



March 20, 2016

## Hamas as a Supporter of Anti-Egyptian Terrorism: Hamas-Egyptian relations deteriorated following the Egyptian accusation of Hamas involvement in the 2015 assassination of the Egyptian attorney general. Egypt is also aware of Hamas' collaboration with ISIS's Sinai Province in its terrorist campaign.



Egypt's Minister of the Interior Magdi Abdel Ghaffar holds a press conference where he accuses Hamas of involvement in the assassination of the Egyptian attorney general (YouTube, March 6, 2016).

### Overview

1. At the end of February 2016, Abu Abdallah al-Muhajer, a jihadist operative fighting in the ranks of ISIS in Syria, sent an open letter to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The letter, which **in ITIC assessment is authentic**, strongly criticized the collaboration between Hamas and ISIS's Sinai Province (the Sinai Province of the Islamic State). According to the letter, while the collaboration did in fact support the Sinai Province's campaign against the Egyptian regime, there was neither religious nor practical justification for it, because Hamas was an "infidel" movement that oppressed ISIS supporters in the Gaza Strip.

2. The letter describes **the military collaboration between ISIS' Sinai Province and Hamas' military-terrorist wing, the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, as follows**: ISIS's Sinai Province operatives **smuggle weapons from Libya and Sudan into the Gaza Strip**, and Hamas **manufactures weapons** (explosives and ammunition) for the Sinai Province, treats **wounded ISIS operatives in hospitals in the Gaza Strip**, provides ISIS's Sinai Province with **communications equipment and uniforms**, and **hosts**

**senior ISIS operatives in the Gaza Strip** (See Appendix A). **Those elements of the collaboration have been exposed in the past by the Israeli, Arab and Western media.**

**3. Since it was formally established (November 10, 2014), ISIS's Sinai Province has been waging a determined guerilla and terrorist campaign against the Egyptian regime.** The Egyptian security forces have not managed to uproot its strongholds in the northern Sinai Peninsula (the areas of Rafah, Sheikh Zuweid and El Arish). In addition, ISIS's Sinai Province initiates terrorist attacks inside Egypt itself and aspires to carry out more. **The Egyptian regime is well aware of the collaboration between ISIS's Sinai Province and Hamas.** That has been **the main cause of the deterioration in the relations between Egypt and Hamas during the past year and for the measures taken by the Egyptian security forces on the ground against Hamas.** The measures have included closing, flooding and destroying tunnels, establishing a buffer zone along the Egyptian-Gaza Strip border, closing the Rafah crossing and the "abduction" of four operatives of Hamas' naval commando after they left the Gaza Strip.<sup>1</sup> **Egypt also conducts a political-media-legal campaign against Hamas,** including designating Hamas military wing, the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, as a terrorist organization. Egypt is still considering designating the entire Hamas movement as a terrorist organization (See Appendix C).

**4. On March 6, 2016, tensions between Egypt and Hamas increased when Magdi Abdel Ghaffar, Egypt's minister of the interior, held a press conference where he accused Hamas of involvement in the assassination of Hisham Barakat, the Egyptian attorney general.** The assassination, carried out in June 2015, was attributed to operatives of the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas vigorously denied the accusations but Egyptian sources have repeatedly claimed that **Hamas provides military support for Muslim Brotherhood terrorists, including training them in the Gaza Strip.** Hamas recently sent a delegation of its senior figures to meet with Egyptian General Intelligence in a effort to defuse the situation. The fact that Egyptian General Intelligence received the delegation was a sign that Egypt was ready to enter into a dialogue with Hamas. However, **in practical terms Hamas apparently achieved nothing at the meeting** (See Appendix B).

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<sup>1</sup> On August 19, 2015, four terrorist operatives of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades' naval commando unit were "abducted" in the northern Sinai Peninsula. They had left the Gaza Strip, probably for training. They crossed the border at the Rafah crossing and boarded a bus on their way to the Cairo airport. After a short distance the bus was stopped by armed, masked men and the four were taken. Sources within Hamas claimed they had information that the Egyptian security forces were behind the abduction. Egypt denied the claims. The fate of the four remains unknown.

