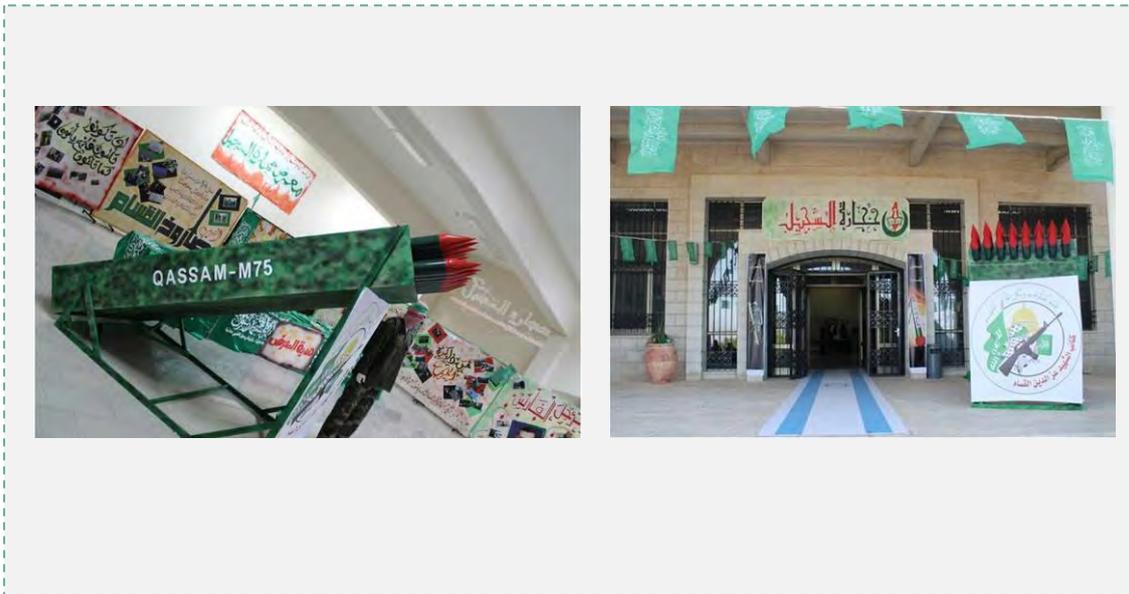




December 18, 2012

Hamas held mass rallies throughout Judea and Samaria to mark the 25th anniversary of its founding. The rallies, authorized by the Palestinian Authority, turned into demonstrations of Hamas power and forums for inciting to terrorism against Israel.



An exhibition organized at Beir Zeit University organized by Hamas featuring models of the M75 long-range rockets launched by Hamas to attack Israel in Operation Pillar of Defense. The entrance to the exhibition (right) is carpeted with an Israeli flag for visitors to walk on (Pictures from Hamas' Filastin al-'Aan website, December 5, 2012).

Overview

1. The Palestinian Authority recently allowed Hamas operatives in Judea and Samaria to hold **mass public events** to mark the 25th anniversary of the movement's founding. They were held in the main cities and on university campuses in Judea and Samaria, primarily in Nablus, Hebron, Qalqiliya and Tulkarm. Thousands of Palestinians participated, a **clear demonstration of Hamas' power in Judea and Samaria after four years in which the Palestinian Authority forbade or limited public Hamas activities**. The PA's security services oversaw the rallies and prevented them from turning into violent confrontations with the IDF.

2. **The rallies emphasized Hamas' narrative of "victory" in Operation Pillar of Defense.** Demonstrators carried models of rockets and listened to speeches given by Hamas activists in Judea and Samaria and from the Gaza Strip. The speeches, especially those by Hamas activists and operatives in the Gaza Strip, stressed the importance of the path of terrorism (jihad and the so-called "resistance") as the only way to restore the Palestinians' "full rights" (i.e., the destruction of the State of Israel). Senior Hamas figures called for strengthening the "resistance" in Judea and Samaria, claiming that all local, regional and international conditions were ripe for a third intifada, which would be "hard and decisive."¹

3. Providing the unusual authorization for Hamas to hold mass rallies in Judea and Samaria is part of the PA's current policy of **redefining the limits placed on its political rivals and promoting an atmosphere of reconciliation.**² It is a trend which has continued for the past year and a half, especially since the reconciliation agreement (signed in May 2011) and the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal (October 2011). Since then Hamas has significantly increased its public presence in **Judea and Samaria**, especially on issues where a Palestinian consensus is perceived to exist (such as the struggle of the Palestinian terrorist operatives imprisoned in Israeli jails). At the same time the PA allows the Hamas media to operate, and they cover various events through the prism of Hamas, inciting the local populace to terrorism and goading Palestinians to revolt against Israel. The most prominent media with correspondents on the ground in Judea and Samaria are Al-Aqsa TV, which broadcasts from the Gaza Strip, and Al-Quds TV, which broadcasts from Beirut.

