

HAMAS, IRAN AND THE NEW MIDDLE EAST EAST CRISES

HAMASTINE



THE NEW MIDDLE EAST REALITY

DURING a joint press conference with PLO chief Mahmoud Abbas last May, US President George W. Bush insisted that the militant Islamic movement, Hamas, had no chance of winning in the Palestinian elections. In October, he reiterated his conviction that the “Palestinian” masses would vote for the “party of peace.”

Based on this firm belief, the Bush Administration pressed Israel to drop any planned action to hinder or thwart the election of the new Palestinian parliament, despite the participation in the elections of recognized terror groups that vowed to destroy Israel.

January 25, 06 proved Bush was dead wrong. Hamas won 76 seats, and captured seats in all major constituencies in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. This landslide victory gave them a solid majority in the 132-member Palestinian parliament.

Palestinian voters rejected the longtime rule of the Fatah Party because of its corruption and failure to ful-fil the Palestinian hope. But the Hamas victory threatens to throw that hope, along with the peace process, into prolonged conflict.

This was the first time Hamas has contested a parliamentary election. And “everyone,” including Israel, expected Hamas would make a strong showing, but not an outright win. What went wrong with the Israeli and the US intelligence services?

Or was it just the unpredictability of elections? No! The Palestinians desperately wanted change.

By all accounts, Palestinians didn’t choose Hamas because they reject peace talks with Israel, but rather because they were fed up with graft in the ruling Fatah Party. Hamas candidates ran on a platform of clean government, largely de-emphasizing their militant credentials.

A POST-ELECTION OPINION POLL ON 31 JAN.

84% of Palestinians want a peace pact with Israel

86% want President Abbas to remain at his post.

75% of Palestinians want Hamas to drop its call for the destruction of Israel .

A 32-year-old policeman in Gaza City said he voted for Hamas because “everyone wants change,” but he said he expected the group to soften its stances once in power.

The Palestinians wanted change and Hamas seemed to be the only alternative.

No one knows better than Palestinians that prolonged conflict brings great economic hardship, frustration, and personal suffering. Many pine for the good old pre-intifada days when they could get on with their jobs and living, and move throughout the country with ease.

The stunning election results were just as much a shock for moderate Palestinians as it was for Israel and for George Bush, and the rest of us.

The Palestinians have voted for a terrorist organisation, and they have a new reality. But will they achieve the change they hope for?

HAMAS NOW IN A DILEMMA

WHILE Hamas supporters rejoiced at the news of their victory, the leaders were not as jubilant as winners normally are. They evidently had not expected an outright win. Their minds had been set on achieving a place in parliament as “a junior partner” that would give them a big say in the running of the Palestinian Authority. Their win presents them with a dilemma.

Now the responsibility to lift the Palestinian society out of its impoverished condition, and to fulfil their promises to the people who voted for them, lies squarely on Hamas.

Not only are Hamas inexperienced parliamentarians, but the well-being of the Palestinian Authority depends on them having some type of relationship with Israel. The Palestinian territories are dependent on Israel’s infrastructure for water, electricity, transport and much more. Their radical charter and agenda, however, means Hamas will have no-one in Israel to talk to. And it means that Hamas’ leaders will not be welcome in the US – the one nation that can pressurize Israel into facilitating the formation of a viable Palestinian state.

For this reason political analysts believe that Hamas will have to change its stripes.

Since the election, Hamas have struggled to persuade Fatah to join them in a coalition — hoping to avoid having to deal with Israel and the

West. The top Hamas leader, Khaled Mashaal, told Abbas his group is ready for a political partnership. But Fatah has so far rejected the offer.



MASHAAL



ABBAS

PA president, Mahmoud Abbas, immediately called on Hamas to form a new government. He then visited Jordan, and Egypt where he also met with Khaled Mashaal. But throughout the Palestinian territories it became evident that Fatah was not going to surrender to Hamas. It was going to go into a very aggressive opposition.

PROTESTERS DEMAND ABBAS QUIT

JAN 27, 06. A mob of up to 2,000 furious Fatah supporters took to the streets, burning cars, firing guns and demanding the resignation of Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, after the militant group Hamas trounced their party in the parliamentary elections.

Waving yellow Fatah flags in the flickering light of flaming bonfires, protesters swarmed around Abbas' home in Gaza City, where they shot in the air and accused him of being a "collaborator" with Israel.

"We don't want to join the Hamas government!" they chanted. "We don't want corrupt leadership! We want reform, and we want to fire all the corrupt!"

The protesters moved to nearby Palestinian legislative buildings where some set a van on fire and scaled walls, trying to force their way into the compound. Demonstrators outnumbered police on the scene.

VIOLENT CLASHES AS FATAH OPPOSES HAMAS TAKEOVER

JAN 28. Fatah supporters, security officers and members of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade protested all over Gaza and the West Bank. Security forces in Gaza demanded Hamas figures responsible for killing policemen should be brought to trial.

Several people were wounded in an exchange of fire between Hamas supporters and members of Fatah in Khan Younis in Gaza. In Ramallah in the West Bank, Fatah supporters staged more protests against their own leadership, which they blame for the election defeat.

Hundreds of Fatah members marched in Ramallah to the grave of Fatah founder, Yasser Arafat, protesting the group's poor showing under Mahmoud Abbas. Abbas' security prevented the armed group from reaching the Fatah chairman's office.

Armed Fatah members took over the parliament buildings in Judea and Gaza, shooting in the air. Cars and tires were also burned outside the parliament building in Gaza. Some demanded the resignation of Fatah politicians, while **Al Aksa Brigades terrorists declared publicly that they would kill Fatah members who joined a Hamas government.**

JAN 29, 06. The Fatah movement, supported by security forces, has launched an effort to block a Hamas takeover of the Palestinian Authority. Over the weekend, Hamas and PA officers clashed throughout the Gaza Strip. At least one PA officer was killed and seven others were injured.

A GRIM PREDICTION: 'HAMAS WIN WOULD DESTROY PA'

THE JERUSALEM POST published this prediction on Jan. 11, 06 – two weeks before the election:

Israel's Security establishment painted a grim picture of the aftermath of the upcoming Palestinian legislative elections, warning that a strong Hamas victory would lead to the total destruction of the Palestinian Authority, the only body Israel has been able to negotiate with. Security officials warned that the new situation will have severe repercussions on future dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians.

Describing the “no-win situation” Israel will be forced to reckon with, security officials declared that a significant Hamas win may spur Fatah factions to stir up trouble and resort to violence, perceiving the move as the only way to serve its interests and reach Hamas' level of popularity. “Everything achieved by Israel and the PA in the past will be lost.”

A Hamas victory means there will be no mutual base for Israel to enter any kind of dialogue, said the officials, adding that no one in Hamas - not even Ismail Haniya, who is considered a pragmatist - would agree to recognize the State of Israel or put terror aside for the sake of entering a dialogue.