5. In summary, Hamas, which collaborates with ISIS's Sinai Province, **is subject to strong pressures from Egypt**, increasing the movement's current strategic distress. **The Egyptians perceive Hamas as a threat to their national security because it supports radical Islamist organizations waging a campaign against the country** (ISIS's Sinai Province and the Muslim Brotherhood). Their perception is probably based on reliable information concerning the collaboration between ISIS's Sinai Province and Hamas. In addition, there are Egyptian accusations, probably based on the interrogation of detainees, that Hamas supports the Muslim Brotherhood's terrorist attacks in Egypt. That is because they share a common ideology and hostility to the Egyptian regime (Hamas is the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood). **The Egyptian perception will probably make it difficult for Hamas to significantly improve its relations with Egypt.**

## Appendix A

### Hammas-Sinai Province Collaboration Exposed in Open Letter from Gazan ISIS Operative Fighting in Syria



The first page of the open letter sent by Abu Abdallah al-Muhajer to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Justpaste.it, February 24, 2016).

1. On **February 24, 2016**, an open letter was published, written by **Abu Abdallah al-Muhajer**, an ISIS operative from the Gaza Strip who is fighting in the ranks of ISIS in Syria. It was written in February 2016 and sent to **ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**. The letter detailed the collaboration between ISIS's Sinai Province and Hamas. He claimed some of the information was based on his own experience in the Gaza Strip, and some was passed on to him by other operatives in Syria. **He said he would not divulge the full extent of the collaboration** (by implication, not to harm ISIS's Sinai Province) (Justpaste.it, February 24, 2016).

2. According to Abu Abdallah al-Muhajer, Hamas collaborates with the Sinai Province in the following ways:

- a. **Smuggling weapons and money** – ISIS's Sinai Province **enables the smuggling of weapons and money to Hamas in the Gaza Strip** ("the trail of weapons and money leads to Hamas from the Sinai Peninsula"). **The weapons come from Libya and Sudan**. Hamas exploits the familiarity of ISIS's Sinai Province operatives with **the routes leading from Libya and Sudan through Egypt to the Gaza Strip**. According to Abu Abdallah al-Muhajer, **several Sinai Province operatives smuggling weapons for Hamas were killed when their convoys were attacked by Israel**.

b. **Manufacturing weapons** – To a great extent, ISIS's Sinai Province relies on Hamas and its military wing for **explosives, IEDs and ammunition**. They are manufactured by Hamas in the Gaza Strip and smuggled to operatives of ISIS's Sinai Province. As opposed to most of the weaponry manufactured by Hamas, **weapons smuggled to ISIS's Sinai Province do not bear the Hamas logo**.

c. **Hospitalization of the wounded** – Hamas accepts ISIS's Sinai Province operatives wounded in battle and treats them in Gaza Strip hospitals. Their security is provided by Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades operatives.

d. **Logistic support** – Hamas provides **wireless communication centers** for ISIS's Sinai Province because its communications networks are often destroyed by the Egyptian army. **Hamas also provides them with uniforms manufactured in the Gaza Strip**.

e. **Mutual visits and ongoing contacts** – **"Friendly, direct lines of communications exist" between Hamas and Sinai Province operatives "at all hours of the day and night."** In addition, senior Sinai Province operatives customarily visit the Gaza Strip and meet with Hamas and Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades leaders to coordinate collaboration. ISIS's Sinai Province operatives visiting the Gaza Strip **are received with great respect and are hosted at the houses of Hamas operatives**, where they are feasted (while not far away, according to Abu Abdallah al-Muhajer, Hamas operatives abuse and torture ISIS supporters in Hamas jails).

3. **Abu Abdallah al-Muhajer discusses the motives of both sides**. He claims that ISIS's Sinai Province, which is the strongest province outside Syria and Iraq, **"profits greatly from the relations [with Hamas]"** because in that way it **increases its military capabilities to fight against Egyptian President el-Sisi** (accused by Abu Abdallah al-Muhajer of having "abandoned the religion of Islam"). That, he says, is compatible with the interests of Hamas. Hamas gave **ISIS's Sinai Province weapons so they could use them to put an end to the current Egyptian regime and prepare the ground for the return to power of the Muslim Brotherhood** (loathsome in the eyes of Abu Abdallah al-Muhajer). Therefore, **ISIS's Sinai Province, consciously or not, is a Hamas proxy**.

