



Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center

June 4, 2009

During Operation Cast Lead a promotional film was seized about a military academy established by Hamas named after Dr. Abdallah Azzam, Osama bin Laden's ideologue. Hamas turned him into a role model, although in practice the movement restricts the activities of the global jihad networks in the Gaza Strip.



Sign at the entrance to the Abdallah Azzam Academy.



A poster at the academy's entrance reading "Welcome the Shaheed Dr. Abdallah Azzam Academy." The bottom line reads "A Muslim is most glorious when he wages jihad for the sake of Allah" [an Abdallah Azzam quote]. At the left is the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades insignia.

Overview

The Dr. Abdallah Azzam Academy

1. During Operation Cast Lead the IDF seized a CD containing a high technical-quality promotional film about the Dr. Abdallah Azzam Academy. It was produced in 2007 by the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades information office to help encourage enrollment in the academy, establish to improve Hamas's military training.

2. Dr. Abdallah Azzam, for whom Hamas's military-terrorist academy is named, was a Palestinian born in the village of Silat al-Harithiya (near Jenin in upper Samaria) in 1941. He received his PhD from Egypt's Al-Azhar University, where as a student he joined the Muslim Brotherhood. Later he developed the radical Islamic ideology adopted by Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. His particular contribution was conceiving the idea that jihad (holy war against the infidels) was the personal, actual, concrete duty of every Muslim.

3. Hamas is a Palestinian movement based on the radical Islamic ideology of its parent movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928 in Egypt.¹ It adopted the image and ideology of Dr. Abdallah Azzam and turned him into a role model, primarily because he was a Palestinian who integrated theory and practice, that is, he not only developed and refined the idea of jihad but also fought the Russians in Afghanistan.² Hamas named the academy after him even though in practical terms, because of Hamas governmental considerations, it restricts the activities of the global jihad in the Gaza Strip. Since winning the Palestinian Legislative Council elections, Hamas's rule of the Gaza Strip has even been harshly criticized by senior Al-Qaeda figures.

4. Hamas's military academy is located in **Al-Nuseirat** in the central Gaza Strip, south of Gaza City. According to the movie, the first group of students, operatives from the Al-Nuseirat Brigade of the Central District Regiment of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, began their studies on November 29, 2006. The course, named for the dead terrorist Jihad Izzat Abu Sweirat,³ lasted four months and consisted of theoretical and practical lessons. The first group finished with a graduation ceremony and military show on March 30, 2007, attended by senior Hamas figures. The academy apparently continued its activities during the following year, since material encouraging enrollment appeared on the Hamas Internet forum in 2008.

¹ For further information see our February 12, 2006 bulletin "Profile of the Hamas movement" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e0206.pdf.

² He is glorified in posters and instructional material, mosques are named after him and as noted, Hamas's military academy. (Hamas preferred to name it after him and not after Salah Shehadeh, another "role model," who was head of the movement's military-terrorist wing.)

³ A Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operative killed by the IDF in the Gaza Strip on September 18, 2003.



Sayid Siyam, late interior minister of the Hamas de-facto administration, at the Abdallah Azzam Academy (From a Hamas poster, June 6, 2007).⁴

5. The first course consisted of more than 100 hours of instruction in various subjects. According to the CD and information which appeared on the Hamas Internet forum on April 2, 2007, the following were taught: making bombs and IEDs, detonating explosive devices, self defense, wireless communications, first aid, securing important individuals, camouflage and specific military training, the last of which included **invading IDF posts and abducting IDF soldiers** (an indication of its importance in Hamas eyes). The students were also indoctrinated with the themes of jihad and the qualities of the jihad fighter, supported by the legacy of Abdallah Azzam. They were brainwashed with the idea that they were fighting **for the Palestinian homeland as well as for Allah and Islam**. The same theme, **which is proclaimed at the academy's entrance, reflects Hamas's radical Islamic ideology**, which has not changed since the movement was founded.⁵

6. In our assessment, the founding of the academy was another step in establishing an advanced system for military and ideological training, which until then was limited to bases scattered throughout the Gaza Strip (professional and more advanced training courses were held in Iran, Syria and Lebanon). Founding the academy was part of Hamas's efforts to raise the level of its operatives' skills and activities in all the military-terrorist professions for the military buildup it has been conducting in recent years.⁶

⁴ <http://www.muslim.net/vb/showthread.php?t=235441>

⁵ For further information about Hamas's radical Islamic world view, as expressed in its charter, see our March 2006 bulletin "The Hamas Charter" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_charter.pdf.

