



**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center**

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**Hamas is conducting a “smile spin” for the West, particularly the United States. Its main objectives are to ease its political isolation, improve its position vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority and get funds to rebuild the Gaza Strip. For the Palestinians, it stresses that its fundamental anti-Israeli pro-terrorism strategy remains unchanged.**

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**Khaled Mashaal speaking on June 26, 2009. (Hamas’s Palestine-Info website, June 29, 2009). He leads Hamas’ smile spin which targets the United States and the other Western countries.**

## Overview

1. In recent months Hamas has conducted a **smile spin** aimed at the West, particularly the United States. Hamas spokesmen in the Gaza Strip and Damascus, led by **Khaled Mashaal**, chairman of the Hamas political bureau, have been using **softened rhetoric** when referring to Hamas positions on various issues relating to its political connections with the West and Hamas' conflict with Israel.

2. As part of the spin, prominent were two interviews, one given by Khaled Mashaal's interview to the *Wall Street Journal*, and the other given by Ahmed Yousef, deputy foreign minister in the Hamas de-facto administration, to the British *Economist* (See the appendices for details). Part of the spin have been the repeated requests made by senior Hamas figures to the West for open diplomatic channels. They also make prominent references to the cessation of rocket fire from the Gaza Strip and represent it as being in the interests of the Palestinian people, reiterating that Hamas is not an obstacle to the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state with the 1967 borders and Jerusalem as its capital, and state that Hamas is also ready to cooperate with the international community in a peace process leading to the establishment of such a state.

3. However, when speaking to the **Palestinians**, Hamas spokesmen continue using their **routine extremist rhetoric**, which clearly expresses Hamas' ideology. They reiterate Hamas' adherence to the strategy of "resistance" [i.e., terrorism] as the main way to "liberate Palestine," refuse to recognize the State of Israel and insist uncompromisingly on the return of the Palestinian refugees within any agreement, even what Hamas would consider an interim arrangement for the establishment of a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders. To inculcate the principle, the Hamas de-facto administration in the Gaza Strip recently organized a conference of representatives of educational and cultural institutions and intellectuals designed to reinforce the so-called "culture of resistance" which centers around adherence to the "resistance" [i.e., terrorism], opposition to peace negotiations and the rejection of Western values foreign to Islam and the Palestinian people.

4. Hamas' smile spin and rabble-rousing rhetoric are **fundamentally two sides of the same coin**. They reflect the **basic tension** between Hamas' adherence to its **radical Islamic ideology** and the **pragmatic considerations** resulting from the administrative responsibilities of the movement, which controls the Gaza Strip and is responsible for the welfare of 1.5 million Palestinians. **Ideologically and strategically**, Hamas remains committed to the final objective of the destruction of the State of Israel and refuses to abandon or even modify its 1988 charter, the basic document which expounds the

movement's radical Islamic worldview. However, at the same time, **practically speaking** Hamas does not reject temporary lulls in terrorist attacks for various longer or shorter periods of time, with or without formal agreements, when it deems the interests of the Gazan population or the movement require it.<sup>1</sup> **Politically speaking** Hamas aspires to open dialogue channels with the international community and to gain the greatest amount of political and economic benefit possible with relation to both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, **without changing its basic positions**.

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<sup>1</sup> That was shown by the cessation of rocket fire during the last months, intended to give Hamas a break during which it could rebuild the Gaza Strip, increase its control over the population, and reconstruct the military-terrorist networks damaged during Operation Cast Lead.

# Appendix I

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## Examples of Hamas' smile spin

1. **Khaled Mashaal**, chairman of the Hamas political bureau, was recently interviewed in Damascus by the *Wall Street Journal*. According to the paper, the wall was decorated with pictures of Hamas leaders who had been deemed shaheeds and a picture of the Al-Aqsa mosque. The main points of the interview were the following (*Wall Street Journal*, July 31):

i) The Hamas movement and its military-terrorist wing would be willing to agree to an **immediate reciprocal ceasefire** with Israel, as well as a prisoner exchange that would trade Hamas fighters for kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

ii) Hamas and other Palestinian organizations would be **ready to cooperate with any American, international or regional effort to find a just solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict**, end the so-called "Israeli occupation" and allow the Palestinian people their right to self-determination." He said Hamas expected President Obama and his special envoy to the Middle East, George Mitchell, to present a broader outline for conducting Middle East peace talks.

iii) Hamas would be **willing to "stand by and respect" a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders** as part of a broader agreement with Israel. That would be on condition that Israel agreed to the "right of return" of millions of Palestinian refugees and the establishment of a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

iv) **Hamas would not be an obstacle to peace.** "We," he said, "along with other Palestinian factions in consensus agreed upon accepting a Palestinian state on the 1967 lines. This is the national program. This is our program. This is a position we stand by and respect."

