

FATAH & HAMAS

and the Issue of Reconciliation



INTRODUCTION

In January 2006, the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, won a majority of seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections, and in June 2007 it seized control over the Gaza Strip from the rival Palestinian National Liberation Movement, Fatah. Since then the Palestinian people have been in a state of *inqisaam* (Arabic for division), despite numerous rounds of talks and initiatives aiming for reconciliation and unity.

This bulletin provides an overview of the history, structure and goals of Fatah and Hamas respectively, and traces the two groups' relations from the emergence of Hamas in late 1987 until the present day. In doing so, the nature, extent, and significance of their evolving rivalry - as well as its implications - are explored.


There are various "narratives" about these two factions and their respective histories. However, the aim of this bulletin is not to present and discuss all of them but to give a clear overview of the background of both factions and inform readers about the challenges and internal struggles each one faces, their reconciliation efforts, the key issues that separate them, and the prospects for Palestinian unity.

With this bulletin PASSIA thus hopes to help the reader gain a better understanding on Fatah and Hamas, the current state of Palestinian politics, the issues at stake, and the positions and ways taken or yet to be chosen by both factions to overcome the critical juncture they are currently in as well as its negative repercussions on the Palestinian cause.

LIST OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Fatah Overview | 2 |
| Hamas Overview | 3 |
| Fatah | 4 |
| Hamas | 8 |
| Hamas and Fatah between Rivalry and Reconciliation | 12 |
| References | 16 |

FATAH & HAMAS

| FATAH Overview | |
|---|---|
| Full Name | <i>Harakat At-Tahrir Al-Watani Al-Filastini</i> (The Palestinian National Liberation Movement, with the Arabic first letters in reverse order giving <i>Fatah</i> = conquest) |
| Place/Date of Creation | Kuwait, 1957 |
| Founders | Yasser Arafat, Khalil Al Wazir (Abu Jihad) Farouq Qaddoumi, Mahmoud Abbas, Khaled Al-Hassan and other Palestinian refugees in Kuwait |
| Emblem/Flag | The official Fatah emblem/flag has a yellow background (with a white variant). In the center are two fists holding rifles and a hand grenade superimposed on a map of historic Palestine (i.e. British Mandate borders)  |
| Headquarters | Ramallah, West Bank |
| Leaders - Exile | Farouq Qaddoumi (Head of Fatah's Political Bureau) |
| Leaders - Local | Mahmoud Abbas (President of the PA) Marwan Barghouthi (leader of <i>Tanzim</i> , currently imprisoned by Israel) |
| Structure | Tripartite: General Conference, Revolutionary Council, Central Committee |
| Main Document | Fatah Constitution (1964) Fatah Internal Charter (August 2009) |
| Military Wing | Al-Assifa (1964), Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (2000) |
| Ideology | Moderate-Secular – Palestinian Nationalist |
| Vision | Two-state solution with a Palestinian democratic, secular, multi-religious state within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital |
| Position on Oslo | Supportive |
| PLC Seats (2006) | 45 |
| Classified as Terror Organization by | Fatah itself by none; Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades by Israel, the US, Canada, Japan, and the European Union |
| Relation with the PLO | Took control of the PLO as the largest single bloc at the 5 th PNC meeting in Cairo in 1969 and remained since then its most powerful member |
| Websites | http://www.fatah.ps/ (official website) http://www.jmcc.org/documents/NewFatahCharter2009.pdf (new internal charter) |

Historical Figures/Founding Members:



Yasser Arafat



Khalil Al-Wazir



Salah Khalaf



Khaled Al-Hassan



Mohammed Najjar



Kamal Adwan



Walid Nimer Nasser (Abu Ali Iyad)



Hani Al-Hassan



Kamal Nasser

Contemporary Figures:



Mahmoud Abbas



Farouq Qaddoumi



Marwan Barghouthi



Zakaria Al-Agha



Nabil Sha'ath



Abbas Zaki



Maher Ghneim




Nasser Al-Qidwa



Salim Zanoun

FATAH & HAMAS



| <h2 style="text-align: center;">Hamis Overview</h2> | |
|---|--|
| Full Name | <i>Harakat Al-Muqawamat Al-Islamiyya</i> (The Islamic Resistance Movement; the acronym of the Arabic name means 'zeal' in English) |
| Place/Date of Creation | Gaza, 1987 |
| Founders | Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, Abdul Aziz Ar-Rantisi, Abdel Fattah Dukhan, Mohammed Shama', Dr. Ibrahim Al-Yazuri, Issa An-Najjar, Salah Shehadeh |
| Emblem/Flag | The official Hamas emblem shows two crossed swords in front of Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is framed by two Palestinian flags with the phrases (in Arabic) "God is Great" and "Mohammad is the Prophet of Allah"  |
| Headquarters | Gaza City, Gaza Strip |
| Leaders - Exile | Khaled Mashaal (Chief of the Political Bureau since 2004) Musa Abu Marzouq (Deputy Chief of the Political Bureau since 1997) |
| Leaders - Local | Ismail Haniyeh (<i>de facto</i> Prime Minister of Gaza since 2007) |
| Structure | Political Bureau, Shura Council, military wing, social welfare services |
| Main Document | Hamas Covenant of August 1988 |
| Military Wing | Izz Ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades (named after a pioneer <i>mujahid</i> who was killed in 1935 near Jenin) |
| Ideology | Militant, Islamic/Palestinian Nationalist; considers historic Palestine as Islamic trust land that can never be surrendered to non-Muslims |
| Vision | Establishment of a Palestinian state based on Sharia law over all of Mandatory Palestine. |
| Position on Oslo | Opposed |
| PLC Seats (2006) | 74 |
| Classified as Terror Organization by | Hamas itself by the EU, the US, Canada, Israel, UK and Japan; Izz Ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades by the EU, the US, Canada, Israel, UK and Japan and Australia |
| Relation with the PLO | Not a member |
| Websites | www.hamasinfo.net/ (Hamas Information Office) www.qassam.ps (Izz Ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades) |

Historical Figures/Founding Members:



Sheikh Ahmad Yassin



Abdul Fattah Dukhan



Mohammed Shama'



Dr. Ibrahim Al-Yazuri



Mohammed Najjar



Abdul Aziz Ar-Rantisi



Salah Shehadeh



Ismail Abu Shanab

Contemporary Figures:



Khaled Mashaal



Ismail Haniyeh



Mahmoud Zahar



Musa Abu Marzouq



Osama Hamdan



Sami Abu-Zuhri



Abdel Aziz Dweik



Said Siam

FATAH & HAMAS

FATAH



FOUNDATION AND BACKGROUND

Fatah was first and informally founded in Kuwait in 1957 as a Palestinian clandestine movement, advocating armed struggle to liberate all of Palestine by Palestinians, while remaining independent from all Arab governments. Among its initial founders were Palestinian refugees and exiles studying in Kuwait and other Gulf countries, led by Yasser Arafat and including Khalil Al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), Farouq Qaddoumi, Mahmoud Abbas, and Khaled Al-Hassan. In 1959, Fatah was officially established as a “National Liberation Movement” after the model of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) with the vision of building a secular democratic state in liberated Palestine. It was joined by personalities such as Salah Khalaf, Mohammed Yousef Najjar, Kamal Adwan.

After the 1967 Six-Day War, Fatah joined the PLO and soon became the dominant force in Palestinian politics. At the Palestinian National Council meeting in Cairo in February 1969, the movement’s leader Yasser Arafat was elected Chairman of the PLO. Under his leadership, Fatah evolved from a resistance group into the principal faction of the PLO, dominating from then on its institutions and organs and influencing its agenda and strategies according to its own political program.

Since the death of Arafat (11 November 2004), the secretary-general of Fatah is no longer the chairman of both the PLO and the PA: Fatah co-founder Farouq Qaddoumi, head of the PLO’s Political Department, was appointed secretary-general of Fatah, while Mahmoud Abbas, who serves as chairman of the PLO and PA, was appointed the “supreme commander” of the movement (although there is a controversy over which of these Fatah positions enjoys greater powers and authority).

In the wake of the Oslo Accords, Fatah transformed itself from a liberation movement into a political party and, given its dominant position within the PLO, it also came to dominate

the newly established Palestinian National Authority (PA), where a great part of its armed wing was absorbed into the newly formed security forces.

