azzam, it is the individual duty of every Muslim to fight for Muslims in distress wherever they may be. Faithful to those principles, he went to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, where he established his organization with the intention of assisting the persecuted Muslims against the regime, which was aided by the Soviet Union, in the Afghan civil war.

► The element of "miracles" caused by divine intervention was prominent in al-Qaeda, with stories circulated within the organization about a single anti-tank missile that struck numerous Russian tanks, or about the bodies of the organization's martyrs that remained on the ground for a long time but did not decay and emitted the scent of perfume.

► The global jihad movement and the Muslim Brotherhood were rivals, with the Muslim Brotherhood accused by the jihadists of cowardice, inaction, confining itself to *da'wa* activity and participation in the political life of various secular states, which they regarded as forbidden under Islamic law. The Muslim Brotherhood opposed the terrorism of global jihad organizations, such as the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

► Hamas, as the only Muslim Brotherhood movement that actually engages in jihad, occupies an intermediate position, and there are points of convergence between it and the global jihad organizations. That was also demonstrated by Dr. Abdullah Azzam's status in Hamas as an ideological-religious authority and a source of inspiration. The Hamas Charter also emphasized Azzam's perception that jihad was an individual duty incumbent on every Muslim, as was the "liberation of Palestine."

²⁰ See the February 2011 ITIC report, [Portrait of Sheikh Dr. Yusuf Abdallah al-Qaradawi, senior Sunni Muslim cleric, affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood](#) and the March 2009 report, [Anti-Semitism on Arab media](#).

²¹ See the November 2004 ITIC report, [The influence of the legacy of global jihad on Hamas: glorification of the image and Islamic-political doctrines of Dr. Abdallah Azzam](#)

► Materials retrieved by the IDF during operations in Judea and Samaria during the second intifada showed that Azzam was a Hamas role model, with his portrait appearing alongside those of Hamas founder Ahmed Yassin, Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna, Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam (for whom the Hamas military wing is named), and other Hamas leaders. Azzam's name also appeared in books, documents and recordings and in the names of mosques in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, and he was mentioned in the wills of Hamas suicide bombers.



A small poster commemorating Azzam retrieved from the offices of Hamas' Charity Committee in Tulkarm in 2004

The Stages of Hamas' Religious Indoctrination

► Since Hamas' establishment, education has been key for promoting religious-political indoctrination and shaping the political consciousness of Palestinian youth. The Hamas Charter emphasized the need to promote Islamic consciousness and the spirit of jihad among the masses at the local, Arab and Islamic levels in order to encourage them to confront the enemies and join the ranks of the *mujahidin* (Article 15). Particular emphasis was placed on instilling these perceptions among young people, as Article 16 of the Charter stated:

There is no alternative to providing the [future] Islamic generations in our region with an Islamic education based on observing the religious commandments and the conscious study of the Book of Allah [the Qur'an] and the law [Sunna] of the Prophet [Muhammad]. We must also teach them Islamic history and heritage from their authoritative sources, under the guidance of experts and scholars, and establish the curricula properly [in accordance with] the thoughts and faith of the Muslim [student]. It is necessary to study the enemy consciously and learn about its material and human capabilities, identifying points of weakness and strength and the forces that support it and stand alongside it. [It is] necessary to be familiar with current events, study their analyses and interpretations and remain up to date. It is necessary to plan

for the present and the future and investigate every event, so that the Muslim *mujahid* lives his life aware of his purpose, his objective, his path and what is happening around him.

► Hamas' complete control of the Gaza Strip since 2007 enabled it to impose its perceptions on the formal and informal education systems to raise new generations with extremist Islamic ideology, according to Hamas' political interpretation, in order to integrate them into the armed campaign against Israel.²² Alongside military or semi-military training, the curriculum stressed the "liberation of Palestine" and the destruction of Israel, the culture of jihad and "resistance," the cult of the shaheeds, the inculcation of extremist Islam and hatred of Israel.²³

► Hamas' "educational" activity was in evidence at the Rudolf Walther School in Deir al-Balah, which regularly hosted clerics and political propagandists to deepen the students' indoctrination. The school held a week of activities to "preserve Islamic values in daily life," in cooperation with Hamas' Islamic Bloc, its university student organization. It hosted the preacher Sheikh Ibrahim Darwish, head of the Ministry of endowments office in the central Gaza Strip.²⁴

► Hamas also operated a program at its summer camps to ensure indoctrination continued during the school vacation. The summer camps, which were operated by Hamas' military wing and held annually until July 2023 with the participation of tens of thousands of children and adolescents, had military and semi-military training (including training in live fire training, and physical fitness training, and theoretical weapons instruction), ideological indoctrination and Qur'an studies. Senior Hamas figure Mushir al-Masri said the camps built "a devout Muslim

²² As part of its control of the education system, Hamas prevented UNRWA from introducing content into its schools in the Gaza Strip that was inconsistent with the movement's views, such as Holocaust studies. See the July 2009 ITIC report, [The Islamization process promoted by Hamas in the Gaza Strip and its social and political implications on the local, the Middle Eastern, and the international scenes](#) and the March 2011 report, [The battle for the character of education in the Gaza Strip](#)

²³ See the February 2013 ITIC report, [Education for terrorism: Hamas increases its military and propaganda activities among Gazan youth to raise a younger generation able to continue its anti-Israeli path of terrorism and ensure Hamas control of the Gaza Strip](#), and the May 2013 report, [Hamas has introduced a program in Gaza Strip schools called Al-Futuwwa, which provides military training for tens of thousands of adolescent boys](#).

²⁴ See the April 2016 ITIC report, [Inculcating Hatred and Violence for Israel in the Palestinian Educational System: The Rudolf Walther School in Deir al-Balah, as a Case Study](#).

young person who struggles against the occupation" (Gaza Legislative Council website, August 1, 2023).²⁵



Right: Qur'an lesson at a Hamas summer camp (Shehab Agency, July 8, 2023). Left: An operative from the military wing explains how to operate a mortar (Shehab Agency, July 10, 2023)

► The Islamic University in Gaza City, which was founded by Ahmed Yassin in 1978, participates in Hamas' religious indoctrination. Religious studies were an integral part of the university curriculum, and many senior Hamas figures, past and present, graduated from it, some of whom also held positions there. Conferences dealing with imposing the Islamic code on the daily lives of the Gazans were held and many "academic" papers written by university students incorporated jihadist ideas.²⁶ A study that examined the educational background of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorists from the late 1980s through 2002 found that more than half of the terrorist operatives, including more than half of the suicide bombers, had an academic education.²⁷

► Religion occupies a central place in the training of fighters in Hamas' military wing. During Operation Cast Lead in the Gaza Strip (December 2008-January 2009), IDF forces found a CD containing a video about Hamas' Abdullah Azzam Military Academy. According to it the course at the academy taught theoretical lessons and practical exercises on military subjects, such as preparing explosives, operating explosive devices, self-defense and specialized military

²⁵ The ITIC issued annual reports examining the summer camps in the Gaza Strip. See the August 2009 report, [Hamas summer camps in the Gaza Strip integrate social activities with political and Islamic indoctrination and semi-military training](#), the July 2018 report, [Hamas announced the opening of summer camps for children and adolescents in the Gaza Strip. This year summer camps are inspired by the "return marches," and include military training as they do every year](#) and the August 2013 report, [Hamas summer camps in the Gaza Strip](#).

²⁶ See the April 2020 ITIC report, [The Islamic University of Gaza, A Hamas Stronghold, Has Been Supported by the EU for Years](#).