“The future looks bleak. It is clear that, whatever the outcome, Israel will be faced with an upsurge in violence and a breakdown in the situation,” an official said.

“No matter how you look at it, nothing good will come out of the situation. It is a shame that the US is unable to understand the situation and the new reality Israel will be faced with. It is possible that we will witness the last democratic elections to take place in the PA.”

THE POWERLESSNESS OF MAHMOUD ABBAS

RECENT reports that reached the security establishment portray the Palestinian President as a weak soul incapable of taking charge of the situation. The aides that surround Abbas are pegging their hopes on his failure and perceive him as a man unable to cope with the internal pressures he is confronted with. Security officials did not rule out the possibility that Abbas may resign.

Abbas' biggest mistake was the strategic decision not to confront Hamas, because that enabled Hamas to continue with its ongoing activities uninterrupted. Abbas' weakness can be seen in his failure to uphold any of the agreements he signed with Israel.

“In West Bank cities where the PA received security control he failed to disarm fugitives and reign in extremists,” an official said. The chaos and lawlessness that rage through the PA-controlled areas continues without any real attempts by the PA leadership to halt the situation and restore law and order, the official added. - *The Jerusalem Post* / 11 Jan 06

WHAT ISRAEL'S POLITICAL LEADERS ARE SAYING

ISRAEL is going through a time of soul-searching, and blame-naming.

RAMON: “PA, HAMAS, NO DIFFERENCE”

Kadima MK (Member of Knesset) Haim Ramon said that he failed to understand the consternation that Hamas' seeming victory caused among right-wing politicians in Israel.

Ramon told Israel Radio that right-wing politicians had said “over and over” that “Abbas was the same as Hamas,” and had called the PA leader “even worse” because he and Fatah “hid their true intentions.”

ORLEV: “DISENGAGEMENT DID IT”

National Religious Party MK Zevulun Orlev said the Hamas victory was the result of Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip. “The Palestinian public recognized that Hamas’ suicide bombers and Kassam rockets convinced the Kadima-led disengagement government to uproot Jews from Gush Katif,” he declared.

NETANYAHU: “IT’S HAMASTAN”

Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu told the Likud faction in the Knesset: “Before our very eyes, Hamastan - an offshoot of Iran - has been established, the step-child of Iran and the Taliban. It’s in firing range of our airport, our highways and cities. This has to be a day of soul searching because the writing is on the wall.

“The policy of giving land for free gave a prize to terror and a winning card for Hamas. This event (elections) has produced an extreme Islamist country; the hands of all its leaders are stained in blood,” he added.

“How are Olmert and Peres getting ready for this challenge? They are moving the fence 500 meters closer to the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway (Beit Iksa). They gave more land to the Hamas state. Any land given to Hamas will give more of a front to fire upon us. This is a new and dangerous situation. Sharon said he wouldn’t let Palestinians in Jerusalem vote. Olmert let them.”

EITAM: “HAMAS, SEND FLOWERS TO OLMERT”

MK Avigdor Lieberman (*Yisrael Beiteinu*) said that the results were “a victory for radical Islam”, while MK Effi Eitam said that Hamas leader Mahmoud Zahar “should send flowers to Ehud Olmert.”

HENDEL: “TERROR WAS THE ONLY WAY”

National Union chairman Zvi Hendel had claimed that Hamas showed the Palestinians that terror was the only way by which they could “defeat and expel Israel.”

SHALOM: “ISRAEL MADE GRAVE MISTAKE”

Former foreign minister and *Likud* MK Silvan Shalom said that Israel had made a grave mistake in allowing Hamas to participate in the elections. “The over-whelming victory by Hamas is an earthquake that will set us back 50 years and lead the entire region to chaos.”

“The writing is on the wall,” he said. “I warned Ehud Olmert in our first meeting after he assumed the post of acting prime minister. For months I attempted to prevent Hamas participation in the elections. We initiated a large-scale diplomatic move and forwarded the Hamas charter, which calls on Israel’s destruction, to world leaders. We have nobody to blame but ourselves.”

“The international community will find a way to justify its dealings with Hamas by saying that it was democratically elected - and this after all Israel’s efforts to prove to the world that Hamas is a terror group,” Shalom declared.

PERES: “WE HAVE TO SEE WHERE THEY’RE GOING”

Shimon Peres. *Kadima*, said that Israel would engage in talks with Hamas if the party “abandoned terrorism.” “Israel will have to see where [Hamas] are going; back to the road of violence and terror, or ahead to the route of peace. They haven’t taken a decision yet. They weren’t prepared for this victory.”

“PERETZ: “HAMAS NOT A PARTNER”

Labor Chairman Amir Peretz said his party did not consider Hamas a partner for peace negotiations. “We have no intention of allowing negotiations to take place, or of allowing a third party to force us to recognize an organization that openly seeks to destroy Israel,” Peretz said, adding that the apparent Hamas victory undermined the stability of the Middle East.

BEILIN: “LAUNCH PEACE TALKS WITH ABBAS”

Meretz-Yahad chairman Yossi Beilin told Israel Radio that Israel was to blame for the Hamas victory. “Israel played a large role in weakening the Palestinian Authority and strengthening Hamas,” he said. “The unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, not as a part of an agreement, greatly strengthened Hamas.”

The election results still provided a chance for an agreement with moderate Palestinians. Beilin called on Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to launch peace talks with PA President Abbas. Beilin warned that if Israel and the PA failed to reach an agreement soon, Hamas would win in the next elections, as well.

ISRAEL’S STRATEGIC FAILURE

EHUD OLMERT, like the rest of Sharon’s stalwarts in the government and *Kadima* party, are caught in a dilemma of their own making. Since they enthusiastically executed Israel’s withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, Hamas has gone from strength to strength – militarily and politically. The pull-out enabled an Islamic terrorist group dedicated to Israel’s destruction to leap into Palestinian government.

Because of this self-programming, Olmert and *Kadima* failed to heed the warning given last Nov-Dec by Shin Beit director Yuval Diskin that a strong Hamas showing at the ballot box would be disastrous for Israel. Now, it is too late to start fashioning a policy to hold back the rushing Hamas tide.

1. Iran’s fundamentalists as well as Egypt’s radical Muslim Brotherhood (the Hamas’ parent-organization), will ride straight into positions of influence in the Palestinian government in Ramallah, on the backs of Hamas.
2. Hamas in government broadens the scope of the Israel-Palestinian dispute to involve the most belligerent Muslim Sunni and Shi’ite sects. In this sense alone, Sharon and his clique/successors performed a strategic misstep of monumental proportions.
3. Al Qaeda is not surprisingly poised to press its advantage and is racing its radical Muslim rivals in the effort to attack Israel.
4. In the aftermath of Sharon’s unilateral disengagement, every single accord - from the Middle East Road Map to the pre-withdrawal security and diplomatic accords the United States and Europe brokered between Israel, the Palestinians and Egypt - has unraveled. The resulting security vacuum and diplomatic blind alley were graphically described by Gen. Yaalon.