The first Palestinian elections for the PA presidency and a Legislative Council (PLC), were held on 20 January 1996, at a time when many Palestinians still hoped their achievement of statehood was just a matter of continued negotiations. Accordingly, Fatah won a landslide victory (55 out of the 88 seats) and its leader Yasser Arafat was elected president with 88.2% of the vote (Hamass and other groups opposing Oslo boycotted the elections, independent Islamist won 4 seats).

When the post of prime minister was created under international - mainly American - pressure in 2003, Arafat reluctantly agreed to cede some of his powers and appointed Mahmoud Abbas to the post. However, the power-sharing arrangements between the “elected” president and the “appointed” prime minister were far from clear, repeatedly causing crises between the two office holders. Yet, as both remained in Fatah’s hands, these conflicts were manageable.

In the January 2006 PLC elections, Fatah was defeated by Hamass, gaining only 45 seats out of 132. The vote was a rebuke to Fatah’s chronic corruption, inaction, and absence of achievements in the negotiation process. It suffered another blow in the ensuing inter-Palestinian fighting and Hamass’ military takeover of the Gaza Strip in June 2007. Since then, the authority of the Fatah-dominated PA has effectively been limited to the West Bank and Fatah has been accused more than ever with corruption, chaos, confusion, and crisis of leadership and strategy. Illustratively, it took Fatah two years of consultations and meetings in order to set an agenda for and convene its 6th General Conference, which eventually took place in Bethlehem in August 2009, with the aim of delivering a new leadership and political program.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

Fatah’s ruling body – its general assembly and supreme authority – is the **General Conference** or **Congress** (GC) which appoints the members of all other official institutions and sets the movement’s agenda. The GC is made up of members coming from regional congresses, military and popular organizations, and the Revolutionary Council (see below). Its number varies: while there were approximately 450 members at the 4th conference in 1980, the figure had risen to some 1,350 members at the 5th conference in August 1989 and to approximately 2,300 members at the most recent conference in Bethlehem in August 2009. The GC is supposed to convene every five years, but has not met for 20 years between its 5th and 6th session, mainly due to the failure of the peace process to achieve any tangible progress and to differences within the leadership. The 7th GC session is tentatively scheduled to take place in August 2014.

FATAH & HAMAS



At the 2009 General Conference, Fatah approved a new political agenda focused on “building the homeland.” It also held new elections for its two main bodies, which are:

- The **Central Committee** (CC, *Al-Lajna Al-Markaziyya*): Fatah’s executive branch, which carries out the movement’s decisions and political program and is in charge of its daily operations. Of its members, 18 are to be elected by ballot; however, at the 2009 conference this number became 19 because two of the candidates had received the same number of votes. Mahmoud Abbas was elected separately as the CC’s chairman, and the CC itself nominated two additional members. The CC also appoints the Fatah representatives to the Palestinian National Council. CC members hold various portfolios, such as Foreign Relations, Culture, Negotiations, Economy, Refugees, etc.

The 23 elected CC members are:

- Mahmoud Abbas
- Maher Ghneim
- Mahmoud Al-Aloul
- Marwan Barghouti
- Nasser Al-Qidwa
- Zakaria Al-Agha
- Salim Za'noun
- Jibril Rajoub
- Tawfiq Tirawi
- Saeb Erekat
- Othman Abu Gharbieh
- Sakher Bseisso
- Mohammad Shtayyeh
- Nabil Abu Rudeineh
- Mohammad Madani
- Jamal Muheisen
- Hussein Ash-Sheikh
- Amal Hamad*
- Azzam Al-Ahmad
- Sultan Abul Einen
- Tayyeb Abdul Rahim
- Abbas Zaki
- Nabil Sha'ath

- The **Revolutionary Council** (RC): Fatah’s parliament and monitoring body with policy-making authority in certain realms when the General Conference is not in session (quorum = two thirds vote). The RC is headed by a secretary-general (currently Amin Maqbul) and follows up and executes GC’s and CC’s decisions. It consists of 80 members elected by secret ballot at the GC (in 2009, 81 were elected since two candidates received the same number of votes), plus members of the CC, which nominates up to 20 additional candidates, who must then be approved by the RC. The RC convenes every three months.

Another body in place within the Fatah structure is the **General Council** – a kind of mini-General Conference that to date has not assembled but was set up to convene in cases of emergency that do not allow the necessary time to convene the larger RC or GC.

The 2009 General Conference also suggested the creation of a new body – the **Consultative Council** – which was afterwards agreed upon by the RC. The Consultative Council was basically created to absorb former CC and RC members who either did not run in the elections at the 2009 Bethlehem conference or failed to win a seat. It consists of maximal 51 members and meets every 3-4 months, tasked to advise the CC and RC leaderships. The current Secretary is Ahmed Qrei’a (Abu Ala).

FATAH AND THE PLO

The Palestinian Liberation Movement (Fatah) has often been confused with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), with the former being a member of the latter, which serves since 1964 as a national and political umbrella organization for the Palestinian people and a range of the Palestinian politi-

cal factions and their military branches. Initially Fatah criticized the establishment of the PLO and challenged it with its own military operations. Like other newly established Palestinian guerrilla groups Fatah won increasing prestige from its warfare against Israel, which led to a marginalization of the PLO leadership then headed by Ahmad Shuqeiri. At the July 1968 PNC session in Cairo, the guerrilla groups were for the first time included in the PLO and Shuqeiri resigned. He was succeeded by Yahya Hamuda for a short transition, who, however, did not represent these groups. The guerrilla leaders were elected to key positions in the PLO, most significant of which was Fatah leader Yasser Arafat’s appointment as PLO spokesman. The new weight of the guerrilla groups led to their takeover of the PLO at the February 1969 PNC session, with the election of Arafat as chairman.

As the dominant group within the PLO since 1969, Fatah had and has only little ideological or personnel differences with the umbrella organization. Those within Fatah who, over the years, disagreed with the mainstream politics and strategy, split off and established their own less moderate or even militant groups.



Ahmad Shuqeiri



Yahya Hamuda



Yasser Arafat

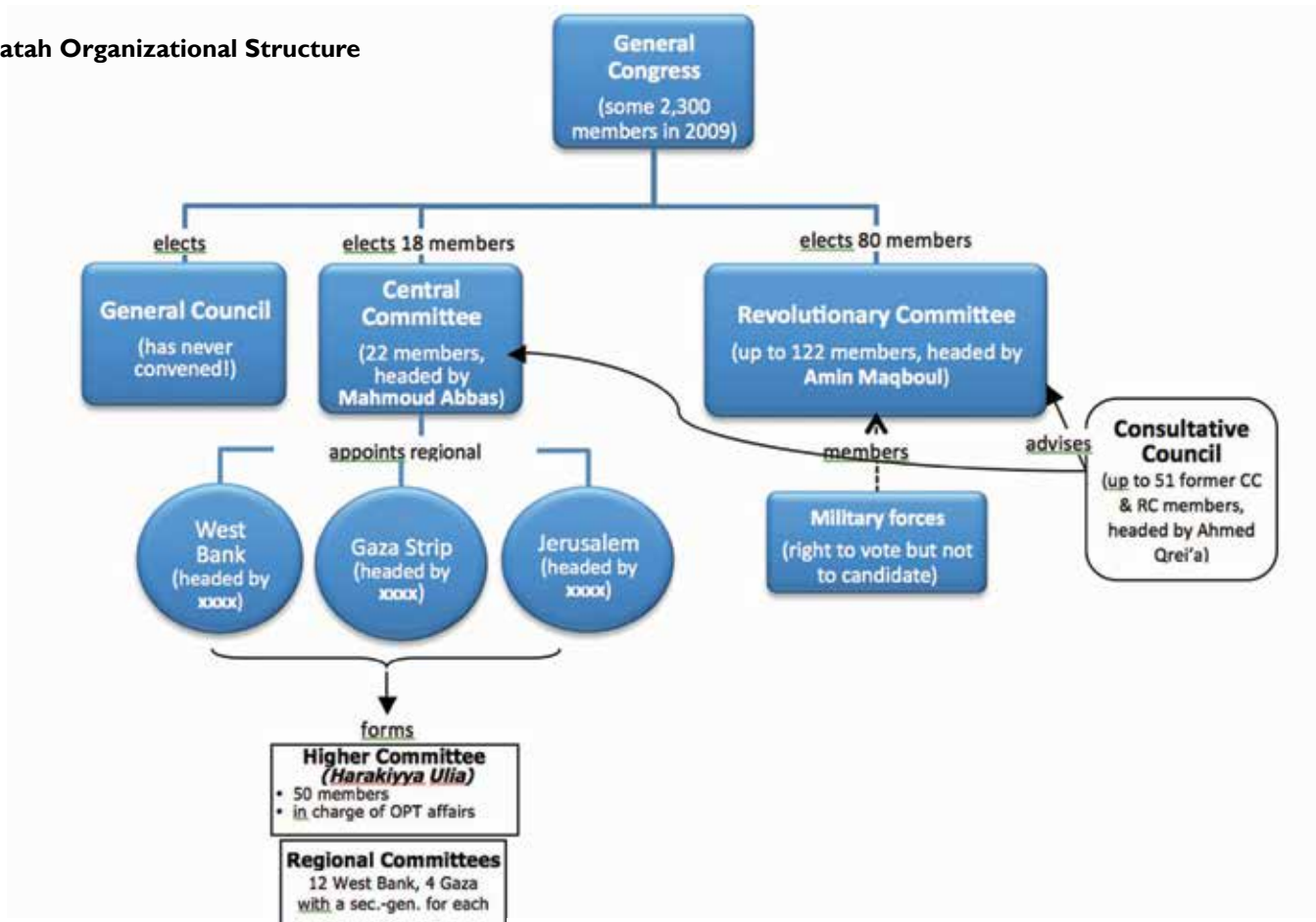
* A female Fatah member from Gaza who was picked by the Fatah Central Committee to replace Mohammad Dahlan after he was dismissed in 2011.