²⁷ Berrebi, C. "Evidence about the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism among Palestinians", Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy, 13(1), 2007. pp. 19-21.

training which included invading IDF posts and abducting IDF soldiers. Religious indoctrination classes taught that the trainees were fighting simultaneously for the Palestinian homeland and for Allah and Islam. At the entrance to the academy there was a sign with quotation from Azzam reading, "The Muslim attains his greatest glory when he wages jihad for the sake of Allah."²⁸

► Another manifestation of Azzam's central place in the training of Hamas terrorists is a series of books entitled *Harvests from the Depths of the Educational and Ideological Experience of the Shaheed Sheikh Abdullah Yusuf Azzam*, published in 2012, with a foreword written by Ahmed al-Jaabari, head of Hamas' military wing until he was eliminated in November 2012 (marking the beginning of Operation Pillar of Defense). The books, which are studied in courses conducted by the military wing, have quotations by Azzam, such as, "There is no alternative to bearing arms so that the human soul and spirit may be refined. The religion of Allah, that is, Islam, is understood through jihad for the sake of Allah, and many of the meanings in the Qur'an and the texts of the Prophet can be understood only on the battlefield. History is written in blood.... The palace of glory is built only with skulls; might and exaltation are founded only on hills of human remains and corpses."²⁹



The book series containing quotes from Abdullah Azzam

► A document discovered by the IDF during the Gaza Strip War discussed the structure of the training program conducted by the Hamas military wing for new recruits to the al-Shuja'iya Battalion during the ceasefire in February-March 2025. It showed that in addition to acquiring field skills and qualification in the use of various weapons, the trainees underwent mental preparation through religious lectures and were required to swear allegiance to the Izz al-Din

²⁸ See the June 2009 ITIC report, [During Operation Cast Lead a promotional film was seized about a military academy established by Hamas named after Dr. Abdallah Azzam, Osama bin Laden's ideologue.](#)

²⁹ Sagi Polka, "The Mental Preparation and Shaping of the Spirit of Hamas' Military Wing Operatives for Carrying Out Jihad," *Ma'arachot*, February 25, 2024 . <https://tinyurl.com/y38w38ds>

al-Qassam Brigades. According to the document, the lecture topics were the Influence of Faith on Our Lives (Abu Mus'ab Mushtaha); Joint and Movement Activity (Abu Muhammad Jundiya); Milestones in the Life of the Prophet Muhammad (Abu Muhammad Shuweidah).³⁰



"I swear by Almighty Allah to obey the instructions of the command, not to tamper with, use or make modifications to the resources of the military apparatus, and not to pass on the knowledge I have acquired to any party without the command's knowledge and without obtaining prior authorization. And Allah is witness to my words."

The oath of allegiance of the training course participants (from the captured document)

Islamism as Part of the October 7, 2023, Terrorist Attack and Massacre

Reliance of Religious Sources

► Since Hamas makes extensive use of religious language, including numerous quotations from the two principal religious sources of Islam, the Qur'an and hadiths (the oral tradition). As an Islamic movement, Qur'anic verses were incorporated into the 1988 Hamas Charter, speeches and publications and the names given to previous campaigns against Israel (such as Eaten Chaff for Operation Protective Edge in 2014) also originated in the Qur'an.³¹ Qur'anic verses appeared in documents discovered during the Gaza Strip War which dealt with the preparations for the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre, as well as in statements to justify them.

► In the recorded speech delivered by Muhammad Deif in which he announced the launch of Al-Aqsa Flood, he made extensive use of Islamic terminology to frame the new campaign as

³⁰ See the May 2026 Amit Institute report, [The training program of the Hamas al-Shuja'iya Battalion during a ceasefire with Israel, according to a document brought back from the Gaza Strip](#).

³¹ Eaten Chaff (al-'Asf al-Ma'kul) is a term from the Qur'an (Surah 105, verse 5). 'Asf is the remains of grain after the harvest, which the wind blows away, chaff used as food for sheep and cattle. Al-'Asf al-Ma'kul is chaff that has been eaten and crushed in the animal's mouth. In the context of the Qur'anic verse, it refers to Allah, who severely struck the enemies who fought the inhabitants of Mecca in the year of the Prophet Muhammad's birth and, figuratively, ground them into crumbs. The message is that this campaign will crush Israel. See Nissim and Schnitzer, "Al-Aqsa Flood: What Is Behind the Name?" Hebrew only.

jihad, while justifying the violence in terms of defending the holy places of Islam (al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, October 7, 2023). He began with verses from the Qur'an, "Their multitude will be put to flight, and they will show their backs. Nay, but the Hour is their appointed time (for their full recompense), and the Hour will be more grievous and more bitter" (Surah 54, verses 45–46). The verses refer to the Battle of Badr between Muhammad and the idolaters of the Quraysh tribe in 624 CE, and their interpretation is that the infidels are destined for defeat and severe punishment on Judgment Day, from the outset predicting victory over the "Zionist infidels" as a foregone conclusion.³²

► When the invasion and massacre began on the morning of October 7, 2023, a personal letter was sent to Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah³³ and to the head of the Palestine Branch of the Iranian Qods Force, Muhammad Saeed Izadi,³⁴ signed by Deif, al-Sinwar and Deif's deputy, Marwan Issa.³⁵ It informed Nasrallah of the invasion of Israeli territory, explained the motives and urged him to join the campaign and open a second front. No fewer than 14 passages from the Qur'an appeared in the letter. The following are examples (Ben Caspit, Maariv, May 16, 2026):³⁶

◆ The letter began, "In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful. The believers and those who emigrated and strive [jihad fighters] for the sake of Allah, sacrificing their property and their lives, and those who gave refuge and extended assistance [to those who emigrated to Medina], all these protect one another. As for the believers who did not emigrate, you have no part in their protection until they emigrate. But if they seek your assistance in matters of religion [to repel harm by the infidels and to preserve their religion and prevent their persecution], you must hasten to their aid, unless it is against people with whom you have a covenant. Allah sees what you do. The infidels protect one another, and if you do not do likewise, persecution will befall you (Surah 8, verse 72). In the name of Islamic solidarity, Hezbollah must join the campaign against the common enemy, following the example of the first converts to Islam who emigrated from Mecca to Medina (*al-muhajirun*) and were prepared to do so at great personal risk.

³² The full text (in Arabic) of the speech appears in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Issue 137 (Winter 2024). The Hebrew text of the speech was translated by Yonatan Dahoah Halevi.

³³ Eliminated in October 2024.

³⁴ Eliminated in June 2025.

³⁵ Eliminated in March 2024.

³⁶ The Amit Institute is not in possession of the full letter.

- ◆ The element of surprise in the invasion and massacre is also addressed in the letter. "We hoped thereby to enter upon them through the gate by surprise, and when we enter, we shall overcome them, with Allah's permission. 'Enter upon them through the gate, and when you enter it, you will be victorious' " (Surah 5, verse 23). In this way, the Hamas leaders sought Nasrallah's forgiveness for not having informed him of the timing of the invasion and massacre.³⁷
- ◆ Regarding Israel, it said, "You [Nasrallah] were the one who used the word 'spiderweb,' and you were right. This is the spider's house, torn to pieces and divided within itself. Allah the Exalted said, 'You think they are united, but their hearts are divided' " (Surah 59, verse 14).
- *A Guide for Raising Morale* was found in the possession of Hamas terrorists from the al-Quds Battalion of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades who entered Israeli territory in the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre. The document had sayings and verses from the Qur'an and hadiths divided according to situations: before entering battle; when a mujahidin is killed and becomes a shaheed; when there are wounded; when there is success on the battlefield; and general words of encouragement for the fighters. For example:
 - ◆ A verse for before entering battle is, "O believers, fight the infidels who are nearest to your borders, and deal firmly with them, and know that Allah is with those who fear him" (Surah 9, verse 123). The verse instructs Muslims to fight the enemies closest to the border (in the context of October 7, 2023, this can be understood as the communities and posts near the Gaza Strip border) and to display strength and power before the enemies.
 - ◆ In the section dealing with those wounded in battle, the hadith attributed to Muhammad stated, "The messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Every person wounded for the sake of Allah will come on Judgment Day with his wound bleeding, its color the color of blood, but will smell of perfume.' " Instead of the scent of decay the wound will smell of perfume because the fighter died for the sake of Allah, and therefore there is no reason to cleanse the shaheed's body before burial.

