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Hostility towards Israel continues to be a fundamental element of Iranian foreign policy

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An Anti-Israeli Iranian poster (IRNA, July 1, 2015).

Overview

1. Iran's diplomatic charm offensive, which began in the summer of 2013 with the election of Hassan Rouhani as Iranian president, and the nuclear agreement signed with the Western powers in the summer of 2015, raised the question of **whether Iran's foreign policy towards Israel had become more moderate**. Generally speaking, Iranian policy is predicated on a revolutionary ideological vision, but in the past the Iranian regime has been pragmatic concerning its national and political interests. However, **its foreign policy towards Israel remains unchanged**.

2. President Rouhani's rhetoric towards Israel is more moderate than that of his predecessors and the issue of Israel does not seem to be one of his administration's high priorities. However, he is not the Iranian political system's final authority, and Iran's policies towards Israel, **dictated by the supreme leader and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)**, have clearly not changed. Senior Iranian officials have reacted harshly to hints of a change towards Israel, indicating that **Iran's**

basic, uncompromising hostility to Israel remains a consistent element of the Islamic Republic's official foreign policy. During the past year, the Iranian leadership, led by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, **continually voiced strong anti-Israel statements, openly advocating the destruction of the State of Israel.**

3. Hostility to Israel continues to be a major component of the Iranian regime's worldview and enjoys **an almost total political consensus.** Explicit threats against Israel are also made **by senior members of the Iranian military establishment.** On the sidelines of Iranian public discourse it is possible to discern the beginnings of change. This change, however, is limited to **circles without substantial influence on Iranian foreign policy,** among them pro-reform academics.

4. Iran's hostility towards Israel is not limited to propaganda but is also translated into action. Iran continues to **encourage, promote and support anti-Israel terrorist activity, which is carried out by the Palestinian terrorist organizations and Hezbollah.** Recent developments in Iraq and Syria have nevertheless compelled Iran to invest most of its effort in halting the spread of ISIS and in supporting and defending the Assad regime. To a great extent that has limited the Qods Force's ability to advance the Iranian regime's objectives for the Israeli-Palestinian arena. **Iran continues, however, to promote terrorist activity against Israel, although not particularly extensively at this point.**

5. Despite the crisis in Iran-Hamas relations which began with the beginning of the Syrian civil war, **Iran is still committed to supporting the Palestinian military-terrorist campaign against Israel.** During the past year senior Iranian officials reiterated Iran's commitment to supporting the Palestinians, especially in view of the renewed Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. Iran's financial aid to the Palestinians continues as well, and Iran has stated its intention to provide funds for Palestinian families whose members were killed by Israel. In the meantime, **Iran also provides extensive support to Hezbollah, some of which is diverted to Hezbollah's military infrastructure in Lebanon, especially its rocket arsenal, earmarked for use at a future date in accordance with Iranian interests.** Iran gives Hezbollah an estimated **\$200 million a year.** It also provides Hezbollah with weapons, intelligence, logistic support and support for Hezbollah's extensive social welfare system (on June 24, 2016, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah claimed that "Hezbollah's budget, salaries, funds, food, drink, arms, all come from Iran...**as long as Iran has money, we will have money**").

6. **In Syria Iran uses local terrorist networks to foster anti-Israeli terrorism in the Golan Heights**, exploiting the vacuum left by the Syrian regime's loss of control over the region. So far, Iran has failed to establish a significant terrorist network in the Golan Heights, due to Israel's ongoing counterterrorism efforts and Iran's need to concentrate the IRGC and its auxiliary Shi'ite forces on the campaign for Aleppo, currently Iran's top priority.