FATAH & HAMAS

Fatah is currently represented in the 18-seat PLO Executive Committee by five members:

1. Mahmud Abbas (Fatah) – Chairman of the PLO
2. Farouq Qaddumi (Fatah) – in charge of the PLO Political Department (Foreign Affairs)
3. Sa'eb Erakat (Fatah) – in charge of the PLO Negotiations Department
4. Ghassan Ash-Shakaa (Fatah) – in charge of the PLO International Affairs Department
5. Zakaria Al-Agha (Fatah) – in charge of the PLO Refugees Department

Fatah Organizational Structure



MILITARY WING/ARMED FORCES

Fatah did not have any effective military cadres until Syria began recruiting and training militants in 1964. Its first main military branch was Al-Assifa (The Storm) which was formed in early 1965 to launch guerrilla attacks against Israeli targets. Later on, Al-Assifa forces were incorporated into the PLO's armed wing, the Palestinian Liberation Army.



Today, Fatah's armed wing consist of the *Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (Kata'eb Shuhada Al-Aqsa)* that were formed following the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000 as a coalition of armed groups affiliated with Fatah to resist the Israeli

occupation and bolster Fatah's militant standing vis-à-vis the rival Hamas movement.

Other commando and militant groups belonging to Fatah – in the past or at present – include:

- *Force 17*: Formed in the early 1970s by Ali Hassan Salameh as a special operations unit to protect top officials. Today it is partly incorporated in the PA Presidential Guard and in charge of protecting senior Fatah officials.
- *Black September*: Formed by Fatah leaders in 1971 following the "Black September" events in Jordan (the Jordanian civil war between Palestinians/the PLO and Jordanians/the Jordanian Army), to organize clandestine attacks which Fatah did not want to be openly associated with. Later, Fatah publicly disassociated itself from the group.

FATAH & HAMAS



- *Fatah Hawks*: Formed in the 1980s as a popular movement of Palestinian youth to attack and ambush Israeli targets. It was disbanded under the provisions of the Oslo Accords but reemerged more militantly as an offshoot of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.
- *Black Panthers (Al-Fahd Al-Aswad)*: Formed as a paramilitary group during the first Intifada, mainly known for its execution of collaborators, attacks on Israeli forces, and outright rejection of the peace process. Their capability was whittled down considerably after an Israeli crackdown on their members in the mid-1990s.
- *Tanzim* (Arabic for 'Organization'): Founded in 1995 under the leadership of Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, with roots in the first Intifada, to carry out armed attacks against Israeli targets and counter Palestinian Islamism. Was particularly active in the early days of the second Intifada ("Al-Aqsa Intifada") but was then sidelined/absorbed by the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.

POSITIONS AND GOALS

As laid down in its 1964 constitution, Fatah originally believed that "The Palestinian struggle is part and parcel of the worldwide struggle against Zionism, colonialism and international imperialism" (Article 4, Fatah Constitution), and that "Liberating Palestine is a national obligation..." (Article 5) in face of the "Zionist Movement [which] is racial, colonial and aggressive in ideology, goals, organization and method" (Article 7) and the fact that the "Israeli existence in Palestine is a Zionist invasion with a colonial expansive base, and is a natural ally to colonialism and international imperialism" (Article 8).

The initial stated goals of Fatah, which saw itself as "an independent national revolutionary movement representing the revolutionary vanguard of the Palestinian people" (Article 10), were the "Complete liberation of Palestine, and eradication of Zionist economic, political, military and cultural existence" (Article 12), as well as the "Establishing [of] an independent democratic state with complete sovereignty on all Palestinian lands, and Jerusalem is its capital city, and protecting the citizens' legal and equal rights without any racial or religious discrimination" (Article 13).

From the outset, Fatah stressed its "Palestinianness" and firmly believed that it had to remain independent from all Arab governments, which it considered untrustworthy and preoccupied with their own interests. At the same time, keeping with the nationalist pan-Arab tendencies of the time, Fatah intended to contribute to the building of a united Arab society. Holding that "Armed public revolution is the inevitable method to liberating Palestine" (Article 17), Fatah followed a guerrilla strategy until 1972, with its military wing and units operating underground in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. After it gained control of the PLO, Fatah put

guerrilla warfare as only one of various means of struggle, and its principles and philosophy became largely identified with those of the PLO. This modified approach was laid down in the PLO's 10-Point Plan (also known as "Phased Plan"), which was adopted at the 12th Session of the PNC on 9 June 1974. While upholding the importance of armed struggle, this new political program maintained that it would employ "all means [...] to liberate Palestinian territory and to establish the independent combatant national authority for the people over every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated" (Article 2). This was widely interpreted as an indication of the PLO/Fatah's willingness to consider territorial compromise, having realized that the destruction of Israel was unworkable.

Over the years, Fatah's goals and ideologies changed further, most dramatically at the 19th PNC session held in Algiers on 15 November 1988 when the PLO officially accepted in its Declaration of Palestinian Independence the principle of the two-state solution, explicitly referring to UN General Assembly Resolution 181(II) of 1947 which called for the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state, and calling for an international Middle East Peace Conference based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338. This acceptance that the future Palestinian state would exist on only 22% of the original homeland represented a historic compromise.



19th PNC, Algiers 1988

This was further confirmed by the Oslo peace process and the PLO's recognition of Israel's right to exist as well as its renunciation to the use of terrorism as laid down in an exchange of letters between PLO Chairman (and Head of Fatah) Yasser Arafat and then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin preceding the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements on 13 September 1993. As members of the dominant body in the PLO, Fatah officials were henceforth those who dealt with Israeli negotiators and other counterparts.

Today Fatah is internationally recognized as a Palestinian political party. At its 6th General Conference in Bethlehem in August 2009, Fatah delegates drew up a new internal charter* and a new political platform free of anti-Zionist articles and even devoid of any mention of Israel, Zionism, or Jews.

* For the full text see <http://www.jmcc.org/Documentsandmaps.aspx?id=760>.

FATAH & HAMAS

INTERNAL STRUGGLES

Since the launching of the Oslo process, Fatah has been facing an internal power struggle that intensified with the eruption of the second Intifada in September 2000 and the death of long-time leader Yasser Arafat in November 2004. This contributed – along with allegations of corruption and ineffectiveness as well as difficulties in formulating unified lists of candidates for elections – to the movement’s electoral defeat to Hamas in the January 2006 elections. These incidents have demonstrated that Fatah consists of many constituent groups that have little in common except for the affiliation to the name. This contributed significantly to Fatah’s loss of its traditional influence among Palestinians with Hamas as the main beneficiary.

