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**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Israel Intelligence Heritage
& Commemoration Center (IICC)**

The meaning of the term “Islamic emirate”, used by Abu Mazen and official Palestinian and Egyptian media to refer to the political entity formed in the Gaza Strip following the Hamas takeover¹

Overview

1. The Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip (June 2007) created a radical Islamic political entity with characteristics not unlike those of a sovereign state. It is home to about 1.4 million Palestinians living in poverty and without any real economic infrastructure. That political entity is ruled by Hamas, a movement that holds radical Islamic views and embraces terrorism as a means to achieve its goals. It is closely allied with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, of which the Hamas is the Palestinian offshoot, and with Iran, ruled by a radical Shi'ite Islamic regime. During the takeover of the Gaza Strip, Hamas operatives expressed their support of the rule of Islam and its victory over the infidels.²

¹ Follow-up to our Information Bulletin [“Egypt condemns the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, expresses its unequivocal support of the Palestinian emergency government, and campaigns to strengthen Abu Mazen. The Egyptian government is strongly concerned over the establishment of a radical Hamas-controlled “Islamic emirate” supported by Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood”](#), July 5, 2007.

² See MEMRI report titled “Fears in PA: Gaza May Turn into Taliban-Style Emirate” (<http://memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=SD163307>).

2. The Hamas entity, which immediately found itself in a brutal conflict with the supporters of Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen, who represents the national-secular Fatah faction, raised grave concerns in Egypt, bordering the Gaza Strip (and in other Arab countries). Against this background, Abu Mazen and official Palestinian and Egyptian media made frequent use of the term **“Islamic emirate”** to refer to the newly-founded entity in the Gaza Strip. Thus, for example:

a. In a speech given by Abu Mazen on June 20, 2007, about a week after the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, he stressed that the “emirate” formed in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip was **illegitimate and lacking any Islamic foundations**. “It is a struggle between the national [Palestinian] project and the project of the militias,” said Abu Mazen, “between the project of the homeland and the project of the emirate or fictitious statelet...” He further stated that he had spared no efforts to reason with Hamas, but it was in vain since its preparations for the “scheme” (that is, Hamas’s establishment of the “Islamic emirate”) never stopped. He explained that it was **“the plot to separate the Gaza Strip from the West Bank and establish an emirate or statelet ruled by one color and one faction [i.e., radical Islam], characterized by fanaticism and radicalism...”**³

b. On June 19, 2007, **Muhammad Ali Ibrahim, the editor-in-chief of Egypt’s official daily Al-Gomhuria**, published an article titled: **“An Islamic emirate on our border: the Muslim Brotherhood is happy about the victory achieved by Hamas in the Gaza Strip—and not over Israel!”** According to the article, Hamas’s tactics in the Gaza Strip are testimony to the desire of all Islamic factions in the world, including Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, to establish an Islamic emirate on the ruins of a country—any country. The article is part of a widespread media campaign initiated by the Egyptian government to express its deep

³ See our Information Bulletin [“In an emotional speech given a week after Hamas took over the Gaza Strip, Abu Mazen attacked Hamas and rejected a dialogue with Hamas \(“There is no dialogue with those conspirators and murderers.”\). Hamas responded with protest processions in the Gaza Strip and unrestrained personal attacks against Abu Mazen”](#) (June 26, 2007).

concern over the Hamas-ruled political entity becoming a source of radicalism and instability that would threaten Egypt's national security (see footnote no. 1 above).

3. The term "Islamic emirate" has a **strongly negative connotation in the history of Islam**. In modern times, it is used to refer to a small territory ruled by the emir (*amir*, leader) of a fanatic Islamic sect attempting to impose radical Islam, separating itself from its "infidel" environment. The significant majority of Islamic underground movements ever to operate in Egypt (and in other Arab/Islamic countries) sought to form an "emirate" ruled by the laws of Islam (see **Appendix** for details).

4. **It is therefore small wonder that Hamas firmly rejected the description of the Hamas entity in the Gaza Strip as an "Islamic emirate"**. In a speech given on June 24, 2007, Isma'il Haniyah, the dismissed Prime Minister, said that claiming that Hamas established an Islamic emirate in the Gaza Strip was no more than Israeli propaganda meant to arouse fear. He added that Hamas was not interested in establishing an (independent) Islamic state in the Gaza Strip, and that the Gaza Strip would instead remain part of Palestine, itself an inseparable part of the Arab and Islamic nation: "...we do not think about independent emirates and we do not preach for fragments of countries and fiefdoms..." (Al-Aqsa TV, June 24, 2007).

5. The appendix includes an analysis of the negative term "**Islamic emirate**" (*imara islamiyya*) used by politicians and official Palestinian and Egyptian media to refer to the threat posed by the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip.

