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Special Dispatch No. 9417

Hamis And Islamic Jihad Summer Camps In Gaza: A Framework For Jihadi Indoctrination, Military Training



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For over ten years, summer camps for children and teens held in Hamas-controlled Gaza have served as a framework for inculcating an extremist ideology that glorifies jihad, terror and armed struggle against Israel with the aim of "liberating Palestine from the river to the sea." The camps, most of which are operated by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), also provide military training, such as practice with knives and firearms (in some cases with live ammunition); hand-to-hand combat; marching and foot drills, obstacle courses and tunnel combat. Campers also stage plays and enact scenes of fighting and capturing Israeli soldiers or firing rockets into Israel. Many activities are themed around the liberation of Palestine, Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa, or deal with commemorating and glorifying terrorists.

Recruitment and registration for the camps is carried out via the Hamas and PIJ websites and social media, and at booths manned by Hamas and PIJ operatives at mosques and other public spaces across the Gaza Strip. Hamas and PIJ officials attend the camps' opening and graduation ceremonies and deliver speeches there.

Over the years, MEMRI has published reports and videos documenting the summer camps and their activities, as well as statements by Hamas and PIJ officials describing their character and goals.[\[1\]](#)



Teens training at Hamas and PIJ camps (Sources: Tlae3Camps.ps, June 27, 2021; paltoday.ps, June 26, 2021)

This year's summer camps started this week. The following are details about them and photos from their first days of activity.

Military Training At Summer Camps Operated By Hamas' Military Wing

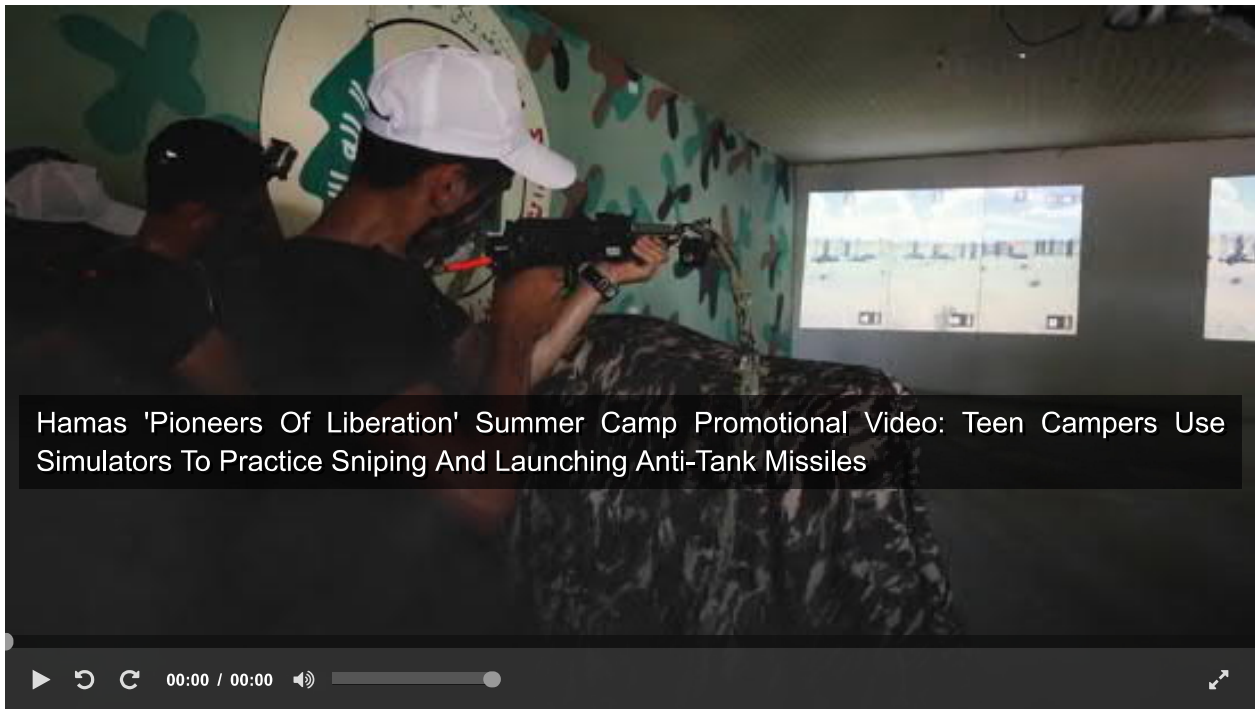
Registration for Hamas' "Pioneers of Liberation" camps, operated by the organization's military wing, the 'Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, was held on June 14-18, 2021. This year's camps have been dubbed "Sword of Jerusalem," which is Hamas' name for its latest round of fighting with Israel, in May 2021. There are camps for four age groups: junior high school students, high school students, university students and older adults. According to the Telegram channel of the 'Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, "the goal of the camps is to fan the flames of jihad among the generation of liberation, instill Islamic values and prepare the long-awaited army for the liberation of Palestine."[\[2\]](#)