³⁷ See the July 2026 Amit Institute report, [Hamas' Perception of Hezbollah's Role in the Multi-Arena Hostilities as Reflected in Documents from the Gaza Strip.](#)

[illegible]

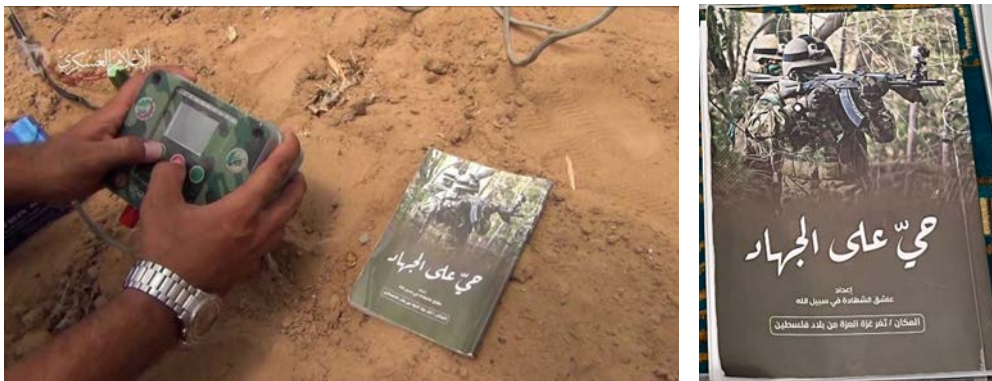
Jihad and Istishhad³⁸

- ³⁹ The *shahada*, prayer (five prayers a day), charity (*zakaat*), fasting (Ramadan) and the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*).

the dead, when they will return to dwell in the bodies of the shaheeds, who will be granted a place in Paradise.

► *Religious Rulings for Jihad Fighters*, which was part of the "mental preparation" kit found in the possession of Hamas terrorists who broke into Israeli territory, quoted hadiths affirming that jihad for the sake of Allah and faith in him were the loftiest things, and the sins of a person killed while fighting for the sake of Allah would be forgiven.⁴⁰

► *Come to Jihad* was meant to strengthen belief in the righteousness of jihad and *istishhad* by representing the "Muslim combat heritage" throughout the generations alongside advice from clerics who had themselves been involved in jihad. One of them was Nizar Rayyan, one of the commanders of Hamas' military wing who also taught Sharia at the Islamic University in Gaza and was killed in Operation Cast Lead in January 2009. The booklet included a quotation from Rayyan's will, which said, "I instruct whoever reads these words to continue jihad for the sake of Allah and not to submit to worthless solutions, for our land is a trust for which we are responsible; we must not relinquish the option of jihad for even a moment." The booklet quoted Hamas founder Ahmed Yassin, who said, "We seek *istishhad*. We do not strive for this life. This life is worthless and cheap. We aspire to eternal life." In June 2024, the booklet appeared in a video issued by the Hamas military wing as it fired rockets at IDF forces in the Khan Yunis area, showing that it continued to be an important source of religious guidance for Hamas terrorists during the war (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, June 10, 2026).



Right: The booklet *Come to Jihad* (from the "Return to October" exhibition at the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center). Left: A Hamas combat information operative photographs the booklet placed beside a rocket launcher (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, June 10, 2026)

⁴⁰ Religious Rulings Committee of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, *Fatawa al-Mujahidin*, second edition, 2023, p. 17.

Success Based on "Divine Promise"

► The perception that victory or defeat is ultimately subject to the grace of Allah, without exempting human beings from participating in the struggle, is a fundamental concept in the Qur'an and is reflected in verses such as, "(Remember) when you sought help of your Lord and He answered you (saying): 'I will help you with a thousand of the angels each behind the other (following one another) in succession. Allah made it only as glad tidings, and that your hearts be at rest therewith. And there is no victory except from Allah. Verily, Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise' (Surah 8, verses 9–10. it refers to the battle between Muhammad's supporters and his enemies from the Quraysh tribe at the Battle of Badr). 'You killed them not, but Allah killed them. And you (Muhammad) threw not when you did throw but Allah threw, that He might test the believers by a fair trial from Him. Verily, Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower. This (is the fact) and surely, Allah weakens the deceitful plots of the disbelievers' (Surah 8, verses 17–18). A quotation from the beginning of this verse appears in the logo of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing.

► According to the Qur'an, the enemies of the Muslims are told that their superior military strength is of no significance because of divine intervention, stating, "... your forces will be of no avail to you, however numerous it be, and verily, Allah is with the believers" (Surah 8, verse 19).

► Radical Islamist organizations, whether they target Israel or the United States, other world powers or "infidel Islamic regimes," generally have a weaker military force. Therefore, divine intervention is a natural choice to inspire their members with the hope of victory. That does not contradict or obviate the need for the believers to take part in the struggle to the point of sacrificing themselves for the cause (*istishhad*). That is reflected in the verse, "O you who believe! If you help (in the cause of) Allah, He will help you, and make your foothold firm. But those who disbelieve (in the Oneness of Allah Islamic Monotheism), for them is destruction, and (Allah) will make their deeds vain" (Surah 47, verses 7–8).

► A small booklet entitled *What the Mujahid Cannot Afford Not to Know about Religious Rulings, Rules of Conduct, Prayers and Events*, issued by the Izz al-Din Brigades' department of recruitment and guidance in 2013, gave the reasons for victory over the enemies. Most of them

are not military but relate to faith, such as loyalty to and reliance on Allah; good deeds; reciting prayers of supplication to Allah; obedience to Allah and his messenger and similar acts.⁴¹

► **Statements by senior Hamas figures during the preparations for the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre and as it began indicate that the belief that Allah stood by their side and would grant them victory was one of the principal considerations in the decision to launch the "decisive campaign" against Israel.** Prominent was the use of the concept *wa'd al-akhira* whose literal meaning is "the promise of the end of days / the promise of the hereafter." According to another interpretation, it means "the promise of the second time," that is, the later of the two promises (literally, the term can be interpreted in both ways).

► The concept originates in Surah 17, verses 4–7, which state, "And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the Scripture, that indeed you would do mischief on the earth twice and you will become tyrants and extremely arrogant! So, when the promise came for the first of the two, We sent against you slaves of Ours given to terrible warfare. They entered the very innermost parts of your homes. And it was a promise (completely) fulfilled. Then We gave you once again, a return of victory over them. And We helped you with wealth and children and made you more numerous in man power. (And We said): "If you do good, you do good for your own selves, and if you do evil (you do it) against yourselves." Then, when the second promise came to pass, (We permitted your enemies) to make your faces sorrowful and to enter the mosque (of Jerusalem) as they had entered it before, and to destroy with utter destruction all that fell in their hands."

► The accepted Muslim interpretation is that the verses refer to the events that led to the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians and the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans. Another interpretation, which is linked to other verses in the Qur'an and was adopted by Hamas, is that the promise of the second time refers to the gathering of the Jews in the Land of Israel in the modern era, after which the divine promise will be fulfilled and the Muslims will be able to put an end to them.⁴²

► The following are examples of Hamas' use of the concept of *wa'd al-akhira* before the al-Aqsa Flood campaign to express its confidence that it would be the decisive campaign against Israel:

⁴¹ See Sagi Polka, "'The Land Grows Resistance Fighters as It Grows Olives': Victory and Defeat in the Eyes of the Resistance," Beit HaMa'arakhot 29, November 13, 2024, p. 3. Hebrew only.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 7–8.