Appendix

Analysis of the meaning of the term “Islamic emirate”

Terminology

Emir

6. “Emir” (*amir*) is a deeply-rooted religious Islamic term with social, military, and fundamentalist connotations. Its main meanings in Islamic history are:

- a. The supreme commander of a Muslim army (*amir al-jaish*).
- b. The commander of a military unit such as a brigade, battalion, platoon, etc. (according to Prophet Muhammad, every group of more than two people must have its own superior emir).
- c. The head of a delegation (or convoy) of Muslim pilgrims to Mecca, mostly in the Middle Ages, perceived as a full-fledged military commander (*amir al-hajj*).
- d. The Emir of the Believers—a title exclusively reserved for the Muslim caliph (supreme ruler) (note: according to Shi’ite tradition, Imam Ali—Prophet Muhammad’s son-in-law, the fourth caliph, and the founder of the shi’a—is called “Emir of the Believers”).

7. In modern times, “emir” is sometimes used to refer to the head of a radical Islamic group whose subordinates must fully comply with his orders. One example is the emir of Pakistan’s Jamaat-e-Islami, Qazi Hussain Ahmad. Other examples are Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi, the emir of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (killed in June 2006), and Khattab, the Arab commander (emir) of the Chechen rebels (killed in 2002).

Emirate (imara)

8. This word is used to describe a Muslim territory ruled by an emir, in which he asserts hegemony and imposes a certain worldview, usually unlike the worldviews of other territories. During the low points of the Islamic empire, such emirates were prevalent throughout the Arab world (such as Antakya, in the territory of modern-day Syria). **Those emirates were notorious in the history of Islam for the internal rivalries between their rulers. The term gained notoriety during the Crusades,** when the Crusaders came united while the Middle East was torn apart and ruled by such sub-emirates. It was his ability to unite those emirates that made Saladin, the Muslim warlord who triumphed over the Crusaders, such a revered figure in Islamic history.

The evolution of these terms in modern times

9. An emirate is a small territory ruled by the emir of a fanatic Islamic sect, which imposes Islamic religious law to the letter and applies the rules of Islam in all walks of life (economy, education, etc.). It separates itself from what it considers to be its “infidel” environment, constantly seeking to increase its territory and number of subjects. The ultimate goal of the emirate’s founders is to unite all emirates into a single territory ruled by a Muslim caliph (supreme ruler).

10. As already mentioned, Islamist circles tend to adopt the term “emirate” in modern times. **The vast majority of Islamic underground movements ever to operate in Egypt and in other Arab/Muslim countries (such as Algeria) sought to form an emirate ruled by the laws of Islam.** Such groups include Al-Jama’a al-Islamiyya, the Al-Takfir wal-Hijra group in Egypt, the Egyptian offshoot of the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb ut-Tahrir, established in Jordanian-controlled East Jerusalem in 1953 and operating in Egypt in the 1970s under the leadership of Saleh Sariyya, who was of Palestinian descent), and more.

11. What follows are some examples of modern-day Islamic organizations which announced the establishment of an Islamic emirate:

a. **The Al-Qaeda organization, which announced the establishment of an Islamic emirate in Iraq:**
<http://arabic.tharwaproject.com/node/5756> (last checked on July 3, 2007).

b. **The Fath al-Islam organization in Lebanon (in the city of Tripoli):**
<http://www.aawsat.com/leader.asp?section=3&issue=10411&article=421566> (last checked on July 3, 2007).

c. **The Islamic militias of the Shari'a courts in Somalia:**
<http://www.fatehforums.com/showthread.php?t=55944> (last checked on June 19, 2007).

The Egyptian fear of a possible union between the Islamist opposition in Egypt and the Islamic emirate in the Gaza Strip

12. The use of the term “Islamic emirate” on the Egyptian media reflects a clear concern over the Gaza Strip becoming a hotspot of radical Islam, closely associated with Egypt’s radical opposition, chiefly the Muslim Brotherhood. **“Islamic emirate”, as already mentioned, is a term used by the Islamist underground movements ever to operate in Egypt.**

13. Within that context, it is worth mentioning that **there is a historic link between the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt on one hand and Hamas and the radical Muslims in the Gaza Strip and in the Palestinian Authority-administered territories on the other.** Beside the fact that Hamas is the “protégé” of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, a movement that has been working against the Egyptian government for many years, there is a historical connection between the military wing of the Muslim Brotherhood and Gaza Strip residents, witnessed when the Muslim Brotherhood fought

alongside the Palestinians during Israel's War of Independence (1947-1949). It was then that the Muslim Brotherhood movement actually started operating in the Gaza Strip (contrary to the popular theory that such activities began later).

14. It is therefore small wonder that, years later, most Hamas leaders-to-be received their radical Islamic ideological training in Egypt (Ahmed Yassin, Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi, and more). Also, not an insignificant number of leading figures of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist organization in the Gaza Strip were well-connected in Egypt (Fathi Shiqaqi, former leader of the organization; others at present). What is more, the Sinai Peninsula, which lies adjacent to the Gaza Strip, has been undergoing a process of militant Islamization in recent years. It is reflected in a number of severe terrorist attacks against tourist sites along the Red Sea perpetrated by elements associated with global jihad, which caused considerable damage to the Egyptian economy. These parties in the Sinai Peninsula might unite with the "Islamic emirate" in the Gaza Strip and cooperate with it in the field of terrorism.