Registration booth for the "Pioneers of Liberation – Sword of Jerusalem camps" (Source: T.me/Tlae3Camps, June 17, 2021)

The spokesperson for the Hamas summer camps, "Abu Bilal," announced the opening of the camps at a June 26, 2021 press conference, and stressed that the Al-Qassam Brigades have held the "Pioneers of Liberation" camps for about a decade "out of belief in the role of the young people and a sense of responsibility for the [younger] generation." He added that "the young people have [always] been the ones to carry out armed operations, and were the fuel of the intifadas and uprisings, including the Al-Quds Intifada [of 2015-2016],^[3] the Marches of Return [on the Gaza border in 2018-2019]^[4] and the recent uprising at Al-Aqsa [in May 2021]." Abu Bilal stated further that the Al-Qassam's summer camps have several goals, including "instilling Islamic values and national values in the young people, as well as a spirit of faith in Allah, courage, hope, honor, a sense of belonging to this sacred land [Palestine] and readiness for the stage of liberation and return." The Al-Qassam Brigades, he elaborated, want to provide Palestinians of all ages with "a basic [level of] military training and skill with light weapons, just like all the peoples that have suffered occupation."^[5]

In a promotional video posted June 25 by the Al-Qassam Brigades on Telegram, Hamas's "Pioneers of Liberation" campers, wearing Hamas military fatigues, practice shooting anti-tank missiles at an Israeli bus and tank, infiltrating an IDF outpost, and liberating the Al-Aqsa Mosque, among other simulated military training activities. To view the video, click on the player below:



After the camps started, the Al-Qassam website posted many photos from their first day:[6]

Operatives of Hamas' military wing, the Al-Qassam Brigades, greet the campers:



Weapons and combat training under the tutelage of Al-Qassam operatives:





Campers train using a shooting simulator:





Campers carry out close order drills and run obstacle courses:



Military Training At Summer Camps Operated By The PIJ Military Wing

Registration for the summer camps run by the PIJ military wing, the Al-Quds Brigades, was held on June 17-22, 2021 in mosques across the Gaza Strip. The name given to these summer camps was similar to that of the Hamas camps: "Sword of Jerusalem – The Promise Draws Near."^[7] Intended for teens aged 14-17, they will be held between June 26 and July 15. ^[8] The spokesperson for the PIJ summer camps, Ahmad Al-Ra'i, explained that teens of these ages need to be "purged" of "distorted" values and imbued with values of "patriotism, jihad and resistance." He added that the Al-Quds Brigades had been surprised by the turnout, which "far exceeded" the expected number (10,000), and that the activities at the camps would include "culture and entertainment; jihad, military and security activities; combat and self-defense [training], as well as lessons on shari'a, religion and jihad." The religion, culture and indoctrination activities, he explained, will be held in mosques, whereas the other activities will be held at PIJ military camps, where participants will be "familiarized with military culture and jihadi and military activity and with the stages of the Al-Quds Brigades' operations, and given basic military training in [the use of] firearms and in self-defense."^[9]