7. Not only did the **nuclear agreement** make no change in Iran's policies toward Israel, to a great degree it encouraged Tehran to be more overtly hostile, proof of its **ongoing adherence to the Islamic Revolution's ideology**. Moreover, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict provides Iran with opportunities to bolster its regional hegemony and use hostility to Israel to enlist the support of public opinion, both at home and abroad. It is a win-win situation for Iran, which does not have to pay a price for its anti-Israel stance. Thus **opposition to Israel can be expected to remain a central tenet of Iranian foreign policy**. However, Iran's ability to promote its anti-Israel objectives depends on geostrategic circumstances, the future of its relations with the Palestinian terrorist organizations, especially Hamas, and on developments in combat zones where Iran is involved, especially Syria and Iraq.

Iranian Policy under Hassan Rouhani Following the Nuclear Agreement

8. Iran's diplomatic charm offensive, which began with the election of Hassan Rouhani to the presidency in the summer of 2013, and the nuclear agreement signed with the Western powers in the summer of 2015, raised the question of **whether Iran's foreign policy towards Israel had moderated**. In general, Iranian policy is not only a function of revolutionary ideology and vision, but also of strategic considerations related to the country's national and political interests. On a number of occasions the Iranian regime showed a leaning towards pragmatism and the willingness to compromise its revolutionary principles when national interests were at stake. For example, in certain circumstances, Iran has not supported various groups of oppressed Muslims, such as the Chechens in Russia and the Uyghurs in western China, because of strategic considerations.

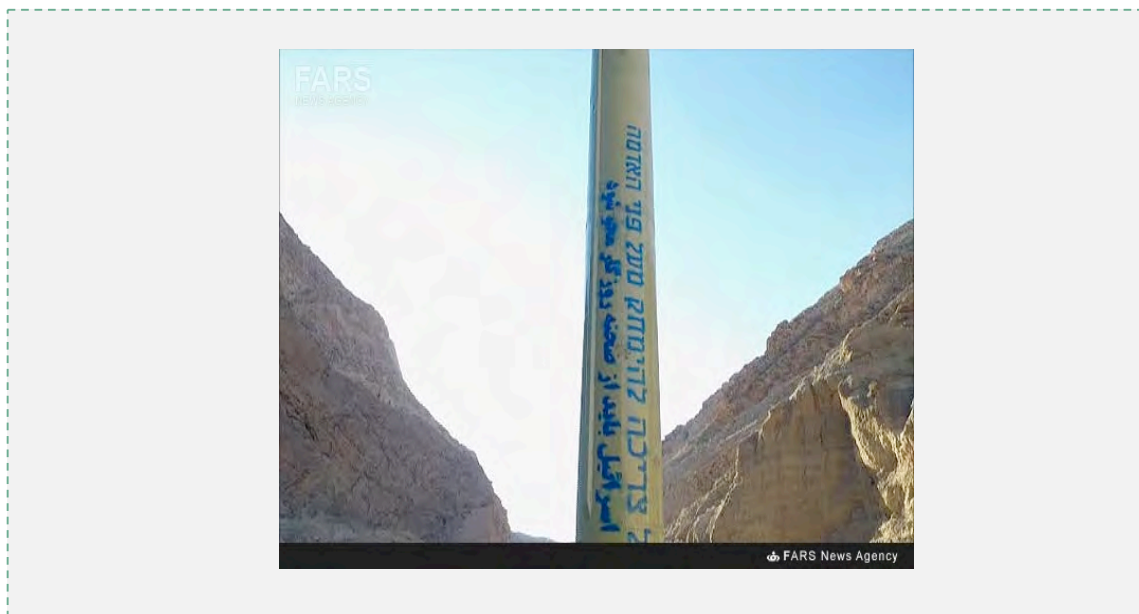
9. Even Iran's approach to the United States shifted somewhat, after years during which even a dialogue with the "big Satan" was considered taboo. The Iranian regime's basic animosity towards the United States persists: Tehran refuses to normalize relations and pursues a policy of defiance, escalates its naval threat to American forces

in the Persian Gulf, and arrests civilians with dual American-Iranian citizenship. Despite the determined refusal of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to enter into a dialogue with the United States, over the years cracks occurred that widened in recent years to the point of direct negotiations over the nuclear issue, and even to occasional talks on regional affairs.

