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Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Israel Intelligence Heritage
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Hamas recently upgraded its TV station and Internet sites. Although the Hamas government is bankrupt, the movement has invested massive sums in improving its propaganda assets, aware of their importance in the battle for hearts and minds against Israel and against its opponents in the internal Palestinian arena.



Portal for Hamas's most important Internet sites: Palestine-info's new homepage. The sites appear in Arabic, English, French, Russian, Urdu, Malaysian and Farsi. The variety of languages reflect the target audiences Hamas considers important.

Overview

1. A few months ago Hamas began operating a satellite broadcasting station called The Light of Al-Aqsa (*Siraj Al-Aqsa*), and at the same time upgraded its Website system. Both media continue to serve as platforms to encourage terrorism and hatred for Israel, although in recent months they have become more important in the propaganda war and mud-slinging campaign against Abu Mazen, Muhammad Dahlan and Fatah (official Palestinian media are under Abu Mazen's control and Hamas has not yet been able to exploit them for its own purposes).

2. Hamas invested enormous sums in the upgrades. Highly-placed Palestinian sources in Ramallah, most probably supporters of Abu Mazen, told a Jerusalem Post¹ reporter that Hamas had taken millions of dollars of the funds its leaders had received from visits to the Arab-Muslim countries and used the money to improve its propaganda assets. According to the sources , some of the funds were used to launch an English Website for Hamas's military wing (Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades) and the Palestine-info portal received a serious facelift "costing hundreds of thousands of dollars" (Jerusalem Post, January 18, 2007).

Upgrading Hamas's Website system

3. Hamas has a multiple Internet infrastructure. Most of its sites are administered from Lebanon and their contents are dictated by Hamas in Damascus. Some of them however, are handled the Gaza Strip. There are more than 20 prominent sites in eight languages (Arabic, English, French, Russian, Farsi, Malaysian, Urdu and Indonesian).² During the past half year, the English site of Hamas's terrorist-operative wing, Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, was upgraded, new Internet sites were launched and extensive technical and graphic improvements were made to the Palestine-info portal.

¹ An English-language daily newspaper published by Israel in Jerusalem.

² For further information see our June 20, 2006 Bulletin entitled "Terrorism and Internet: an examination of Hamas's Websites and the hosting providers used by them ," at www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_internet0606e.pdf.

The Palestine-info portal upgrade

4. During the past few months Hamas upgraded both the main Palestine-info portal and the individual sites. Technical and graphic improvements were made and the number of articles posted was increased.



Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas’s political bureau in Damascus, center stage. Under him appears his deputy Musa Abu Marzuq. Musheir al-Masri (Hamas’s chairman in the Palestinian Legislative Council) is quoted as saying that the Palestinian Authority’s information [i.e., propaganda] activities had reached audiences beyond the Arab-Muslim world, for example in Europe and Latin America. He claimed that the objective was “to foil the American-Zionist plan, which is supported by some of the Palestinians [i.e., the Road Map or any arrangement between Israel and the Palestinians].”

5. The Arabic version of the Palestine-info has a link to matters relating to Hamas *shaheeds*, including suicide bombers, who are presented as heroes and role models. Clicking on the link to “The Zionist Entity” reveals long lists of “Zionist crimes” whose objective is to foster hatred for Israel. Like Hamas’s other media, the site is used as part of the organization’s campaign to defame Israel for the rescue earthworks currently being carried out at the Mugrabim ramp in Jerusalem. During the violent clashes, the site carried out a mudslinging campaign against Fatah, especially Muhammad Dahlan.³

³ Following the Mecca Accord, Hamas’s anti-Dahlan campaign on the Palestine-info portal and in other media belonging to or identified with it ceased.



A stereotype Jew hacking at the dome of Al-Aqsa, part of the Hamas hate campaign (Palestine-info, February 19).

Upgrading the English Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades Website

6. An improved version of the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades (Hamas's terrorist-operative wing) Website was recently launched, funded, according to highly-placed Palestinian sources, by money given to Hamas leaders during their visits to a number of Arab and Muslim states. Its Webhost is Telekom, located in Malaysia.⁴

7. The English version is not a literal translation of the Arabic version, but is a "moderate" version whose operators try to make suitable for target audiences in English-speaking countries. That is compatible with Hamas's desire to market its messages to varied audiences beyond the Arab-Muslim world. Their outlook is clearly shown by its Palestine-info portal, which has links to its English, French and Russian sites.

⁴ According to the Whois Website.

The homepage of the English version



The homepage of the English version: it contains news of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict laced with Hamas extremist ideology and propaganda. Under the heading “Martyrdom Operations” there is a picture of Fatima Najar, 57, sent by Hamas to carry out a suicide bombing attack against IDF soldiers on the outskirts of the Jabaliya refugee camps in the Gaza Strip (November 23, 2006).