The two main power struggles within Fatah are as follows:

- “Old Guard” vs. “Young Guard:” discord between the so-called “Old Guard” (e.g., Mahmoud Abbas, Ahmad Qre’ia), aging cadres who returned from exile following the Oslo Accords under the patronage of Yasser Arafat and have since dominated Fatah politics, and the “Young Guard” (e.g., Marwan Barghouti, Mohammed Dahlan, Kadoura Fares, and Jibril Rajoub), frustrated former Intifada leaders and fighters, many of whom had spent time in Israeli prisons, who distanced themselves from the corruption and approach of the party. The conflict surfaced when Barghouti, from his Israeli prison cell, announced in December 2005 – a month ahead of the PLC elections – the formation of a new political list of candidates (*Al-Mustaqbal* – ‘The Future’), mainly composed of “Young Guards.” Although both sides eventually agreed to run on one list led by Barghouti, their discontent had become apparent.
- “Outside” vs. “inside” leadership: rivalry between the PLO-bound exile leadership in Tunis, led by Farouq Qaddoumi, which opposes the post-Oslo arrangements and represents a more hardliner position, and the “insiders,” led by PA President Mahmoud Abbas. This includes a struggle over who is responsible for the diplomatic representations – Abbas, the Chairman of the PA and the PLO, or Qaddoumi, who as head of the PLO’s Political Department holds the official authority to conduct foreign relations on behalf of the PA.

There have also been internal conflicts between different PA security services (West Bank vs. Gaza rivalry), between those calling for armed struggle against Israel and those seeing Fatah only as a political party, and due to the divergent (and conflicting) foreign patrons of the various Fatah sub-groups (e.g., US, Syria, etc.).

HAMAS



FOUNDATION AND BACKGROUND

Hamas is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood (*Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimun*), a religious and political organization that was founded in Egypt in 1928 and has inspired many of today’s Islamic movements – in addition to forming its own branches throughout the Arab world. In 1973, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin established a center for Muslim Brotherhood activities in Gaza; this was the nucleus of Hamas, which in late 1987, at the outset of the first Intifada, was turned into the Muslim Brotherhood’s political branch with the aim to resist the occupation (as announced in its early leaflets). Among its founders were the spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin as well as Ibrahim Al-Yazuri, Abdel Fattah Dukhan, Mohammed Shama’, Issa Najjar, Sheikh Saleh Shehadeh, and Dr. Abdel Aziz Ar-Rantisi. With the issuance of its own charter, or covenant, in August 1988, Hamas became an independent organization. The covenant declared all of Palestine an Islamic trust (*waqf*) land and proclaimed *jihad* against Israel, thus shifting from the Muslim Brotherhood’s more universal Islamic vision to focusing on Palestinian nationalism. Hamas’ formation and initial development was tolerated by Israel, if not encouraged as an alternative or counterforce to the PLO.

During the first Intifada, Hamas worked independently from the Unified Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU). From the beginning it pursued a two-track policy under the banner of Islam: armed struggle (initially targeting Palestinian criminals or collaborators, then directed at the Israeli occupation) and provision of social-welfare programs to Palestinians (running charities as well as schools, kindergartens, clinics and religious institutions). This latter point helped Hamas to gain broad popularity, along with its strong opposition to the Oslo Accords manifested in its armed resistance.

While Hamas boycotted the first Palestinian legislative elections of January 1996, it ran in the second elections of January 2006 as the “Change and Reform Party”. Although it had not

FATAH & HAMAS



intended to take over the PA leadership but rather to remain in a position of influence, it won a landslide victory with 74 out of the 132 PLC seats, unexpectedly and clearly defeating Fatah. The subsequently formed Hamas-led government, with Ismail Haniyeh as prime minister, was not really given a chance to succeed or fail as it was immediately and widely boycotted by the international community for refusing to meet three “conditions:” renouncing terrorism, recognizing the right of Israel to exist, and accepting all agreements previously signed by the PLO. Meanwhile, tensions between Fatah and Hamas soared, stirred *inter alia* by international players, leading to President Mahmoud Abbas’ dissolution of the government and declaration of a state of emergency. Violent clashes – sometimes called “civil war” – erupted in June 2007 and ended with Hamas’ takeover of the Gaza Strip. Subsequently, President Abbas dissolved the Hamas government and appointed a Fatah-led emergency government. However, Hamas



Hamas election poster, 2006

still rules *de facto* the Gaza Strip in complete independence from the Fatah-run West Bank.

On 2 April 2013, after a year of secret internal voting, Hamas’ Shura Council gathered in Cairo and re-elected, for the fourth time, the rather moderate and pragmatic Khaled Mashaal as chief of the Political Bureau, and Ismail Haniyeh as one of the three deputy heads. The vote was strongly backed by Egypt, Turkey and Qatar. For the next four years, Mashaal is tasked with outlining Hamas’ future resistance strategy; reconciling with Fatah; finding a way to integrate the movement into the Palestinian political system, including the PLO; defining an agenda on the issue of Jerusalem; and setting priorities between Palestine/pan-Arabism and political Islam/Muslim Brotherhood. This is no easy task, especially for someone who acts from exile.

Next on the agenda is the holding of national elections. Being part of the next PA government is not only an important step for Hamas to re-enter the Palestinian political system after seven years of separation, but also to become part of the (changed) PLO infrastructure for the first time.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

Hamas’ structural organs are flexibly arranged to adapt to the various realities under which it functions while at the same time maintaining some organizational secrecy. Hamas membership has four components - activists in Gaza, in the West Bank, in exile and in Israeli prisons. Its overall structure can be divided into the following four power centers:

- The **Political Bureau** (outside): Led by Khaled Mashaal and until recently headquartered in Damascus from where it moved to Qatar and Egypt when the civil war in Syria intensified in 2012. The political bureau is Hamas’ highest decision-making body and deals mainly with political, military and security affairs, finances, organization, welfare/charitable work, media relations, and international relations.

Members of the current elected Political Bureau are:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| • Khaled Mashaal (Head) | • Sami Khater | • Imad Alami | • Maher Abeid |
| • Ismail Haniyeh (Deputy) | • Mohammed Nasser | • Yahya As-Sanwar | • Nizar Awadallah |
| • Musa Abu Marzouq | • Mohammed Nazzal | • Saleh Al-Arouni | • Khalil Hayeh |
| • Mahmoud Zahhar | • Izzat Ar-Risheq | • Rawhi Mushtaha | |
- The **operational center** (inside, i.e., Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip): Led by Hamas PM Ismail Haniyeh and mainly tasked with running an Islamic social-welfare system (*Da’wa*) and internal security. An important component of Hamas’ inside organization is made up of leaders jailed in Israeli prisons.
 - The **Shura/Consultative Council** (*Majlis Ash-Shura*): Made up of members secretly elected from local consultative councils in Gaza, the West Bank, Israeli prisons, and from the leadership in exile. It works as the organization’s main consultative body, also setting its political guidelines. The identity of the council’s members is unknown, as is their number, though observers suggest a membership of around 70. The Shura Council also provides religious support and guidance and acts as an umbrella for a range of committees that supervise Hamas’ activities in all fields, whether military, political or social.
 - The **military wing** (*Izz Ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades*): Separate armed wing with its own leaders, who carry out resistance activities against Israel. Although the Brigades follow Hamas’ overall guidelines they are a network of independent specialized cells with their own decision-making and wide-ranging operational freedoms. Identities and positions of members are kept secret, often only disclosed after their death. The current leader is Mohammed Deif.

FATAH & HAMAS

HAMAS AND THE PLO

Being critical of the PLO's secular orientation in contrast to its own Islamist approach, Hamas has initially not sought to become a member of the umbrella organization, stressing that only "The day the Palestinian Liberation Organization adopts Islam as its way of life, we will become its soldiers, and fuel for its fire that will burn the enemies" (Hamas Covenant, Article 27).

The PLO's 1988 acceptance of the two-state solution (at the 19th PNC in Algiers) added a political dimension to their ideological differences, and Hamas, which so far had not seriously questioned the PLO's role as representative of the Palestinian people at an international level, began to challenge its status from within. Hamas' own national aspirations were further pushed forward when the PLO accepted and embarked on the Oslo process, which Hamas refuses to recognize.