⁶ For further information see our April 9, 2008 bulletin "Hamas's military buildup in the Gaza Strip (Updated April 2008)" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_080408.pdf



Internet posting encouraging enrollment in the Shaheed Abdallah Azzam Academy. The figures at the center top include sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Abd al-Aziz Rantisi (Hamas Internet forum, March 7, 2008).

Subjects studied at the academy (according to the CD seized in Operation Cast Lead)

Making bombs and IEDs



Learning about bombs and IEDs.



Materials used in the manufacture of explosives and a laptop in one of the classrooms.



Teaching the use of telephones to detonate bombs.



Teaching about detonating bombs.



Theoretical material about sabotage: explanations of bombs in a manual written especially for students of the first training course at the academy. It has been used later, and is called “The principles of military research – training an active fighter – the jihad fighter, the shaheed Izzat Abu Sweirat course.”

Invading IDF posts and abducting Israeli soldiers



Model of an “IDF post” where students train to abduct Israeli soldiers.



Invading an IDF post. According to the captions in yellow at the left, the invading force includes of engineering, auxiliary, sniper and



Simulating the abduction of an “Israeli soldier” (man at center right).

Training on police vehicles



Students training on police vehicles, another illustration of the link between Hamas's Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, its police and its other security forces. The picture at the right shows a poster of Salah Shehadeh, who headed the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and died in an Israeli targeted killing.

Training exercises in the academy courtyard



Self-defense exercise in the academy courtyard



Training exercise in the academy courtyard



Students in training. At the left are a map of Palestine and a picture of Saleh Shehadeh.

Classroom studies



Computerized information about weapons



Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives in class



Students in class. The poster's caption reads "Educating an active fighter."



Learning how to use hand grenades

Theoretical material: how to use an RPG

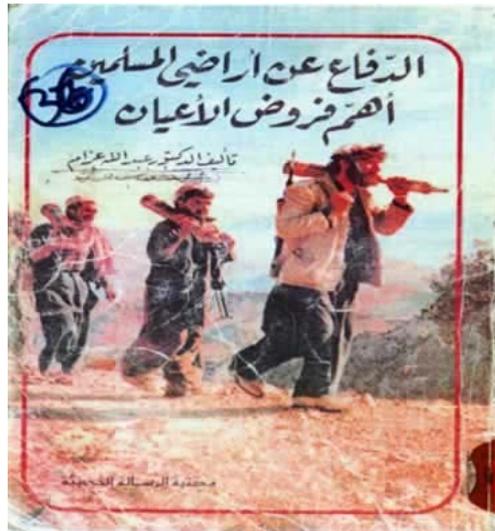


Information about using RPGs from an instruction manual prepared for students in the first course given by the academy.

Dr. Abdallah Azzam, Osama bin Laden's ideologue and a Hamas role model

7. **Abdallah Azzam**, for whom Hamas's military-terrorist academy is named, was a Palestinian born in the village of Silat al-Harithiya (near Jenin in upper Samaria) in 1941. He received his PhD from Egypt's Al-Azhar University, where as a student he joined the Muslim Brotherhood, and later developed the radical Islamic ideology adopted by Al-Qaeda. He operated against the Russians in Afghanistan and was assassinated in 1989.

8. He **was Osama bin Laden's ideological mentor** and had a central role in formulating Al-Qaeda's jihadist ideology. His particular contribution was fostering the idea of **jihad as the personal duty of every Muslim**, as opposed to the traditional orthodox Islamic view that jihad is the duty of Muslims as a community, and not of each individual. His view enabled Al-Qaeda to appeal to Muslims all over the world and to recruit them to the global jihad by representing it as a religious duty, actual and concrete.



