



## Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center

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# Khaled Mashaal, Chief of Hamas' political bureau, visits Tehran

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Khaled Mashaal and other senior Hamas figures meet Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei (Photo from Ali Khamenei's website.)

## Overview

1. On December 13-15, Khaled Mashaal, chief of Hamas' political bureau in Damascus, headed a delegation to Tehran and met with the Iranian leadership, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the president and other top figures of the regime. The visit marked the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Hamas' founding. It symbolized the close relations between Hamas and Iran and the importance Hamas gives to the support it receives from Iran in view of its isolation, both regionally and internationally. During the visit the Iranian leadership promised to support Hamas' continuation of the "resistance" [i.e., terrorism]. Khaled Mashaal praised Iran's support and in answer to a question, hinted that if Israel attacked Iran, Hamas would be part of the response.

## Hamas-Iranian Relations

2. **Khaled Mashaal**, head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, **celebrated the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the founding of Hamas by visiting Iran**, which (along with Syria) support the movement's strategy. While the move was largely symbolic, it reflected the close relations between Iran and Hamas created in recent years, **especially after Hamas took over the Gaza Strip** in June 2007, **increasing its dependence on Iranian support**.

3. **In the past two years Iran has assisted Hamas in a variety of ways**: its support has been **military** (training, weapons – including long-range rockets – and technical knowhow), **financial** (several hundred million dollars a year) and **political** (publicly backing Hamas' policies). After Operation Cast Lead Iran worked energetically to **help Hamas rebuild its military infrastructure, which was damaged in the fighting**; part of its aid included giving Hamas rockets with **ranges of 75 kilometers**, or 37.5 miles, threatening the center of Israel.

4. **Support for Hamas as well as Hezbollah and jihad continues as one of the main aspects Iran's security perception. It is intended to tie Israel to conflicts on its southern and northern borders and provide a response to the possibility of an Israeli attack on Iran**. In addition, support for the Palestinian terrorist organizations is part of Iran's policy of exporting the Islamic Revolution, and reflects the deep hatred the Iranian regime bears toward Israel.

## Khaled Mashaal's Visit to Iran

5. **Khaled Mashaal's reception in Iran was of the sort usually reserved for respected heads of state** (such as Syrian President Assad). He met with **Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei** (an honor accorded to few) and with other top leaders (President Ahmadinejad, Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki and Ali Larijani, Chairman of the Majlis [Iranian parliament]).

6. **All the heads of the Iranian regime expressed support for Hamas' struggle** and promised to continue their support, severely criticizing the leaders of the Arab countries who, they claimed, acted against Palestinian interests and "play into the hands of the Zionists." **The most important Iranian statements were the following:**

- i) **Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei** said that Iran had paid a heavy price in the international arena for its position on the Palestinian issue. He said that by retreating from its pro-Palestinian position a great deal of pressure would be relieved, but that

Iran was willing to bear the brunt of that pressure. **He strongly criticized what he called the failure of the leaders of the Arab countries to support the Palestinian cause, and said that some Arabs (disguised as Muslims) [a hint at Egypt and other pro-Western Arab countries] had betrayed the Palestinian cause.** He said that the only solution for the crisis in Palestine was to continue the resistance [i.e., terrorism], have faith in Allah and be capable of carrying out acts [i.e., terrorist acts]. **"Allah,"** he said, **"had decided that victory would come to those who believed in him and carried out jihad in his name."** He added that if Israel attacked the Gazans again it would be delivered a greater blow and defeat more crushing than in the past.<sup>1</sup>

ii) **Iranian President Ahmadinejad** said that Iran would always **stand by the "oppressed Palestinian people"** and that global conditions were changing in favor of independent countries, and their enemies were suffering one failure after another. As examples he gave what he called the failure of Israel's attacks of the Gaza Strip and in the second Lebanon war, and the failure of American President Barack Obama to rehabilitate the United States' image among the Muslim countries and the failure of the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup>



**Khaled Mashaal meets Iranian President Ahmadinejad**  
(Photo from Ahmadinejad's website).

iii) **Ali Larijani, chairman of the Majlis**, strongly criticized the position of the American administration in the Palestinian issue, saying that Washington had repeatedly failed to provide the Palestinians with the most basic rights. He said that **Iran considered its continuing support of the Palestinian cause a great honor and that Hamas was "a symbol of confrontation with Zionist regime and**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?p=contentShow&id=6218>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://president.ir/fa/?ArtID=19251>.

**resistance against its acquisitiveness.**<sup>3</sup> He said that the “resistance” [i.e., terrorism] had proved itself to be the best weapon for realizing the rights of the oppressed Palestinians.<sup>4</sup>

iv) **Iranian Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki** said that the fact **that Israel had been libeled throughout the world after the operation in the Gaza Strip was to a great extent the result of the “courageous resistance led by Hamas.”** He added that Iran congratulated Hamas on the 22<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of its founding and said that “[t]he indecent and arrogant moves made by hegemonic powers and the Zionist regime versus the status and prestige of Hamas have thus far been entirely futile, having led to improving the status of Hamas among the Palestinians and the Palestinian resistance [i.e., terrorist] groups.”<sup>5</sup>



**Khaled Mashaal with Iranian foreign minister Manuchehr Mottaki**  
(Fars News Agency, Iran, December 15, 2009).

v) **Hashemi-Rafsanjani**, chairman of the Iranian Assembly of Experts and of the Expediency Discernment Council, described the Palestinian issue as the most important international concern and said that **the Muslim world had a duty to put and end to the Palestinian’s suffering.** He said that “The Islamic world can create a serious obstacle in the way of the Zionist regime’s totalitarian and expansionist tendencies and policies, and the Islamic countries must spend efforts aimed at breaking the siege of Gaza.” He added that “Maintaining the Jihadi spirit and observing patience in confrontation with the hardships are two main factors in resistance that would lead to the victory of the Palestinian people, and the signs of upcoming victory are already evident.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8809241314>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://alef.ir/1388/content/view/59443/>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8809241319>.

<sup>6</sup> <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8809240788> and <sup>6</sup> <http://www.aftabnews.ir/vdcjy8eh.uqetmzsfu.html>.



**Khaled Mashaal and Hashemi-Rafsanjani**  
 (Photo from Hashemi-Rafsanjani's website)

#### 7. Khaled Mashaal's main statements were the following:

i) Khaled Mashaal expressed his appreciation for Iranian support, saying that it strengthened the resistance [i.e., terrorist organizations] in Palestine. He said that **"All nations support us but at the top of them are the leader and people of Iran. We appreciate them."** Asked what Hamas would do if Israel attacked a country in the region, he answered that "[t]he Zionist regime is a danger for all and threatens Lebanon, Syria, Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran. **We are always ready for resistance and if Israel attacks, we will all resist.**"<sup>7</sup>

ii) He said that "[t]he event in occupied Palestine and the approaches adopted by the Zionist regime reveal the fact that the so called **peace talks have been fruitless and resistance [i.e., terrorism]** is the only real and genuine way to go." He added that Israeli Prime Minister "intended to take advantage of the weak position of the Arab world and the European countries, and resort to deceiving tactics in order to stabilize the position of the Zionist townships within the Palestinian territories."<sup>8</sup>

[**Note:** All emphases in the statements by Khaled Mashaal and the Iranians were added by the ITIC.]

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.irna.ir/En/View/FullStory/?NewsId=845076&IdLanguage=3>.

<sup>8</sup> <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8809241319>.