



**The Meir Amit Intelligence and
Terrorism Information Center**

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Mahmoud al-Zahar, senior Hamas figure, recently attacked the West's values and permissive lifestyle (i.e., secularism, gender equality, tolerance of homosexuality) and expressed adherence to the goal of the annihilation of the State of Israel through jihad.



Mahmoud al-Zahar at a press conference, September 2006 (Chinadaily.com.cn)

Overview

1. Senior Hamas figure Mahmoud al-Zahar¹ was recently interviewed by several Arab and Western media. He used an opportunity (interview with Reuters) to **strongly attack Western values and the West's lifestyle (particularly tolerance for homosexuality, secularism, gender equality and sexual permissiveness)**. He emphasized the superiority of Islamic morality over that of the secular West and defended Hamas' Islamization of the Gaza Strip.

2. Mahmoud al-Zahar also stressed his opposition to every form of negotiation with Israel, reiterated Hamas' objective of founding an Islamic state on all the territory of "Palestine," and promised that Hamas would not abandon the path of jihad and the "shaheed project." However, he defended Hamas' post-Operation Cast Lead restrained policy of rocket fire, saying that it was Hamas' "right" to arm itself by all available means to "defend the Palestinian people."

3. Mahmoud al-Zahar's attack on the West and its values and his proclamations of adherence to the path of jihad for the annihilation of Israel **express Hamas' genuine extremist Islamic ideology expressed in its charter**. That ideology of sometimes marketed euphemistically, ambiguously and misleadingly to important individuals and groups in the West, often from the extreme left, and to human rights organizations, whose basic worldview is totally different from that of Hamas.

4. Mahmoud al-Zahar (and other senior Hamas figures) actually speaks of **defending Hamas' "right" to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip, as it has been doing since the end of Operation Cast Lead (January 2009)**. His remark about rearmament illustrates the need for the oversight of shipments into the Gaza Strip because of the trend of smuggling weapons by sea and overland. The weapons smuggling orchestrated by Iran strengthens Hamas' military power and increases the terrorist threat to Israel from the Gaza Strip.

¹ One of Hamas' founders and a member of its political bureau. Is often interviewed by the Arab, Palestinian and foreign media.

Appendix

Attacks on Western Values and Lifestyle

5. On October 28, 2010 Mahmoud al-Zahar was interviewed by Reuters. He strongly attacked the West and its values:

A. **"The West,"** he said, **"is floundering in immorality,"** and therefore has no right to criticize Hamas for the way it governs the Gaza Strip. He accused the West and Europe of promiscuity and hypocrisy saying that Islamic traditions deserved respect because "we have the right to control our life according to our religion, not according to your religion. **You have no religion, You are secular.**" (ITIC emphasis)

B. He **viciously attacked the West's secular lifestyle:** " You do not live like human beings. You do not [even] live like animals. You accept homosexuality. And now you criticise us?" He denounced France, which recently passed legislation forbidding women to wear full face veils [*burqas*] in public, saying "We are the ones who respect women and honour women ... not you," he said. **"You use women as an animal.** She has one husband and hundreds of thousands of boyfriends. You don't know who is the father of your sons, because of the way you respect women."² (ITIC emphasis)

6. Mahmoud al-Zahar's remarks accurately reflected Hamas' positions and the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas' parent movement, as expressed in the Hamas charter.³

Defense of the Islamization of the Gaza Strip

7. Mahmoud al-Zahar also spoke about criticism of the Hamas regime in the Gaza Strip and its stringent laws. He said, **"Is it a crime to Islamise the people? I am a Muslim living here according to our tradition.** Why should I live under your tradition? We understand you very well, **you are poor people. Morally poor.** Don't criticise us because of what we are." (ITIC emphasis).⁴

8. Since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip in June 2007, it has **promoted the gradual Islamization of the Gaza Strip,** intended to translate the vision of **the establishment of a Palestinian stated based on Islamic law into reality.** The process, enforced by the de

² <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE69R21120101028?pageNumber=1>

³ For further information about the Hamas charter, see the March 21, 2006 bulletin, "The Hamas Charter" at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_charter.pdf

⁴ <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE69R21120101028?pageNumber=1>

facto Hamas administration and also used as a tool for reinforcing its control, has been manifested in daily life by the passage of a series of radical Islamic laws and regulations, forcing the population to conform to Islamic behavior codes, the establishment of Islamic economic entities (such as banks) and intensifying Islamic education in the formal and informal educational systems.

The Conflict with Israel

9. In a speech given on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the death of Palestinian Islamic Jihad founder Fathi Shqaqi, Mahmoud al-Zahar said that the Gaza Strip and the West Bank were an integral part of Palestinian lands and that **no Palestinian state would be established on less than "all Palestine."** He promised that **Hamas would not abandon the "path of jihad" and the "shaheed project."** He added that the Qur'an proved that "there is not future for the Zionists among us," and claimed that the CIA had issued a report that Israel would not last longer than 20 years (Al-Quds TV, October 27, 2010).⁵

Hamas' Restrained Policy of Rocket Fire

10. Interviewed by the London-based *Al-Hayat*, **Mahmoud al-Zahar defended Hamas' restrained policy of rocket fire.** He justified the detention of squads launching rockets from the Gaza Strip belonging to networks which did not accept Hamas' authority. He said that after Operation Cast Lead an agreement for a lull had been brokered by Egypt, signed and accepted by the various factions. When rogue operatives violated the agreement by launching rockets of their own accord, it would, he said, open the door to anarchy. He also said that those rocket launching squads were **rebelling against their own factions.** He added that some of the factions which had complained that Hamas did not let them launch rockets into Israel territory had not fired so much as once shell throughout Operation Cast Lead, were now trying to market themselves by firing rockets (*Al-Hayat*, October 30, 2010).

11. Since the end of Operation Cast Lead Hamas has maintained a restrained policy of rocket fire and has also enforced it on the rogue networks, for the most part successfully. The policy is a response to Israel's deterrent power, and **its objective is to allow Hamas to rebuild the military and civilian infrastructures damaged during Operation Cast Lead.** The relative quiet resulting from the policy is being exploited by other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip (especially the Palestinian Islamic Jihad) to advance their own military buildups and build up their forces with the **aid and support of Iran, Syria and Hezbollah.** Hamas

⁵ Hamas also denounced pamphlets recently issued by the PLO relating to a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders side by side with the State of Israel, claiming it was a distortion of history. The de facto Hamas administration also stated that there was no statute of limitations on the so-called "right of return" and that no national or international factor had the authority to cancel it (Hamas' Palestine-info website, October 26, 2010).

has replenished and even increased the stockpiles of weapons at its disposal before Operation Cast Lead both by smuggling them into the Gaza Strip and by improving its capability to manufacture them itself. It now has, in our assessment, **an arsenal of 2,500-3,000 rockets**, including Iranian-made Fajr rockets with a range of more than 60 kilometers, or just over 37 miles (i.e., from the Gaza Strip to the center of Israel).