2. **Ahmed Yousef**, deputy foreign minister of the Hamas de-facto administration and advisor to Ismail Haniya on foreign affairs, was interviewed on July 30 by the British *Economist*. The main points of the interview were the following:

i) "Hamas is very close on recognition of Israel... **We show all sorts of ideological flexibility on this...**" Ahmed Yousef added that did not mean Hamas could unequivocally accept the three conditions the Quartet. According to the paper, Yousef seemed **"almost desperate to stretch the semantic elastic to satisfy the doubters."**

ii) Hamas "honored" all the PLO's previous agreements with Israel, including recognition, provided the other side [i.e., Israel] "abides by all its reciprocal promises."

iii) **He refused to commit to completely abandoning violence** (as the Quartet demands) but said Hamas would **extend the it's "unilateral ceasefire"** if the other side [i.e., Israel] agreed. He later suggested that the two sides could agree to an immediate ceasefire for a year, to build on today's "period of quietness."

iv) **Asked about recognition of Israel**, he said, "[T]he issue is not Israel's right to exist. We know Israel is there. It's not a matter of recognition." **The distinction, he said, was semantic, between recognition and acceptance.**

v) **Praising the June 4, 2009 speech given in Cairo by President Obama**, he said, "In general it was excellent. I do believe he's sincere." However, he wondered if Obama would yield to pressure from the fundamentalist Christians in America and the Jewish lobby. "We wait for facts on the ground," on said.

vi) **Yousef had a series of demands on Israel and the United States.** He said that Israel had to "lift the cruel siege" of the Gaza Strip and stop building in the West Bank settlements Bank, and that there had to be an exchange of prisoners between Israel and the Palestinians. President Obama also had to "boost the Egyptians to go ahead with national reconciliation between the Palestinians."

vii) **Should the Palestinian people choose the two-state solution, he said, " Hamas would not object,"** although it would prefer a single state for "all the Abrahamic faiths, maybe a Holy Land federation. We leave it to the next generation to decide what kind [of arrangement]."

viii) **Ahmed Yousef tried to minimize the importance of the Hamas charter while refusing to change it**, saying, "...we don't use it. Why should be change it when we never use it?" [Note: In speaking before Palestinian target audiences, Ahmed Yousef denied some of the things he was quoted as saying. See Appendix II.]

3. Hamas recently allowed *New York Times* correspondent Ethan Bronner to enter the Gaza Strip and interview Hamas activists and local residents. One of them was senior Hamas figure **Ayman Taha**, who said the following: "Armed resistance is still important and legitimate, but we have a new emphasis on cultural resistance..."<sup>2</sup> **The current situation required a stoppage of rockets. After the war, the fighters needed a break and the people needed a break"** (*The New York Times*, July 24, 2009).

4. In a Friday sermon given at a mosque in Khan Yunis, **Ismail Haniya**, head of the Hamas de-facto administration, said that Hamas was prepared to adopt the concept of "**liberation**

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<sup>2</sup> For the meaning of the term, "cultural resistance," which is actually "a culture of resistance," see Appendix II.

**in stages.” That is, Hamas would not object to the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state with the 1967 borders and whose capital was Jerusalem.** However, he said that that did not mean ceding the rest of the land or recognizing of the State of Israel, rather it was a strategic option to ending the “occupation.” He added that the **“resistance” [i.e., terrorism] was also a strategic option which the Palestinians would continue adhering to** (Al-Aqsa TV, July 24, 2009).

5. **Ahmed Yousef, deputy foreign minister in the Hamas de-facto administration,** said that Hamas would not object to negotiations based on the option of the establishment of a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders. He said that there were international elements interested in having Hamas participate in conferences discussing the Palestinian cause. He also said that Hamas continued knocking on America’s door and sending it messages through various channels (*Al-Shorouk*, July 23, 2009).

6. **Ismail Radwan, a senior Hamas figure in the Gaza Strip,** said that international elements had come to realize that Hamas was a factor whose importance could not be minimized, and that no move could be made in the Middle East without Hamas participation. However, he refused to distinguish between “moderate” and “extremist” element in Hamas, saying that Hamas had one position to which all its members were committed (QudsPress website, July 26, 2009).

7. **Taher al-Nunu, spokesman for the Hamas de-facto administration,** said that Hamas welcomed the opportunity for a dialogue with the international community (BBC, July 26, 2009). **Musa Abu Marzuq,** deputy chief of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, said that any serious dialogue [with Hamas] had to be held without preconditions (BBC, July 26, 2009).