And even supposing that the US and Europe freeze donations to a Hamas-dominated Palestinian Authority, as elder statesman Shimon Peres seems to believe they will, the Muslim world can easily afford to make up the difference from its abundant petrodollars.

The only positive outcome from Hamas gaining power in Palestinian government is a temporary one: The group may opt to continue the **partial ceasefire for some time**. But this will not mean the organization is changing its ways or disarming, any more than Lebanon's Hizbollah, only that it will welcome a breather to promote its long-term goals.

The Islamist radicals will need time to consolidate their grip on power and build a powerful military force. The price Israel will pay for this truce will be high - it will be Hamas' unopposed takeover of the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus and its buildup with the help of Iran, Syria and the Hizbollah, into an organized military force able to confront the Israeli army.

By failing to stop the Hamas in time, the Israeli government is now condemned to being dragged willy-nilly into playing ball with the long-term strategic goals of a radical Islamic group committed to wiping out the Jewish state. It is hard to see how the Olmert team can do anything tangible to arrest the slide at this late date. - Extracts from DEBKAfile. Jan 24, 06

WORLD LEADERS PESSIMISTIC, CAUTIOUS

AFTER IT became clear that the terrorist organization Hamas had won the Palestinian election with a land-slide victory, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Britain, Japan, the United States and the European Union all warned that international cooperation with the peace process will depend on Hamas' willingness to lay down its weapons and acknowledge Israel's right to exist.

US President George W Bush said Washington would not deal with Hamas unless it rejected its call to destroy Israel.

Condoleezza Rice phoned President Abbas to praise Palestinian democracy and to say the United States supports him and his policies. She asserted to him that US administration will continue supporting the elected president and his policies.

The German Foreign Ministry said German assistance to the Palestinian government, will not happen unless Hamas recognizes Israel.

The World Bank which coordinates financial matters between the Palestinian Authority and countries which provide monetary aid, said that there is a "lack of certainty and hope" in the financial world. An official said that by next week the PA will not be able to pay its employees' salaries, and that he believed international financial assistance will be terminated following the Hamas victory.

THE QUARTET WARNS HAMAS

JAN 31, 06. The EU, US, Russia and the UN has called for Hamas to renounce violence and recognise Israel or face the prospect of cuts in global aid.

Meeting in London, the Quartet of would-be Middle East peacemakers confirmed that aid to the Palestinians totaling more than \$1bn {£563m} could be jeopardised if Hamas refused change. (The EU gave some \$600m {£338m} in aid in 2005, while the US handed over \$400m {£225m}).

The Quartet's statement, read by Mr Kofi Annan, said: "All members of the future Palestinian government must be committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the Road Map."

The statement said future aid would be reviewed in reference to these demands, but did not threaten to cut it in the short term. The BBC's diplomatic correspondent said the words were chosen with care. They did not demand a renunciation of violence or immediate recognition of Israel, but a commitment to these things in the future.

The EU wants to continue financing the Palestinian Authority while Hamas attempts to form a government. The EU foreign ministers stated that they expect the new Palestinian parliament to support the creation of a government committed to a peaceful and negotiated solution to the conflict. "On this basis, the EU stands ready to continue to support Palestinian economic development and democratic state-building."

President Bush set out a far more terser message. "The Hamas party has made it clear that they do not support the right of Israel (to exist). And I have made it clear that so long as that's their policy, we will not support a Palestinian government made up of Hamas."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the US will fulfil its current aid commitments to Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, but will not give money to a Hamas government. "The United States is not prepared to fund an organisation that advocates the destruction of Israel, that advocates violence and that refuses its obligations under the roadmap to which everyone is committed."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that Germany does not intend to hold talks with Hamas, which has spearheaded a campaign of suicide bombings that killed hundreds of Israelis in the past 5 years, unless the Islamic movement rejects violence and meets other conditions.

British foreign secretary, Jack Straw, said EU ministers were most likely to adopt a wait-and-see approach to Hamas before deciding whether to cut off aid to the Palestinian Authority. And the Dutch foreign minister, Ben Bot, said the EU could not do business "with a party that partakes in terrorism ... that intends to eliminate another country." But he added that EU ministers would wait and see what kind of government Hamas formed.

HAMAS REJECTS 'UNFAIR' AID DEMAND

JAN 31, 06. Hamas criticised the ultimatum to change, and said it will not abandon its strategy of "resistance" against Israel. Political head in Gaza, Ismail Haniya, said the "unfair conditions" would endanger the well-being of Palestinians. He insisted international aid was vital humanitarian assistance for people living under occupation. "This aid should not be linked to unfair conditions."

Khaled Mashaal, the movement's overall leader, wrote in the UK's *Guardian* newspaper saying, "Hamas is immune to bribery, intimidation and blackmail." He called on Arab states to increase aid to the Palestinians.

Hamas, on the other hand, called on Israel to change, repeating his demand for an end to the occupation of Palestinian land and attacks on Palestinians.

HAMAS VICTORY - ISRAEL'S WORST NIGHTMARE

OBSERVERS in Israel say that Hamas will never significantly alter its central charter goals, as they are based on a literal reading of the Koran.

Although some local Hamas politicians have recently spoken with relative moderation in relation to their charter's call for Israel's complete annihilation, most Israeli experts and officials do not accept this as reflecting a real sea change in the movement's radical positions. Therefore, the already fractured Israeli-Palestinian "land for peace" process will now be recognized by most Israelis as being **beyond resurrection**.

“HAMAS” is an Arabic acronym for “Islamic Resistance Movement.” The organisation was formed in mid-1988 with a founding charter that spells out in graphic in detail Hamas’ intention to destroy Israel and to replace it with a Palestinian Islamic regime.

Hamas is actually an outgrowth of the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood movement which made big inroads into the Egyptian parliament last year.

THE HERZLIYA CONFERENCE

THIS conference of Israeli establishment leaders was held on 24th January, the eve of the Palestinian election.

Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert addressed the Conference and outlined his views of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Evidently not anticipating a Hamas victory, Olmert made what seemed to be a disastrous capitulation to Palestinian demands. He said: “We cannot rule over areas with a Palestinian population” ...

“WE ’LL HAVE TO PART WITH MOST OF YESHA”



EHUD OLMERT

OLMERT said his first priority would be to shape permanent borders that guaranteed a Jewish majority, and that he preferred agreement with the Palestinians, rather than further disengagements.

As chairman of the recently formed Kadima Party, Olmert essentially said he sees no future for a Jewish ‘Yesha’ (Judea and Samaria ~ The West Bank).

