



July 31, 2012

This year Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip again exploited summer camps to integrate camping activities with political Islamic brainwashing and paramilitary training.



Campers in the Khan Yunis refugee camp show off their military skills to visiting Hamas activists (Picture from the Hamas forum, June 18, 2012)

Overview

1. As in years past, this year as well summer camps were held for the children of the Gaza Strip. **Most of them were organized by the de-facto Hamas administration**, with a few organized by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other organizations. This year an estimated **100,000 children** attended summer camps.
2. Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip **consider the summer camps an important means of fostering its next generation of operatives and supporters, and as a way to brainwash the younger generation with their ideologies**, oriented towards radical political Islam. The main themes are the so-called "liberation" of Palestine and the annihilation of the State of Israel, the path of jihad (the so-called "culture of resistance"), the cult of the shaheeds and other themes taken from Hamas' strategies in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The camps are often visited by senior figures from Hamas and the

other terrorist organizations which support the inculcation of Gazan youth with political Islam.

3. As far as we know, as opposed to previous years, **this year there were no camps run by UNRWA**. More than 200,000 children participated in UNRWA summer camps in previous years (more than in the camps run by Hamas and the other terrorist organizations put together). UNRWA sources said the camps were cancelled because of the agency's budget deficit. However, in our assessment, there may have been other reasons, such as the constant competition between Hamas and UNRWA for camp enrollment, Hamas' criticism in the past that the UNRWA camps' curriculum "corrupted" Gazan youth, and the physical attacks waged on the UNRWA camps by Islamist elements.¹ By not holding summer camps this year, UNRWA left the field open to the terrorist and other radical Islamic organizations, especially Hamas.



Summer camp logos. Left: The Palestinian Islamic Jihad's camp logo, with the slogan "A message of victory." Right: The Hamas camp logo, with the slogan "We will live with our heads held high."

Hamas Summer Camps

4. On June 9, 2012, Hamas summer camps opened with **an estimated 70,000 registered campers**. The slogan for most of them was "We will live with our heads held high," which accompanied the hunger strikes of the Palestinian terrorist operatives in Israeli jails. According to Hamas spokesman **Fawzi Barhoum**, the slogan marks one of milestones in the struggle for the restoration of the so-called "Palestinians' rights," the most recent of which was the Palestinian prisoners' hunger strike (Safa News Agency, June 21, 2012). **Azzam Wissam**, director of Hamas summer camps in the northern Gaza Strip, said that the slogan was meant to

¹ For further information on Hamas summer camps see the August 7, 2011 bulletin ["This year's summer camps in the Gaza Strip were once again used by Hamas and its military wing to combine social activity with Islamic and political indoctrination and paramilitary training."](#)

emphasize the importance of the issue of prisoners held in Israeli jails.

5. The campers engaged in the following types of activities:

- 1) **Identification with the prisoners:** The children created a "human chain," **gave presentations illustrating the so-called "tortures" undergone by the prisoners** and put on other shows.
- 2) **Paramilitary activities:** Some of the camps had paramilitary training, in which the children crawled as if under barbed wire, stood in military formation and had rifle practice. In some instances the campers wore uniforms.
- 3) **Ideological brainwashing:** The campers were **indoctrinated with the ideology of armed "resistance"** [i.e., terrorism] **against Israel**. They chanted slogans such as "One hand holds a pen and the other a rifle..." "...one hand studies and the other fights Israel..." (Filastin al-'Aan, July 12, 2012).
- 4) **Inculcating Islam through camps held for Qur'an memorization:** Several thousand children participated in Qur'an camps **held under the aegis of the ministry for religious endowment of the de-facto Hamas administration**, and the Dar al-Qur'an wal-Sunna Association. At a ceremony held to announce the opening of Hamas' summer camps, Ismail Haniya, head of the de-facto Hamas administration, gave \$50,000 to fund them, saying that he would give more to **"prepare the army that would liberate Al-Aqsa in the coming years."**



Left: Senior Hamas figures, among them Fathi Hamad (fourth from left), minister of the interior in the de-facto Hamas administration, visit a camp for Qur'an memorization (Safa News Agency, June, 2012). Right: Girls in a summer camp memorize the Qur'an (Picture from the paltimes.net website, June 12, 2012).

6. **Muhammad Abu Askar**, senior Hamas figure and one of the organizers of the summer camps in Jabaliya, said that the objective of the camps was to **bring up a generation of gun-**

carrying young men and to inculcate them with love of the homeland and **Islam as a way of life** so that **they would eventually participate in "the Palestinian liberation army."** **Mustafa al-Soaf**, a political commentator affiliated with Hamas, said that the summer camps were "**preparation for the day of victory**" (Fajar website, June 10 2012). Senior Hamas figures visited the camps and met with campers. **Ismail Haniya** met with children attending the camp in the Shati refugee camp, and said that "the hour victory is getting closer and closer," adding that the current generation of children will "[live to] see victory and liberation" (Safa News Agency, June 12, 2012).