Abdallah Azzam's well-known book, *Defending Muslim Lands – The Most Important Personal Duty* (Amman, Al-Risala al-Haditha publishing, 2nd edition, 1987.) This copy was seized in 2003 by the IDF at a school for orphans in Hebron run by the Hamas Islamic Charitable Society. The book is a long tract based on quotations from Muslim sources backed up by various Muslim scholars, especially from Saudi Arabia. Its theme is that any land that was ever under Islamic rule must be returned to Islamic rule by "violent jihad, which is the personal duty of every Muslim."

9. Hamas, the Palestinian offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood and an organization with a radical Islamic ideology, turned Abdallah Azzam into a role model and promoted his theories. That was because it regarded him as a Palestinian who put theory into practice, i.e., developed the concept of jihad and was also an active fighter. As opposed to the global jihad, his vast, dynamic ideological literature, adapting itself to changing situations, Hamas is inflexible and must rely on radical ideologies such as that of Dr. Azzam. For that reason, his picture appears on Hamas posters distributed in Judea and Samaria as one of the movement's most outstanding figures (See below), alongside Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam (killed by the British in 1935) and Hassan al-Banna (who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928).

10. Thus it was not by chance that Hamas named its military-terrorist academy after Abdallah Azzam and that **his jihadist ideology is taught in its courses**. Quotations from his works appear on the sign at its entrance and in the theoretical training material taught. During Operation Cast Lead an instruction manual was found, issued in 2007 by the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades with a second edition in 2008, called "The principles of military research – training an active fighter – the jihad fighter, the shaheed Izzat Abu Sweirat course." It contained a **quotation from his last statement**, calling upon Muslims to carry out a violent jihad against the "tyrants, infidels and oppressors." Not only the Palestinian context was intended, but rather global jihad. (The quotation can also be interpreted as not only against external enemies, but against Arab-Muslim rulers considered infidels.)

Abdallah Azzam's last statement appearing in the training manual used by students at Hamas's military-terrorist academy



The cover of an Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades training manual written for the academy, 2008 edition, seized during Operation Cast Lead.

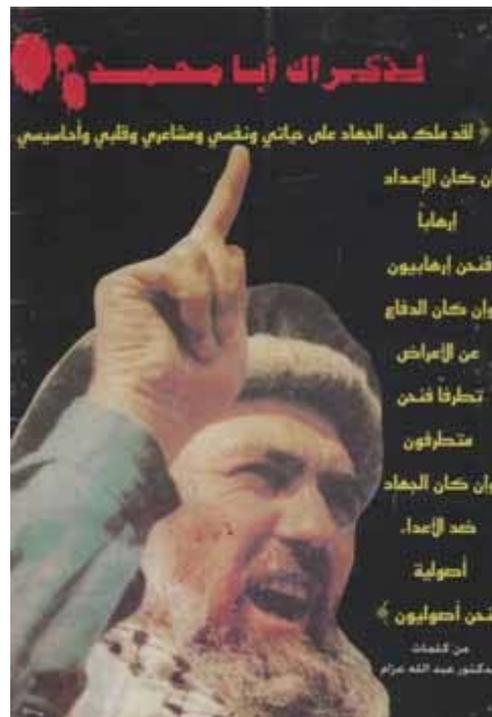


The last page of the manual, containing Abdallah Azzam's last statement, calling for jihad against "tyrants, infidels and oppressors." Hamas has used Abdallah Azzam's last statement in the past. The suicide bomber who carried out the attack at the Dolphinarium night club in Tel Aviv also quoted passages from it in favor of jihad and terrorism in his own last statement (See below).