4. Despite the benefits ISIS's Sinai Province receives from Hamas, according to Abu Abdallah al-Muhajer, their relations are "dubious," and violate Islamic law. ISIS believes that Hamas, including the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, is an "infidel"

movement, and that is known by every operative in Syria and Iraq. Moreover, he complains that  **Hamas oppresses ISIS's supporters in the Gaza Strip while ISIS's Sinai Province ignores it because collaboration with Hamas serves its interests.** Hamas "kills, arrests and tortures the [ISIS] brothers [in the Gaza Strip] every day because they support the Islamic State" [Abu Abdallah al-Muhajer gives examples of a murder and an arrest of two jihadist operatives in the Gaza Strip]. According to the letter,  **ISIS's Sinai Province operatives do not condition any agreement with Hamas on ending the abuse of operatives in the Gaza Strip and on the release of operatives held by Hamas.**

5. Abu Abdallah al-Muhajer ended his letter with a request to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi  **not to abandon ISIS supporters in the Gaza Strip.** He repeatedly stressed that only ISIS could help them because ISIS's Sinai Province ignored them and preferred to increase its collaboration with Hamas.

#### 6. **Media Exposure of the Collaboration between Hamas and the Sinai Province**

7. It was not the first time the close collaboration between  **Hamas and ISIS's Sinai Province** was exposed. It was revealed a number of times last year by the Israeli, Arab and Western media:

- a. 1) On  **July 2, 2015, General Yoav Mordechai, the Israeli Coordinator for Government Activities in the Territories,** was interviewed by telephone by Al-Jazeera. The interview was held after an ISIS's Sinai Province terrorist attack on the Egyptian army. Mordechai said the following: "I want to say this clearly, and I have verified information,  **that Hamas in the Gaza Strip provides the Sinai Province with organizational support including weapons and ammunition.** According to our information Hamas gave the Sinai Province support in the recent attacks carried out in the Sinai Peninsula. Some of the evidence is the following... **Abdallah Kishta trains the ISIS terrorists in Sinai, and he belongs to Hamas. Wael Faraj, a Hamas battalion commander, smuggled ISIS terrorists into the Gaza Strip for medical treatment during the month of Ramadan...**" (YouTube, July 2, 2015).



**General Yoav Mordechai, Israeli the Coordinator for Government Activities in the Territories, in a telephone interview with Al-Jazeera TV after an ISIS terrorist attack against the Egyptian army in the Sinai Peninsula (YouTube, July 2, 2016).**

b. According to an article by **Shlomi Eldar** in **Al-Monitor**, the relations between Hamas and the jihadists in the Sinai Peninsula were formed over a period of years. They peaked after the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood regime and the rise of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi to power. **The jihadist organizations in the Sinai Peninsula helped the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades smuggle weapons, ammunition, fuel and building materials** into the Gaza Strip. In return, **Hamas provided the Sinai Province and other jihadist terrorist organizations with a considerable amount of the weapons smuggled in from Libya and Sudan** (Al-Monitor, July 6, 2015).

c. **General Yoav Mordechai**, Israeli the Coordinator for Government Activities in the Territories was interviewed by Elaph, a daily Internet newspaper operating from Saudi Arabia. He said that Israel had **verified information that ISIS's Sinai Province operatives entered the Gaza Strip through the tunnels to receive [medical] treatment in Hamas' hospitals**. Hamas operatives, under direct orders from the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, transported wounded operatives of ISIS's Sinai Province **through the tunnels to the Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis**. Hamas operatives use the same tunnels to enter and exit the Sinai Peninsula and to **smuggle explosives, weapons, merchandise, etc.** into the Gaza Strip. General Mordechai added that the collaboration had existed for a long time. In return **ISIS provided Hamas with money, weapons and merchandise** (Elaph, February 8, 2016).

d. **Egyptian "security sources" in the Sinai Peninsula** reported there were **250 armed ISIS operatives** in the Gaza Strip today. Twenty of Hamas' operatives train them in the use of car bombs and the construction of IEDs. After training they return to the Sinai Peninsula through the tunnels to carry out terrorist attacks (Al-Watan, March 9, 2016).

## Appendix B

### Hamas Accused of Involvement in the Assassination of the Egyptian Attorney General

1. **On June 29, 2015, a car bomb was used to assassinate Hisham Barakat, the Egyptian attorney general.** The car hit the convoy transporting him from his home in a Cairo suburb to his office in the center of the city. Four people were wounded in the explosion, two civilians and two policemen. Since Abdel Fattah el-Sisi became president **judges have become a favorite target of the Islamist terrorist organizations.** That is because of the heavy sentences Egypt's judicial system imposed on former Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, who was affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, and on other Muslim Brotherhood activists. Before the attorney general was assassinated, three judges were shot to death in El Arish (May 2015).

