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Prioritization of Hamas' Military Buildup vs. the Gaza Strip's Civilian Needs: Hamas' genuine strategic priorities according to Khaled Mashaal, about a year after Operation Cast Lead



Khaled Mashaal, chairman of Hamas' political bureau, at a conference of Arab parties where he said that most of the money received by Hamas and most of its efforts were invested in its military buildup (Paltimes.net, November 12, 2009).

1. The rebuilding of the Gaza Strip after Operation Protective Edge, once it ends, can be expected to be an important issue on the Arab and international agenda. It is therefore interesting to note remarks made by Khaled Mashaal, chairman of Hamas' political bureau, **about a year after Operation Cast Lead** (when the civilian rebuilding of the Gaza Strip was also on the agenda).

2. On November 12, 2009, Khaled Mashaal met with several senior figures at a meeting of Arab parties in Damascus. One of his main themes was that **Hamas would continue the path of "resistance"** [i.e., terrorism], and therefore most of Hamas' money and efforts in the Gaza Strip were invested in military preparations. His main talking points were the following (Paltimes.net):¹

¹ For further information see the November 17, 2009 [bulletin "Khaled Mashaal makes it clear that Hamas is determined to continue the path of 'resistance' \(i.e., terrorism\) and that 'other statements are political maneuvers.' He reveals that Hamas uses most of its financial resources in the Gaza Strip for military purposes."](#)

1) **Most of Hamas' efforts in the Gaza Strip are invested in military preparations:** "On the surface, [statements in the Gaza Strip] refer to reconciliation [between Hamas and Fatah] and rebuilding, however, what is not revealed is that **most of Hamas' funds and efforts are invested in the resistance and military preparations...** We are intent on the resistance."

وفيما يتعلق بغزة، قال مشعل "ظاهر الصورة في غزة أنهم يتحدثون عن المصالحة والبناء، لكن باطن الصورة يقول إن معظم المال والجهد يذهب للمقاومة والاستعدادات العسكرية". .. مؤكداً "نحن شغالين على المقاومة".

Selection from Khaled Mashaal's original text

2) **Hamas, which has financial difficulties, needs contributions for the "resistance:"** Khaled Mashaal urged the Arab parties to enlist contributions in preparation for the next stage of the "resistance" [i.e., anti-Israeli terrorist activities], since **Hamas was in financial straits.** He warned against conditioning financial support for Hamas on the "resistance's" carrying out terrorist [attacks] because, he said, **"the money is invested in preparing for escalating the 'resistance.'"**

3. Khaled Mashaal made the remarks almost year after Operation Cast Lead, when the civilian rebuilding of the Gaza Strip was proceeding slowly. The remarks reflected Hamas' genuine order of priorities, **the result of its being a "resistance" organization and of its strategy in the conflict with Israel.** Hamas' top priority was **the rehabilitation of its military infrastructure in the Gaza Strip,** which was damaged in Operation Cast Lead. It channeled most of the funds that poured into the Gaza Strip, including those from Arab and international aid funds into its military buildup, **at the expense of the civilian rebuilding of the Gaza Strip.**

4. In retrospect it is evident that **Hamas's order of priority, as reflected by Khaled Mashaal's remarks, was implemented on the ground** during the five years between Operation Cast Lead and Operation Protective Edge (during which Hamas also had to deal with the consequences of Operation Pillar of Defense). Funds and resources (such as cement and iron) received by the Gaza Strip for civilian purposes were used for Hamas' military-terrorist infrastructure, **particularly on increasing the number and quality of its rockets and on the tunnel project.** In ITIC assessment, **Hamas' order of priorities will be on the political agenda after Operation Protective Edge, and will necessitate close supervision of how resources funneled into the Gaza Strip for its rebuilding are used.**