

■ Concepts 2.10.06 | Hamas Challenge

Hammas Covenant

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Definition

The term [Hammas](#) Covenant (8/88) refers to the founding document, or charter, of the Hammas Movement. It reflects an Islamic nationalist perception, which negates the right of the state of Israel to exist and strives to establish an Islamic state on all of Historic Palestine.¹

Background

General Structure

The Hammas Covenant was written during the first Intifada and challenged the dominance of the PLO within the Palestinian national struggle. The covenant presents an alternative Islamic agenda to the "secular" Palestinian National Charter of the PLO. In contrast to the Charter (article 33), the Hammas covenant provides no mechanism for amending its content.² The covenant contains anti-Semite expressions, including a reference to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion as a factual historical document, and a comparison between Zionism and Nazism (article 32).

Content of the Covenant

Five ideological principles can be identified within the covenant:

- Universal Islamic principle – This principle is manifested in article 2, which defines the movement as a "universal organization", which is "one of the wings of the Muslim Brotherhood", and article 7, which deals with the "universality" of Hammas. The Pan-Islamic nature of the movement is reflected also in numerous quotes from the Qura'an.
- National-Territorial principle – The covenant expresses a nationalist approach with a strong territorial link to the land of Palestine. Article 11 explicitly maintains that the land of Palestine is "an Islamic Waqf (Holy land) consecrated for future Muslim generations until Judgment Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered [...] or given up. Neither a single Arab country, nor all Arab countries [...] be they Palestinian or Arab, possess the right to do that".
- Political principle – attitude towards the PLO and the secular national movement – The covenant (article 27) is ambivalent towards the PLO. On the one hand, the PLO is defined as "the closest to the heart of the Islamic Resistance Movement" and the day it "adopts Islam as its way of life, we will become its soldiers, and fuel for its fire that will burn the enemies". On the other hand, the covenant stresses that "we are unable to exchange the present or future Islamic Palestine with the secular idea".
- Social principle – The second chapter of the covenant states the objectives of the movement. Within that chapter, article 10 refers to the social vision of the movement, which strives to "back the oppressed and support the wronged with all its might". The covenant also presents its vision for "the education of the generations" (article 16) and the role of the Muslim woman in Palestinian society (article 17).
- Armed struggle principle – similarly to the Palestinian national charter, which presents the armed struggle as the strategy of the PLO, Hammas declares Jihad as its strategic path. Article 13 of the covenant outright rejects any peace initiatives and maintains that "there is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad". Moreover, while

the armed struggle, according to the PLO, is a national struggle which encompasses the entire Palestinian society, the Hamas covenant refers to Jihad as a personal religious obligation (article 14).

¹ This term relies on the translation of the covenant as it appears at [the Yale Law Avalon Project](#).

² This can serve Hamas if it is required to implement policies that contradict the principles of the covenant. See interview with Mahmoud Al-Zahar, Ha'aretz, 10/26/05.

[More Sources](#)

- For the [Hamas Covenant](#).
- For the [Palestinian National Charter](#).
- Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Morton Klein, *Focus on Hamas: The PLO's Friend or Foe?*, Middle East Quarterly, June, 1996.
- Muslih, Muhammad, *The Foreign Policy of Hamas*.
- ICG report on the challenge of dealing with Hamas.
- For further elaboration on PLO-PA-Hamas relations and the battle over Palestinian representation, see [ICG report on the issue of Palestinian refugees](#) (pp. 26-27), February 2004.