“The dramatic move before us,” Olmert said, “is to re-form our borders to ensure a Jewish majority. In order to guarantee the existence of the Jewish home, we will not be able to continue and rule over the areas in which a Palestinian population lives ... Israel will maintain the security areas, the Jewish settlement blocs, and those places that have supreme significance for the Jewish nation ... There can be no Jewish state without the capital Jerusalem in its center.”

Taking aim at the population of Judea and Samaria, Olmert said, “The Government of Israel will not be deterred by any threat of a law-breaking minority... I have instructed the security forces to raze all the unauthorized outposts in Judea and Samaria.”

Settling all of Judea and Samaria does not jibe (go well) with preserving Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, the Kadima Prime Ministerial candidate said.

“We hope that they [the Arabs of the Palestinian Authority] will give up some of their dreams, just as we have given up some of ours.”

“In the name of the Government of Israel,” Olmert said, “I say that we will fulfill all the Road Map commitments we took upon ourselves, and we demand that the leadership in Ramallah do the same.”

During his speech Olmert praised the work of Binyamin Netanyahu as finance minister in the former government. This has been interpreted as an indication that Olmert may take a turn to the right. It could be a clue as to the shape of the government coalition he will prefer after the Israeli election in March.

Olmert called on Palestinian leaders to join him in negotiations on the basis of current realities. If they fail to live up to their roadmap commitment to dismantle terrorists including Hamas, he warned that Israel would defend its interests by **every** means, and fight terrorism with increased vigor.

Olmert told a US envoy that he opposed controlling territory in which there was a Palestinian majority. He went on to say: “Israel accepts the need to forgo parts of the ancestral Land of Israel, retaining security zones, large settlement blocs and places of supreme importance to the Jewish people, primarily Jerusalem which must remain under Israel sovereignty. The Palestinians too must forgo some of their national dreams to achieve statehood. A Palestinian state will embody all their national aspirations including the settlement of refugees. *But* no Palestinian refugees will be allowed to enter Israel.”

REACTION TO THE SPEECH

MK ARYEH ELADAD (*National Union*) replied: “By Olmert’s logic, we’ll have to soon leave the Galilee. Olmert’s speech is the beginning of the end of the State of Israel ... If we cannot live in areas where what he calls ‘Palestinian’ population lives, then we will quickly have to part from the Galilee, the Triangle [Um el-Fahm], and the Negev, and the division of Jerusalem is just around the corner. Olmert will be able to say: ‘In Herzliya, I destroyed the Jewish State’.”

Labor’s YITZCHAK HERZOG said Olmert had “merely downloaded Labor’s platform from the internet, leaving out the social issues.”

A *Likud* spokesman said, “Olmert hid his true plans for a **unilateral withdrawal** from much of Judea and Samaria (Yesha), the Jordan Valley and Jerusalem - a position he has expressed many times in the past years.”

The **YESHA COUNCIL** said Olmert’s remarks were “laced with an anti-Semitic tone towards the Jews of Yesha. In the Middle Ages, (*vitriolic rumours said*) ‘the Jews spread the Black Plague by poisoning the wells and murdering Christian children for their blood for matzas’; in the 20th century, ‘the Jews took over the world’s economy’; and now, *they say*, ‘the settlers are the reason for all of Israel’s problems’.”

Council spokesperson Emily Amrusi noted, “The same Olmert who emphasized in his speech that he was offering his hand in peace to murderers, has ordered his underlings over the past days not to conduct dialogue with the Yesha Council. It has never happened before that the government simply ignores the Yesha leadership and doesn’t talk with them ... He offers gestures and benefits to terrorists, but wages war on Jewish settlements, essentially naming us as the enemy.”

MK TZVI HENDEL (*National Union*): “With this shallow and hesitant speech, Olmert is trying to con-vince us that he is the new Sharon. But behind the fog of his press advisors, a clear plan is hiding: expulsion and destruction of Judea and Samaria, the division of Jerusalem, a return to the '67 borders, and the abandonment of Israel's security.”

BENNY KASHRIEL, the *Mayor of Maaleh Adumim*, just to the east of Jerusalem, said, “Olmert's promise to preserve Jerusalem will be kept only if he reinforces the settlement belt around Jerusalem. He must allow contiguous construction from Jerusalem to Maaleh Adumim in order to stop the Palestinian choke-hold around the capital, and he must approve the E-1 construction plan [between the two cities].”

MK SHA'UL YAHALOM (*National Religious Party*): “Olmert copied Sharon's speech from two years ago - and we have seen what that speech led us to: a rainfall of Kassam rockets, no security for the Jews living adjacent to Gaza, and no response from Israel.”

“PA WON'T RECOGNIZE ANY BORDERS”

SPEAKING at the Herzliya Conference, ex-IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. MOSHE YAALON warned that the time-honored phrase “territories for peace” has no practical relevance for the Palestinian Authority. As the PA does not fulfill its obligations, any border that will be chosen, will be violated by violent activity - unless Israel manages to create a significant deterrence.

Yaalon related to Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and the reports that the *Kadima* Party favors additional such moves. He said that they are damaging to Israel's deterrence ability because “they are interpreted by the other side as weakness.”

Regarding the Kassam rockets fired almost daily from Gaza towards the Negev and Ashkelon areas, Yaalon said, “Israel has not created reliable deterrence against this threat. Israel's unilateral withdrawals are interpreted as a running away from this threat ... Gaza is turning, in front of our very eyes, into Qaedastan and Hamastan.

The bottom line of this analysis is that for the foreseeable future, the '67 borders are not defensible.”



“YES, YES, YES TO PALESTINE”

ISRAEL’S zealous new foreign minister, TZIPI LIVNI, told participants in the Herzliya Conference, “We must say ‘yes, yes, yes’ to a Palestinian nation-state on these ancient Jewish lands (Judea and Samaria).”

Trying to balance her remarks, Livni went on to say Israel should make sure Palestine does not become a terrorist state that continues to threaten Israel. She did not, however, say just how Israel could try to make sure of this. (Earlier in the day, former IDF chief of staff Moshe Ya’alon indicated that this was in any case a lost cause.)

He said the problem is that Israel’s surrender of land is seen as **a retreat from the threat of Islamic terror**, making it impossible for the Jewish state to create a credible deterrence against such aggression, and encouraging the nation’s enemies to attack us.

The general insisted the situation will not change simply because Livni and her colleagues offer the Palestinian Arabs a state, explaining that the true source of the conflict is the Arabs’ refusal to recognize Israel.

“INEXPLICABLE RUSH”

Speaking at the same conference, Nobel Laureate Professor ISRAEL AUMANN concurred that Israel is asking for trouble with its inexplicable rush to divide the land in the name of peace. The very act of running headlong after the longed-for peace is precisely that which distances it from us, the top game theorist said.

