

Hamas Policy Document: Palestinian State In 1967 Borders Is 'National, Agreed-upon and Joint Formula' By Hamas, PLO – Yet Armed Struggle Will Continue, And Palestine Extends From River To Sea

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On May 1, 2017, Hamas published a policy document approved by all the movement leaders. The leaders clarified that the document was not replacing the Hamas Charter^[1] but was aimed at adapting the movement's position to the current time. The document was presented by Hamas spokesmen as a development that did not compromise their principles.^[2]

In his announcement upon the release of the document, Hamas leader Khaled Mash'al said that it had been decided four years ago to draw up a political plan adapted to the policy that Hamas was actually implementing, and that this plan would be the movement's source of authority. Two years after that, he said, an in-depth, detailed discussion began on the details of this plan; he added that ultimately, after consultation with international legal experts, a document in the name of all Hamas leaders had been drawn up. Mash'al clarified that in this document, Hamas was presenting "development" and "renewal" in its political function, just as it was doing in the domain of its resistance and fighting, without compromising on the movement's demands and on the rights of the Palestinian people.^[3]

The policy document is aimed at casting the movement in a pragmatic, democratic, tolerant, and non-extremist light, in order to burnish its image in the world and to present a political position that it shares with Fatah and the PLO. However, it is full of internal contradictions that are unresolvable. One of these is the contradiction between the political view that it sets out regarding a state in the 1967 borders as a "national, agreed-upon, and joint formula" by Hamas, Fatah and the PLO and other statements in the document setting out Hamas's unwillingness to relinquish any part of Palestine, its demand for the refugees' return to their homes, and its non-recognition of Israel. The document also states that Hamas insists on continuing the armed struggle and jihad^[4]



Image: Khaberni.com

What Has Changed?

No Mention Of Hamas-Muslim Brotherhood Connection

The new policy document, which is aimed both at Western ears and the Arab countries, includes no mention at all of any connection between Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB); it defines Hamas as a national Islamic movement and not, as in the Hamas charter, as the Palestinian branch of the MB. At the press conference at which he released the document, Mash'al clarified that Hamas belonged to the school of the MB, but that it was an independent Palestinian organization not subordinate to any other organization.^[5] The document also does not highlight the Islamist aspect of the movement – for example, there is no mention of the land of Palestine as the land of the Waqf, i.e. Islamic endowment, as in the charter.^[6]

Emphasis On Hamas As Fighting The Occupation And Zionism – Not The Jews

The document attempts to distance Hamas from the antisemitism that permeates its charter. It stresses that Hamas is not fighting the Jews for their Jewishness, but is fighting the occupation and the Zionist enterprise. It states: "Hamas opposes any oppression of anyone or any damage to their rights due to nationality, religion, or ethnic group. Antisemitism and oppression of the Jews are phenomena connected to European history, not to Arab and Muslim history. The Zionist movement is a dangerous example of the settlement occupation that has passed from the world, and it must pass also in Palestine."^[7]

Negotiations With Israel – Not Right Now

In contrast to and absolute negation of all the statements about negotiations with Israel in the Hamas charter, Mash'al explained that at this time there is no place for Hamas-Israel negotiations: "Negotiations are a tool, and we will treat it as something that [we] can change [our position about]. Hamas's [current] policy opposes negotiating with Israel because the timing right now does not permit it. Today, Israel is using negotiations as a trick."^[8] However, in principle, he said, there is

4othing to prevent such negotiations, since "the Prophet [Muhammad] and Salah Al-Din spoke with their enemies." [9]

What Remains The Same?