- ◆ A book published by Hamas' military wing after Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021 stated, "Defeating the enemy has become one bowshot or closer, with Allah's permission. The resistance [Hamas] and its political and military leadership have drawn up a comprehensive plan for the campaign of the Promise of the Second Time. We in the Hamas leadership are in unprecedentedly close contact with all the national and Islamic forces and organizations in order to advance the strategic project of return and liberation."
- ◆ On September 30, 2021, a conference whose theme was, "The promise of the hereafter – Palestine after liberation" was held in Gaza City under the auspices of Yahya al-Sinwar and attended by senior figures from Hamas and other terrorist organizations. Discussions included preparations for the future administration of the State of Palestine after its liberation from Israel. Kamal Abu Aoun, a member of the Hamas political bureau, delivered a speech on behalf of al-Sinwar saying, "We are sponsoring this conference because it is consistent with our assessment that victory is near, and because the complete liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea is at the heart of Hamas' strategic vision." He added, "The conflict can end only with the fulfillment of the promise of victory and control Allah has given us, so that our people may live with dignity in their independent state whose capital is Jerusalem. To this end, we work hard and make great efforts above the ground and in its depths, in the heart of the sea and high in the sky.... We [already] see liberation with our own eyes, and therefore we are preparing for what will come after it...."⁴³
- ◆ The original name of Hamas' plan for the invasion of Israel, which was formulated in various versions from 2016 to 2022 and was called the Wall of Jericho in Israel, was Wa'd al-Akhira, as was also mentioned in the Israel Security Agency (ISA) investigation of the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre (Israeli media, March 4, 2026).
- ◆ In a letter sent by "our brother" [apparently al-Sinwar] to Isma'il Haniyeh⁴⁴ on June 19, 2022, the latter was asked to present, during his meetings in Lebanon with senior Hezbollah and Iranian Revolutionary Guards officials, three possible scenarios for a major strategic campaign which would change the face of the region and the "rules of the game." The first scenario was entitled "the major strategic campaign" and described an invasion by the

⁴³ See the March 2025 ITIC report, [Hamas' strategy to destroy Israel: from theory into practice, as seen in captured documents](#).

⁴⁴ Eliminated in July 2024.

"resistance axis,"⁴⁵ including Hezbollah and without Iran, with "reasonable participation" by axis forces from Yemen, Iraq and Syria, as well as forces from Jordan, Judea, Samaria and Israeli Arabs ("the interior"). According to the letter, the best time would be one of the Jewish holidays, preferably Passover.⁴⁶

- ◆ The deployment order issued by the commander of Hamas' Gaza Brigade, Izz al-Din al-Haddad, to the brigade commanders on October 6, 2023, ahead of the beginning of the invasion, began by saying, "With belief in the promise of the second time and in Allah's crushing victory for his mujahidin servants, the leadership of the military apparatus, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, has approved the beginning of the major military operation Al-Aqsa Flood."⁴⁷
- The belief that the campaign had Allah's support and Hamas and all those participating that it would succeed in achieving the objective also appeared in statements by senior Hamas figures on the morning of the invasion and massacre on October 7, 2023:
 - ◆ Muhammad Deif's recorded speech at the beginning of the war used Qur'anic verses to show that there was a divine promise of victory and that Allah would mobilize alongside the Hamas fighters. For example, Deif promised that Allah's angels would "fight alongside you, one after another," and thereby Allah would fulfill the verse "... and (as for) the believers it was incumbent upon Us to help (them)" (Surah 30, verse 47); Deif called on those who had memorized the Qur'an and all the believers in the mosques to pray to Allah to bring victory and help achieve the objective of praying at al-Aqsa Mosque, as stated in the verse, "And if they turn away, then know that Allah is your *maula* (patron, lord, protector and supporter), (what) an excellent *maula*, and (what) an Excellent Helper!" (Surah 8, verse 40). Deif quoted the verse, "...And Allah has full power and control over His Affairs, but most of men know not" (Surah 12, verse 21), meaning that no force can stop Allah's plan, even if people do not understand it, that is, victory and achievement of the objective are assured.
 - ◆ The letter sent by the Hamas leaders to Nasrallah on the morning of the invasion and massacre emphasized that divine intervention would bring victory, and ended in the same

⁴⁵ Iran, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Houthis in Yemen and the Shi'ite militias in Iraq.

⁴⁶ See the March 2025 ITIC report, [Hamas' strategy to destroy Israel: from theory into practice, as seen in captured documents](#).

⁴⁷ Al-Haddad was appointed head of the military wing in May 2025 and eliminated in an Israeli attack in Gaza on May 15, 2026. See the May 2026 Amit Institute report, [Elimination of Izz al-Din al-Haddad, Head of Hamas' Military Wing: Reactions and Significance](#).

manner as Deif's speech, "May Allah grant us and you success in raising his banner and exalting his cause, subdue and humiliate his enemy and gladden through us and through you the hearts of believing people. 'Allah has command over his affairs, but most people do not know.' "

► Another example of the perception of divine intervention on the battlefield is in the book *Under the Banner of the Flood – Khabbab's Trench*, published in Gaza in 2025. The author, Muhammad Zaki Hamad, had memorized the Qur'an, was a graduate of the Islamic University in Gaza and had an MA in Qur'anic exegesis. He was an imam, preacher and Qur'an teacher and a deputy company commander in Hamas' military wing in Beit Hanoun. He was eliminated in a targeted Israeli strike on July 12, 2025, and his book was written during the fighting and edited after his death by his brother, Dr. Abd al-Rahman Zaki Hamad.



The cover of Hamad's book

► The book combines a war diary with religious thought. The author did not confine himself to the general statement that Allah helps the fighters, but constructed an entire worldview in which every development in the war was given religious significance. For example:

- ◆ Seemingly inexplicable survival: cases are described in which fighters survived bombings, ambushes or building collapses and presented as manifestations of divine will. For example, an incident is described in which an entire residential block, beneath which were Hamas fighters in tunnels, was obliterated by heavy air force bombardment, and the author was certain that no one had survived. He wrote, "The number of missiles raining down upon us was enormous, to the point that I said to myself: I will wake up tomorrow morning and find a hundred shaheeds from among our men. But the wonder, by Allah, is that no one was hurt, no one was even scratched, praise be to Allah!!!" (p. 45).
- ◆ Operational successes as the fulfillment of a divine promise: when an ambush succeeded or an Israeli force was hit, it was generally not explained solely in terms of tactical factors.

Planning and training are important, but the decisive factor is assistance from Allah to those who deserve it. Under the heading "The Secret of Success," Hamad described battlefield successes and then wrote, "Do not think that [the military power] of which I speak is by itself the secret of success; rather, before it, alongside it and together with it come the fighters' supplications to Allah, their turning to him, their trust in him, their certainty in him, their recognition of their dependence on him and their drawing strength from him" (p. 330).

- ◆ The book expressed a sense of certainty in victory despite the disparity in military forces. In addition to divine assistance, victory also depends on the fighter's spiritual state, and the battle is decided through faith, purity, prayer and study of the Qur'an, and only then by military means.
- ◆ Hamad also compared the Gaza Strip War to the Battle of Badr, Muhammad's first battle, in which, according to the Qur'an, angels assisted the Muslims. He did not claim that angels had actually been seen in the current war, but used the Battle of Badr as a theological metaphor: just as Allah assisted the believers then, so he assists today those who meet the conditions of faith.

Al-Quds (Jerusalem) and al-Aqsa as a Focus for Pan-Islamic Mobilization

- The sanctity of Jerusalem, and particularly al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount, and the need to restore Muslim control over them have always been central themes in the ideology of the Hamas movement. Article 15 of the Hamas Charter stated, "There is no alternative to instilling the Palestine problem in the minds of the Muslim generations [and explaining to them] that it is a religious problem and must be addressed on that basis. For [Palestine] contains holy places of Islam, since al-Aqsa Mosque is located there and is inextricably linked to the Sacred Mosque [in Mecca]."
- On May 10, 2021, Hamas' military wing fired rockets at Jerusalem during Jerusalem Day celebrations in response to the [alleged] "crimes and aggression of the enemy in occupied Jerusalem " and the "harassment of the residents of Sheikh Jarrah and at al-Aqsa Mosque." Hamas claimed it was keeping Muhammad Deif's "promise," issued about a week earlier, that the movement would not stand idly by in the face of "what was happening" in Jerusalem and "Israel would pay." The rocket fire marked the beginning of Operation Guardian of the Walls, what Hamas called the Sword of al-Quds."During the 11 days of fighting there were outbreaks

of violence in arenas other than the Gaza Strip. In Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem there were clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinians and an increase in terrorist attacks; clashes and riots occurred between Arabs and Jews in mixed cities inside Israel; rockets were fired from south Lebanon and Syria; and an armed UAV penetrated the Beit She'an Valley area. After the ceasefire, Hamas spokesmen claimed that the campaign had not been about the Gaza Strip but about Jerusalem, al-Aqsa Mosque and Sheikh Jarrah.⁴⁸

► The success, in Hamas' view, of turning the Sword of al-Quds campaign into a multi-arena campaign encouraged senior Hamas figures to note the importance of defending Jerusalem and al-Aqsa during the preparations for the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre. They regarded it as a slogan which could mobilize not only the Palestinians but the entire Muslim world, in light of what was perceived as an attempt by Israel's right-wing government to increase the Jewish presence at al-Aqsa:

◆ On December 14, 2022, Hamas marked the 35th anniversary of the movement's establishment with a mass rally in Gaza with the slogan "Toward Jerusalem we come in a roaring flood," the name that would later be given to the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre, al-Aqsa Flood. Al-Sinwar began his speech at the rally by quoting two Qur'anic verses, seeking to convey that the liberation of Jerusalem and prayer at al-Aqsa Mosque were a divine promise which, even if its fulfillment had been delayed, was approaching. He quoted a verse dealing with the liberation of the Kaaba in Mecca from idolatry to allude to the liberation of Jerusalem from the Jews, who in his view defiled al-Aqsa like the infidels in Mecca.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ See the May 2021 ITIC report, [Escalation in Israel's South – Rocket Fire from the Gaza Strip Updated to 12:00 noon, May 11, 2021](#) and the May 2021 report, [Escalation from the Gaza Strip – Operation Guardian of the Walls – Summary](#).