ISRAEL LOSING IMAGE OF TERROR FIGHTER

Another speaker at the Herzliya Conference was YUVAL STEINITZ, chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee. Steinitz warned that Israel’s additional territorial transfers to a Hamas-dominated Palestinian Authority could cause it to lose its image as a major partner in the war against terrorism.

Steinitz asserted that Israel has enabled Hamas and other Palestinian insurgency groups to significantly strengthen over the last five years.

ISRAEL’S UNILATERALISM

UNILATERALISM means “one member of a group doing something alone without the agreement of the other members.” When negotiations break down, the members begin to take unilateral decisions and actions.

The Middle East Peace Process is supposed to progress by negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, and other involved parties, but for the lack of progress, Israel has resorted to unilateralism.

IT IS hard to understand the disengagement line that Ariel Sharon and Israel has taken over the last couple of years. It was a unilateral decision, taken without any negotiation with the Palestinians, that led to the destruction of Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip, and the removal of Jewish settlers and soldiers from the heavily populated coastal region.

Earlier, Sharon had been such a strong supporter of settlements, but he evidently reached a confirmed conviction that there would be no negotiated settle-ment for many years, and that time was running out. Unilateral action was necessary. The plan was to reduce the state of Israel to a defensible territory with a Jewish majority. Gaza was the beginning. But this left open the possibility of more withdrawals from non-viable settlements in the West Bank.

Major settlements, however, were to be enclosed within the defence wall, or otherwise protected.

The plan meant that the two sides would be unilaterally separated, and that the Palestinian terrorists would be kept at bay. It was hoped that the Palestinians in the vacated areas would be encouraged to establish viable governments for themselves. Final arrangements would be left for the next generation.

Unilateralism is what Israel has been pursuing.

The present situation has developed much faster than most expected! Now leaders of most of Israel's political parties favour some type of unilateral withdrawal, but there are wide differences on the extent of withdrawal.

Israel's own elections, due in March, are likely to be heavily influenced by the Palestinian results. There could be an increased support for a much harder line as the new dangers are more clearly realized.

Already Ehud Olmert has ordered the speeding up of the construction of the separation barrier, which runs along and through parts of the West Bank. After more than three years of building, **"the wall"** remains less than **half finished**, but Israeli officials say it has contributed enormously to the reduction of suicide bombings and other attacks.

Olmert made it clear after an emergency cabinet meeting that talks with Hamas, a party sworn to Israel's destruction, were out of the question.

Israel will now most likely pursue unilateral actions, drawing its own borders and separating itself more securely from the Palestinians. Some experts say that Israel will now be more freer to establish its future on its own.

Ami Ayalon, the former head of Israel's Shin Bet security service and now a parliamentary candidate for the left-leaning Labor Party, said the absence of a negotiating partner should not halt Israeli actions aimed at separating from the Palestinians. "Israel," he said, "should seek to create a situation where it disengages from the Palestinians and preserves the character of Israel as a Jewish democracy." Israel should continue, he said, "to move fast and independently to our goal."

But Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the right-wing Likud Party, made clear that the Palestinian results offered an opportunity for his **more hawkish message** to be heard. He said the Hamas victory was a result of the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and this proved that no more withdrawals should occur.

PERES: "GAZA WAS JUST THE BEGINNING"

KADIMA will enter final status talks despite PA non-compliance. Elder statesman Shimon Peres confirmed that last summer's Gaza "disengagement" was only the beginning of Ariel Sharon's strategy to fully divide the Land of Israel and **relieve the Jews of their biblical heartland**.

Peres said Sharon had told him the Gaza pullout was not the end of the story, but the beginning of a series of surrenders he believed would ultimately bring an end to Israel's conflict with the Arab world.

Peres vowed that if the *Kadima* Party is victorious in the upcoming general election, and Ehud Olmert is officially installed as prime minister, no time would be wasted in implementing this strategy.

Associated Press quoted Peres as saying a post-election Olmert government would, in conjunction with further withdrawals, immediately engage in final status peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, despite the latter's enduring failure to comply with decade-old commitments to combat anti-Jewish terrorism.

If Peres' words hold true, it would be the first time Israel has agreed to discuss a final peace settlement in the absence of "Palestinian" compliance.

Meanwhile, security experts continue to blame the very policies Peres is championing for eroding Israel's ability to deter terrorism and for recent increases in the Palestinian Arabs' ability to mass murder Jews. - Jerusalem / NewsWireJanuary / 19 Jan 06

LABOR PARTY SUPPORTS GIVING UP PARTS OF JERUSALEM

In its new campaign platform, the *Labor* Party supports giving up Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem in a final deal with the Palestinians. "Labor backs a 'united Jerusalem consisting of its **Jewish neighborhoods**'."

Post

- AP / Jerusalem

"A HAMAS GOVERNMENT IRRELEVANT"

JAN 26, 06. Acting PM Olmert declared that any Palestinian Authority government that included Hamas would not be a partner for Israel.

"If a Palestinian government should arise of which Hamas is a participant, the world and Israel will ignore it and render it irrelevant," he said.

"Israel will not negotiate with a Palestinian government, even if only part of it is an armed terrorist organization calling for Israel's destruction; and in any case *Israel* will continue to strenuously fight terrorism everywhere."

OLMERT SETS HAMAS 'RED LINES'

JAN 29, 06. Ehud Olmert set out his government's red lines for dealing with a Hamas government.

1. Hamas and all Palestinian terror groups must disarm.
2. The Hamas Covenant, which denounces peaceful negotiations, and calls for the destruction of Israel through jihad, must be annulled.
3. All the agreements which have been signed, and all the commitments which have been entered into, by the Palestinian Authority must be accepted and upheld.

What was unclear was how the Olmert government intends to respond should Hamas fail to meet any or all of the above criteria.

WHAT ISRAEL SAYS

ISRAEL has indicated that newly elected Hamas legislators will not be granted free access between Gaza and the West Bank.

Israel said that no Hamas leaders would be immune from targeted killings if the group maintained aggression and continued to refuse to acknowledge Israel's right to exist. Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz said: "Whoever stands at the head of a terror organisation and continues to carry out terror attacks against Israel is not immune."

Israeli Foreign Minister Tsipi Livni, called on the EU - the biggest financial donors to the Palestinian Authority - to oppose the creation of a "terrorist government."

WHAT HAMAS IS SAYING

HAMAS' overall Damascus-based leader, Khaled Mashaal, is playing up democracy. He attacked international governments for criticizing the democratic choice of the Arabs of the PA. "The world should respect the results of democracy," Mashaal said. "If you want to punish the Palestinian people for practicing democracy, then the Americans should be punished for choosing President Bush."

Mashaal has invited the Fatah group to join a Hamas-led government. "We believe it is in everybody's interest to ride the Hamas train, because this train will reach its destination," he said. "We extend our hand to everyone. We need each other." At the same time, Mashaal said his group's presence in the legislature will strengthen its ability to wage war against Israel.