4. In our assessment the Palestinian Authority gave Hamas permission to hold mass rallies because it understood that given the atmosphere prevailing in the Arab world in general and on the Palestinian street in particular, it would be hard to prevent such rallies from being held. Therefore, the PA considered it best to allow the local residents let off steam under the supervision of the Palestinian Authority and its security services. In addition, permission may have been given **as a signal to Israel and the international community as to the possible consequences of a political freeze and the need to strengthen the PA.**

¹ For example, **Yusuf Rizqa**, Ismail Haniya's political advisor, has said that third intifada against the [Israeli] "occupation" in the West Bank was very close (Alresala.net website, December 15, 2012). **Saleh al-Aroui**, a member of Hamas' political bureau, said that after the "victory" in the Gaza Strip the "resistance" in the West Bank had to be strengthened, construction in the settlements had to be ended and Israel had to be stopped (Al-Aqsa TV, December 13, 2012).

² The trend has been manifested by the PA's allowing hostile organizations and groups, such as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Hamas student faction and the Liberation Party (Harb al-Tahrir) to hold rallies.

5. The mass participation of the Palestinian population in the rallies reflects, in our assessment, **extensive support for Hamas** in Judea and Samaria.³ The support for Hamas and its accompanying incitement to terrorism are liable **to contribute to an increase in violence in Judea and Samaria**, even if the PA can be expected to prevent the situation from getting out of control. Violence in Judea and Samaria, so far limited to various types of "popular" activities (throwing stones and Molotov cocktails and attacking IDF soldiers), **has risen** since Operation Pillar of Defense, and especially since the upgrading of the PA's status in the UN.

Events Organized by Hamas to Mark the Anniversary of Its Founding

Overview

6. Hamas marked the 25th anniversary of its founding with a series of mass rallies and demonstrations throughout Judea and Samaria. The main rallies were held in the large cities, among them **Nablus, Hebron, Ramallah, Qalqiliya and Tulkarm**. They stressed the "victory" of the Palestinian "resistance" during Operation Pillar of Defense. The demonstrators carried models of Hamas-produced M75 rockets fired into central Israel which symbolized the "resistance" and "victory." Senior figures from Hamas and the other terrorist organizations participated in the rallies. Some of the speakers, especially Hamas activists from the Gaza Strip who spoke by telephone, **praised of the right to "resistance" and jihad. The rallies were held under the supervision of the PA's security services, which prevented them from turning into confrontations with the IDF.**

³ One indication of sympathy for Hamas in Judea and Samaria is the outcome of a public opinion poll taken by the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research directed by **Khalil Shqaqi**. The survey was conducted between **December 13 and 15, 2012**, and its results indicated increasing public support for Ismail Haniya and diminishing support for Mahmoud Abbas. According to the survey, if elections for the presidency were held in the Palestinian Authority today, 48% would vote for Ismail Haniya, as opposed to 45% for Mahmoud Abbas.



Hamas poster for the rallies in Judea and Samaria. The caption reads, "The [West] Bank renews its commitment and swears loyalty to the resistance (Ajnad Facebook page, December 15, 2012)"

Events in Hebron

7. A mass rally was held in Hebron, attended by **Aziz Dweik**, Hamas activist and chairman of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), and representatives from the local Palestinian organizations. **Ismail Haniya** greeted the participants in a telephone conversation from the Gaza Strip. Aziz Dweik appealed to Mahmoud Abbas to end the internal Palestinian schism, to stop the so-called "political detentions" in Judea and Samaria and to release Hamas prisoners in PA jails (Safa News Agency, December 14, 2012). **Palestinian police stationed at a distance followed the rally and prevented friction with IDF forces** (Ajnad Facebook page, December 14, 2012).



Left: A rally in Hebron to mark the 25th anniversary of the founding of Hamas (Hamas forum, December 14, 2012). Right: Palestinian police prevent demonstrators from approaching IDF forces (Ajnad Facebook page, December 14, 2012).

Hamas Rally at the Palestine Polytechnic University in Hebron

8. On December 18 Hamas held a rally at the Palestine Polytechnic University (PPU) in Hebron. Hundreds of Hamas-flag waving students participated. **They held a military display in which they wore uniforms and carried models of rockets.** Aziz Dweik, Hamas chairman of the PLC, attended, as did other Hamas Council member, representatives of the university administration, and members of the families of Palestinian terrorist operatives who had been imprisoned or killed.