8. On May 4 **Khaled Mashaal** was interviewed by *The New York Times*. Excerpts from the interview follow:

i) Early in the interview Khaled Mashaal announced to the American administration and the include that **Hamas would “be part of the solution, period.”** He said that President Obama had taken a positive tone, different from his predecessor, but complained that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton used “language that reflects the old administration policies.”

ii) He said that **there was only one enemy in the region, Israel** (whose existence he refused to recognize). He said that no good had come to Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas from recognizing Israel, but as far as the two-state solution went, he said that “We are with a state on the **1967 borders, based on a long-term truce.** This includes East

Jerusalem, the dismantling of settlements and the right of return of the Palestinian refugees." When asked what he meant by "long term," he replied "ten years."

iii) Asked why Hamas was no longer firing rockets into Israeli territory, he answered that **"Not firing the rockets currently is part of an evaluation from the movement which serves the Palestinians' interest.** After all, the firing is a method, not a goal. Resistance is legitimate right, but practicing such a right comes under an evaluation by the movement's leaders."<sup>3</sup>

9. Hamas' response to President Obama's Cairo speech was conciliatory. On May 3, **Ahmed Yousef**, deputy foreign minister of the Hamas de-facto administration, sent a letter to Obama during his stay in Cairo, and its contents were posted on the website of an American women's pacifist organization called Code Pink, whose representatives have visited the Gaza Strip. In our assessment it is unclear whether the letter was actually delivered to Obama. It said that Hamas welcomed the president's visit and his initiative to bridge differences with the Arab world. It represented the **Palestinian-Israeli conflict** as one of the causes of the continued tension between the United States and the Arab-Muslim world, and again **called on President Obama, Hillary Clinton and George Mitchell to visit the Gaza Strip**, where "the death and destruction...suffered during the invasion could not have happened without U.S.-supplied weapons and U.S.-taxpayers' money." The letter also called on the United States to lift the "siege" of the Gaza Strip and halt all settlement building and expansion. **Hamas, it said, was committed to seeking a "just resolution" to the conflict which did not contradict the international community and "enlightened opinion" as expressed in the International Court of Justice, the United Nations General Assembly, and "leading human rights organizations."** Hamas, it said, was **"prepared to engage all parties on the basis of mutual respect and without preconditions."**<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The day after the interview was published Khaled Mashaal claimed that the reasons he gave for the current cessation of rocket fire had **not been understood properly**. He said that he had meant to say that the decision whether or not to fire rockets depended on Hamas' strategic evaluation, which was a product of many factors. He said that Israel ("the Zionist entity") was always the "aggressor" and that the rocket fire was Palestinian "self defense," and carried out after consideration of the circumstances of the lives of the Palestinian people (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, May 5, 2009). For further information see our May 11, 2009 bulletin "Hamas leader Khaled Mash'al has recently addressed the issue of rocket fire and of terrorism ("resistance")" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/hamas\\_e072.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e072.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.codepinkalert.org>.

## Appendix II

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### Statements made by Hamas activists expressing Hamas' fundamental extremist positions

1. "Clarifying" his remarks for Palestinians following the publication of the article in the *Economist*, Ahmed Yousef **denied** having said that Hamas was close to recognizing Israel. He said that the *Economist* **had either not understood what he said or had misquoted him when the interview was translated into English**. He added that nothing in international law required the Palestinians to recognizing Israel, and that the **Palestinians would not recognize Israel's right to Palestinian land**. The international community, he noted, should work to restore Palestinian rights: "an occupied people cannot be required to recognize those who stole its land, rather, the Zionists must recognize the rights of the Palestinian people" (Hamas's Palestine-Info website, August 2, 2009).

2. On July 28, 2009, a ceremony was held in the Al-Zeitun neighborhood of Gaza City in honor of the families of the *shaheeds* and wounded of Operation Cast Lead. Senior Hamas figure **Mahmoud al-Zahar** gave a speech which also mentioned Hamas' position toward Israel, saying the following (July 29, 2009):<sup>5</sup>

i) Hamas adheres to the position that the [Palestinian] state must contain all the territory of "Palestine."

ii) Today no one demands that Hamas recognize Israel. Those who demanded it in the past currently maintain contacts with Hamas, some of them covertly, after they became convinced that Hamas could not recognize Israel.

iii) "We are certain that what comes after the liberation of Palestine will not be only a state. **After the liberation of Palestine a large revolution will reach everywhere**...Anyone who thinks that today we are only paying the price for the liberation of Palestine is mistaken. **The firm stance of Gaza is only the opening of all the doors**, especially when that country, 'Israel,' ceases to exist."

3. **Sheikh Hamad al-Bitawi**, a Hamas activist in Nablus, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council with a rich past in incitement against Israel and the Palestinian Authority, recently called for a renewal of Palestinian terrorism. Interviewed by the Hamas-affiliated **Al-Bayan Center website** on July 30, he said that "the Al-Aqsa mosque is a trust on the shoulders of all Arabs, but we, the Palestinians, have a great responsibility. As our people

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<sup>5</sup> The quotations are from the website to QudsPress, and inter-Arab news agency. They were deleted from Hamas websites such as Palestine-info.