Hamas policy-maker Ghazi Ahmed Hamad said, if Fatah does not join a government "we will try to form a **government of technocrats.**"

Hamas emphatically says it has no intention of changing its charter or agenda; **it will refuse to negotiate with Israel; it will continue its "armed resistance" and it will not revise its charter to acknowledge Israel's right to exist.**

Hamas co-founder Mahmoud Zahhar said: "We are not playing terrorism or violence. We are under occupation. The Israelis are continuing their aggression against our people, killing, detention, demolition and in order to stop these processes, we run effective self-defence by all means, including using guns."

Senior Hamas leader Ismail Haniya has rejected international calls, under the threat of cuts to international aid for the Palestinian Authority, to disarm and renounce violence.

"This aid cannot be a sword over the heads of the Palestinian people and will not be material to blackmail our people, to blackmail Hamas and the resistance."

"Arms and resistance are issues that are linked to the presence of the occupation and as long as occupation exists the Palestinian people have the right to defend themselves, and to resist the occupation," he said.

Hamas seeks to replace both Israel and the Palestinian Authority with an Islamic state. It has said it would support the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a **first step**. Haniya says that Hamas' top priority remains completing the liberation of the other parts of "Palestine."

Khaled Mashaal said that Hamas would honor commitments made by the PA to Israel, provided that those commitments "serve Palestinian interests."

One of the group's senior leaders said Hamas could agree to a long-term "hudna", or truce, if Israel accepts a Palestinian state based on the internationally-recognised borders of 1967.

Mahmoud al-Zahar called for the release of Palestinian prisoners, an end to Israeli "aggression" against Palestinians, and a geographic link between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. "At that time, with assurance from other sides, we are going to accept to establish our independent state, and then give us one or two, ten, or fifteen years to see what is the real intention of Israel after that," Zahhar said.

Sheikh Nazzar Rayan: "The vanquishing of the enemy in Gaza does not mean that this stage has ended. We still have Jerusalem and the pure West Bank *to conquer*. We will not rest until we liberate all our land, all our Palestine. We do not distinguish between what was occupied in the 1940s and what was occupied in the 1960s. Our Jihad continues, and we still have a long way to go. We will continue until the very last usurper is driven out of our land."

Mahmoud al-Zahar was quoted by Al-Jazeera as saying, "We did not fall upon Gaza from the moon. We are living within the society and know what the street wants and what their conscience is. Oslo is not only dead, it has rotted," he said.

In a statement from a pre-election debate, Al-Zahar said: "Between 1994-2004, the donor nations gave the PA \$US6 billion. Where did all this money go? Fifty-six million dollars go to salaries every month. There are \$US100 million in revenue every month. There are 37,000 fictitious jobs; the colonel, his wife 'the coloneless,' his son, his daughter they all get paid, as you know very well."

Mushir al-Masri, a Hamas candidate and spokesman, who won election in the northern Gaza Strip, said **peace talks and recognition of Israel are "not on our agenda"** but the group is ready for a partnership - presumably with Abbas.

"BUSH WON'T DICTATE TO US"

Hamas spokesman Sheikh Yasser Mansour said President Bush's insistence on disarming Hamas constitutes a "blatant interference in Palestinian affairs. "Bush won't dictate to us. We completely reject his remarks regarding disarming us. Nobody can force us to disarm."

WHAT FATAH LEADERS SAY

PRESIDENT Mahmoud Abbas - who also heads the ruling Fatah party - said he remains committed to "a peaceful settlement." As news of Hamas' victory spread, Abbas said he would honor the outcome, and, according to *Agence France-Presse*, he asked Hamas to form the next PA government even before the election results were officially released.

On Jan 26, the day the Hamas win was declared, Mahmoud Abbas indicated that far from stepping down after his Fatah party's defeat, he is collaborating fully with the winning Hamas. That night Abbas was on the phone to Khaled Mashaal, at his Damascus headquarters.

According to Mohammed Mustafa, economic adviser to PA Chairman and Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas, Hamas will "have to accept Abbas' economic and diplomatic agenda."

Palestinian Economy Minister, Mazen Sinokrot, was blunt about its need for cash and his expectations that the international community should provide it. "The whole world should understand that we are very much in need of \$97 million," he said during his speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

THE ARAB LEAGUE

The Arab League added its opinion that Hamas will be forced to accept the Beirut initiative, despite its current refusal to do so. Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa said that the diplomatic process in the Middle East moves according to the guidelines set forth in the Beirut initiative, which calls for full Arab recognition of Israel.

The guidelines, approved by the Arab League in 2002, also call for a full Israeli withdrawal from territories gained in the 1967 and 1973 wars, according to UN resolutions 242 and 338. The initiative was rejected at the time by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

AHMEDENIJAD RECEIVES PALESTINIAN TERRORIST LEADERS IN SYRIA

JAN 20, 06. The Iranian President, during a visit to Syria, received leaders from 10 terrorist groups, and promised to support their struggle. Among them were HAMAS leader, Khaled Mashaal, Abdallah Ramadan Shalah, head of JIHAD ISLAMI, Ahmed Jibril, head of the radical PFLP, and HIZBOLLAH'S Hassan Nasrallah.

ISMAIL HANIYA LIKELY TO HEAD HAMAS GOVERNMENT



ISMAIL HANIYA

JAN. 27, 06. According to sources close to Hamas, Ismail Haniya is likely to head the new Palestinian Authority cabinet.

Haniya, who ran at the head of Hamas' Change and Reform List, will replace outgoing Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei, who submitted his resignation after learning that Hamas had scored a landslide victory.

Some Palestinians predicted that Hamas might ask former finance minister Salam Fayyad to head the new cabinet, so as to avoid a boycott by the international community.

Fayyad's Third Way List won two seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council. He is a widely respected figure with close ties to many world leaders, including Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Hamas may therefore use him as a bridge to Israel and the rest of the world.

It is not yet clear what would happen with the PA's **Interior Ministry**, which is in charge of the security forces. Interior Minister Nasser Youssef, a veteran Fatah official, is unlikely to remain in his post under a Hamas prime minister. As security chief, Youssef was responsible in the mid-1990s for a massive crack-down on Hamas and Islamic Jihad members in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A new interior minister would have to appoint security commanders, and it remained to be seen if some of the Fatah chiefs would agree to give up their posts.

It was also unclear what would happen with Palestinian ambassadors around the world. Almost all current ambassadors are Fatah loyalists.

KHALED MASHAAL TO MOVE TO GAZA

The overall Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal intends to arrive in the Palestinian territory the moment Hamas takes over from the Fatah.

Mashaal says he does not want to be prime minister and he would therefore not appoint the new government. But he suggested several names of public Palestinian figures with international credibility for the position of prime minister and finance minister.

If Mashaal sets foot in Israel-controlled territory he will be arrested, but he can easily reach Gaza through Egypt.