⁴⁹ Sagi Polka, *Yahya al-Sinwar's Statements as a Reflection of Hamas' Intentions to Go to War to Liberate Palestine*, in: *With Eyes Closed – Open-Source Information and the 'Iron Swords' War*, Ma'arachot Publishing, 2026, p. 50. Hebrew only.



Right: The rally stage (Safa Agency, December 14, 2022).

Left: Al-Sinwar during his speech (Al Jazeera, December 14, 2022)

◆ A magazine published by Hamas to mark the anniversary of its establishment also bore the title "Toward Jerusalem We Come in a Roaring Flood." A short article entitled "Al-Aqsa is Hamas' compass" stated, "On the 35th anniversary of its establishment, Jerusalem and the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque stand at the top of the Hamas movement's priorities, a central issue guiding its long jihadist journey, particularly at this time when the city is experiencing the ugliest campaign of settlement and Judaization and plans to entrench its temporal and spatial division, complete control over the city and uproot its residents... Jerusalem today is boiling like a cauldron because of the occupation's policies, and it is the driving force behind our people's uprisings and 'resistance' operations throughout the length and breadth of the land of Palestine. It is the compass of our people and their 'resistance;' for its sake campaigns are ignited, martyrs ascend to heaven and the wounds of the heroes spread the fragrance of musk" (magazine marking the 35th anniversary of the establishment of the Hamas movement, December 2022).



Right: Cover of the magazine. Left: The article "Al-Aqsa is Hamas' compass"

- ◆ At a rally held in Gaza on April 15, 2023, to mark World Jerusalem Day,⁵⁰ al-Sinwar quoted three hadiths whose common denominator was a reference to acts of jihad and *ribat* (guarding and defending Islamic territory as a religious duty) for the sake of Jerusalem. He also used the term "the victorious group," meaning that until Judgment Day, within the Muslim nation would remain a group distinguished by bringing victory to the "true religion," that is, Islam. Al-Sinwar identified the chosen group in this tradition with the *ribat* operatives in Jerusalem. Another important place of *ribat* according to al-Sinwar, based on another hadith, was Ashkelon (south of which Hamas operatives were stopped in the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre).⁵¹
- Jerusalem and al-Aqsa occupied a central place in statements by senior Hamas figures on the morning of October 7, 2023, to justify the invasion and massacre and with the objective of mobilizing the active support of Muslims in general and the "resistance axis" in particular:
 - ◆ Al-Deif claimed that the [alleged] "crimes of the occupation have increased and crossed all boundaries, particularly in Jerusalem and at blessed al-Aqsa Mosque," and accused Israel of breaking into the mosque and defiling it, attacking not only the women who guard it (*al-murabita*), but the elderly, children and young people, and preventing access to the mosque. He further claimed that "Jewish groups" had desecrated the mosque and cursed Muhammad. He said, "Today the rage of al-Aqsa erupts, the rage of our people, the rage of our nation, the rage of the free people of the world," and called on all Muslims to rise up and participate in the "liberation of al-Aqsa Mosque."
 - ◆ The letter from Deif, al-Sinwar and Issa to Nasrallah repeated the accusations regarding the [alleged] "crimes of the occupation" at al-Aqsa Mosque and added sexual content, claiming, "We and the world saw how the soldiers of the occupiers dragged Muslim women along the ground without concern that their private parts or the undergarments concealing their private parts might be exposed." They claimed it was "no secret that the campaign under the banner of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa is the campaign of all of us, and under this banner we can rally the entire nation and prevent many from supporting and strengthening

⁵⁰ World Jerusalem Day has been observed since 1979 on the last Friday of the month of Ramadan, by decision of the founder of the Islamic Revolution, Ruhollah Khomeini. Its objective is to express the support of Iran and the Muslim world for the Palestinian cause and the liberation of Jerusalem, vilify Israel, call for its destruction and defy the United States, Western countries and their Arab allies in the region. For further information, see the April 2023 ITIC report, [World Jerusalem Day: again a platform for incitement, threats, and the defamation and demonizing of Israel and the United States.](#)

⁵¹ Polka, *Yahya al-Sinwar's Statements*, pp. 55–56.

the enemy," and recalled that in the coordination talks with Hezbollah and Iran it had been agreed that "we will begin when the justifying reason, namely the enemy's crimes at al-Aqsa, materializes."

► A booklet entitled *Our Narrative*, published by the Hamas magazine *al-Risalah* in January 2024 to present the movement's version of the invasion of Israel and subsequent massacre, included a list of the factors alleged to have caused Palestinian "frustration" with the international community and led them to take the "necessary step and natural response" on October 7, 2023. The situation at al-Aqsa Mosque headed the list. Hamas complained about, "The Israeli Judaization plans at the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque, its attempts to divide it temporally and spatially, as well as the escalation of incursions by Israeli settlers into the holy mosque" (*al-Risalah*, January 21, 2024).

► Even three years after the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre, Hamas continues to use al-Aqsa Mosque to mobilize pan-Islamic support and justify the continuation of the campaign against Israel. For example, its statement marking the 30th anniversary of the Western Wall Tunnel riots in September 1996, stated that "al-Aqsa Mosque is an exclusively Islamic *waqf*, and the occupation has no purported legitimacy over any part of Palestinian land or the holy places." It further claimed that the anniversary of the riots came during the [alleged] "escalation of aggression against Jerusalem, al-Aqsa Mosque and the West Bank" (Hamas Telegram channel, September 25, 2026). In a statement marking the 26th anniversary of the beginning of the second intifada in September 2000, Hamas reiterated that Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque were "at the heart of our ongoing confrontation with the Zionist enemy. Al-Aqsa will remain a Muslim *waqf*, neither divided nor shared, and the 'occupation' will have no sovereignty or legitimacy over any part of it. We will not retreat from defending it until it is liberated" (Hamas Telegram channel, September 28, 2026).

Killing Civilians and Acts of Abuse

► Islamic sources, particularly the hadiths, contain explicit statements against harming defenseless people during war. For example, a woman was found killed in one of Muhammad's wars and he condemned the killing of women and children (Sahih al-Bukhari, *Book of Jihad*, hadith 3015; Sahih Muslim, *Book of Jihad*, hadith 1744);⁵² or "Go forth in the name of Allah... Do not betray, do not break your pledges, do not mutilate bodies and do not kill a child" (Sahih Muslim, *Book of Jihad*, hadith 1731).

⁵² Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim are the collections of hadiths considered the most reliable.

► However, there are historical religious law disputes regarding cases in which civilians directly assist the war effort, participate in combat or are present in combat zones. As early as the mid-1990s, Hamas provided a religious law justification for killing civilians, including women and children, for example in suicide bombing attacks in crowded public places and on public transportation. The explanation was that they too constituted part of the Israeli occupation machine because women serve in the army and children will grow up and serve in the army, and therefore "the circumstances of the fighting require it." The religious authority who permitted this was Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who issued fatwas calling for jihad against Israel and the Jews and permitting suicide bombing attacks on the grounds that Israel was a militaristic society.