10. On the other hand, **Iran's policies towards Israel continue unchanged.** President Rouhani does, in fact, employ more moderate rhetoric towards Israel than former Iranian president Ahmadinejad, and does not usually make anti-Israel and anti-Semitic statements. He also has not put Israel at the top of the Iranian government's priority list. However, he is not the ultimate authority in the Iranian political system and **even if his remarks are fairly moderate, Iran's Israeli policy is dictated by the supreme leader and the IRGC has not changed.**

11. **During the past year, senior Iranian officials led by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei repeatedly preached the destruction of Israel.** In a speech given in September 2015 Khamenei claimed Israel would no longer exist in 25 years, and that during that time it would know no respite from the "Islamic struggle" (Tasnim, September 9, 2015). High-ranking members of the Iranian security establishment followed with similar statements (See the Appendix).

12. **Senior military officials made explicit threats against Israel,** while in the meantime Iran's program to develop long-range missiles proceeds unabated. During the annual missile exercise held in March 2016, the IRGC launched long-range ballistic missiles with **Mohammad Ali Jafari, IRGC commander,** in attendance. During the launching senior IRGC officials stated the missiles would target the "Zionist enemy" (Fars, March 8, 2016).



The Hebrew reads, "Israel must be wiped off the face of the earth." The missile was launched on March 9, 2016 (Fars, March 9, 2016).

Responses to Western Expectations for a Change in Iran's Position on Israel

13. At the beginning of October 2016, **Sigmar Gabriel, German Vice-Chancellor and minister for economic affairs and energy**, paid a two-day visit to Tehran for the signing of an Iranian-German economic agreement. His visit caused an uproar in Iran after he told *Der Spiegel* that he conditioned the normalization of bilateral relations between Iran and Germany on Iran's recognition of Israel. **Bahram Qasemi, spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry**, stated that Iran regarded defending the rights of the Palestinian people as an integral part of its foreign policy and would never agree to abandon the Palestinian cause (Press News, October 1, 2016).

14. **Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Iranian foreign minister**, unconditionally rejected Gabriel's position, stating that Iran was a sovereign state and would not allow any other country to dictate conditions. He told media correspondents that Iran's policies were based on fixed principles, and that people who came to visit the country were aware of them (Fars, October 2, 2016). On October 4, 2016, the Iranian media reported that in protest, Zarif had refused to meet with the German minister.

15. **Sadegh Amoli Larijani, head of Iran's judiciary**, joined the criticism, and said if he could, he would cancel Gabriel's visit (Mehr, October 4, 2016). **The commander of "popular resistance" in the IRGC's Basij wing** scorned the remarks of the German minister, stating that **Iranian doctrine was "the destruction of Israel"** and that Iran

wanted the end of Israel's existence. He said, "**We want to separate Israel's head from its body**" (Basij News, October 1, 2016).

16. Iran responded similarly in August 2015, after the historic visit to Tehran of **Philip Hammond, at that time the British foreign secretary**. Before meeting with President Rouhani, Hammond opined that the current Iranian government was more pragmatic towards Israel. **Ali-Akbar Velayati, advisor to the Iranian supreme leader for international affairs**, stated outright that Iran would never recognize Israel. Meeting with Pakistani Islamic clerics, he said the efforts of the West to have Muslim countries recognize Israel had failed and that was good, because the Palestinian people had to continue fighting until they liberated their territory. **Hossein Sheikh Holeslam**, Iran's Majlis Spokesman's advisor on International affairs, said Iran's position on the "occupying Zionist regime" had not changed at all. "Israel," he said, "has to be destroyed, and that is our final slogan" (Fars, August 25, 2015).

17. The responses of senior Iranian officials to the expectations of Western officials for a change in Iran's Israeli policy reflect the Islamic Republic's official position of **fundamental, ideological, uncompromising hostility towards Israel**. Iran has had a rigid anti-Israel policy since the Islamic Revolution, openly calling for the destruction of the State of Israel, and there is almost total consensus on the issue among all parties in the Iranian political establishment.