A HAMAS 'PEACE INITIATIVE'

JAN 27, 06. *WORLDNETDAILY's* Middle East correspondent, Aaron Klein, says Hamas will soon make public a "peace initiative" in which it will offer to trade strategic land with Israel, cease attempts to capture parts of Jerusalem, and sign a 10-year renewable cease-fire with the Jewish state.

A Hamas leader who gave an exclusive interview said the plan, which he justified using Islamic tradition, is a temporary machination to ease international and US hostility toward his group in hopes of receiving financial assistance.

"We will not impose Islamic laws and we will not escalate our fight against Israel," he said. "We will even be ready to accept an interim long-term agreement that will give the Palestinian people an independent state on most of the territories occupied in 1967. I tell you we will surprise everyone with our new attitude."

FUNDING SITUATION COMPLEX

A DIPLOMATIC official said that Israel faces a real dilemma, because although on the one hand its reflex was to push for the world to cut off aid to the PA; on the other hand, if it does, and the PA collapses, Israel would once again bear responsibility for the fate of millions of Palestinians. "If the PA dissolves and can't pay salaries, then suddenly everything again is on Israel's doorstep," he said.

Israel must immediately decide whether it will continue to transfer customs revenue to the PA under terms of the interim agreement signed in 1995, an agreement that Hamas does not recognize. The government currently transfers about \$60 million a month.

In addition to this revenue, outside sources - such as the EU and US - contribute another \$60 million monthly to the PA, which keeps it solvent. "Israel has to think hard about the alternatives," one diplomatic official said. "Israel has always said the PA must crack down on the terrorist organizations. Now that's over. But if the West stops funding the PA, **the Iranians may step in and fill the gap.** The situation is complex."

Last month, after the EU did not transfer funds because the PA did not live up to certain benchmark requirements, the PA turned to the Saudis who paid the salaries.

BUSH WARNS US MAY CUT AID

JAN 28, 06. President George Bush has warned US aid to the Palestinian Authority may be cut after Hamas' surprise election win. He said the US would stop \$400m (£225m) of aid unless the militant group renounced violence and stopped calling for Israel's destruction.

The Palestinian Authority has always been heavily reliant on international cash, and its main donors, the US, EU, Japan and Arab states, are reviewing their position. Last month the PA finance minister begged the Group of Seven richest countries to provide aid to keep the government afloat.

Since 1993, the Palestinians have received more than \$1.5 billion in U.S. economic assistance via the U.S. Agency for International Development. In 2005, Washington gave \$225 million in aid to the Palestinians through USAID, and \$88 million to a UN fund.

“They’ve got to get rid of that arm of their party which is armed and violent, and secondly, they’ve got to get rid of that part of their platform that says they want to destroy Israel,” Mr Bush said. “And if they don’t, we won’t deal with them. Aid packages won’t go forward.”

OPPOSITION IN CONGRESS

IN Congress, there is strong opposition toward giving aid to a Hamas-led government. US Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, an influential Florida Republican, said lawmakers could not support a group that called for the destruction of Israel and did not renounce violence.

“I will work with my colleagues to undertake all necessary steps to prevent US foreign aid from being diverted to Hamas by placing strict limitations on direct US assistance to the Palestinian Authority,” said Ros-Lehtinen, chairwoman of a House of Representatives subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia.

The EU, the Palestinian Authority’s largest donor with \$US 606m (£341m) a year, was also pegged to the Palestinian Authority’s recognition of Israel and Hamas’ renunciation of violence, according to the German State Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Hamas has rejected international calls for the group to renounce violence or face cuts in aid to Palestinians.

Ismail Haniya, who headed Hamas’ election list, said: “This aid cannot be a sword over the heads of the Palestinian people and it will not be material to blackmail our people, to blackmail Hamas and the resistance. It is rejected.”

ISRAEL DELAYS PALESTINIAN FUND TRANSFER

JAN. 30, 06. Israel has suspended a transfer of tax revenue to the Palestinian Authority until Hamas agrees to back peace with Israel.

Israel was scheduled to hand over 200 million shekels (\$43 million) to the Palestinian Authority on Feb. 1, but the PM Olmert suspended the transfer pending a review on the direction the Palestinian Authority will take.

Olmert said that Israel had no intention of letting the tax revenue end up in the hands of terrorist groups. “It must be made very clear, we are not going to transfer funds which could finance terrorist attacks against our civilians.”

But Israel was also concerned about undermining Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who has negotiated with Israel in the past.

FINANCE FLEES FROM WEST BANK!

JAN 30, 06. *DEBKAF* reports that Palestinian financial assets have begun to flee from the West Bank. Senior Palestinian Authority officials, including ministers and security chiefs, have begun transferring their assets overseas. One source estimates that some \$45 million were shifted in one day (Jan. 30).

Businessmen, doctors and lawyers, worried by the regime change from Fatah to Hamas, are moving their businesses and assets to Europe and Gulf emirates.

This flight of funds is a symptom of how little confidence the business community and elite have in Mahmoud Abbas’ ability to limit the Hamas drive to grab full control of government and its institutions.

There is also a fear that the property of prominent figures will be impounded to make a show of the corruption and thieving of the defeated Fatah.

AL QAEDA CALLS FOR VOLUNTEERS TO FIGHT WITH PALESTINIANS

SEPT 17, 05. In statements on its websites, internet radio and e-mail, a- Qaeda told followers: "Now is your chance. Hurry up and make your way to the Philadelphi route crossing from Sinai, to fight with your Palestinian brothers."

"GAZA NOW ARMED TO THE HILT"

AFTER the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, militants have been able to smuggle tons of weapons into the Gaza Strip for use against Israel, a senior security official said.

"Gaza is armed to the hilt. The Palestinians have now moved an enormous quantity of weaponry, including anti-tank missiles, explosives, ammunition, rocket- propelled grenades and the like from Sinai into the Gaza Strip. They took complete advantage of the lack of any real security along the Egypt border."

ASHKELON IN RANGE OF 27km-RANGE MISSILES

JAN 24, 06. The Fatah-al Aqsa Brigades of the Gaza Strip announced the receipt of a new surface missile, designated No. 207, whose 27-km range covers the entire district of the Israeli port of Ashkelon. A missile with this range could also hit the towns of Netivot, Ofakim and places west of Beersheba, capital of the Negev.

The new weapon has been identified as the Russian short-range Grad 121mm. On Jan 3, Shin Beit director Yuval Diskin reported this weapon had been smuggled into the Gaza Strip to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Security Committee. - DEBKAfile

ISRAEL TO PROTECT STRATEGIC SITES

JAN 9, 06. Israeli authorities have begun planning for a Palestinian missile strike on strategic facilities. The military and civilian authorities plan to relocate or protect strategic sites in Ashkelon, the latest target of Palestinian gunners. Ashkelon contains a major oil and gas terminal, naval port and power station.