However, in recent years the realities on the ground and the growing influence of the pragmatists within the movement have made Hamas opt for conciliatory approaches towards the PA – a body that grew out of that very Oslo process. In addition, there have been ongoing talks on bringing Hamas (and

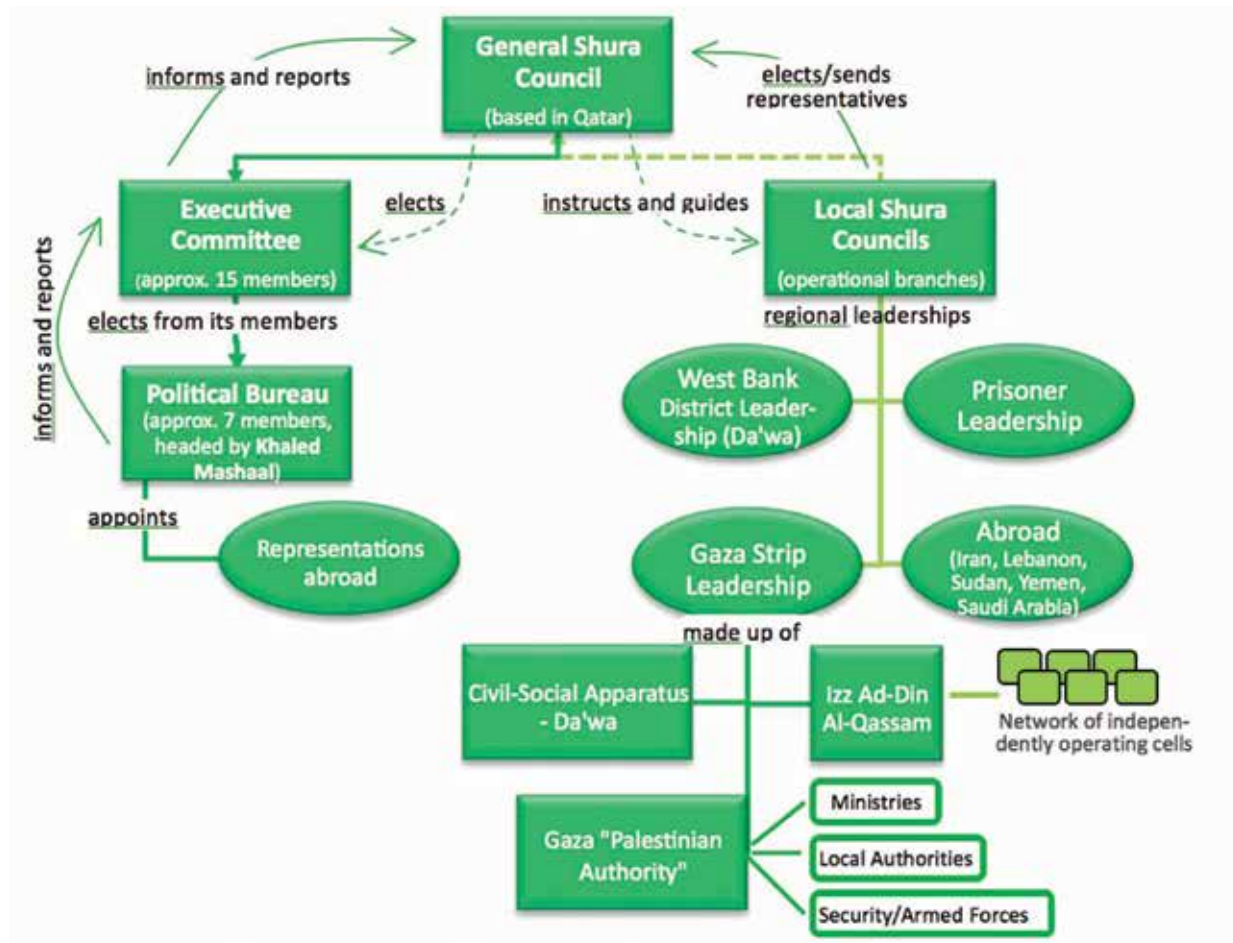
Islamic Jihad) into the PLO. In the past, Hamas demanded over 30% representation in the PLO's institutions as a condition to join, which Arafat rejected. After its electoral victory in 2006, it asked for a representation proportionate to the votes received in the elections. Hamas wants a reform of the PLO as a condition for establishing a national unity government with Fatah.

For the time being, Hamas' position is that the PLO can negotiate on behalf of Palestinians as long as there is a national referendum in the end to approve what has been decided upon.

MILITARY WING/ARMED FORCES

First attempts to establish a military wing for the armed resistance against the Israeli occupation were made in the mid-1980s by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, Sheikh Salah Shehadeh, and others. An early network of cells targeting collaborators and Israeli soldiers was formed by Sheikh Shehadeh under the name "Al-Mujahidun Al-Filistiniyun" (the Palestinian fighters) in 1986. Following the official establishment of Hamas in December 1987, other similar groups emerged (e.g., "Abdullah Azzam Brigades" and "Majd") until the present armed wing – Izz Ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades – appeared in 1991. They

Hamas Organizational Structure



FATAH & HAMAS



consider armed struggle as a strategic tool to achieve their goals and have carried out numerous suicide bombings, especially in the mid- to late 1990s, as well as other underground guerilla actions. They are listed as a terrorist organization by the US, the EU and others.



In 2006, late Hamas Interior Minister Said Siam established the 'Executive Force' to counter the Fatah-dominated PA security forces and defend the Hamas government in Gaza. It was this force which engaged in the bloody clashes with Fatah that ended with Hamas seizing control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007. In October 2007, the Executive Force was merged with the official police force controlled by the Hamas' Ministry of Interior. After the Gaza takeover, the Izz Ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades became more of a uniformed military force. In 2009, the International Crisis Group estimated that the Brigades were made up of 7,000-10,000 members plus 20,000 reserves.

In addition, Hamas is estimated to dispose of a contingent of approximately 14,000 police, security, and intelligence personnel. Today, major security forces under the command of Hamas in Gaza include:^{*}

- *Internal Security Service*: Responsible for counter-intelligence and infiltration of rivals. Also said to have created an external intelligence arm.
- *VIP Protection Force*: Made up of security personnel to protect top officials and key facilities.
- *National Security Force*: Functions as a border police.
- *Police*: The largest of the Hamas security forces (many of them former Executive Force members), dealing with civil and criminal matters.

POSITIONS AND GOALS

Hamas' philosophy and program is laid down in the 1988 Covenant, which states in Article 1 that "The Movement's program is Islam," and further elaborates in Article 6 that:

The Islamic Resistance Movement is a distinguished Palestinian movement, whose allegiance is to Allah, and whose way of life is Islam. It strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine, for under the wing of Islam followers of all religions can coexist in security and safety where their lives, possessions and rights are concerned. In the absence of Islam, strife will be rife, oppression spreads, evil prevails and schisms and wars will break out.

^{*} Mohammed Najib, "Hamas creates external intelligence arm," *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst*, 29 January 2010.

Hamas negates the existence of the state of Israel and calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state based on Islamic law (*Shari'a*) over all of Mandatory Palestine (Article 11), which can only be achieved through armed struggle ("Allah is its target, the Prophet is its model, the Koran its constitution: Jihad is its path and death for the sake of Allah is the loftiest of its wishes" – Article 8). *Jihad* for the liberation of Palestine is regarded as an individual duty (Article 15). Hamas considers all of Palestine as an Islamic trust land that can never be surrendered to non-Muslims (Article 11), which is also the reason why the movement scorns all peace initiatives (Article 13).

The charter is still in effect today as Hamas' official document and is often quoted, but many people – including from within Hamas – view it more as a historical rather than an active program since Hamas has changed its views and tune with time. However, the leadership cannot modify the covenant as this would look like a concession with no gains in return. Although some maintain that Hamas' alleged new stance was only a ploy to hide its true agenda and that its rhetoric has remained fiery, there are indications that its members have become more pragmatic, conciliatory and flexible in the past years, moving gradually towards a *de facto* acceptance of the state of Israel. For instance, Hamas officials, including Ismail Haniyeh and Khaled Mashaal, have hinted several times at supporting a Palestinian state based on the pre-1967 borders and spoken of a possible long-term truce with Israel if it withdraws from the territories occupied in 1967. A similar shift occurred with regard to the PA, which Hamas refused to recognize because it was created in agreement with Israel but now runs in PLC elections, and with regards to the PLO, whose ranks it now wants to join.

