



Intelligence and Terrorism Information
Center at the Israel Intelligence
Heritage & Commemoration Center

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Reactions in the Arab and Muslim world to the terrorist attacks in Mumbai (Preliminary report)

Overview

1. At the level of political leadership, the Arab and Muslim world **condemned** the terrorist attacks in Mumbai and expressed solidarity with the Indian government, including terrorism-sponsoring countries like Iran and Syria. **Iranian president Ahmadinejad** sent a message of condolence to the Indian president and prime minister in which he deplored the terrorist attacks which cost innocent lives; **Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Hassan Qashqavi** also condemned the attacks; and the Iranian media used expressions like "terrorism" and "terrorist attack." The Syrian newspaper **Tishrin** gave a short summary of the events and also called the attackers "terrorists." Even Muhammad Mahdi 'Akef, leader of the radical Islamic **Muslim Brotherhood** in Egypt, issued a denunciation of the attacks.

Op-ed Commentary in the Iranian and Syrian Media

2. However, in commenting on the reasons for the terrorist attack, the Iranian and Syrian propaganda was quick to exploit the event to assail the United States, Israel and the Zionist movement, and to represent them as responsible for terrorism in India and the world in general:

i) **Iranian president Ahmadinejad**, in a vague statement hinting at the United States, said that "the ugly phenomenon of terrorism...has its roots in [an] international unfair order and ...occupationist and disuniting policies" (ISNA News Agency, November 28). On November 29 the Iranian newspaper **Al-Wifaq** was much more explicit in its reaction. It criticized the Western media for describing the attackers as "Islamists." It also said that Israel ("that hypocritical entity") had sown terrorism in the Middle East

and the entire world. It added that the attacks in India had a Zionist background with goals of interfering in regional matters, and fingerprints of American crimes could also be seen on the Indian sub-continent. According to the article, ten years ago the United States and the Zionists started spreading to the Indian arena to encourage a civil war within India and strife between India and its neighbors. Their intention was to impose their hegemony in the region. "Thus it is not enough to put an end to the military attack [in Mumbai], the true American string-pulling behind the terrorist [attack] must also be exposed..."

ii) On November 30 a columnist named Hassan Hassan wrote an anti-Semitic column about the events in Mumbai for **the Syrian paper Al-Thawra**. It attacked the United States and Zionism which, he claimed, were responsible for global terrorism. Islam, according to the article, is a religion of peace, not violence, and religious extremism is common to all nations and not just Islam. The article also claimed that accusing Islam of responsibility for global violence and terrorism was "anti-Islamic aggression" and bore the fingerprints of Zionism. That proved that the international community, led by the United States, was not serious about dealing with the problem of terrorism, despite the claim that it was waging a war against it. The article ended by saying that "the problem of terrorism will remain as long as Zionism stirs things up behind the scenes, everywhere, with complete liberty, especially in view of the lack of international law and order, and the lack of balanced political standards, which have led to anarchy and the collapse of countries..."

Support for Terrorism in Talkbacks on Hamas and Al-Jazeera Internet Sites

3. **Opinions opposing the official stance** could be found on the Internet sites of Hamas and the Qatari Al-Jazeera TV, whose editors **gave a forum** to surfers wishing to identify with the terrorists in Mumbai. Talkbacks on those sites **expressed support for the attacks** and identification with the attackers and their goals, expressing hope that such acts of violence would be carried out against Israel and the United States.

4. Surfers on **Hamas's PALDF Forum**, which appears on the Palestine-info website (Hamas's main website), expressed support, their remarks shown next to pictures of those in killed in the attacks. **The forum did not post any talkbacks criticizing the terrorist attacks**. The following is a representative sampling (November 29):

i) "Abu Majed" wrote: "Our guys in India are great."



Computer-generated “picture of the ruins of Washington DC” attached to a talkback, with the caption “By Allah, this picture is nice to look at... With Allah’s help, it will happen soon...” (Hamas’s PALDF Forum, November 29).

v) “Awamir bil-Intilaq” (“marching orders”) wrote: “Allah, pave the way for the jihad fighters on your way everywhere.”

vi) “Al-Hamsawi 11” wrote: “Allah, bestow a victory on our brothers in India.”

vii) “Funoun al-Shahadah” (“the art of dying a martyr’s death for the sake of Allah”) wrote: “Allah, sow terror and destruction in all the infidel countries. Best wishes to the heroic jihad fighters everywhere.”



