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The Meir Amit Intelligence and  
Terrorism Information Center

## **The visits of Ismail Haniya, head of the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, to Egypt, Sudan, Turkey and Tunisia were meant to strengthen Hamas' ties with the various countries, reinforce the legitimacy of the Hamas administration and bolster Haniya's personal status.**

### **Overview**

1. Ismail Haniya, head of the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, recently paid visits to Egypt, Sudan, Turkey and Tunisia. It was the **first such series of visits since the violent coup which brought Hamas to power in the Gaza Strip in June 2007**. There were two aspects to Haniya's trip: **the official**, which was prominent in his meetings with the heads of state in Turkey, Sudan and Tunisia, but absent from his visit to Egypt (where the heads of the regime did not meet with him), and **the popular aspect**, manifested in meetings with the heads of the Muslim Brotherhood (in Egypt) and the heads of the Islamic movements whose ideologies are close to that of the Muslim Brotherhood (IHH in Turkey, Al-Nahda in Tunisia).

2. In our assessment the objectives of the visits were to **strengthen the status of the de-facto Hamas administration and its ties with friendly countries, ensure closer relations with popular Islamist movements, especially the Muslim Brotherhood, and to reinforce Ismail Haniya's image as head of the Palestinian entity**. Hamas also wants to exploit the regional uprisings, especially the increase in strength of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Al-Nahda in Tunisia, and Turkey's desire to extend its regional

influence and promote its position in the Palestinian arena. Beyond that, the regional unrest, especially the harm to Hamas' relations with the "resistance" camp (Iran and Syria),<sup>1</sup> has made it necessary for Hamas to **find additional strategic support. Such support could, to a certain extent, balance its great (and continuing) reliance on the "resistance camp,"** (especially with everything concerning its military buildup in the Gaza Strip).

3. During his visits Ismail Haniya sent the message (aimed at the Palestinian Authority as well) that in **the future Hamas would use the so-called Arab Spring to emphasize its radical ideology, which focuses on the "liberation of Palestine" through jihad.** Haniya repeatedly stressed that Hamas would never recognize the "Israeli entity" and called on the Arab world to wage a jihad against Israel and establish a "Jerusalem army" to **"liberate Palestine from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea."** His statements, **spiced with anti-Semitic remarks in Tunisia, were generally well-received in the host countries,** especially among Islamist movements and in "popular" forums.

4. Throughout his tour **Haniya maintained a high media profile, and his extremist positions on the conflict with Israel were widely and sympathetically reported.** At a press conference in Rafah held on his return and in a report to the Hamas administration, he boasted about the positive outcome of the visits.<sup>2</sup> He said that they symbolized "breaking the political blockade" of Hamas and the Palestinian government, and boasted that **Gaza had a revolutionary role in the Arab Spring.** At the press conference in Rafah he said that he had returned to the Gaza Strip with **"many good things"** (possibly hinting at promises of practical support received during the tour). He added that **he was planning another round of visits to the other Arab and Islamic countries** which had invited him.

5. Ismail Haniya visited the following countries:

### **Egypt, December 25-26, 2011**

6. While in Egypt Haniya met with the secretary general of the Arab League, senior members of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sheikh al-Azhar, high-ranking officers in Egyptian general intelligence and lower-level functionaries in the Egyptian administration. Unlike the other

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<sup>1</sup>For further information see the December 11, 2011 bulletin "Hamas evacuates its Syrian external headquarters: overview and initial analysis" at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/pdf/ipc\\_e249.pdf](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/ipc_e249.pdf).

<sup>2</sup>However, Haniya's rivals claimed that the tour was a great waste of "public money." Dr. Yusef Rizka, Haniya's political advisor, rejected the claims, saying that the governments of the various countries had paid for the visits and that they had resulted in many achievements, costing the Hamas administration "only small change" (Hamas' Felesteen, January 13, 2012).

countries he visited, **Egypt made sure that high-level members of the regime did not meet with him.**

7. Haniya met with **Muhammad Badie**, the general guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, and with his deputy, **Dr. Khairat al-Shater**. It was **one of a series of public meetings held this past year in the Gaza Strip and Cairo between high-ranking Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood figures**. Under the Mubarak regime, however, the movement had to reduce its relations with Hamas to a minimum because of internal security considerations. Hamas regards its closer relations with the Muslim Brotherhood as a way to gain strength in its dealings with the Egyptian army and administration, and to improve its status in the internal Palestinian and pan-Arab arenas.<sup>3</sup>