Pictures of Hamas Summer Camp Activities

Paramilitary Training



Children engage in paramilitary training at a Hamas summer camp (Pictures from the Al-Quds website, June 10, 2012)



Children engage in paramilitary training at a Scout summer camp (Pictures from the PALDF and Hamas forum websites, July 22, 2012).

Identifying with Palestinian Prisoners Held in Israeli Jails



Left: Children dressed like prisoners. Right: Simulation of Israeli prison cells (Pictures from the gazacamps.ps website)

Visit from Senior Hamas Figures



Senior Hamas figures visit the summer camp in the Khan Yunis refugee camp (Pictures from the Hamas forum website, June 18, 2012)

Palestinian Islamic Jihad Summer Camps

7. The **Palestinian Islamic Jihad** organized about **50 camps throughout the Gaza Strip** this summer, opening them on June 3. They were attended by an estimated **ten thousand children and adolescents**. The camps' slogan was "A message of victory," intended to stress the organization's sensation of "victory" after a massive round of rocket fire in March 2012, which it led.² According to **Ahmed Mudallal**, senior PIJ figure, the objective of the slogan was "**to burn the ideology of the struggle against Israel into the [consciousness of] the younger generation.**"

8. During the camps, which lasted a week, ordinary recreational and amusement activities were combined with activities intended to foster identification with the Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails because of terrorist activities. Visits to the homes of prisoners, wounded and killed were arranged, as were visits to hospitals and to the graves of PIJ terrorist operatives who had been killed in the March 2012 escalation.

9. When the camps closed a festive ceremony was held in front of Red Cross headquarters in Gaza City and attended by senior PIJ figures. During the ceremony **Nafez Issam** said that the goal of the camps this year was to strengthen ties to and **identification with the prisoners and to reinforce the culture of "resistance"** [i.e., the culture of terrorism] **within the younger generation**. He added that there was **a need to prepare the next generation to continue**

² For further information see the March 22, 2012 bulletin ["The Palestinian terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip regard the last round of escalation as having negative results but claim 'victory.'"](#)

along the path of "jihad and resistance" (Filastin al-Yawm, July 9, 2012).

Pictures of Palestinian Islamic Jihad Summer Camp Activities

Paramilitary Training



Paramilitary training and identification with the prisoners in Israeli jails at PIJ summer camps (Pictures from the elqudos.com website).

Visiting Cemeteries



PIJ campers visit the graves of shaheeds (Pictures from the elqudos.com website).

UNRWA Summer Camps

10. As far as we know, UNRWA did not hold summer camps this year. Until this year the agency had a broad system of camps which annually hosted an estimated 250,000 Gazan children and adolescents, more than twice the number attending the terrorist organizations' camps. The

UNRWA camps were **coeducational** and their activities included sports and games, and **emphasized universal themes such as peace and coexistence**. They did not hold Islamic studies or paramilitary training exercises.

11. UNRWA gave its **budget deficit** as the reason for canceling the camps this year. However, in our assessment there were other reasons:

1) Since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip its summer camps have been **in competition with those of UNRWA**. Hamas, in its ongoing effort to control the Gazan public, **viewed the UNRWA camps as competing** with its own social, cultural and educational influence over the local population. As a result, in the past it repeatedly appealed to Gazan parents not to send their children to UNRWA summer camps.

2) Hamas and various other radical Islamic organizations accused the UNRWA summer camps of "corrupting" the morals of the youth (in previous years UNRWA was accused of holding coeducational activities, spreading the use of drugs and holding activities whose objective was to promote a reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis). There were also a number of incidents in previous years in which competition led to physical violence against UNRWA summer camps:³



UNRWA summer camp in the Gaza Strip torched, 2011 (Pictures from Ma'an News Agency, July 28, 2011).

12. In view of the above, it would seem that this year there was an increase in the number of children attending summer camps run by Hamas and the other terrorist organizations. Nevertheless, the number was smaller than the number of those who attended summer camps last year.

³ For further information about Hamas summer camps and attacks on UNRWA camps see the May 27, 2010 bulletin ["Educating the younger generation in the Gaza Strip: summer camps organized by UNRWA in "competition" with Hamas, are a target for threats and assaults."](#) and the September 14, 2010 bulletin ["This year Hamas' summer camps in the Gaza Strip again combined political Islamic indoctrination and paramilitary training with social activities."](#)