Iranian Support and Encouragement for Anti-Israel Terrorist Activities

Overview

18. Iranian hostility to Israel is not limited to declarations. **Iran encourages, promotes and supports terrorist activities against Israel**, despite events in Iraq and Syria that have led it, over the past few years, to invest heavily in fighting ISIS and defending the Assad regime. To a great extent, that has limited the Qods Force's ability to promote the goals of the Iranian regime in the Israeli-Palestinian arena.

Relations with Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)

19. In the 1990s, the IRGC's Qods Force began encouraging and financing terrorist attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets, and became involved in smuggling weapons to the Palestinian Authority-administrated territories. Iran supported most of the Palestinian terrorist organizations, especially Hamas and the PIJ, with money, training and guidance, providing them with operational support and the technology to improve

their weapons. After Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in 2007, Iran increased its financial support to several million dollars a year and also gave it political support. Hamas control over the Gaza Strip was considered an asset in Iran's armed campaign against Israel and a way of increasing its influence among the Palestinians.

20. However, **the Syrian civil war caused a deep rift in Iran's relations with Hamas**, destabilizing the Iranian-led "resistance axis." As Tehran increased its involvement in Syria by supporting the Assad regime, Hamas rebuffed Iran and supported the Syrian opposition. **Disappointed by Hamas' lack of support, Iran significantly reduced its support for the organization, but did not end it completely.** The fall of Mohamed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt in the summer of 2013 raised Tehran's expectation of a possible rehabilitation of its relations with Hamas. A renewal of ties might enable Iran to retrieve its foothold in the Gaza Strip, increase its influence in the Palestinian arena and reinforce the unity of the "resistance axis," and Hamas understood that having lost support from Egypt, it needed Iran more than ever for financial and operational aid.

21. Operation Protective Edge (July – August 2014) gave the Iranian leadership an opportunity to show its support for the Palestinians. During the operation **Qasem Soleimani, commander of the IRGC's Qods Force**, issued an open message to the Palestinians where he claimed the demand to demilitarize the Gaza Strip and dismantle the "resistance" was propaganda, a delusion and a wish Israel would take with it to its grave. He said "Palestine is a volcano that will only be extinguished with the destruction of the occupying regime," adding that events in Palestine made blood flow through the veins of the Iranians, filling their hearts with pain and anger that would erupt, to the detriment of Israel, when the time came. "Iran," he wrote, "will support the resistance until the earth and the sky have turned into hell for the Zionists...We hope to die as martyrs. Death as a martyr for Allah on the path to Palestine and Jerusalem is the heart's desire of every Muslim, and we are proud of it. At this important time in the history of our people, I call on every brother to use a rifle, a weapon, his blood and honor to defend humanity and Islam in Palestine" (Serat News, July 30, 2014).



Support from east Jerusalem for Qasem Soleimani. The Arabic reads, "Soleimani, from us, the residents of Palestine" (Haj.Qasem.Soleimani, April 13, 2015).

22. The Iranian regime also saw Operation Protective Edge as an opportunity to rehabilitate its relations with Hamas and gain significance in the Palestinian arena. Iran was quick to exploit the opportunity, and on July 23, 2014, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei gave a speech for World Jerusalem Day, held annually on the last Friday of the Muslim religious month of Ramadan. Not only did he express support for the Palestinians, but in an exceptional statement, called for the arming of the West Bank. Other senior Iranian officials quickly followed suit. **Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of the IRGC air force**, said that arming the Palestinians in the West Bank would speed the destruction of Israel (Fars, July 25, 2014). The IRGC's Basij announced it had opened a bank account for donations to arm the Palestinians, as Khamenei had instructed (Fars, July 24, 2014).



World Jerusalem Day parade (ISNA, July 1, 2015).