**Ismail Haniya meets Muslim Brotherhood general guide Mohammed Badie in Egypt (Hamasinfo.net December 31, 2011).**

#### **8. The main themes of Ismail Haniya's remarks:**

- 1) **The Hamas movement is a continuation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.** Haniya said that Hamas founder Ahmed Yassin was a link in the chain of Muslim Brotherhood founders which began with Hassan al-Banna (Safa News Agency, December 26, 2011).
- 2) **Hamas will not recognize the "Israeli entity"** and will not cooperate with agreements which ignore "Hamas' rights" [i.e., the Oslo Accords] (Safa News Agency, December 26, 2012). **[Note:** Thus Haniya indirectly rejected the demands made on Hamas by the Palestinian Authority as part of the internal Palestinian reconciliation.]
- 3) **An appeal to Egypt to serve as the first line of Hamas' defense, since it is an offshoot of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.** After his meeting with Mohammed Badie Haniya expressed assurance that Egypt, governed by the Muslim

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<sup>3</sup>For further information see the November 20, 2011 bulletin "A high-level delegation of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood recently held a first-of-its-kind visit to the Gaza Strip, following up on meetings with top Hamas officials held in Cairo..." at [http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/jpc\\_e242.htm](http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/jpc_e242.htm)

Brotherhood, would not participate in a blockade on the Gaza Strip, not detain Palestinians and would not provide cover for Israel in the event of another attack on the Gaza Strip (Bokra.net website).

9. **Haniya** (and high-ranking Hamas figures) **also met with Ahmed Tayyib, Sheikh al-Azhar, the most senior religious authority in the Sunni Muslim world.** After the meeting Tayyib claimed that the "**resistance**" [i.e., terrorism] was **the "legitimate right" of the Palestinian people** and anchored, he claimed, in Islamic religious law and international conventions. He added that the  **Jihad against Israel would continue "using all means available, possible and legitimate" and that he was personally ready to leave for Palestinian and die as a martyr on its soil,** on condition that the various Palestinian factions and Jihad fighters joined forces. He said that under the aegis of Al-Azhar University **he was planning to organize a conference to discuss Jerusalem and ways of combatting attempts to Judaize it** (Masrawi, January 10, 2012).

### **Meetings with members of the Egyptian administration**

10. The Egyptian regime was cautious and did not allow its senior officials to meet with Ismail Haniya. He held meetings (as was customary under Mubarak) with **senior officers of Egyptian General Intelligence, including Brigadier-General Ahmed Abd al-Khalq, who holds the general intelligence's "Palestine portfolio"** (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, December 25, 2011). Haniya also met with lower-level regime officials and discussed professional issues related to the ties between Egypt and the Gaza Strip.

11. Summing up his trip for the de-facto Hamas administration and members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Ismail Haniya described his visit to Egypt as "successful and productive." He said that in meetings with authorized persons he had been promised that **Egypt would provide the Gaza Strip with more electricity.** He claimed Egypt had also promised **to improve procedures at the Rafah crossing.** He said other issues had been discussed, among them **the lack of cooking gas in the Gaza Strip, security in the Sinai Peninsula, the rehabilitation of the Gaza Strip and the import of materials necessary for the Gaza Strip** (Hamas' Palestine-info website, January 12, 2012).

12. In response to Egypt's refusal to allow Haniya to meet with senior members of the regime, **Gamal Heshmat,** of the Muslim Brotherhood's guidance office, **attacked the Egyptian administration.** He claimed that **the refusal was a surrender to external pressure,** adding that the Muslim Brotherhood opposed the administration's domestic and foreign affairs functioning, especially regarding the Palestinian cause. He also said that the government was too weak to make decisions about who would meet with Haniya and that

they would rely on the next parliament to demand an accounting of a number of issues regarding the Palestinians (Alresalah.net website, January 10, 2012).

### **Sudan, December 17, 2011-January 1, 2012**

13. In Sudan **Ismail Haniya met with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir**, with the Sudanese prime minister and various government ministers. He participated in an **International Al-Quds Institute**<sup>4</sup> conference which met in Khartoum and whose theme was "Jewish Jerusalem – the Case of the Mugrabi Gate."



**Ismail Haniya meets Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir**  
(Islammemo.cc website)

14. Speaking before the conference, Ismail Haniya appealed strongly to the Arab states to establish military forces called the "Jerusalem army" of their own to liberate "Palestine" from the "Zionist occupier." He called for more financial aid and political support from the governments of the Arab states for the Jerusalem cause. **He swore he would remain faithful to the "resistance"** [i.e., the path of terrorism], **would not relinquish one centimeter of the soil of "Palestine" or the Muslim holy places, and would never recognize the State of Israel** ( Hamas' Palestine-info website, December 31, 2011; Islammemo.cc, January 1, 2012).