Like Hamas, the PIJ also opened its camps, on June 26. PIJ political bureau member Khader Habib explained at a press conference that the objective of the camps is "to prepare a generation of resistance [fighters] raised to liberate and take back the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque from the Israeli occupation and to remove the alien corn [i.e. Israel] that has taken over Palestine." He said that the "PIJ will begin to prepare the generation of victory, so that it will launch the campaign to [liberate] Jerusalem, which is a campaign of the [entire] Arab and Islamic nation" and that the Palestinian "people is the spearhead of the struggle against the Zionist enterprise..."^[10]



PIJ official Khader Habib at the camps' opening ceremony (Source: Paltoday.ps, June 26, 2021)

The following are photos of the first day at the PIJ summer camps:^[11]

The campers run a military-style obstacle course:



Military training with smoke and fire:**Practicing "tunnel combat":**

[1] For information on previous Hamas and PIJ summer camps, see MEMRI reports:

Special Dispatch No. 9411 - Hamas' Camps For Children And Youth – A Means Of Indoctrination For Jihad And Martyrdom, Imparting Military Skills – June 24, 2021;

Special Dispatch No. 8242 - Blog Post On Website Of Qatar's Al-Jazeera Network Praises Hamas Summer Camps And Its Efforts To 'Raise A Generation That Believes In The Duty Of Jihad' – August 26, 2019.

Special Reports - Hamas Military Wing 'Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades Launches Facebook Page For Its 'Liberation Vanguards' Military Summer Camps – July 22, 2019.

Special Dispatch No. 6151 - Hamas Summer Camp Graduation in Gaza: Teen Cadets Demonstrate Military Training, "Capture" Israeli Soldier – July 31, 2017;

Special Dispatch No. 6145 - Hamas Military Wing Summer Camp: Teens Enact Scenes from Al-Aqsa Mosque Standoff, "Kill" Israeli Soldiers, "Liberate" Al-Aqsa Mosque – July 19, 2017; Special Dispatch No. 7046 - Motto Of Hamas Summer Camps This Year: 'Marching On Jerusalem'; Their Goal: To Train The Generation That Will Liberate Palestine, Jerusalem - August 8, 2017; Special Dispatch No. 6560 - Al-Quds Intifada Summer Camps In Gaza Offer Training In Stabbing, Firearms, Tunnel Combat – August 8, 2016;

Special Dispatch No. 5025 - Hamas Summer Camps in Gaza Train Youth in Warfare, Instill Spirit of Jihad – July 27, 2015;

Special Dispatch No. 6093 - Intense Campaign By Hamas's Military Wing To Recruit Youths For Its Summer Camps – July 6, 2015;

Special Dispatch No. 5778 - Hamas Summer Camps: Liberating Palestine With Rockets, Rifles, And Pistols – July 24, 2014;

Special Dispatch No. 5339 - Motto Of Hamas's Summer Camps In Gaza This Year: 'The Generation Of Return' – June 18, 2013;

Special Dispatch No. 5333 - In Islamic Jihad Summer Camp In Gaza, Boys Practice Kidnapping Soldiers And Firing Guns Using Live Ammunition – June 13, 2013.

[2] T.me/Tlae3Camps, alqassam.ps, June 13, 2021.

[3] On this terror wave see MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 6627 - Wave Of Incitement On Palestinian Social Media Pages Following Recent Spike In Attacks On Israelis – September 26, 2016.

[4] On these marches see MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 7476 - The 'Great Return March' Campaign: An Initiative Sponsored By Hamas, Whose Goal Was To Breach The Border Fence, Penetrate Israeli Territory – May 18, 2018.

[5] T.me/Tlae3Camps, alqassam.ps, June 26, 2021.

[6] Al-Qassam.ps, June 26-27, 2021.

[7] The name is a reference to the latest round of fighting with Israel and also to Quran 21:97, which states that "the time for the fulfilment of the true promise of Allah [i.e., the Day of Judgement] draws near."

[8] Paltoday.ps, June 17, 2021.

[9] Paltoday.ps, June 25, 2021.

[10] Paltoday.ps, June 26, 2021.

[11] Paltoday.ps, June 26, 2021.