Continuing The Jihad And The Armed Struggle To Liberate Palestine

The document states: "The resistance and the jihad to liberate Palestine will remain a legitimate right, duty, and honor for all members of our people and our [Muslim] nation... The resistance to the occupation by all methods and means is a legitimate right that is assured by the divine laws and by the international laws and rules – and first and foremost is the armed struggle that is considered a strategic option to defend the principles and to restore the rights of the Palestinian people... Hamas opposes any harm to the resistance and its weapons and stresses the people's right to develop means of resistance." [10]

Actualizing The Refugees' Return To Their Homes

"The right of the Palestinian refugees and uprooted individuals to return to the homes from which they were removed or to which they were prohibited from returning in the territories occupied in 1948 or in 1967 – that is, all of Palestine – is a natural individual and collective right... Hamas opposes any plans and attempts to eliminate the refugees' cause, including attempts to resettle them outside of Palestine and plans for an alternative homeland. Hamas stresses that compensating the Palestinian refugees and uprooted individuals for the damage caused them as a result of their expulsion and the occupation of their land is a right that is connected to their right to return, and [this compensation] will be implemented after the right of return is actualized, and neither abnegates the refugees' right of return nor takes anything away from it." [11]

Non-Recognition Of Israel; "Israel's Existence Is Null And Void From Its Establishment"

The Hamas document stresses that the movement's stance vis-à-vis a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders "does not necessarily mean recognition of the Zionist entity... Israel's existence is null and void from its establishment, and it contravenes the rights of the Palestinian people... There is no recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist entity." [12]

Palestine "From The River To The Sea"

The document states: "There is no compromise on any part of Palestine under any conditions, any circumstances, or any pressure, no matter how long the occupation continues. Hamas rejects any alternative to the complete liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea... Palestine in its borders from the Jordan River in the east to the Mediterranean in the West, and from Ras Naqura [Rosh HaNikra] in the north to Umm Rashrash [Eilat] in the south is a complete unit and the land and homeland of the Palestinian people. Expelling the Palestinian people and exiling it from its land and the establishment of the Zionist entity on it do not abnegate the right of the Palestinian people to all of its land..." [13]

The Palestinian State

The section of the document that got the most media attention, and that ostensibly attests to the development of Hamas's pragmatism, is the one dealing with a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders. It is written in such a way that it is not possible to understand clearly whether Hamas accepts the establishment of a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders, noting only that it "regards [this]... as a national, agreed-upon, and joint formula" by Hamas, Fatah and the PLO.

As noted, it states: "There is no compromise on any part of Palestine under any conditions, any circumstances, or any pressure, no matter how long the occupation continues. Hamas rejects any alternative to the complete liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea." It continues: "At the same time – and this does not mean recognition of the Zionist entity or compromise on any of the Palestinians' rights – Hamas regards the establishment of a fully sovereign independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital in the June 4, 1967 lines, and the return of the refugees and the uprooted individuals to the homes from which they were expelled, as a national, agreed-upon, and joint formula."^[14]

Additionally, it should be noted that the position on the establishment of a state in the 1967 borders as an "agreed-upon joint formula" is not a new Hamas position. Mash'al had declared it several times in the past, and the late Hamas leader Ahmad Yassin spoke about it as well. This position has also appeared in the Hamas-Fatah reconciliation agreements. The only thing that is new about it is that this time it is in an official document expressing the position of the entire Hamas leadership that was approved by the movement's highest body, the Shura Council.

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^[1] For a translation of the Hamas Charter, see MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 1092, [The Covenant Of The Islamic Resistance Movement – Hamas](#), February 14, 2006.

^[2] Palinfo.com, May 1, 2017.

^[3] Youtube.com/watch?v=smbIS-YIT1g, posted May 1, 2017.

^[4] Palinfo.com, May 1, 2017.

^[5] *Al-Yawm Al-Sabi'* (Egypt), May 1, 2017.

^[6] Palinfo.com, May 1, 2017.

^[7] Palinfo.com, May 1, 2017.

^[8] *Al-Yawm Al-Sabi'* (Egypt), May 1, 2017.

[9] [Youtube.com/watch?v=smbIS-YIT1g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smbIS-YIT1g), posted May 1, 2017.

[10] [Palinfo.com](https://palinfo.com), May 1, 2017.

[11] [Palinfo.com](https://palinfo.com), May 1, 2017.

[12] [Palinfo.com](https://palinfo.com), May 1, 2017.

[13] [Palinfo.com](https://palinfo.com), May 1, 2017.

[14] [Palinfo.com](https://palinfo.com), May 1, 2017.