23. The Saudi Arabian attack on Yemen (Operation Decisive Storm) launched in March 2015 worsened Hamas-Iran relations, as Hamas issued a statement supporting the deposed Yemeni president and essentially supporting the Saudis. Iran regarded the announcement as another slap in the face and as more proof that Hamas preferred its relations with Saudi Arabia and the Sunni camp to its relations with Tehran. In July 2015 Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas' political bureau, paid a visit to Saudi Arabia, widening the Iran-Hamas breach, and leading to the cancellation of a planned Hamas delegation to Iran. The ties between Iran and Hamas' military-terrorist wing continued, however, despite political tensions. Nevertheless, Operation Protective Edge and the political developments in Egypt seriously limited Iran's ability to deliver advanced rockets and other weapons to the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip overland, by sea and through the smuggling tunnels.

24. Iran's commitment to supporting the Palestinians' military-terrorist campaign has thus remained unchanged, with promises of continuing support, especially in view of the escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the past year. Meeting with senior Palestinian and Lebanese officials visiting Iran for the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in February 2016, Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of the Supreme Council for National Security, said that Iran had rebuilding the Gaza Strip and improving its defensive capabilities on its agenda. He said the Palestinian cause was the focus of the Muslim world's "struggle against global hegemony and colonialism" (ISNA, February 14, 2016).



The international conference in solidarity with Al-Aqsa mosque (Tehran Times, May 15, 2016)

25. Iran also continues giving the Palestinians financial aid. In February 2016 Mohammad Fathali, Iranian ambassador to Beirut, held a press conference where he said that Iran was planning to give the family of every Palestinian shaheed killed in the "Jerusalem intifada" \$7,000, and \$30,000 to every family whose house was destroyed by Israel (Fars, February 24, 2016). In November 2015, it was reported that Iran would transfer \$2 million to the families of terrorist operatives in the Gaza Strip. Nafez al-Araj, who heads the Palestinian al-Shaheed institution, said aid would be given to 4,700 families of operatives killed from the beginning of the second intifada (2000) to June 2014. If the operative had been unmarried, the family would receive three installments of \$100, and if he had been married, the family would receive three installments of \$200. He said the money was meant to ease the hardships of families of shaheeds suffering because of the harsh economic situation in the Gaza Strip caused by the Israeli siege. He expressed his appreciation to Iran for its continuing support of the Palestinian people (Fars, November 9, 2015).

Iran and Hezbollah

26. Iran also continues providing Hezbollah with funding estimated by the American administration at approximately \$200 million a year. Iran provides Hezbollah with extensive support for its military and social institutions, valued at hundreds of millions of dollars a year. Hezbollah's military infrastructure, constructed with aid from Iran, is designed to be used against Israel in the future in accordance with Iranian interests. **Hossein Salami, deputy IRGC commander, speaking on July 1, 2016 for World Jerusalem Day, said more than 100,000 missiles were ready for launching at Israel, and that tens of thousands of long-range missiles were ready in other**

locations in the Muslim world to "remove Israel from the world's geopolitical map, once and for all" (Fars, July 1, 2016).

27. On June 24, 2016, Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah secretary general, gave a speech in which he dealt with challenges facing the movement. He spoke at great length about the pressure the United States was exerting on the Lebanese banking system not to cooperate with Hezbollah (designated as a global terrorist organization by the United States in 1995). He criticized the Lebanese banks for surrendering to American dictates and the freezing accounts of charitable institutions affiliated with Hezbollah and of Hezbollah operatives. However, he claimed, American pressure would have no influence because Hezbollah's entire budget came directly from Iran, and not through Lebanese banks ("Hezbollah's budget," he said, "its salaries, funds, food, drink weapons, everything comes from Iran...As long as Iran has money, we will have money.")