► The stance received confirmation by religious law in a 2021 book by Hamas' religious committee, whose role is to advise Hamas on religious matters. The book, which was retrieved during IDF operations in the Gaza Strip, was distributed to Hamas terrorists and contained articles, religious rulings and instructions for terrorists on how to act and how to treat the enemy and hostages and when they are permitted to kill. It stated, "Zionist society is an armed society that came to seize the land of Palestine by force, defile the holy places and shed blood. Most of its men and women are conscripted for compulsory military service. There is no distinction whatsoever between men and women, old and young. Therefore, it is permissible to target them in killing operations and to take all of them captive as prisoners of war. All this, if they can be abducted while still alive" (X account of Avichay Adraee, the IDF's Arabic spokesperson, February 4–5, 2024; Ynet, February 5, 2024).



Right: Cover of the Hamas religious committee book. Left: The passage [in yellow] stating that there is no distinction whatsoever between men and women, young and old (Avichay Adraee's X account, February 5, 2024)

► Yahya al-Sinwar did not distinguish between Israelis in uniform and civilians. In the novel *The Thorns and the Carnation*, which he wrote while serving life sentences in an Israeli prison (before his release in the 2011 Gilad Shalit exchange deal), al-Sinwar emphasized the need to brutally kill as many Israelis as possible, without distinguishing between soldiers and civilians, glorifying suicide bombing attacks and abductions for bargaining purposes.⁵³ In a speech delivered at a World Jerusalem Day ceremony in Gaza on April 30, 2022, al-Sinwar, who was head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, addressed the Palestinians, particularly Israeli Arabs (the Arabs of the Negev, the Triangle,⁵⁴ the Galilee, Haifa, Jaffa, Acre and Lod), and urged them to prepare a rifle or an axe, a butcher's knife or any knife to embark on a religious war against the Jews. A few days later, four Israelis were hacked to death in an axe murder in the community of Elad.⁵⁵

► Al-Sinwar's brutality was reflected in a document he wrote on August 24, 2022, which contained his precise instructions for the beginning of the campaign against Israel, retrieved during the Gaza Strip war. **He instructed Hamas terrorists to document in real time the massacre and slaughter of civilians, trampling on the bodies of soldiers, burning residential neighborhoods and blowing up tanks. Documentation of the atrocities was intended not only for internal use but was planned in advance as a psychological tool designed to shock and terrorize the Israeli public and send a message of strength to terrorist operatives in the region.**⁵⁶

⁵³ Ofir Winter and Niv Shaiovitz, "'The Struggle Has Faces Different from Those We Knew': A Retrospective Reading of the Book by the Architect of the October 7 Massacre," Strategic Assessment – Institute for National Security Studies, July 2025; Jacky Hugi, *Five Knocks at the Door – How We Reached October 7*, Kinneret Zmora, 2026, pp. 127–157.

⁵⁴ The Triangle is a cluster of Arab towns and villages located along the Green Line border between Israel and the West Bank. It sits in the eastern Sharon plain and the Samarian foothills and about 250,000 Arab citizens of Israel live there, a large portion of the country's Arab population.

⁵⁵ See the May 2022 ITIC report, [Terrorist attack in Elad. Three Israeli civilians killed and four wounded. Hamas again praises and encourages](#)

⁵⁶ See the October 2025 ITIC report, [Instructions Given by Yahya al-Sinwar for the October 7, 2023 Attack and Massacre.](#)

It must be emphasized to those responsible for the units that they have to ensure that these things are carried out deliberately. That is, to document and broadcast the images as quickly as possible. Trampling on soldiers' heads, shooting at point-blank range, slaughtering people with a knife, blowing up tanks, prisoners kneeling with their hands on their heads and so forth. Events that will produce images of horror must be planned in advance. Several burning car bombs that exploded inside a post or a building and caused horrific destruction. Heart-rending scenes. An enormous fire. Five or ten such images will make their hearts fail. Allah came upon them from where they did not expect and cast terror into their hearts. Preparations should be made for two or three operations whose purpose is to burn entire neighborhoods, a kibbutz and so forth. Fuel or diesel will be sprayed over the site from a special tanker. The site will be set on fire and the images broadcast.

در الجاهل لدى العدو ، ويجب أن يتم التأليف على مسؤولي الوحدات على قصد إظهار
هذه الأفعال ، وتصويرها ، دبت الصور في أسرى وقت .. الأوامر على رأس الجنود
والطوائف الخاصة عليهم من نفقة صفر ، ذبح بعض بالكين ، تغيير البوابات ، عدد من
الأسرى وهم يمشون على ركبتهم وتصنعون أسد بهم على رؤوسهم ، دمايا في ذلال ..
[١٣] أخذت صور مرقبة : يجب أن يكون من الكثرة من الأوصاف بعض
الأمثلة التي تخرج منها صور مرقبة .. عدد من السيارات المغطاة بالمظلمة التي تنبهر
في موقع أو مبنى ، نفقات دماراً مرقبة ، صدمات خالقة للقلوب ، دماراً حاصلاً
[١٤]
أية خبطة أو عثرة صور من هذا النوع لم تنبش لأهلهم قلباً بسبب ضلوعه
(نأنا هم الله من حيث لم يحتسبوا وقذف في قلوبهم الرعب) ، ويجب التنبه
للعنق أو ملات أسلحة عده في كامل أركبوت أو دمايا ، حيث يتم ريش
المكانة بالبنزين أو البترول من صهرج بخار خاص ، وحرق المكانة دبت الصور

From the document in al-Sinwar's handwriting, August 24, 2022

► Hamas ideology, which does not distinguish between people in uniform and civilians, was combined with the movement's deeply rooted antisemitism, which does not regard Jews as ordinary human beings and therefore permits them to be treated brutally. The *Guide for Raising Morale*, found in the possession of Hamas terrorists who invaded Israeli territory, had exhortations of invasion and massacres of Jews, such as, "Blessed are those arms that defended the people and the homeland and protected the land, honor and holy places from

the impurity of the Jews... We are people who drink blood, and we have learned that there is no blood better than Jewish blood, for this [to drink Jewish blood] we have come." That echoed the words of the Muslim commander Khalid ibn al-Walid to the commander of the Byzantine army at the Battle of Yarmouk (636 C.E.), "What you have mentioned will not drive us from our land, for we are people who love blood, and we have learned that there is no blood better than the blood of the Byzantines, and therefore we have come."

► Despite the perception prevalent within Hamas, the book *Fatawa al-Mujahidin*, which was also part of the religious preparation kit in the possession of Hamas terrorists who invaded Israeli territory, included a hadith emphasizing that harming children, women and the elderly was absolutely forbidden, as were damaging enemy property, such as uprooting trees, and taking plunder. It also explicitly stated that mutilating enemy bodies, committing sexual acts with enemy women and engaging in homosexual intercourse with enemy men were absolutely forbidden, even if the enemy committed such acts against Muslims. That is because such acts are explicitly prohibited by Islam and because they would cause revulsion toward Islam.⁵⁷

► Speaking on the morning of October 7, 2023, Muhammad Deif instructed the Hamas terrorists, "And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out" (Surah 2, verse 191). However, he immediately added, "Do not kill the elderly and children," although he did not refer to women, as stated in the hadith. According to Polka, he wanted to represent Hamas to Western audiences as acting in accordance with recognized laws of war, but in practice his call in the following sentence, "Remove this impurity from your land and your holy places," was intended to make clear to the Hamas terrorist operatives that all Jews were to be removed, without distinction.⁵⁸

► **In practice, Hamas' October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre fully implemented Yahya al-Sinwar's instructions, both in terms of the terrorists' brutality and real-time documentation. Reports published in Israel and around the world provided survivors' testimonies about the atrocities carried out during the invasion and massacre, including brutal sexual assaults and rape.**⁵⁹

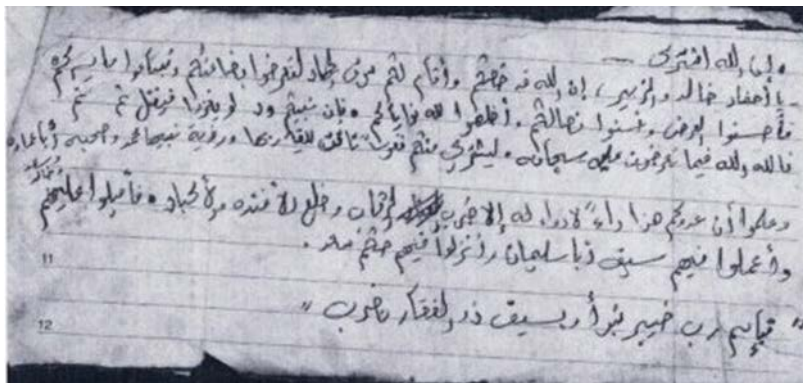
⁵⁷ Polka, *Mental Preparation and Shaping the Spirit*, pp. 8–9.