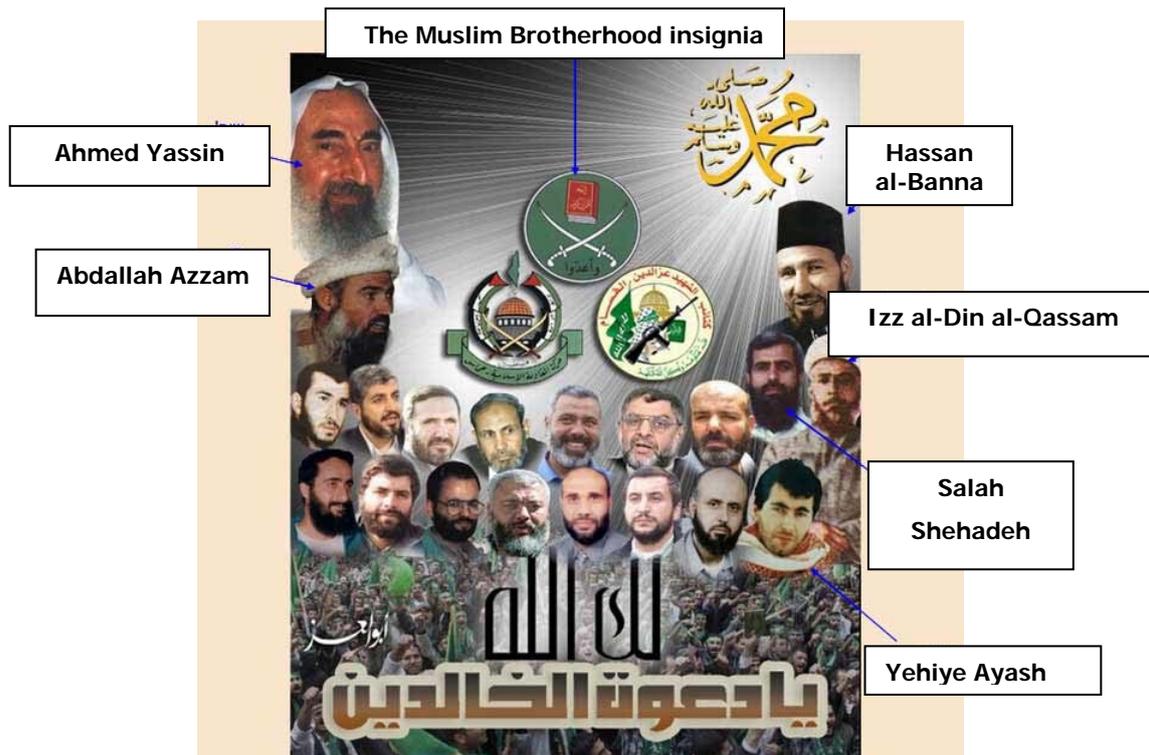
Other examples of Hamas's perpetuation of Abdallah Azzam's image and jihadist ideology