### Hamas Accused of Supporting the Attorney General's Assassination

2. On March 6, 2016, **Magdi Abdel Ghaffar, the Egyptian minister of the interior,** held a press conference where **he accused Hamas of helping Muslim Brotherhood operatives assassinate the attorney general.** He claimed **Hamas had trained the assassins** in the Gaza Strip and **helped them escape to the Sinai Peninsula after the attack.** He also claimed that **the assassins' contacts and handlers were Muslim Brotherhood operatives located in Turkey.** According to Magdi Abdel Ghaffar, **the suspects admitted they had been trained by Hamas operatives in the Gaza Strip for six weeks** (Al-Youm Al-Sabaa, March 7, 2016).

3. "Security sources" quoted by the Egyptian media also reported that **operatives in the squad that assassinated the attorney general admitted Hamas' involvement in the attack.** Hamas had provided the Muslim Brotherhood operatives involved in the assassination with the following support (Al-Youm Al-Sabaa, March 6, 2016):

- a. **Recruiting the assassins and sending them to the Gaza Strip** – The recruiter was a man named **Sayid al-Manufi,** who was in close contact with students at Al-Azhar University affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. He recruited young men whom he sent to Hamas training camps in the Gaza Strip with the help of five smugglers from the Sinai Peninsula. **He received his instructions from senior Muslim Brotherhood operatives who had escaped to Turkey, Qatar and the Gaza Strip.**

b. **Contact person in the Gaza Strip** – The young men who were sent to the Gaza Strip met their contact, **an intelligence officer known as "Abu Omar."** He had five aides whose real names are unknown (three of them were "Abu Hazifa," "Abu Abdallah" and "Abu Yasser"). "Abu Omar" maintained telephone contact with the young men training in the Gaza Strip, including after they had been sent to Egypt on terrorist missions.

c. **Training in the Gaza Strip – The assassins' terrorist training lasted 45 days and was held at Hamas training camps in the Gaza Strip.** They were trained to launch terrorist attacks in Egypt, and in military tactics, guerilla warfare, preparing car bombs, detonating IEDs by remote control, manufacturing explosives and blowing up buildings.

## Hamas' Response

4. **Hamas was quick to deny every detail of the Egyptian accusations.** On March 7, 2016, the day after Magdi Abdel Ghaffar's press conference, Hamas held a press conference of its own where **senior Hamas figure Salah al-Bardawil** denied the accusations. He called the press conference held by the Egyptian minister of the interior "astounding," unrealistic and contrary to the facts. He claimed Hamas had no intention of harming Egypt's security or the security of any other Arab country, and that its war was only against Israel. He called on Egypt to retract its accusations and expressed hope they would not harm the relations between the two sides, which had [apparently] improved recently (Hamas website, March 7, 2016).

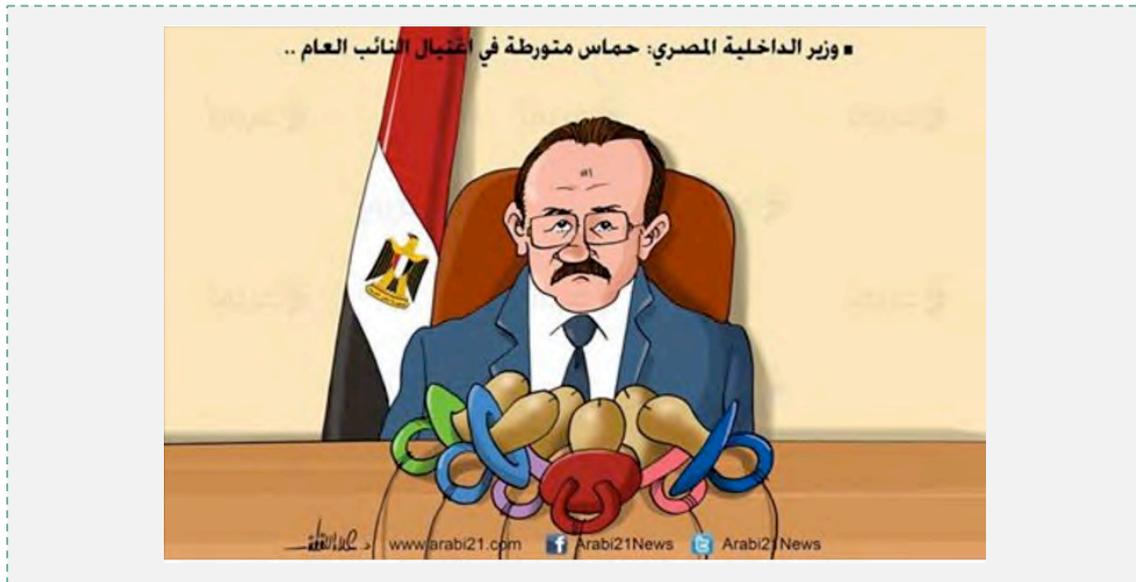
5. Senior Hamas figures repeatedly denied the Egyptian accusations:

a. **Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas' political bureau,** denied the Egyptian accusations, claiming they were untrue. He claimed Hamas did not interfere in the internal affairs of Egypt, not in the past, not in the present, and not in the future (Interview with Khaled Mashaal, France24, March 14, 2016).

b. **Sami Abu Zuhri, a Hamas spokesman,** condemned the Egyptian accusations. He claimed they were untrue and not befitting the efforts Hamas invested in developing ties with Egypt. He called on Egypt not to involve the Palestinians in its internal conflicts (Hamas website, March 6, 2016).

c. **Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of Hamas' political bureau,** claimed Hamas was not involved in any way in Egypt's internal affairs, and denied the Egyptian accusations about the assassination of the attorney general. He claimed great

effort had been invested in recent months to improve Hamas' relations with Egypt (Hamas website, March 8, 2016).



**Hamas cartoon mocking the Egyptian minister of the interior. The Arabic reads, "The Egyptian minister of the interior: Hamas is involved in the assassination of the attorney general..." (Facebook page of Paldf, March 8, 2016).**

## Hamas Delegation Visits Egypt

6. To calm the troubled waters and regulate relations with Egypt, Hamas sent a delegation of 12 of its senior figures to Egypt on the first such visit since Operation Protective Edge (the delegation included **Mahmoud al-Zahar, Musa Abu Marzouq and Khalil al-Haya**). They arrived in Cairo on March 12, 2016, and met with **Khaled Fawzy, head of Egyptian General Intelligence**. The Palestinian media reported that the objective of the visit was to regulate bilateral relations in the wake of the accusation that Hamas was involved in attorney general's assassination.

7. Egypt's agreeing to host the delegation in Cairo signaled it was ready to hold a dialogue with Hamas and did not have an interest in burning bridges. According to reports in the Egyptian and Arab media, Egypt demanded Hamas specifically commit itself not to provide a safe harbor in the Gaza Strip for jihadist operatives. Hamas, according to the media reports, raised a number of issues on its agenda that related to Egypt (among them the construction of a port, the tunnels and the Rafah crossing). Apparently the visit of the Hamas delegation to Egypt did not have practical results.

## The Legal Aspect: Stages in Designating Hamas as a Terrorist Organization and Outlawing Its Activities in Egypt

### Overview

1. In the era after the toppling of the Mohamed Morsi regime **the deterioration in the relations between Egypt and the Hamas movement has accelerated**. That is the result of the Egyptian perception of Hamas as an arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, while Hamas' rule in the Gaza Strip is perceived as a source of subversion and terrorism exported to Egypt. The deterioration in relations contributed to the terrorist campaign launched by the Salafist-jihadi networks in the Gaza Strip against the Egyptian regime, which today centers around ISIS's Sinai Province (which collaborates with Hamas).
2. There are also **legal aspects to the deterioration**, and the Cairo Court for Urgent Matters has repeatedly deliberated appeals to designate Hamas as a terrorist organization. In 2015 the appeals were partially successful. The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, was designated as a terrorist organization. Today the possibility of designating the entire Hamas movement as a terrorist organization is on the Egyptian agenda. The milestones of the case are the following:

### 2014

3. On **March 4, 2014**, after three postponements, the Cairo Court for Urgent Matters handed down a ruling banning Hamas activity in Egypt (including groups and bodies subordinate to and supported by it). The ruling was handed down because it was claimed Hamas supported "extremist groups," which since the ousting of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, had escalated their attacks on the Egyptian security forces. According to reports in the Egyptian media at the time, the ruling was not final and **government authorization was necessary to enforce it** (Al-Youm al-Sabaa and Al-Masri al-Youm, March 4, 2014).
4. The ruling was made **after a formal appeal by attorney Dr. Samir Sabri to interim Egyptian President Adly Mansour and Egyptian Minister of the Interior Muhammad Ibrahim demanding that they designate Hamas as a terrorist organization**, as had many other countries around the globe. **His argument was that Hamas was an arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was outlawed in Egypt** (Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, March 5, 2014). He presented the court with 45 examples of

terrorist attacks carried out in the Sinai Peninsula at the time in which he claimed Hamas had been involved. He said that **"Hamas is a terrorist movement that collects money, took over the Gaza Strip and is one of the arms of the terrorist Muslim Brotherhood"** (Akhbarak.net, March 5, 2014).

5. Following the ruling of the Cairo Court for Urgent Measures, **Dr. Samir Sabri issued a formal warning regarding its enforcement.** It was sent to the Egyptian prime minister, minister of defense, minister of foreign affairs, the head of general intelligence, the director of the immigration and passport authority and the director of the security authority for Egyptian ports. He said that not fully enforcing the ruling of the court would lead to legal measures being taken in accordance with Egyptian penal law (Akhbarak.net, March 6, 2014). In response, **Nabil al-Fahmy, the Egyptian foreign minister,** said that **his office was studying the ruling to be able to enforce it.** (Quds.net, March 5, 2014).



**Attorney Samir Sabri, who initiated the ruling designating Hamas as a terrorist organization, interviewed by Egyptian TV immediately after the ruling was handed down by the court in Cairo (YouTube, March 4, 2016).**

## 2015

6. At the end of January 2015, in the wake of a string of terrorist attacks in the Sinai Peninsula, **an Egyptian court ruled that the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas military-terrorist wing, was a terrorist organization.** A representative of the prosecution said that the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades had been **involved in terrorist attacks in Egypt.** He said they exploited the tunnels along the Egypt-Gaza Strip border **to enter Egypt, finance their terrorist attacks and smuggle in the weapons used to kill Egyptian security force personnel** (Youm7.com, January 31,

2015). In ITIC assessment the decision was based on Egyptian awareness of the collaboration between Hamas and ISIS's Sinai Province.

7. On **February 28, 2015**, a month after the previous ruling, following an appeal of two Egyptian lawyers, Dr. Samir Sabri and Ashraf Sayid, **the Egyptian Court for Urgent Matters in Cairo designated the entire Hamas movement as terrorist organization** (and not just its military wing). The Egyptian authorities appealed the ruling. The Administrative Court in Cairo headed by **Judge Yahya Dakroury, deputy Egyptian prime minister**, transferred the case to the Civil Service Commission (Al-Masri al-Youm, March 11, 2015). Somewhat later the lawyer who initiated the appeal, Samir Sabri, retracted his petition. He claimed he did not want to make it difficult for the Egyptian leadership to act in matters regarding the internal Palestinian reconciliation (Al-Shorouk, March 17, 2015).



March in the Gaza Strip to protest the Egyptian ruling. The Arabic reads, "The ruling of the Egyptian courts [is] directed against [Egypt's] history." The small print reads, "Hamas [is] resistance... Hamas is not terrorism" (Filastin al-A'an, February 28, 2015).

8. On **July 6, 2015**, the **Cairo Court for Urgent Matters ruled in favor of the appeal not to designate the Hamas movement as a terrorist organization**, voiding the initial ruling (Al-Masri al-Youm, June 6, 2015). However, **the court's ruling pertained to Hamas but not its military-terrorist wing, which remained designated as a terrorist organization.**

## 2016

9. On **March 15, 2016**, following the statement of the minister of the interior regarding Hamas' involvement in the assassination of the attorney general, the **Egyptian judicial system renewed dealing with designating the entire Hamas movement as a**

**terrorist organization.** The Cairo Court for Urgent Matters will convene its first meeting on March 31, 2016, **to discuss the legal suit to limit Hamas' activities inside Egypt and detain anyone professing Hamas ideology.**

10. The case was brought before the court by an attorney named **Abd al-Rahim Ali Mohamed, who accused Hamas of being a terrorist organization planning terrorist attacks in Egypt.** According to the accusation, Hamas interferes in Egypt's internal affairs and has been involved in a number of terrorist attacks, raids on prisons, and the assassination of Egyptian police and soldiers in the Sinai Peninsula. Hamas is also accused of belonging to and identifying with the Muslim Brotherhood.