28. In American estimate, **Iran gives Hezbollah approximately \$200 million a year.**¹ In addition, Iran gives Hezbollah extensive financial support for **its military and social institutions, worth, in ITIC assessment, hundreds of millions of dollars a year.** The military-terrorist infrastructure Hezbollah has been constructing in Lebanon with Iranian support will be used **against Israel in accordance with Iranian interests.**

Iran and Syria

29. **Iran actively fosters anti-Israel terrorism in the Golan Heights in Syria** using local Hezbollah, Druze and PIJ terrorist networks, exploiting the vacuum created when the Syrian regime lost control of the area. So far Iran has failed to establish a significant terrorist infrastructure, mainly because of Israel's counterterrorism activities and because of Iran's need to concentrate its regular and auxiliary Shi'ite forces on the campaign in Aleppo.

¹ Annual reports issued by the American Department of State have said that Iran gives Hezbollah hundreds of millions of dollars a year. In 2010 the Obama administration reported that Iran gave Hezbollah between an estimated \$100 million to \$200 million annually. The American Department of Defense issued the same estimation (Website of the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress, June 30, 2015). **Matthew Levitt**, director of the Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, testified before the House foreign relations sub-committee on September 17, 2015. He told the committee **Iran was giving Hezbollah \$200 million a year in addition to weapons, training, intelligence and logistic support.** He testified that during the previous 18 months Iran had limited the funds sent to Hezbollah, calling it a "collateral benefit" of the sanctions imposed on Iran and the drop in the price of oil (Washington.institute.org). other estimates of Iran's yearly support for Hezbollah vary between **\$200 million and \$300 million** annually. In October 2011 the **Kuwaiti newspaper al-Qabas** reported that Hezbollah was getting **\$350 million a year.** In October 2014, **Le Monde** quoted the same figure. In June 2016 the London-based paper al-Arab, quoting American intelligence sources, put the figure at **\$200 million** (En.iranwire.com).

Shift in Iranian Public Discourse

30. There has been a certain change on the sidelines of Iranian public discourse, limited, however, to circles without significant influence on Iranian foreign policy, including certain pro-reform academics, such as **Professor Sadegh Zibalakam**, of the University of Tehran. On several occasions in recent years he has called for a reassessment of the Islamic Republic's position on Israel.

Appendix

Iranian References to Israel During the Last Year

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, in a speech on September 9, 2015

"Some of the Zionists said that in view of the results of the nuclear talks, they have been relieved of worrying about Iran for the next 25 years, but I say to them, you won't see the next 25 years and with the help of Allah the thing called the Zionist regime will no longer exist. During this period, the Islamic spirit of struggle, heroism and jihad will not let the Zionists rest" (Tasnim, September 9, 2016).

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to Ramadan Shallah, head of the PIJ, May 2016

"The extensive regional war being fought today is the continuation of the war against the Islamic Republic of Iran begun 37 years ago, and the Palestinian cause is the key to the struggle. Iran has regarded support of Palestine as its duty from the beginning, and it will continue to support Palestine in the future...The defense of the Palestinian cause is anchored in the nature of the Islamic Republic of Iran...The defense of Palestine symbolizes the defense of Islam" (Fars, May 2, 2016).

Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, chairman of the Expediency Discernment Council, to Ramadan Shallah, May 2016

"Because of political turmoil, Muslims have abandoned the most important issue, that is, Palestine, and fight against one another instead of defending the aspirations of the Palestinians...We see the day when the occupation called Israel will no longer exist" (Fars, May 2, 2016).

Mohammad Ali Jafari, commander of the IRGC, at a "Gaza, symbol of the resistance" conference, January 2016

"Palestine will remain the central cause of the Islamic world...The religious tension caused by the media affiliated with the Saudi Arabian kingdom not only removed the Palestinian cause from the Arab world's foreign policy agenda, it also made the Arab people pay less attention to what happens in Palestine...More than 200,000 [regional] popular forces were organized to fight terrorists, and no army, not even the American

or Israeli armies, can fight against them. Such achievements will continue until the liberation of Palestine and Jerusalem, and victory is close" (Sepah News, January 20, 2016).