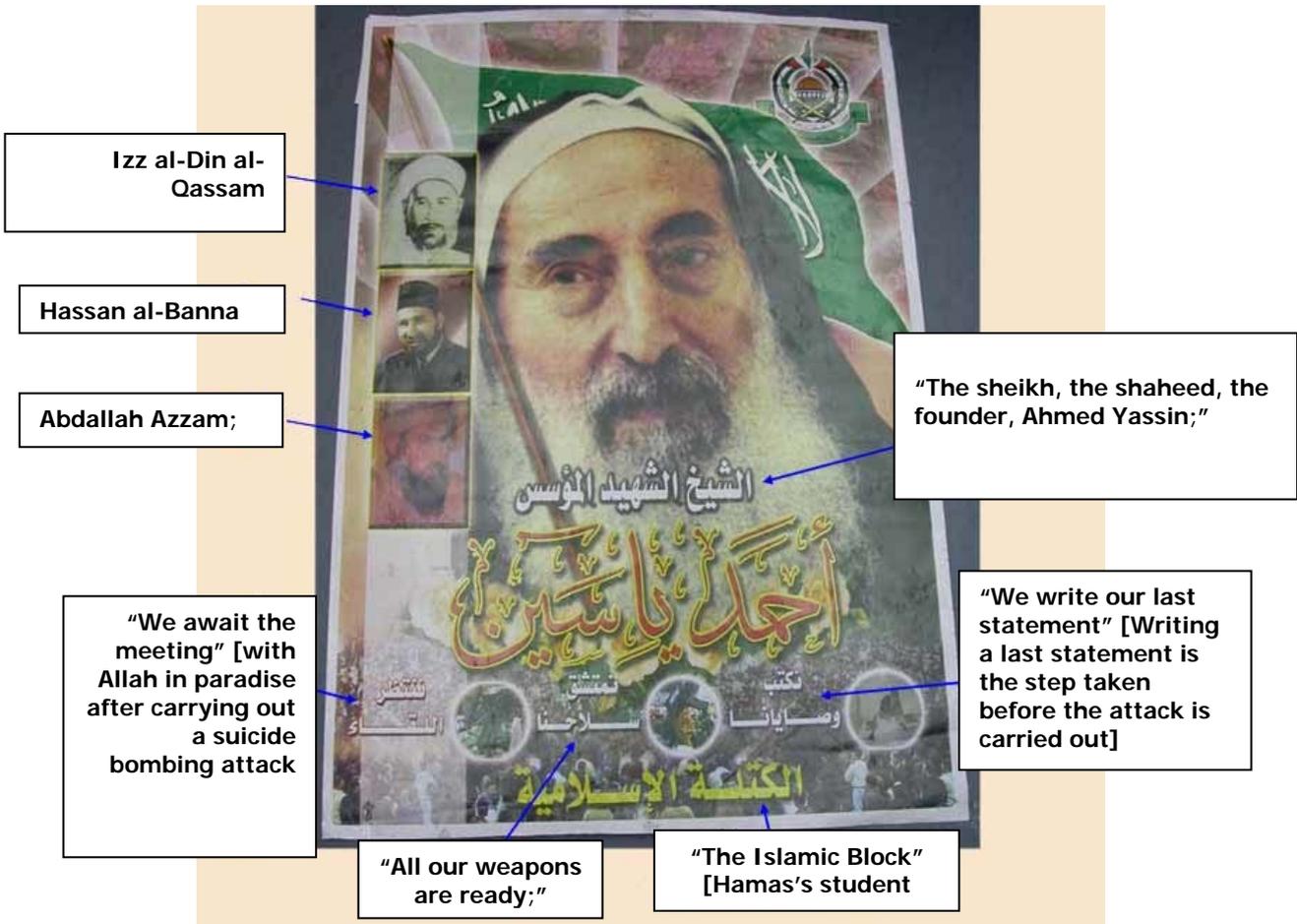
Poster of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, former Al-Qaeda head in Iraq. The uniformed Palestinian belongs to Hamas's Executive Force, which was integrated into the Hamas police force in the Gaza Strip. The figure to al-Zarqawi's left is Popular Resistance Committees leader Jemal Abu Samhadana, and captioned "Zarqawi Palestine."



Poster found in 2003 in a Hamas-run charitable society in Tulkarm. The picture is of Abdallah Azzam, the inscriptions are his praise for jihad.



Poster seized by the IDF at the American University in Jenin in 2003, showing Abdallah Azzam as only slightly less important than Ahmed Yassin and on a par with Hassan al-Banna, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood. Other figures are Izz al-Din al-Qassam, Yehiye Ayash, arch-terrorist nicknamed "the engineer," and Salah Shehadeh, who led the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. The large inscription reads "For your sake, Oh Allah. Oh [how great is] the preaching of Islam [*da'wah*] of the eternal men [who live eternal life in paradise]."



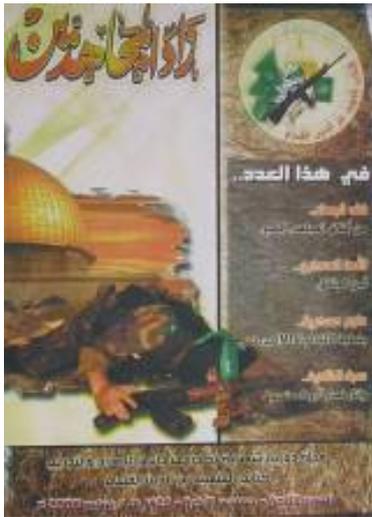
Hamas poster issued in 2003 commemorating Sheikh Ahmed Yassin flanked by other figures considered role models by Hamas: Izz al-Din al-Qassam, Hassan al-Banna and Abdallah Azzam.



The mosque named for Abdallah Azzam



Inside the Abdallah Azzam mosque, opened in July 2005. The first sermon was preached by senior Hamas figure Mahmoud al-Zahar.



Quotation from Abdallah Azzam 2008 issues of the magazine *Zad Al-Mujahideen*, published by Hamas's Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. Several copies were seized by the IDF during Operation Cast Lead. "Zad al-mujahideen" means "the equipment the jihad fighter takes with him," and is the name of one of the books written by Abdallah Azzam.