The English site in praise of suicide bombing attacks, one of them carried out on a bus in Jerusalem killing 23 Israelis.⁵ (See <http://www.alqassam.ps/english/?action=showmartyrs&mid=54>)

⁵ One of the most deadly attacks carried out in Jerusalem by Hamas, occurring on August 19, 2003. Ra'ed Mesk, a Hebron resident and imam of the local mosque, blew himself up on a No. 2 Jerusalem bus on its way from the Western Wall to Shmuel Hanavi Street. Twenty-three people were killed and approximately 115 wounded.

New television channel launched

8. On October 15, 2006, a new satellite channel called The Light of Al-Aqsa (*Siraj Al-Aqsa*) began broadcasting (in addition to the land-based broadcasting station which had been launched a few months previously and had a limited range). Broadcasts from the new channel can be received in Judea and Samaria as well as the Arab states. On January 31, 2007, the channel was on the air for 22 straight hours for the first time. Currently, it broadcasts 24 hours a day.



The first news broadcast, October 2006

9. The new station broadcasts from Dubai and the material comes mostly from the Gaza Strip. Two communications satellites are used: one belongs to the Arab communications company **Arabsat**, most of whose stocks belong to Saudi Arabia, and the other, in Egyptian hands, is called **Nilesat**, and five members of the Egyptian Broadcasting Authority sit on its board of directors (out of 11).

10. During its first months most of the broadcasts were devoted to religious programs in the spirit of Hamas's radical Islamic ideology, although the field was widened to include politics. Today, many of the programs include incitement against Israel and document the activities of Hamas's and the other organization's terrorist-operative wings (for example the suicide bombing attack carried out by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Eilat, which

was widely covered by the media). They contribute to the mudslinging propaganda campaign against Fatah, especially Abu Mazen and Muhammad Dahlan, whom Hamas feels lead the struggle against them.

New Websites launched by Hamas

New Website for Siraj Al-Aqsa

11. The Siraj Al-Aqsa Website was launched at the same time as the television channel, but has only recently begun to operate on a daily basis, including news updates several times a day. It is still finding its way and has only a small number of features: news flashes, opinions, “studies,” sports and economics. Its underlying hate messages are directed against Israeli and the United States.



The home page of Al-Aqsa TV's Website. Left: An interview with sheikh Ra'ed Salah, part of his campaign to incite the Arab world against Israel because of the rescue earthworks being carried out at the Mugrabim ramp in Jerusalem. In the interview, he falsely claims that Israel is deliberately trying to undermine Al-Aqsa in an attempt to add a religious dimension to the political confrontation with the Palestinians. Right: The site allows Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas's "political bureau" in Damascus, to stand center stage (www.aqsatv.ps).

An anti-American posting on the Siraj Al-Aqsa Website entitled “The Mongolian Sword or the Blood of Free Men?”

By Dr. Salah al-Bardawil⁶

The Americans did not learn their lesson from what the [Mongols] did in Baghdad!!⁷ They Mongols burned the institutions of higher learning, killed the clerics and spread corruption and whoredom in pure, faithful Baghdad. A few hundred years later the Americans came and did the same thing – damaged and destroyed mosques, killed worshippers, assassinated sages who protected the holy Qur’an, persecuted the university teachers and scientists, killed them, made them disappear off the face of the earth and destroyed the universities!

What is the connection between the brutality of the Mongols and the brutality of the Americans? It is ignorance and hostility toward human culture and the desire to destroy Islam. [The Mongols] came from the Far East to destroy Islamic culture and [the Americans] came from the Far West to do the same thing. The Crusaders did the same, they crossed Palestine and killed thousands of clerics and worshippers, polluted the mosques and holy books, stopped the muezzins in the mosques from calling the faithful to prayer, turned Al-Aqsa into a stable for their horses. The only thing motivating them was their ignorance of the truth of Islam and their hatred for the purity of Muslims and their culture.

Decades passed before the world discovered the Mongols’ perverse motives, because their might and swords did not avail [in their battle] against the faith of free men, their culture and the blood of the men of the jihad (*mujahadeen*) faithful [to Islam]...”

⁶ Hamas speaker in the Palestinian Legislative Council.

⁷ The reference is to the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols in the 13th century, which marked the destruction of the Abbasid empire. The destruction has remained engraved on the consciousness of Iraqis and Arabs in general to this day. The comparison between the Mongols and Americans was intended purely to increase hatred for the latter.

Launching the Executive Forces Website (tanfithya.com)



The new Website's homepage

12. A new Website was launched a few months ago by the Executive Forces, Hamas's security force directed by the interior ministry. (The Executive Force have played a central role in the violent clashes with Fatah and the security forces loyal to Abu Mazen.) The site includes a banner with news about the Executive Force, updated daily, details about their activities, announcements to the public, promotional messages, editorial articles, etc. It includes a picture archive and visual and audio files. Since the site is new, some of the links are not yet active.

13. The site is hosted and supported by the Defender Technologies Group, located in Virginia.⁸ The site is registered to Sammer Shlil of Rafah. His email address is sammer@egh.gov.ps,⁹ meaning it belongs to the Palestinian government apparatus.

⁸ According to the Whois Website.

⁹ According to the Hagana Website.