⁵⁸ "Thinking Islamically, Analyzing Militarily: Reading Hamas" with Dr. Sagi Polka, Modcast, Season 8, Episode 7, Harkabi Institute for Intelligence Research, October 2, 2026.

⁵⁹ For further information, see *Silent Cry*, a report by the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel from February 2024, <https://tinyurl.com/3e4aa8dp>; a report by the Dinah Project from July 2025, <https://thedinahproject.org/he>; a report by an all-party committee of the British Parliament and House

► Documents found in the possession of Hamas terrorists who participated in the invasion of Israeli territory on October 7, 2023 included instructions to brutalize Jews, soldiers and civilians alike, while justifying such actions as carried out in the name of Islam. For example:

► A note was discovered in the pocket of one of the commanders of Hamas' military wing who was killed in the fighting on the Israeli side of the Gaza Strip border, in which he urged his fighters to kill as many Jews as possible, behead them and tear out their hearts and livers, under the cloak of Islam. The note stated, "Know that your enemy is a disease for which there is no cure except beheading and tearing out hearts and livers. Attack them and do to them as the sword of Abu Sulayman⁶⁰ did to them; judge them according to the judgment of Sa'd. In the name of the Allah of Khaybar,⁶¹ we begin [the invasion and massacre], and with the sword of Dhu al-Fiqar⁶² we shall strike."⁶³



The note in which a commander in the al-Qassam Brigades called on his subordinates to murder Jews

◆ A Hamas battle order for the massacre at Kibbutz Alumim included instructions to murder as many people as possible, take hostages and establish positions inside the buildings. Everyone found in the buildings was to be systematically murdered, and if

of Lords headed by Lord Roberts of Belgravia from January 2025, <https://tinyurl.com/yc4e7bv>; a report by the Civil Commission on Sexual Terrorism on October 7 and in Captivity from May 2026, <https://www.civilc.org/home-heb/silenced-no-more-heb>.

⁶⁰ Abu Sulayman was the nickname of Khalid ibn al-Walid, a Muslim commander and one of the companions of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. He is considered one of the greatest commanders in Islamic history and is said never to have been defeated.

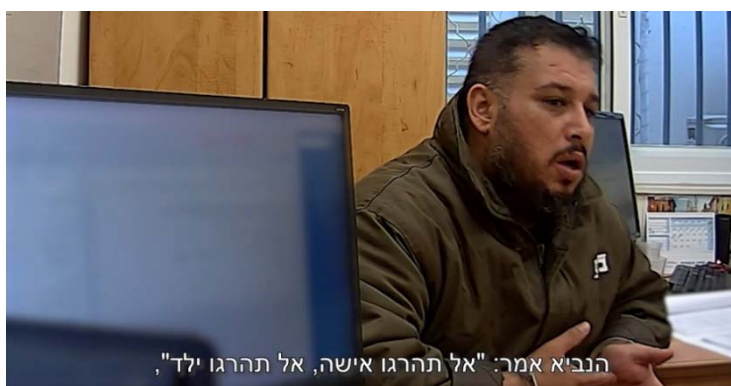
⁶¹ Khaybar, a place where a battle took place in 628 C.E. during which the Muslim army led by the Prophet Muhammad killed many Jews. It became a symbol for radical Islamic elements of the massacre of Jews.

⁶² Dhu al-Fiqar, the sword which, according to Muslim tradition, Muhammad gave to Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth caliph in Islam and Muhammad's son-in-law. The sword became a symbol of Islam's victory in battle. According to Muslim tradition, Muhammad appointed him to command the Muslim army at the Battle of Khaybar, and he used this sword in the battle.

⁶³ See the January 2024 ITIC report, [Documents brought back from the Gaza Strip indicate that Hamas premeditated its atrocities against Israelis and to kidnap and maltreat them.](#)

control could not be taken of the buildings, they were to be burned with their occupants inside. It clarified that the stated objective was "kill, kill, kill," and that civilians were to be used as human shields until reinforcements of additional Hamas fighters arrived (Israeli TV channel Kan, October 14, 2025).

► In filmed interrogations of Hamas terrorists detained in Israel after participating in the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre, they described how they participated in or witnessed the murders of unarmed civilians, including children and adults, in communities near the Gaza Strip border, generally by shooting or burning houses. They admitted that the orders were to kill civilians and abduct as many people as possible. When the terrorists were asked whether their actions were in accordance with Islam, they acknowledged that the orders they had received were contrary to the principles of the religion and that Muhammad had prohibited the killing of children and women. The terrorists also admitted that the brutality they displayed was no different from that of ISIS terrorists (Israel Police Facebook page, October 23, 2023). Security experts noted that Hamas' methods during the invasion and massacre, particularly the beheadings, showed similarities to atrocities committed by ISIS and al-Qaeda (CNN, January 17, 2024).



**Hamas terrorist operatives during interrogations in Israel
(Israel Police Facebook page, October 23, 2023)**

► However, there were exceptional cases in which Hamas terrorists obeyed the hadith prohibition against harming children, the elderly and women. One such case occurred at Kibbutz Kfar Aza, where terrorists who remained in the home of a kibbutz member for several hours did not harm her or her children, after telling her that they were Muslims and therefore would not harm them.⁶⁴ In another case, terrorists who murdered a couple, a man and a

⁶⁴ Testimony of Rotem Holin, part of the Edut 710 project, July 18, 2024.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UW422LdmJj0>

woman, in a house at Kibbutz Re'im saw children hiding under a blanket in the safe room. They wrote in lipstick on the wall, "Al-Qassam does not kill children," and left the house without harming the children.⁶⁵

Treatment of the Hostages

► The Qur'an contains few references to captives. Two verses are, "So, when you meet (in fight *Jihad* in Allah's Cause), those who disbelieve smite at their necks till when you have killed and wounded many of them, then bind a bond firmly (on them, i.e. take them as captives)..." (Surah 47, verse 4); "...capture them and besiege them, and prepare for them each and every ambush. But if they repent and perform *As-Salat* (*Iqamat-as-Salat*), and give *Zakat*, then leave their way free. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (Surah 9, verse 5). Some interpret the phrase "seize them" as permission to kill them, while others maintain that they should be kept alive in accordance with what is stated in Surah 47.⁶⁶

► The hadiths address the issue more extensively, ranging from moderate hadiths such as "Free the captive, feed the hungry and visit the sick" (Sahih al-Bukhari, 3046), to permission to take captives as slaves (a common practice at the time) and even to have sexual relations with female captives who become slaves. The religious law discussion also refers to the Qur'anic verse, Also (forbidden are) women already married, except those (captives and slaves) whom your right hands possess..." (Surah 4, verse 24). The classical interpretation of the verse is that a female captive may become a slave and, after a waiting period to ensure that she is not pregnant, her master is permitted to have sexual relations with her.

► The book *Fatawa al-Mujahidin* did not address the capture of Israeli civilian women, but it did address taking female soldiers captive and the question of the ruling regarding unintended physical contact while seizing and tying them up to prevent them from resisting or escaping. According to the book, taking female soldiers captive, like taking male soldiers captive, is "a great act of jihad," since they may be used to secure the release of male and female prisoners held in Israeli prisons. There is nothing wrong with a jihad fighter touching a female soldier provided that the contact is necessary. However, the al-Qassam Brigades operative is warned to exercise caution lest the female soldier deceive and tempt the jihad fighter, since they are "cunning, and seductive."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ IDF History Department investigation of the battle at Kibbutz Re'im. In Anat Stern, "The Battle of the Kibbutz Re'im Rapid Response Team on October 7, 2023," *Yesodot*, Issue 7 (2025), p. 179.