Albeit this change in attitude is widely seen as a strategy to maintain political influence (and undermine the PA) while avoiding responsibility for the failure of the negotiations process (blaming instead Fatah and the PA), it also reflects deeper changes in Hamas' general approach. The 2005 electoral platform of the Hamas 'Change and Reform' party was marked by minimal military resistance rhetoric (except for "the right to strive to recover their own rights and end the occupation using all means, including armed struggle") and an emphasis on civilian aspects of governance – both in a bid to appeal to *all* Palestinians. The same goes for the 2006 draft "National Unity Government Program," put forth by Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and also meant to reach out to the international community. Article 5 of the program called for the government to "[cooperate] with the international community for the purpose of ending the occupation and achieving a complete withdrawal from the lands occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem." By referring to 1967, and not 1948, it insinuated acceptance of the two-state solution.

Following the January 2006 election victory, Hamas has been torn more than before between its previous ideology and its new pragmatism. Whilst it is far from recognizing Israel's right

to exist, it is driven by the desire to end the restrictions and assaults imposed on the Gaza Strip, prompted it to enter into ceasefires with Israel on numerous occasions.

INTERNAL STRUGGLES

As united as it may seem to the outside world, especially in comparison with Fatah, Hamas also strives with internal struggles, caused by or related to power, policies and personnel. This became recently obvious when the leadership was contested for the first time and did not emerge through consensus as was previously the case. Frictions within the movement stem from:

- The discord between the Gaza-based internal leadership, which is primarily concerned with issues on the ground and public opinion, and the exile-based leadership, which mainly deals with the movement's external relations, including flow of funds.
- Conflicts within the Gaza leadership between the more pragmatic wing and the hardliners (often militants from the armed wing).
- Conflicts among exiles between those born in Gaza or to Gazan families maintaining personal links to the group's founders (e.g., Musa Abu Marzouk), and those with roots in the West Bank who connected to Hamas in Gaza through Islamist organizations (e.g., Khaled Mashaal).
- Strives over power and policies within the Izz Ad-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, resulting in the formation of splinter groups.
- Participation of some members of Salafi and Jihadi Groups from Gaza in the struggle against Bashar Al-Assad in Syria, which embarrasses the Hamas establishment inside and outside.

HAMAS AND FATAH BETWEEN RIVALRY AND RECONCILIATION

Ideological Differences

From its outset, Hamas challenged the secular-nationalist ideology of Fatah and PLO by offering an Islamist-nationalist alternative. This was reflected in the early leaflets of the first Intifada, which Hamas issued separately from the Unified Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU - a coalition of Fatah, PFLP, DFLP, and the Palestine Communist Party). While UNLU leaflets focused more concisely on presenting political arguments and operational instructions, those of Hamas were full of religious slogans, orders and images. This ideological divergence was confirmed by Hamas' 1988 covenant, in which it acknowledged the common aim of both movements but

made clear it would not participate in the PLO until it adopts Islam as its way of life.

The first Intifada led to the launching of the peace process in 1991 (Madrid Conference), the Oslo talks, the 1993 Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO, and the subsequent accords. All of these were entirely rejected by Hamas, for which it gained (along with its efforts in the area of social welfare) increasing popularity. Whereas the PLO and Fatah accept Israel's right to exist and envision a two-state solution, Hamas rebuffs both, calling instead for an Islamic Palestinian state in all of Mandatory Palestine, in which Jews would be allowed to live but not govern. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, Hamas remained in opposition and Fatah was seen as the more moderate party, although it participated in the armed resistance with the establishment of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades following the outbreak of the second Intifada in September 2000.

In 2003, international pressure for PA reforms resulted, *inter alia*, in the creation of the post of prime minister (next to the president) and the consecutive overlap of powers and authorities inside the executive branch. As long as the PA president and the prime minister were from the same party (Fatah), this was not a problem. However, when Hamas won the 2006 PLC elections and thus nominated the prime minister, the PA faced a constitutional crisis. An initially envisioned unity administration failed over the formulation of the new cabinet's stance towards Israel. In May 2006, Palestinian prisoners held by Israel (affiliated with Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, PFLP, and DFLP), most prominently among them Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti and Hamas MP Abdul Khalek An-Natsheh, drew up an 18-point document (known as the "**Prisoners' Document**" or "National Reconciliation Document") to serve as a basis for reconciliation between the rival factions. Key provisions included a call for Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and the creation of a Palestinian state. As it was seen as granting implicit recognition to Israel, Hamas leaders emphasized that the movement's historic charter remained in effect. After further talks, a revised version of the document was published on 27 June 2006, omitting, *inter alia*, references to the national and democratic nature of the Palestinian movement in line with Hamas' nationalist ideology, and limiting the commitment to UN resolutions and international law "in a way that does not affect the rights of our people." Before Hamas and Fatah reached an agreement, the Hamas and Islamic Jihad prisoners who co-drafted the document retracted their names and withdrew their support from it in protest against President Abbas' ultimatum to the Hamas government to accept the document or otherwise face a referendum based on the plan.

After the failure to agree on the document, the growing confrontations over competencies and powers within the PA soon turned into an all-out fighting between Fatah and Hamas supporters. Following a temporary calming down with the signing of the **Mecca Agreement** by Abbas and Mashaal in Saudi

FATAH & HAMAS



RECONCILIATION - TIMELINE

2006

Jan. 25: Hamas defeats the long-dominant Fatah movement in the second PLC elections.

March 29: The Hamas government is sworn in, led by Ismail Haniyeh, after other factions including Fatah refuse to join.

April 7: The US and EU sever contact with, and suspend aid to, the new Hamas-led PA government.

June 25: Hamas launches a raid into Israel from Gaza, killing two Israeli soldiers and capturing a third, Gilad Shalit. Three days later Israel invades Gaza.

June 27: A revised version of the "Prisoners' Document" is issued.

Sept. 11: Abbas and Haniyeh announce that they agreed on a unity administration, but soon talks break down over the new cabinet's stance towards Israel.

Oct. 1: The worst internal Palestinian fighting in a decade takes place. Egypt, Qatar and some Palestinian groups try to mediate.

Nov. 26: A ceasefire is announced in Gaza, ending the five-month Israeli offensive that followed the kidnapping of Shalit.

Dec. 16: Abbas' call for early elections triggers four days of clashes between Fatah and Hamas.

2007

Jan. 21: In Damascus, Mashaal and Abbas fail to settle differences on a unity government.

Feb. 2: Fighting between Hamas and Fatah intensifies in Gaza, with Hamas overrunning PA security compounds.

Feb. 8: Under the auspices of the Saudi leadership, Abbas and Mashaal sign the **Mecca Agreement** to end the violent conflict in the Gaza Strip.

Feb. 15: Abbas formally asks Haniyeh to form a unity cabinet, urging him to respect peace accords signed with Israel.

March 17: The Palestinian unity government takes office.

June 14: A series of clashes between Hamas and Fatah culminate in the "Battle of Gaza," resulting in Hamas taking control of the Gaza Strip. Over 100 people are killed in the fighting. Abbas dismisses the government and declares a state of emergency, a move ignored by Haniyeh.

June 15: Abbas appoints independent PLC member Salam Fayyad as prime minister of an emergency government.

June 17: A new 13-member emergency cabinet is sworn in.

June 18: The US lifts its aid embargo on the Fatah-led PA government.

June 20: Israel and the new West Bank government open formal contacts.

2008

Jan.: Israel steps up military actions on Hamas in Gaza in response to continuing rocket attacks.

March 23: Hamas and Fatah signed the **Sanaa Declaration** in Yemen in a bid to reconcile; *inter alia*, it calls for a return of the Gaza Strip to the pre-June 2007 situation and for revival of direct talks after months of hostilities.

June: Hamas and Israel reach a truce to halt the rocket attacks and end Israeli offensives on Gaza.

Dec. 27: In further response to rocket attacks, Israel launches "Operation Cast Lead," a full scale invasion into Gaza that leaves over 1,400 Palestinians killed, many of them civilians. After 22 days of fighting, Israel and Hamas declare separate unilateral ceasefires.

2009

Jan.: Abbas' term as president ends but he vows to stay in power until elections can be held simultaneously in Gaza and the West Bank.

Feb.: Egypt pushes Fatah and Hamas to hold talks to create a unity government that would allow for elections.

March 11: Meeting in Cairo for unity talks, Fatah and Hamas create five dialogue committees (on government, elections, the PLO reform, reform of security forces, and reconciliation).