9. **Aziz Dweik** gave a speech in which he blessed the "shaheeds" who were PPU graduates, saying that "the path of Hamas is the path of the victory of the truth over the lie, the victory of the resistance over the occupation and its collaborators." **Fawzi Barhoum**, Hamas spokesman in the Gaza Strip, gave a speech by telephone in which he said that "Hamas has written the path to liberation in blood and resistance, and from the beginning of the operation [Operation Pillar of Defense] had ensured victory" (Filastin al-'Aan, December 18, 2012).



Hamis rally at the PPU in Hebron. Masked students put on a military display and carry models of rockets (Radio Al-Aqsa website, December 18, 2012).

Events in Nablus

10. On December 13 a mass rally was held in the center of Nablus. After the afternoon prayer at the Al-Nasr mosque, participants gathered in Al-Shuhadaa Square in the center of the city, where the rally was held. It was attended by representatives from the PLC, the governor of the Nablus district and other prominent public figures (Safa News Agency, December 13, 2012). Among the participants was Amin Maqboul, secretary of Fatah's Revolutionary Council.

11. A telephone-transmitted speech was made by **Husam Badran**, a terrorist operative who had been released from jail and deported to the Gaza Strip. He said that "**resistance**" [i.e., terrorism and violence] **was the only way to restore the rights of the Palestinian people and the only way to achieve national unity**. Amin Maqboul also spoke, praising Hamas and the "hands which brought victory in Operation Pillar of Defense" (Safa News Agency, December 13, 2012).

12. According to **Adnan al-Dhmeiri**, spokesman for the security services of the Palestinian Authority, the district government had authorized Hamas to hold the rally. He claimed the reason was the "positive atmosphere and victory of all the organizations over Israeli aggression in Gaza and Mahmoud Abbas' achievement in the UN" (Ma'an News Agency, December 10, 2012).



The rally in Nablus. Left: Demonstrators at the Hamas rally in Nablus wave Hamas flags. Right: Demonstrators carry models of rockets (Safa News Agency, December 13, 2012).

Ramallah



The Hamas rally in Ramallah (Wafa News Agency, December 14, 2012)

Tulkarm

13. The rally in Tulkarm took place on December 14. Demonstrators waved Hamas and Palestinian flags and **chanted slogans in favor of "resistance."** A speech was given by **Hassan Khraisheh**, Hamas-affiliated deputy speaker of the PLC. He said that the **Palestinian people wanted to unite under the banner of the resistance** (Ajnad News, December 14, 2012).



March through the streets of Tulkarm (Hamas forum website, December 14, 2012).

Qalqiliya

14. The rally in Qalqiliya was held on December 15. Demonstrators chanted slogans in support of Hamas and its military-terrorist wing in light of Operation Pillar of Defense, and called for national Palestinian unity. A speech was given by **Nasser Abd al-Jawad**, a Hamas-faction member of the PLC, in which he said that **Hamas' presence in Judea and Samaria was alive and well despite the difficulties it had encountered in recent years**. Speaking via telephone, **Sheikh Talal al-Baz**, a Hamas terrorist operative released from an Israeli jail and today living in Qatar, stressed **Hamas' adherence to the idea of jihad and "resistance"** [i.e., terrorism] until the so-called "liberation" of Palestine (Alresala.net website, December 15, 2012).



Hamas flags and a model of rockets at the Hamas rally in Qalqiliya, December 15, 2012 (Ajnad Facebook page, December 15, 2012).

Hamas Exhibition at Beir Zeit University

15. On December 10, before the rallies were held, the Islamic block at Beir Zeit University marked the 25th anniversary of the founding of Hamas with a series of events. Students marched across the campus holding Hamas flags and signs in support of Hamas, as well as **models of rockets and pictures of senior Hamas figures and prisoners**. After the march a rally was held with the theme "the path to victory." It was attended by family members of Palestinians who had been killed, prisoners who had been released and Hamas-faction members of the PLC, among them Jamal al Tawil, Ahmed Attoun and Muhammad Abu Tir. **Hama arch-terrorist Yahya Ayash's mother spoke at the rally, as did the mother of suicide bomber Ihab Abu Salim** (Paltoday and Safa News Agency, December 10, 2012).

16. There was also an exhibition on campus to celebrate Hamas' so-called "victory" in Operation Pillar of Defense. It was held at the entrance to the department of literature and featured pictures and models of M75 rockets (medium-range rockets manufactured in the Gaza Strip with Iranian technology). There were pictures of Ahmed al-Jaabari and other terrorist operatives who had been killed during the operation. **The entrance to the exhibition was carpeted with a large Israeli flag for visitors to walk on** (Safa News Agency and Filastin al-'Aan, December 4 and 5, 2012).



Hamas-faction members of the PLC walk on the Israeli flag on their way out of the Beir Zeit University exhibition marking the 25th anniversary of the founding of Hamas (Safa News Agency, December 5, 2012).