Mohammad-Reza Naqdi, Basij commander, in a letter to Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Qasem Soleimani, commander of the IRGC's Qods Force, after the lifting the siege of the Syrian Shi'ite towns of Nubul and al-Zahra, February 2016

"Without a doubt, the firm stance of the resistance front will overcome the American-*takfiri* terrorists sent to guard the Zionist regime, and the great victories to come will pave the way for the complete destruction of the Zionist regime...I pray to Allah for the long life of our great leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, and that we may soon meet at the gates of Jerusalem" (Fars, February 4, 2016).

Ahmad-Reza Pourdastan, commander of the Iranian army ground forces, interviewed on television, October 2015

"If Israel takes action [against Iran] we will respond with long-range missiles and then perhaps Israel will be destroyed in less than 25 years...We want Israel to take action so that we can put the instructions of the supreme leader into practice as soon as possible" (Tabnak, October 26, 2016).

IRGC announcement for World Jerusalem Day, July 1, 2016

"The Palestinian cause continues to top the Islamic world's list of priorities. Israel is the number one enemy [sic] of regional and global security...In light of instructions from the leader of the Muslims, Imam Ali Khamenei, and [with] his support, there are signs that Jerusalem will be liberated and the Zionist regime will collapse, and by Allah's favor within 25 years this evil tree and cancerous growth will vanish from the map of the region" (Sepah News, June 30, 2016).

Hossein Salami, acting IRGC commander, speaking before the delivery of the Friday sermon in Tehran for World Jerusalem Day, July 1, 2016

"The American support for the Zionist regime shows that it is not an ally but an American state...The Zionist regime is the joint product of American-British political

strategy for the Muslim world...Today, more than ever, by the grace of Allah, the ground has been made ready for the collapse of the Zionist regime, and in Lebanon alone there are more than 100,000 missiles aimed at the Zionists' heart, should they wish to repeat past tragedies...Today every site in occupied Palestine, including Haifa, are within missile range...Tens of thousands of long-range missiles in the farthest reaches of the Muslim world are waiting only for the order to remove Israel from the world's geopolitical map, once and for all" (Fars, July 1, 2016).

Senior Muslim cleric Ayatollah Nouri Hamedani, speaking on World Jerusalem Day, July 1, 2016

"Every Muslim in the world wants Israel, the artificial regime, the oppressor that murders children, to be destroyed. Israel is a cancerous growth, a creation forced on us by global arrogance, and the day that it is destroyed and Jerusalem returns to the bosom of Islam will be a great day, and with the help of Allah it will happen during the third intifada (Tasnim, July 1, 2016).

Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, chairman of the Guardian Council, speaking on World Jerusalem Day, July 1, 2016

"The message those marching in World Jerusalem Day processions are sending to the United States and Israel is that we will continue to defend the ideals of the Palestinians...The Iranian nation will march on that path until Israel's complete destruction, which will come soon (ISNA, July 1, 2016).

Amir Hossein Abdollahian, deputy foreign minister for the Arab states and Africa, in an announcement for Palestinian "Land Day," April 1, 2016

"Support for Palestine is a most important issue for the Muslim world and the regional terrorist crisis must not be allowed to deflect the attention of the Muslim world from Palestine and Jerusalem. Effective support for Palestine and the real fight against terrorism are the two most important regional issues...The terrorist Zionist regime is the main source of regional insecurity...The Palestinian people's third intifada is the natural response of the owners of the land of Palestine to the continuing aggressive policies of the Zionist regime (Tasnim, April 1, 2016).

Khosrow Arouj, senior advisor to the IRGC commander, July 2016

"The Imam Khomeini instructed [us] to put the destruction of Israel on our agenda and to destroy the 'cancerous growth'...We thought Hamas would be the standard bearer of the struggle against Israel until its final destruction, but now we see they speak differently " (Mehr, July 9, 2016).