April: The two factions suspend reconciliation talks after failing to agree on a unity government.

2010

Jan.: After Fatah agrees on an Egyptian proposal to hold elections by June, Hamas says significant progress had been made in Egyptian-sponsored talks but some points remain to be solved.

Sept. 2: Fatah-Hamas relations become more complicated after Hamas condemns Abbas for agreeing to resume direct peace talks with Israel.

Sept. 24: In the wake of a recent round of direct talks between Israeli and Palestinian leaders, Hamas and Fatah officials meet in Damascus to discuss efforts towards reconciliation.

2011

April 7: Israel retaliates to missiles launched from the Gaza Strip with several days of air strikes.

April 27: In Cairo, Fatah and Hamas agree on a historic reconciliation accord, united under the common goal of opposing the Israeli occupation. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu responds by saying that Abbas cannot hope for a peace deal with Israel while building an alliance with Hamas.

May 4: Abbas and Mashaal meet in Cairo to formally sign a reconciliation deal (**Cairo Agreement**) which calls for the formation of an interim government as well as legislative and presidential elections in 2012.

Aug. 21: After a round of missiles launches from Gaza, Israel arrests 120 Hamas leaders in the southern West Bank.

2012

Feb. 6: Mashaal and Abbas sign the Doha Agreement in Qatar, placing Pres. Abbas at the head of an interim government of non-affiliated technocrats charged with organizing elections later in 2012 and rehabilitating Gaza.

March 12: Gaza violence spikes as Israel launches a wave of air strikes into the territory.

July: Hamas stops the Central Election Commission's work in Gaza, leading to a halt in reconciliation talks.

May 20: Mashaal and Abbas sign the Cairo Agreement, ratifying the Doha Agreement of February.

Nov. 14: Hamas' military leader Ahmad Al-Jaabari is killed in an Israeli targeted airstrike, sparking renewed fighting between Hamas and Israel ('Operation Pillar of Defense').

2013

Jan. 10: Starting a new round of talks in Cairo, Abbas and Mashaal agree to expedite their stalled reconciliation deal and call on all Palestinian factions to implement the agreement.

Jan. 18: In Cairo, Hamas and Fatah delegations agree on a timetable to implement their May 2011 reconciliation accord, starting at the end of January.

May 13-14: A delegation of Fatah and Hamas officials, headed by Azzam Al-Ahmad and Musa Abu Marzuq, holds talks in Cairo on the formation of a unified Palestinian government.

May 30: During a meeting in Cairo, Fatah and Hamas reportedly agree to remove the remaining obstacles on the way to reconciliation as part of earlier agreements signed in Cairo and Doha, including to ensure political freedom for all factions, end political arrests, and respect the "principles of a free society, including the freedom of speech and opinion."

FATAH & HAMAS

Arabia in February 2007, violent infighting soon resurfaced, peaking in the June 2007 clashes in Gaza. These resulted in the Hamas takeover of the coastal enclave and Abbas' announcement of a new emergency government in the West Bank that excluded Hamas (not least to resume receiving funds from the international community, which in turn hardened its no-contact policy towards Hamas-controlled Gaza). Israel concurrently instituted a tight closure of the Gaza Strip, restricting movement of goods and people in and out of the territory at an unprecedented level. Since then, Gaza remains politically severed from the Fatah-run West Bank.

Reconciliation Talks

On 23 March 2008, after months of hostilities, Azzam Al-Ahmad from Fatah and Musa Abu Marzouq from Hamas signed, a Yemeni-sponsored deal in Sanaa (**'Sanaa Declaration'**) to serve as a framework to resume dialogue with the goal of returning to the pre-June 2007 situation. However, differences remained over the future of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and there was little, if any, progress. In November 2008, Hamas announced a boycott of a new round of talks that were to be held in Cairo in protest over the arrest of hundreds of its members by PA security forces. Other rounds of talks followed, failed and stalled until Egypt presented a new proposal in 2009 calling for general elections in 2010, a reform of the PA security services under Egyptian supervision, and the release of prisoners by both factions. While Fatah endorsed the proposal, Hamas refused it.

The main outcome of the Cairo talks held on 11 March 2009 was the establishment of the following five dialogue committees:

1. **Government Committee**, charged with forming a temporary transitional government until the end of the PLC's mandate, preparing a draft program, and resolving civil and administrative issues resulting from the Gaza-West Bank division (e.g., re-opening of organizations and societies, development projects, reunifying the PA).
2. **Elections Committee**, to work on a new date for the next legislative and presidential elections, create a system to monitor them, review the election laws according to national interest, and re-establish the Central Elections Committee.
3. **PLO Restructuring Committee**, responsible for preparing the reform of the PLO in accordance with the Cairo Agreement of 2005 and with regard to including Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, as well as preparing for the eventual election of a new Palestinian National Council.
4. **Security Forces Reform Committee**, tasked with developing plans for future security arrangements, discussing the reorganization of the Palestinian security apparatuses, and administering, running and overseeing security agencies as well as appointing their leaders.

5. **Reconciliation Committee**, to follow up on all the reconciliation issues (prisoners, closed institutions, freedom of movement and political expression), stop all actions having a negative impact on achieving political unity, and create an 'Honor Charter' to prevent the use of arms and violence.

In April 2011, after a few other fruitless meetings, representatives of both sides finally announced an Egypt-mediated agreement to form a joint transitional government of technocrats and a joint security committee to decide on future security arrangements. They also agreed to hold elections in 2012 and to prepare for Hamas' accession to the PLO. That agreement was formally signed by Abbas and Mashaal on 4 May 2011 at a ceremony in Cairo. While the **Cairo Agreement** was welcomed as a hopeful step towards unity, it failed to achieve it, mainly stumbling over the question of who would assume the position of prime minister, with Hamas rejecting the incumbent Salam Fayyad.



Abbas, Mashaal and Haniyeh in Cairo, 2011

Talks continued nevertheless and Abbas and Mashaal signed the **Doha Agreement** in the Qatari capital in February 2012, placing President Abbas at the head of an interim government charged with organizing elections later in the year. On 20 May 2012, Azzam Al-Ahmad (Fatah) and Musa Abu Marzouq (Hamas) signed yet another document (also known as **Cairo Agreement**), meant essentially to implement the earlier Doha Agreement, particularly the registering of new voters in Gaza and the formation of an interim government, both to start later that month. However, neither agreement accomplished its goals and the local elections, which took place in October 2012, were boycotted by Hamas and did not involve Gaza residents. Following Israel's "Operation Pillar of Defense" launched on 14 November 2012 following the assassination of second-in-command of Hamas' military wing, Ahmad Al-Jaabari (and ending with an US-Egyptian mediated ceasefire on 21 November), and the Palestinian diplomatic victory at the UN upgrading Palestine's status to 'non-member observer state' on 29 November 2012, calls for a unified Palestinian front increased and both Hamas and Fatah took several steps to reconcile their differences. This involved a decline in their media clashes, a release of their respective detainees in the West Bank and Gaza, the first ever visit of Arab Foreign Ministers to Gaza (including the PA Foreign Minister on 19 November 2012), and, for the first time since 2007, Hamas being allowed to mark its 25th anniversary in the West Bank (14 December 2012) and Fatah its 48th anniversary in Gaza (5 January 2013).

FATAH & HAMAS



All the above led to renewed reconciliation talks in Cairo in January 2013, with both sides agreeing to form a technocratic unity government within three months to pave the way for elections. While there have been some positive signs, it remains to be seen if this latest agreement, unlike all previous accords, will seriously deal with the issues of contention between the two factions (elections, security, PLO reforms, etc.) and bring about the desired results.

Political Scenarios for Reconciliation

At this current crossroads of Fatah-Hamas relations, the following are the main scenarios discussed by Palestinian observers and analysts, such as Hani Al-Masri and Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi:

- 1) No change in the *status quo*: If the two factions fail to reach an agreement on a new political program for the PLO and PA (and subsequently fail to resume the function of the PLC) as well as on unifying the various security organizations in the West Bank and Gaza, the situation will remain as it is with Israel continuing to have the upper hand.
- 2) Implementation of the Cairo-Doha Agreements: Supported by an Arab security network under the auspices of the Arab League, both sides respect their obligations under the agreement, including voter registration in Gaza, formation of a unity government within three months, prisoners release, and mutual halt to any arrests or interrogations. Under those parameters the PLO Executive Committee resumes its meetings for reforms.
- 3) Formation of a *temporary* PLO Higher Committee Meant to assume leadership, while an agreement regarding the authorities of the PLO Executive Committee is negotiated along with a new political program in the context of the international recognition of Palestinian statehood.

