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**Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniya firmly positioned himself in the Iranian-Syrian axis during visits to Damascus and Teheran. He made it clear that Hamas rejected Israel's right to exist and supported its destruction by terrorism. He totally rejected the demands of Abu Mazen, the Quartet and the international community.**

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**Ismail Haniya arriving in Damascus (Syrian TV, December 5)**

## **Overview**

■ Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniya is currently making the rounds of the Arab states. He began on December 3 in **Qatar** and spent December 3-7 in **Syria**. Between December 7-11 he visited **Iran** and from there left for **Sudan**.

■ During his visits to Damascus and Teheran he met with senior government officials. In Syria he met with the president, Bashar Assad, and the vice president, Farouk al-Sharaa. In Iran he met with leader Ali Khamenei and the president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Those meetings clearly sent the message that while Abu Mazen relied on the west and on pro-Western Arab states such as Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, Hamas pinned its hopes on the Iranian-Syrian camp (“the axis of evil”), from which he expected to receive financial, military and political support.



**Left: Ismail Haniya shaking hands with Ahmadinejad (IRNA, December 10). Right: Haniya in a meeting with Khamenei (Iranian TV, December 10)**

- Ismail Haniya exploited his visits to Syria and Iran to make a clear statement of the Hamas government’s ideology and political policies. He plainly avowed that Hamas had no intention of abandoning that ideology, at the core of which were its absolute refusal to recognize Israel and support for a terrorist campaign to destroy it, while totally rejecting the demands made by Abu Mazen, the Quartet and the international community.
- On the practical level:
  - Ismail Haniya’s Iranian hosts promised to support the Hamas government in every area (apparently including military matters as

well). Regarding finances, on December 11 the Hamas Website reported that the Iranians had promised Haniya **\$250 million** in aid for a number of development projects. Of that amount, **\$100 million** would cover the 2007 salaries of employees working for the ministries of welfare, labor and culture for six months.<sup>1</sup> Forty-five million dollars of the Iranian money was earmarked as allowances for Hamas prisoners in Israeli jails and support for their over the next six months. The Iranian funding also included aid for 3,000 Palestinian fishermen and 100,000 unemployed workers.<sup>2</sup>

- In addition, Haniya received a promise of \$22 million in Qatar to pay salaries of teachers and of 11,000 employees of the health ministry, and funding for a series of projects. One of those mentioned was the establishment of an Islamic bank with an initial capital of \$50 million, the establishment of a Palestinian “sports city” and a project called “The Islamic religious endowment of Jerusalem,” which would allot \$7 million a month to residents of “occupied Jerusalem” (Hamas Website, December 3).

■ In our assessment, behind Hamas’s unequivocal alignment with the Iranian-Syrian axis lies the fact that Iran is considered the rising force in the Middle East, and she expects to receive support from them to continue its strategy to destroy the State of Israel. The United States, on the other hand, is regarded by Hamas (which is probably influenced by Iran and Syria) as having been weakened by both having sunk into the mud of the “Iraqi swamp” and recent internal developments, i.e., the results of the Congressional elections and the conclusions of the Baker-Hamilton Report. Thus it would seem that Hamas is of the opinion that its political isolation can be ended and that the economic “siege” wielded by the Western countries will collapse without Hamas’s having to pay any price

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<sup>1</sup> That was done because those ministries are viewed as crucial in strengthening Hamas’s influence in Palestinian society. On the other hand, no promise was made that employees of the security services subordinate to Abu Mazen would receive their salaries regularly.

<sup>2</sup> Only time will tell if all the aid is provided, and how it is transferred to the Palestinian Authority.

that might involve a moderation of its ideology and political principles.<sup>3</sup>

■ A summary of statements by Ismail Haniya and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on key topics made during his visits to Syria and Iran are in the appendix which follows.

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<sup>3</sup> That was clearly expressed by Khaled Mashaal in an interview the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* on December 10. He claimed that the “siege” on the Palestinian Authority was collapsing, that the Arab League did not uphold it and that European countries were secretly in contact with Hamas. He also claimed that were contacts with senior European officials regarding relief of the siege (Syrian TV, December 7). Ahmad Yussuf, Haniya’s advisor, claimed that a Hamas delegation visiting Europe had met with a highly-placed delegation of the American Democratic party and with other important American figures (Ma’an News Agency, December 7). So far no confirmation has been received.

## Appendix

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### A summary of statements by Ismail Haniya and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on key topics

#### Stubborn denial of the State of Israel's right to exist and plans to destroy it

■ During his meeting with Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on December 9, Haniya stated that the Palestinian government “**does not recognize the exploitive Zionist entity.**” The Hamas government, he said, aspired to “nullify the oppressive agreements with the counterfeit entity” and “invest efforts to achieve the objectives of the Palestinian people and to liberate holy Jerusalem” (IRNA, December 10). He stressed that “**the Palestinian government will never recognize the Zionist entity, and its support for jihad and resistance [i.e., terrorism] will continue**” (Hamas Website, December 10). He also noted that “the right of return is a holy right which [the Palestinians] will never relinquish...” (Al-Jazeera TV, December 4).

■ Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told Haniya that “**Israel, which stole Jerusalem [from the Arabs], should never be recognized.**” He said that those countries which “sponsor the Zionist entity,” especially the United States and Britain, have begin to question the benefits they reap from “the continued existence of the counterfeit entity” (IRNA, December 10). Ahmadinejad urged Haniya not to give in to pressure to recognize Israel and to continue his fight against the Jewish state (Reuters, December 9).

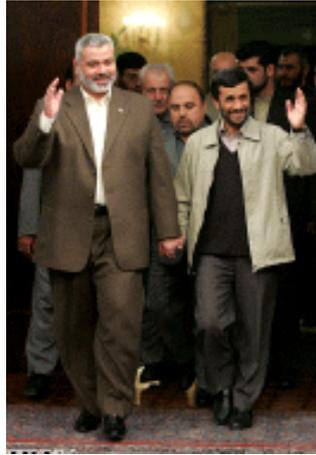
## **The destruction of Israel through a terrorist campaign (jihad and “resistance”)**

- In a speech given at Al-Yarmoukh refugee camp near Damascus, Ismail Haniya praised the Palestinian “resistance” (i.e., terrorism) and said it would continue. He also applauded the female suicide bomber who recently blew herself up near IDF soldiers, the Palestinian civilians who served as human shields to prevent attacks on terrorist-operatives, and the women in Beit Hanoun who enabled terrorist-operatives trapped in a mosque to escape during an IDF action (Al-Jazeera TV, December 4).



**Haniya and his entourage arrive at Al-Yarmoukh refugee camp (Al-Jazeera TV, December 4)**

- During a meeting with Ahmadinejad and other senior Iranian officials Ismail Haniya repeatedly emphasized that his government would continue to support jihad and “resistance” (i.e., terrorism) against Israel. He said that “resistance” was “the only way to liberate Palestine” (IRNA and Hamas Website, December 10). In a Friday sermon in Teheran he said that the Palestinians would never give up the “resistance” and would continue the jihad until “the liberation of Jerusalem” and the return of the refugees. At the Sharif University of Technology he stated that **“the Palestinian government will never arrest operatives engaging in jihad”** and expressed his hope to the audience of Iranian youth that “some day we will meet in liberated Palestine or in paradise” (ISNA, December 10).



**Ismail Haniya and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad walking hand in hand (IRNA, December 10)**

■ At a reception for Ismail Haniya, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said that “the Palestinian government has to support the resistance of the Palestinian people until it achieves its goals.” He added that “the resistance of the Palestinian people will lead to a final victory [over the State of Israel].” He claimed that the pressure exerted by “the Zionist entity” on the Palestinians would not continue because the United States, Israel’s main supporter, “is now weakened and undermined” (IRNA, December 10).

## **Iran as the Islamic “strategic depth” for the Palestinians**

■ In a speech given after Friday prayers in Teheran, Haniya stated that “they [the Israelis] think that the Palestinian people stand alone in this battle. They are wrong. We are part of our nation [the nation of Islam] and we have strategic depth here, in Iran, and in all the Arab states...We stand by Iran in its resistance to American pressure and oppose the American-Zionist takeover of our Arab Islamic region...We hope that the resistance in Iraq will overcome [the Americans] and lead to the expulsion of the American occupation from the lands of our sister, Iraq...” (Al-‘Alam TV, December 8).

■ Haniya thanked the Iranian regime for its support of the Palestinians, saying it made Muslims proud and strengthened the men of the Palestinian “resistance” [i.e., members of the terrorist organizations] (IRNA and Hamas Website, December 10). Ahmadinejad said that “the Iranian people will not be found lacking regarding all forms of support,” a possible hint at military support as well, and called upon the Palestinian government to continue supporting the “resistance” (i.e., terrorist organizations) and terrorist organizations until Palestine was liberated (Reuters, December 9).

## **The internal Palestinian arena**

■ During his visit to Teheran Ismail Haniya expressed severe criticism of the PLO executive committee’s decision calling for early elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council and presidency, calling it “an attempt to overthrow [the government], which increases the tension and [deepens] the crisis.” He blamed Fatah for causing the negotiations for a national unity government to fail and said that the attempt to drag the Palestinians into elections was a lack of respect for the will of the Palestinian people.

■ Haniya called for the establishment of a Palestinian national unity government to “foil the American-Zionist plot” (IRNA, December 9). He said he would agree to a national unity government based on “the national reconciliation document” (“the prisoners’ document”). However, in an interview with Al-‘Alam TV on December 10, he explained that the prisoners document made no mention of recognition of the “Israeli occupation” and expressed his firm opposition to fulfilling the demands made by the Quartet (Al-‘Alam TV, December 10).