⁶⁶ Uri Rubin, *The Qur'an*, Tel Aviv University Press, 2005.p. 153.

⁶⁷ *Fatawa al-Mujahidin*, p. 20.

► The book further stated that the female soldier may arouse the jihad operative in order to escape from him and flee... and may corrupt his religion. The same response also noted that a jihad fighter may sometimes need to remove all or some of the clothing of male and female soldiers because the enemy conceals tracking devices in their clothing [*sic*]. Therefore, in cases of urgent necessity, permission is granted to remove the clothing of male or female captives.⁶⁸

► Testimonies by male and female hostages who returned from captivity in the Gaza Strip described repeated instances of sexual violence, sexual harassment and humiliation and threats of rape or forced marriage, directed primarily at abducted women and girls, but also at male hostages who were forced to remain naked or watch sexual assaults on other hostages. Female hostages were also forced to perform domestic work under humiliating conditions.⁶⁹ In a video published in May 2024 showing the abduction of female surveillance soldiers from the Nahal Oz base on October 7, 2023, one of the terrorists could be heard referring to the women as *sabaya*, an Islamic term meaning women who are spoils of war and can be enslaved (Israeli media, May 22, 2024; *The Atlantic*, May 25, 2024).

Rational Versus Religious Considerations in Hamas' Decision to Launch the October 7, 2023 Attack

► An examination of retrieved documents and statements by senior Hamas figures, particularly after the Sword of al-Quds campaign (Operation Guardian of the Walls) in May 2021, shows that the movement's leadership, headed by Yahya al-Sinwar, based its decision to launch a "decisive" campaign against Israel on "rational" considerations relating to the Palestinian issue in general and the situation in the Gaza Strip in particular. Among the principal considerations were the desire to sabotage the emerging normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, which Hamas believed would marginalize the Palestinian issue; the desire to secure the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel after all indirect contacts had failed to achieve progress; the desire to lift the so-called "siege" of the Gaza Strip; and the desire to exploit the internal disputes in Israel.

► **However, because Hamas is by definition and nature a religious movement, Islam was an integral part of advancing the campaign which would realize the vision of the "destruction of Israel" in the movement's Charter.** The terms from the Qur'an and hadiths

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ See the report of the Civil Commission on Sexual Terrorism on October 7 and in *Captivity*, May 2026, pp. 119–194; "Testimonies from Captivity," an Israeli TV News N12 project.

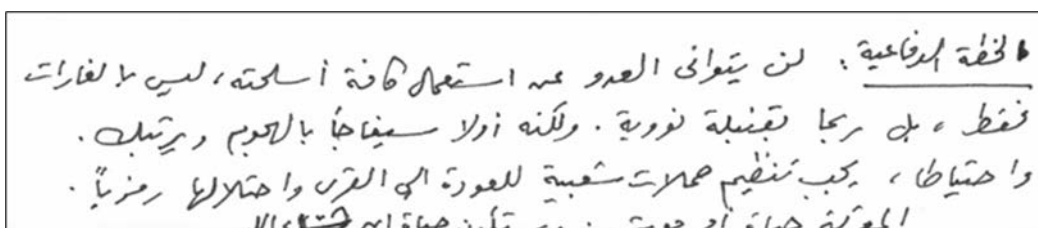
used by senior Hamas figures, foremost among them the "promise of the second time," demonstrated the extent of their belief that the campaign would have Allah's support and achieve its objectives. The repeated emphasis on the need to defend Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque, as reflected in speeches by al-Sinwar and other Hamas leaders and in their correspondence with the Hezbollah and Iranian leaderships, also lent the campaign a religious character. In addition, the Hamas leadership's decision to equip *nukhba* fighters who led the raid into Israeli territory with a religious preparation kit that included a Qur'an and booklets about jihad showed the importance of giving religious legitimacy to the decision to launch an operation whose prospects of success, from a rational perspective, were not high.

► Examples of the convergence of rational and religious considerations during the preparations for the invasion and massacre:

- ◆ A handwritten document composed by al-Sinwar on August 24, 2022, presented the plan for the invasion of Israeli territory. He said that Israel would respond forcefully and did not even rule out the possibility that nuclear weapons would be used. Nevertheless, he did not relinquish his messianic vision, calling it a life-or-death campaign, assuring his followers that Allah would grant them life, even if the price was the destruction of the Gaza Strip.⁷⁰

The defense plan: The enemy will not hesitate to use the means and weapons at its disposal. Not only through attacks but also by other means. It may even use a nuclear bomb. But first of all, it will be surprised by the attack and descend into chaos. As a precaution, a popular operation should be organized to return to the villages [abandoned in 1948-9] and symbolically reoccupy them.

This campaign is a life-or-death campaign, and there will be life with Allah's help.



ملفة الدفاعية: لن يتوانى العدو عن استعمال كافة أسلحته، ليس بالفرات فقط، بل ربما بقنبلة نووية. ولكنه أولاً سيناج بالهجوم، ويتسبب احتياطاً، يجب تنظيم عمليات شعبية للعودة إلى القرى والاحتلال رمزياً. المعركة حياة أو موت. ستكون حياة أم موت.

From the document in al-Sinwar's handwriting, August 24, 2022

- ◆ A secret document from the military intelligence of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades sent to al-Sinwar on July 25, 2023 examined the impact of the protests within the ranks of

⁷⁰ See the July 2026 Amit Institute report, [Yahya Sinwar's Plan for the Invasion of Israel, as Detailed in a Hamas Document](#).

the 'enemy army' on operational readiness and the security situation on the fronts. Based on reports published in Israel, the document described the protests within the military against the judicial legislation and analyzed their possible implications for the IDF's operational readiness. The principal assessment of the authors was that readiness had not yet been affected by the campaign and that was not expected to change in the foreseeable future. They warned that "the enemy will want to focus on dealing with the internal crisis and, at the same time, will want to address the existing threats in the arenas in a manner that will not lead it to a broad confrontation. In addition, the enemy will be more sensitive to any initiated action by the resistance, which will push it to strike back forcefully." In light of this, one of the recommendations was "to avoid entering into a military confrontation based on the development of the enemy's internal crisis. The crisis should be allowed to deepen further, since unless it becomes acute, the benefit of the internal crisis in any military intervention will not be substantial." Nevertheless, al-Sinwar continued to advance the invasion and massacre plan.⁷¹

◆ The talks and correspondence conducted by the Hamas leadership with Hezbollah and Iran during the two years preceding the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre in an attempt to enlist them in the decisive campaign used religious motifs, especially the need to defend al-Aqsa Mosque. However, Hamas' rational assessment was that there was little chance Hezbollah, and even less Iran, would actively join, yet the decision was nevertheless made to launch the invasion and massacre alone. The letter sent by Deif, al-Sinwar and Issa to Nasrallah on the morning of October 7, 2023, which extensively quoted Qur'anic verses and made reference to al-Aqsa Mosque, showed how central religious considerations were to their decision to carry out the invasion and massacre and how much they hoped that the religious appeal would bring about a change in Hezbollah's position regarding its involvement in the new confrontation.⁷²

► The combination of religious elements and rational considerations frequently poses a challenge to Western intelligence services, which have difficulty dealing with the worldview of extremist organizations. That is apparently results from a shortage of experts in the field (language and culture, radical religious thought). Intelligence analysts are also sometimes

⁷¹ See the June 2025 ITIC report, [The Israeli protests against the judicial legislation as reflected in Hamas documents](#).

⁷² See the July terrorist Amit Institute report, [Hamas' Perception of Hezbollah's Role in the Multi-Arena Hostilities as Reflected in Documents from the Gaza Strip](#).

caught in a mirror imaging trap, an attempt to analyze the behavior of the opposing side using assumptions, tools and considerations characteristic of themselves. Therefore, the attempt to enter a mindset whose pattern of thought is fundamentally different and is sometimes perceived as irrational, is challenging and, in many cases, doomed to failure.