A talkback from “Funoun al-Shahadah” (second and third rows): “Allah, sow terror and destruction in all the infidel countries. Best wishes to the heroic jihad fighters everywhere.”

viii) “Aqsana” (“our Aqsa [mosque]”) wrote: “Allah, bestow victory on the jihad fighters fighting for your sake, oh lord of the world; Allah, grant them a victory which will freeze our hearts, oh most merciful; Allah, do not leave a place for the infidels on your land, for they will divert from your work everywhere they are thrown and will give birth only to wantonness and heresy Allah, you promised victory to your servants fighting the jihad and breathing down the necks of your enemies, Allah you aim the weapons in their hands.”



Aqsana (fourth row): “Allah, bestow victory on the jihad fighters fighting for your sake, oh lord of the world...”

5. An op-ed article in Hamas’s organ *Felsteen* (December 2, 2008) accused Israel of responsibility for the terrorist attacks in Mumbai. Dr. Issam Shahwar, in his column “Free Zone,” claimed that the captive in Indian custody¹ had said that the objective of the attack was to kill as many Israelis as possible in retaliation for the “barbaric crimes” Israel has committed against the Palestinians. Thus, he claimed, Israel bears responsibility for international terrorism and for the dangers faced by many countries around the world.

6. Qatar’s **Al-Jazeera TV**, the most popular channel in the Arab-Muslim world, gave extensive coverage to the terrorist attacks in Mumbai. However, in general, the attackers were not referred to as terrorists, but rather in neutral terms such as “armed men (*musallahim*),” although the channel **did not** support the attacks.

7. On the other hand, Al-Jazeera’s website **did provide a forum for support** of the attacks alongside its criticism of them. For example, in response to a posting titled “Seven Israelis killed and tension between India and Pakistan,” a talkbacker calling himself “Majdi” wrote that “Allah will give success to the resistance [i.e., terrorism] everywhere.” There were also talkbacks condemning the terrorist attacks. Particularly conspicuous were the outpourings of joy in response to the Al-Jazeera notice that “a rabbi and his wife were among those killed in the Jewish center in Mumbai” (November 28). Some of the talkbacks were the following:

i) “Palestinian eagle” wrote: **“The killing of a Jewish rabbi and his wife in the Jewish center in Mumbai is heartwarming news.”**

ii) “Abdallah” wrote: “Allah, grant victory to Muslims. Allah, grant victory to jihad fighters everywhere.”

¹ He uses the word “survivor” and avoids calling him a “terrorist.”

iii) "Al-Sana'ni" wrote: "Allah is the greatest, thank you Allah. Victory to jihad fighters everywhere: aim their fire, break [their enemies] into little pieces, and accept them as *shaheeds*, amen."

iv) "Nabil Riyadh" wrote: "**The Jews are the reason for all the world's problems**, they created it [terrorism] and encourage it and support it with weapons and money. They [are the ones who] train terrorists everywhere."

v) "Doctor of Terrorism" wrote: "Terrorism is the Muslims' answer, while it is the modus operandi of the Jews, the West and their vassals among the non-Arab governments. India is a country which wages terrorism in a certain place in the world [apparently a reference to Kashmir], and according to Newton's basic laws of physics, this was a natural reaction..."

8. The providing of a forum for talkbacks supporting and identifying with the attacks in Mumbai was not a random act by Hamas and Al-Jazeera TV. The propaganda spread by Hamas's media in the Palestinian Authority-administered territories often expresses identification with global jihad networks on various fronts (Chechnya, for example), as part of its basic identification with radical Islam and jihad. As for Al-Jazeera, in the past it has often provided a forum for Al-Qaeda publications, including the propaganda campaign Osama bin Laden has been waging since September 2007.² Al-Jazeera TV thus supports Al-Qaeda and the global jihad in the battle for hearts and minds, and at the same time global jihad exposure increases the number of its viewers in the Arab and Muslim world.

² For further information see our September 21, 2008 Bulletin entitled "[During the past year Osama Bin Laden, Al-Qaeda leader, waged an intensive media campaign after a long silence.](#)"