"Most of these facilities cannot be moved and must be protected," an official said. "Some smaller sites might be relocated."

Israeli military sources said Palestinian insurgency groups were ready to fire extended-range Kassam and other missiles and rockets from the Gaza Strip. Palestinians have been trained in Iran and Lebanon in the production and assembly of missiles with a range of 20 kilometers.

Over the last month, a basic training camp in the Ashkelon area was struck several times by Kassam missiles and several soldiers were slightly injured.

Ha'aretz reported that Palestinian insurgency groups have acquired "improved Katyusha rockets" in the Gaza Strip with a range of 20 km.

HAMAS PLEDGES TO FORM ARMY

JAN 28, 06. Three days after winning a landslide victory in the PA elections, Hamas called for the creation of a Palestinian army, even larger than the current 60,000-man police force.

Khaled Mashaal said the force would include the Hamas' militant wing. "We will form an army like every other country. Hamas was ready to "unify the weapons of Palestinian factions, with Palestinian consensus, and form an army like any independent state ... an army that defends our people against aggression."

Asked what he meant by "defending against aggression," Mashaal said that Hamas would continue to carry out attacks on Israeli civilians. "Our presence in the legislature will strengthen the resistance," he said. "Hamas had no plans to disarm. As long as we are under occupation then resistance is our right."

Mashaal is taking advantage of his party's conquest of Palestinian government by the ballot to appropriate Mahmoud Abbas' slogan endorsed by Washington - "**one authority, one law and one gun** (under Hamas)."

Senior Fatah figures have warned Hamas not to inter-fere in the Palestinian security forces - most of whom are linked to Fatah. Gaza police chief Ala Hosni told *Associated Press*: "The security institution is a red line. We will not allow anyone to tamper with it."

THE SEEDS OF CIVIL WAR?

ABBAS SEEKS TO ASSERT CONTROL OF SECURITY FORCES

JAN 30, 06. *The Washington Times* reported that Mahmoud Abbas who continues as president of the PA, has ordered all main branches of the security forces to report to him personally, in his capacity as the "supreme commander of the security forces," rather than to the interior minister or prime minister.

The decision is a bid to forestall a takeover of the security forces by Hamas, and it also aimed at calming rising anger from security forces members themselves. Most of the 63,000 security force members are Fatah loyalists, and have expressed concern that they would lose their jobs in any Hamas-led government.

Members of the Fatah-led security services stormed into the grounds of the National Assembly buildings in Gaza and Ramallah on Saturday (28th), declaring that they would not countenance a Hamas takeover of their forces.

Sources in Ramallah told *The Washington Times* that Abbas has revoked a decree he issued after being elected to the presidency a year ago after Yasser Arafat's death. In that order, Abbas had sought to diffuse presidential power by allocating three of the four main security organs to the interior minister, who serves the prime minister.

The intelligence service and a smaller elite presidential guard remained under his direct control, but Abbas relinquished control over the preventive security forces, the general security forces and the police. So now the president is seeking to take back control of security.

The portfolio that Hamas wants is **internal security** with control over Palestinian security and intelligence services. The new Palestinian ruler will also take over the PAs television, radio and press.

Hamas' internal leader, Mahmoud Zahar, told *The Times* that **his organization planned to take control of the security services** and turn them from "serving Israeli interests" to "confronting Israel and protecting our people."

Asked if the Palestinian Authority's official forces would be Hamas' armed wing, he said: "We will be the Palestinian Authority, and they will integrate with us."

Other Hamas legislators said they did not intend to expel the bulk of security forces members, but they would "purify" the leadership of each security service of its "corrupt elements."

HAMAS TO KIDNAP SOLDIERS AS BARGAINING CHIPS

JAN 8, 06. Hamas sets up special unit to kidnap Israeli soldiers as bargaining chips for release of its jailed terrorists. Hamas also announced the end of talks with Israel if it scored high in the Jan 25 elections. The announcement came from the Islamic group's leader Mahmoud al-Zahar in Gaza City.

Ismail Haniya, who leads the Hamas list of candidates, said **negotiations with Israel will only take place through the barrel of a gun.**

HISTORY OF HAMAS' MURDEROUS ATTACKS

HAMAS has set the destruction of Israel as its goal. Before Sept 2000, Hamas, which introduced the tactic of suicide bombing to the Middle East, was responsible for 180 murders. Between September 2000 and April 2004, Hamas perpetrated 425 terrorist attacks against Israel and murdered at least 377 Israelis - nine every month - a total of at least 557.

Hamas was founded by Islamic militant extremists in the Gaza Strip in 1988, shortly after the first intifada broke out. Though it is also involved in social and welfare programs, the organization is devoted chiefly to the obliteration of Israel. Its charter states, "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it."

The charter further states, "There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors.

TEHRAN PROMISED EMBASSY IN RAMALLAH!

JAN 28, 06. Five days before the Palestinian election, Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal promised Tehran an Iranian embassy in Ramallah very soon. The promise was delivered at a secret meeting with Iranian President Ahmanidejad in Damascus on Jan. 20. - DEBKAFfile

COMMENT FROM CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IN ISRAEL

In *The CARMEL ALERT*, Jan 27, 06, David wrote:

"Realistically, the future of the Peace Process and the Road Map is surely doomed to failure. The big question is 'How many innocent Israelis will have to pay with their lives, or live the rest of their lives maimed by the terrorists that the US administration, the UN & the EU have allowed to continue operating, and even become a "legitimate" part of Middle East Politics?'

"It seems George Bush's 'war against terror' does not include one of the world's most murderous terror organisations - Hamas. Will the US & Israel refuse to deal with Hamas now that it is to become the official PA government?

"One thing is for sure - the pressure on Israel to give away her God-given territory will increase, as will the violence. At this time two of the possible choices for Israel's next government are all prepared to give away the Land for a 'pie in the sky' dream of peace with our neighbours.

“Whatever the ultimate result, good, bad or cataclysmic, we need to know that for reasons above our understanding, God is in control and is allowing it. At the same time we need to exercise the spiritual gifts and authority that Yeshua has invested in us to do our best to search the scriptures and to pray the relevant verses back to the Father.”

“O God, do not keep silent! Do not be quiet, and do not be still, O God! For look, Your enemies are roaring; and those who hate You have raised their heads.

“They craftily plot against Your people, and conspire against Your hidden, *treasured* ones. They have said, ‘Come, and let us destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more.’

“For they have conspired together with one mind; they make a pact against You; the tents of Edom and the Ishmailites; Moab and the Hagarites; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre. Assyria also had joined with them; they have been a help to the sons of Lot. ...

“Cover their faces with shame, that they may seek Your Name, O YHWH. Let them be ashamed and dismayed forever; yes, let them be humiliated and perish, that they may know that You, whose Name is YHWH - *You alone are* the Most High over all the earth.” (Psalm 83:1-8, 16-18)