



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

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**The Internet and terrorism: following the ITIC report on Hamas's AqsaTube, it was removed by its French ISP from the net. As a result, the site issued an announcement claiming it had been victimized by "Zionist-American pressure," and stating it was currently making the necessary arrangements to return.<sup>1</sup>**

ضغوط صهيوي أمريكية تغلق موقع أقصى تيوب على الانترنت

فلسطين المحتلة (غزة)

يا جماهير امتنا العربية والإسلامية.. يا جماهير شعبنا الفلسطيني المجاهد :

لم يكتف العدو الصهيوني والأمريكي بشن حرب بلا هوادة على امتنا العربية والإسلامية مستخدماً أحدث الآليات والمدركات والطائرات على الشعب الفلسطيني وأبطال المقاومة في العراق ولبنان وإنما لجأ ما يسمى بمكتب التحقيقات الفدرالية (F.B.I) الى الضغط على الشركة المستضيفة لموقعنا على الانترنت لاغلاقه في تمام الساعة لثانية من مساء الأربعاء 15 شوال 1429 هـ الموافق 2008-10-15م في إطار الحملة الإرهابية التي تشنها أمريكا والصهاينة لمنع وسائل الإعلام من فضح ممارساتهم اليومية بحق شعوبنا .  
و هذه بعض المصادر من الصحف الأجنبية:

The first lines of AqsaTube's open letter following its removal, as it appeared on Hamas sites. According to the text, "The site's engineers are making the necessary arrangements to return AqsaTube to the Internet..."

<sup>1</sup> An update of our October 12, 2008 Bulletin, "The Internet and terrorism: Hamas recently launched a new website called AqsaTube, an addition to its extensive Internet presence," at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/mt\\_e003.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/mt_e003.pdf).

## Overview

1. The Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center's Bulletin about AqsaTube was widely covered by the media in Israel, the West and the Arab-Muslim world. Reports about the site and the support it received from Western companies appeared, among others, in the Israel papers (Haaretz and the Jerusalem Post), the Western media (BBC News, Sky News) and the Palestinian media (the newspaper Al-Quds and Hamas's various websites).
2. Following the publication of the ITIC report, correspondents asked the Western companies whose services the site used for their response. The results were immediate. After the Jerusalem Post approached Google, the company stopped AqsaTube from using its advertising program (as of October 14). After the BBC approached the French firm OVH, the company announced it would remove the site from the Internet (as of October 15). An ITIC examination showed that the site had in fact been removed (as of October 20).

## Hamás's reaction

3. Most of the reactions to the removal of AqsaTube appeared on the **Hamás forum website**, "Palestine Dialogue Network."<sup>2</sup> Behind the reactions was an individual calling himself "**Fajr al-Yassin**" ("The dawn of al-Yassin," i.e., Sheikh Ahmed al-Yassin, Hamas leader killed by Israel). In our assessment, he is an operator or one of the operators of AqsaTube. There were also reactions on other Hamas websites (including those of Al-Aqsa TV and Filastin al-'An).
4. On October 14 "Fajr al-Yassin" posted his Arabic translation of the ITIC bulletin about AqsaTube and included a link to the ITIC website (Terrorism-info.org.il). It also issued an announcement from AqsaTube stating that the "enemies of the Palestinian Muslim people" call the Palestinians "terrorists," but "it is in our honor to be called terrorists, because we love Palestine dearly, and **we love jihad...**" "The new [media] uproar **reveals the exceptional strength of Hamas in the media and on the Internet...**" According to another posting by "Fajr al-Yassin" on the same day, there had been incitement against AqsaTube by the various news agencies, including Italian agencies.
5. On October 15 (the day AqsaTube was removed from the Internet) **Hamás's** Palestine Dialogue Network posted an **open letter** from the Gaza Strip entitled "**Zionist-American pressures led to AqsaTube's removal from the Internet.**" It stated that the Zionist-

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.paldf.net/forum/showthread.php?t=309880> (Arabic only).

American enemy was not satisfied with unending wars against **Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon**, but was even putting pressure on the company hosting AqsaTube. That had led to the removal of the site at 1400 (2 p.m.) on Wednesday, October 15 (and the link to Arab and foreign media reports about AqsaTube and its removal appeared). The open letter ended with a declaration of **commitment to reestablish the site and the announcement that “The site’s engineers are making the necessary arrangements to return AqsaTube to the Internet.”**

6. On October 16 Hamas’s Al-Aqsa TV website posted an article claiming that the FBI was exerting pressure on AqsaTube’s webhost (i.e., the French OVH) to remove the site. In addition, it posted the open letter mentioned above. The Hamas-affiliated Filastin al-‘An website posted a similar response.

## Conclusion

7. The AqsaTube affair is a **good illustration of the extensive use Hamas makes of the Internet (as do other terrorist organizations, such as Al-Qaeda and Hezbollah)**. They use it in the battle for hearts and minds, operational measures and collecting donations. Through the Internet the terrorist organizations can, with relative ease, overcome the difficulties placed in their path by various governments by hiding behind freedom of speech and the generally accepted principle that the Internet should not be censored.<sup>3</sup>

8. Even though the Islamic terrorist organization websites viciously attack the West and its culture, they have no qualms about exploiting Western technology to promote their objectives in the battle for hearts and minds. Hamas, Hezbollah and Al-Qaeda all avail themselves of the Internet services provided by companies all over the world, including the United States, Canada, and Western and Eastern European countries. Sometimes, as second best, if those avenues are blocked, they use companies in the Arab-Muslim countries, including Iran, Syria and Malaysia. Thus it is reasonable to assume that AqsaTube will shortly find a new company which will agree to provide it with Internet services. **In addition**, the terrorist organizations are making an attempt to promote commercial advertisements on their sites and to use international satellite companies to broadcast their television channels.

9. Therefore, Western countries and public opinion should be aware of the exploitation of the Internet and other electronic media by terrorist organizations, and fight it. As part of the battle, Internet service providers and satellite companies should be prevented from

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<sup>3</sup> For further information see our August 2, 2008 Bulletin entitled “The Internet as a battleground used by the terrorist organizations” at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/int\\_e250707.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/int_e250707.pdf).

supporting the terrorist organizations and accepting their advertisements. That obligates **international cooperation**, because terrorism crosses borders, and the use the terrorist organizations make of the Internet and other media is aimed against the international community, including the countries providing the services themselves.