Conclusion

Since its unexpected electoral victory in 2006, Hamas has undergone a fundamental transformation in its bid to reconcile its erstwhile Islamist ideology with the need to meet practical political requirements and project itself in a different light to the outside world so as to challenge hostile political realities and international isolation. It has, for instance, repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to halt all forms of violent resistance and to get involved in mainstream Palestinian politics abiding by the rules of international law, if also respected by Fatah and Israel. At the same time, Hamas has, unlike Fatah, maintained its credibility as a coherent movement committed to the Palestinian cause by continuing to confront the Israeli occupation and refusing to recognize Israel as a precondition for talks. So far, successive Israeli governments have rebuffed Hamas' attempts to reach a truce and there are no signs for genuine Israeli reciprocity with regard to peace talks with any

Palestinian party, including Fatah. This, in turn, plays into the hands of Hamas, as it gives Fatah no negotiation partner and makes Abbas look completely mistaken. Along with Hamas' efforts in the area of social welfare and a reputation for honesty and discipline, in contrast to the numerous Fatah officials accused of corruption, this has significantly contributed to its popularity.

Fatah, on the other hand, still enjoys international backing and is considered the contact for international political and funding partners, many of whom fear that a unity government would induce them to support also Hamas. Indeed, while Fatah may not be moderate, it is at least not Islamist. International support for Fatah/the PA is very much linked to its recognition of Israel and its principle acceptance to pursue peace negotiations – the refusal of both has in turn made Hamas very popular among Palestinians. Some voices even claim that the US and Israel, fearing the legitimization of Hamas, have signaled to the Fatah leadership that they are not keen to have the reconciliation process succeed.

On the national level the situation is aggravated by the fact that there is no end in sight to the physical separation of Gaza and the West Bank and that both sides mistrust each other with regard to the envisioned future elections. Hamas argues that first a new unity government should be formed to then lead the electoral process, while Fatah wants elections first. Both sides favor elections which will allow them to re-establish their respective constituencies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, Hamas fears that even if it wins future elections it will be denied any role in the West Bank by both Israel and Fatah, and that if it loses, its legitimacy for the control of Gaza would fade as well. Similarly, although Fatah believes that Hamas will never give up Gaza, it wants elections to maintain its power in the West Bank, re-establish its constituency in Gaza, and garner support for its declared position in favor of peace negotiations with Israel.

However, Fatah has a serious crisis of succession which may eventually weaken its ability to lead the PA. Besides, it is in dire need to deliver domestically (a task made more difficult after the resignation of Prime Minister Fayyad, highly respected for his state-building efforts) and with regard to the "peace process" (where the chances for progress are very slim due to rising right-wing tendencies in Israel, the apparent contentment of the main players with the *status quo*, and an Arab world too busy with its own problems). Nevertheless, despite the dim prospects of negotiating with the Netanyahu government, Abbas agreed to US Secretary of State John Kerry's efforts to resume direct peace talks in the hope to improve the economic situation in the West Bank through increased donor aid to the PA.

Hamas is also at a critical juncture. Considering the recent changes in the political landscape of the Middle East, its leverage vis-à-vis Fatah appears weakened. Indeed, Hamas may feel even more under pressure to progress on rapprochement as it is increasingly losing support from its traditional allies, most



FATAH & HAMAS

notably Syria and Hezbollah, after leaving its base in Damascus in 2011, subsequently Iran, which stopped most of its financial support, and Egypt, after the ousting of Muslim Brotherhood President Morsi by the Military in early July 2013. These developments along with the destruction of the tunnels between Sinai and Gaza and the limited opening of the Rafah border crossing pose a threat to the movement's continued rule in Gaza. In addition, Hamas faces growing criticism from within Gaza itself; many supporters believe that the ceasefire Hamas signed with Israel in November 2012 has harmed its nature and ideological basis as a resistance movement. In addition, new groups, such as the so-called 'Tamarud Aza' ('Gaza Resistance' – a reference to the Egyptian Tamarud movement, which was behind the demonstrations that led to Morsi's ouster) may pose growing challenges to Hamas.

At the bottom line, however, and despite some recent progress on reconciliation, it is rather unlikely that Fatah and Hamas will unify of their own accord any time soon as neither side has anything to offer the other that is greater than the power each currently holds.

REFERENCES / BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abu Amr, Z. "Hamas: A Historical and Political Background". *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 22 (4). 5.19, 2004.
- Aburish, Said. *Arafat: From Defender to Dictator*. New York: Bloomsbury, 1999.
- Amayreh, Khalid, *Hamas Debates the Future Palestine's Islamic Resistance Movement Attempts to Reconcile Ideological Purity and Political Realism*, 2007 (<http://www.conflictsforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Monograph-HamasDebatesFutureI.pdf>)
- Austin, J., B. Hofmann, B. Goddard and H. Gray. *Hamas and the Peace Process: Resistance, Rejectionism, Reconciliation?* University of St Andrews, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, 2011. (<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/intrel/media/Hamas%20Map%20FINAL.pdf>).
- Caridi, Paola, *Hamas - From Resistance to Government?* Jerusalem: PASSIA, 2010.
- Chehab, Z. *Inside Hamas - The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement*. New York: Nation Books, 2007.
- Goerzig, C. "Transforming the Quartet principles: Hamas and the Peace Process", Occasional Paper 85, 2010 (http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/op85_Transforming_the_Quartet_principles_01.pdf).
- Gray, D. and Larson, J.B. "Grass Roots Terrorism: How Hamas' Structure Defines a Policy of Counterterrorism", *Research Journal of International Studies*, Issue 8, 2008.
- Gunning, J. "Peace with Hamas? The Transforming Potential of Political Participation." *International Affairs*, 80 (2), 2004, 233.255.
- Gunning, J. *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.
- Hroub, K. "A 'New Hamas' through its new Documents." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 35, (4), 2006.
- International Crisis Group, "Palestine: Salvaging Fatah," *Middle East Report*, No. 91, November 2009.
- International Crisis Group, "Light at the End of Their Tunnels? Hamas & the Arab Uprisings," *Middle East Report*, No. 129, August 2012.
- Kurz, Anat, *Fatah and the Politics of Violence: The Institutionalization of a Popular Struggle*, Sussex Academic Press, 2005.
- Levitt, M. *Hamas, USA: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 2006.
- Litvak, M. "The Islamization of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: The Case of Hamas." *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34 (1), pp. 148-163.
- Milton-Edwards, B. and A. Crooke. "Elusive Ingredient: Hamas and the Peace Process." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 33 (4), 2004.
- Milton-Edwards, B. and Farrell, S. "Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement", Cambridge: Polity, 2010.
- Mishal, S. and A. Sela. *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Robinson, G. Hamas as Social Movement. In Q. Wiktorowicz (ed.), *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004, pp. 112-139.
- Roy, S. *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist Social Sector*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Sayigh, Yezid. *Armed Struggle and the Search for the State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*. Oxford, 1997.
- Scham, P. and Abu-Irshaid, O., "Hamas: Ideological Rigidity and Political Flexibility", United States Institute of Peace, 2009.
- Schanzer, J. *Hamas vs. Fatah: The Struggle for Palestine*. New York, NY: Palgrave, 2008.
- Shikaki, Khalil, "Fatah Resurrected", *The National Interest*, November/December 2009.
- Tamimi, Azzam, *The Political Implications of the Hamas Electoral Victory from the Islamist Perspective*, 2007 (<http://www.conflictsforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Monograph-HamasElectoralVictoryI.pdf>).
- White, Ben, *Will Fatah As Much As Israel Be the Target of the Next Intifada?* Conflicts Forum, October 2009 (<http://www.conflictsforum.org/2009/will-fatah-as-much-as-israel-be-the-target-of-the-next-intifada/>).
- Zanotti, Jim, *Hamas: Background and Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, December 2010 (<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R41514.pdf>).



FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG

Kindly supported by the
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES),
Jerusalem

PASSIA

Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, Jerusalem

Tel: +972-2-6264426, Fax: +972-2-6282819, E-mail: passia@passia.org, Website: www.passia.org, PO Box 19545, Jerusalem