**began the intifada in 2000, we must begin another one, and the Arab nations must rise up in support of the Al-Aqsa mosque.”** He called upon all the group to act “for the liberation of Jerusalem,” saying that “**Jerusalem and Palestine will only be liberated by jihad and not by negotiations.**”

4. Even as Hamas continues its smile spin for the West, it also works within the Gaza Strip, especially among the younger generation, **to strengthen the perception of violence and opposition to negotiations with Israel.** On July 20, 2009, the Palestinian ministry of culture initiated a conference to strengthen “the culture of resistance.” It was attended by Gazan intellectuals and representatives from educational and cultural institutions. Speeches were made about the need to promote a “culture of resistance” based on the example of the *shaheeds* who died during the terrorist campaign, the ideology of jihad and Islam, and on **resistance to the “culture of surrender, defeat and normalization.”** Gazan intellectual were asked by Dr. Abd al-Khaliq Ala’f, who headed the preparatory committee, to form a “cultural front” which would oppose the “sale of the Palestinian homeland” through “negotiations for an empty, deceptive peace” (Website of the ministry of culture in the Hamas de-facto administration and the Hamas’ daily *Felesteen*, July 21, 2009).

5. The conference paid special attention to the **Palestinian educational system and curriculum**, which Hamas controls, to inculcate new generations of Palestinian youth with radical Islamic ideology filled with hatred for Israel and the West, ready to participate in armed violence. The head of the conference’s scientific committee, **Dr. Nabil Abu Ali**, said that the ministry of education had to adapt itself to Palestinian reality, **reexamine the curricula** and reinforce extra-curricular activities to raise ideological adherence to the “resistance.” He said that it was the task of the universities, schools and cultural institutions to found a “culture of resistance” by forming a worldview “**free of Western ideas which are foreign to our religion and people.**” On the second day of the conference **Dr. Khalil Hamad**, director of the curriculum department of the ministry of education and culture, chaired a meeting which examined working papers dealing with education for “strengthening the culture of resistance.” **Dr. Nafiz al-Ja’d** one of the committee members, said there was a need to develop a Palestinian curriculum “**which would raise a resistance generation.**” When the conference ended a series of recommendation was made, one of which was “to strengthen the culture of resistance in the Palestinian curricula and in extra-curricular activities...” (Website of the ministry of culture in the Hamas de-facto administration and the Hamas’ daily *Felesteen*, July 21, 2009). Jabaliya

6. **Fathi Hamad**, Hamas interior minister, interviewed by the Chinese News Agency on July 13, reiterated Hamas' basic, traditional positions. He said that **only the "resistance"** [i.e., terrorism] would make the "Zionist enemy" leave "occupied Palestine." Hamas, he said, **"cannot cede one inch of the historical land of Palestine because it belongs to the Muslim endowment"** [a principle which appears in the Hamas charter]. He added that the organizations in the Gaza Strip were getting ready for the next round of the confrontation with Israel by training their operatives in guerilla warfare, digging tunnels, and increasing the production of rockets.

7. On May 7, 2009, a memorial conference was held at the Rashad al-Shawa cultural center in Gaza City for Sayid Siyam and Nizar Rayyan, who were killed during Operation Cast Lead. Khaled Mashaal, head of the Hamas political bureau, gave a speech in Damascus broadcast live at the conference. It was attended by the leadership of the Hamas police in the Gaza Strip, which is an integral part of Hamas' military-security infrastructure. Mashaal said that no one [i.e., the Palestinian Authority] had the right to conduct negotiations concerning the "rights" and "principles" of the Palestinian people. He represented Sayid Siyam and Nizar Rayyan as role models for jihad fighters, and stressed that **the "resistance" [i.e. terrorism] was Hamas' strategic option for the "liberation" [i.e., the "liberation of Palestine"] and for the "restoration" of the Palestinians' "rights," and that Hamas would make no concession regarding the "resistance" it led** [i.e., terrorism]. As to the issue of smuggling weapons into the Gaza Strip, he said that "the resistance is the legitimate right of the Palestinian people and no one has the right to prevent the Gaza Strip from arming itself or to choke it to prevent weapons from reaching it" (Hamas's Palestine-Info website and Al-Aqsa TV, May 7, and other Palestinian media).

8. **Ismail Haniya**, head of the Hamas de-facto administration, said **Hamas reserved the option of "resistance" [i.e., terrorism] to establish a Palestinian state**. He said the his administration was trying to conduct the daily lives of the Gazans without taking the risk of ceding their "rights," while **continuing to support the "resistance project"** (Hamas' *Al-Ra'i*, July 13, 2009).