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<sup>4</sup>The International Al-Quds Institute is an anti-Israel organization which holds conferences in the Arab-Muslim world and whose objective is to stress the so-called "danger" to Jerusalem under Israeli control.



Right: Ismail Haniya speaks at the Jerusalem conference in Khartoum (Hamainfo.net, December 31, 2011). Left: The Hamas leadership, headed by Ismail Haniya, meets with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir in Khartoum (Hamainfo.net, December 31, 2011).

## Turkey, January 1-3, 2012

15. In Turkey Ismail Haniya was warmly received. He **met with Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan**, and after the meeting Erdogan said no solution could be found for the Palestinian issue without involving Hamas. He added that Turkey demanded Israel lift the siege of the Gaza Strip as a step in rehabilitating Israeli-Turkish relations (hurriyetdailynews.com, January 2, 2012). He also visited the **Turkish parliament** and met with political party heads. On his arrival at the parliament he was greeted with applause and received a kiss from Erdogan (YouTube.com).



Ismail Haniya waves to the Turkish parliament while holding hands with Tayyip Erdogan (YouTube.com)

16. On January 2 Haniya was a guest of the radical Turkish Islamist organization **IHH (which played a major role in the May 2010 *Mavi Marmara* flotilla)**. He met with IHH head Bülent Yildirim and **boarded the *Mavi Marmara***, where he prayed for the souls of the terrorist operatives ("shaheeds") who were killed during the confrontation with the IDF. He also met with Palestinian terrorists who had been released from Israeli jails as part of the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal and were deported to Turkey. He thanked

Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan for his willingness to give them asylum in Turkey. He then presented the terrorists with certificates and awards (islamigundem.com, January 2, 2012).



Ismail Haniya aboard the Mavi Marmara (thehindu.com website)

17. At a press conference organized by IHH, Haniya said that the events aboard the *Mavi Marmara* were "piracy without parallel in history," adding that by virtue of the *Mavi Marmara* shaheeds "we managed to break the siege and defeated Israel." He thanked Prime Minister Erdogan and the Turkish people for not abandoning the Palestinian cause (islamigundem.com, January 2, 2012). During a visit to the Blue Mosque (the Sultan Ahmed mosque in Istanbul) **Haniya prayed for the renewal of the Islamic Caliphate and "the liberation [sic] of Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa mosque and Palestinian from the oppressors [i.e., Israel]."** The congregants in the mosque answered "Amen" (YouTube.com)

## Tunisia – January 3-8, 2012

18. During his visit to Tunisia **Ismail Haniya met with Rashid al-Ghannouchi, head of the Al-Nahda party, with Hamadi al-Jebali, prime minister, and with the chairman of the Tunisian parliament.** While in the country he gave a belligerent, extremist speech using the terminology of the Arab Spring ("the people want the liberation of Palestine"). He also visited the city of Sidi Bouzid where the the Jasmine Revolution began. After five days in Tunisia he returned to the Gaza Strip via Egypt.



Ismail Haniya and the Tunisian prime minister Hamadi al-Jebali at a press conference (Aqsa.ahlamontada.com website).



Ismail Haniya meets with civilians in Sidi Bouzid ( Hamas' Palestine-info website, January 6, 2012)



Ismail Haniya meets with heads of the Tunisian administration (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades website, January 8, 2012)

19. After the Jasmine Revolution, the **Al-Nahda party, headed by Rashid al-Ghannouchi, became the leading power in the government.** In their public statements, the party heads depict themselves as representing moderate Islam, which they claim represents Tunisia. However, **many anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic themes were conspicuous during Ismail Haniya's visit. During his reception at the Tunis airport people shouted "Death to the Jews" and "Crush the Jews."** Prominent among those in the crowd were a large Al-Nahda flag and banners with the party insignia(See photo). Anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic slogans were shouted during Haniya's speech at a rally in the Tunis stadium organized by the Al-Nahda party (AP, January 9, 2012) (See below). However, **Rashid al-Ghanouchi denounced the slogans, claiming they had been shouted by extremists** (AP, January 9, 2012).



Supporters welcome Ismail Haniya at the airport in Tunis. The Al-Nahda insignia can be seen on the flag at the left and on the banner to the right of the vertical Palestinian flag (Aqsa.ahlamontada.com website).

20. On January 8 **Ismail Haniya gave a belligerent speech rife with anti-Semitic slogans at a convention held at the Tunis stadium organized by Al-Nahda** (AP, January 9, 2012). In addition, apparently a Muslim charitable society called the Tunisian Association to Support Palestine participated in the event. A banner on the stage read "The people want the liberation of Palestine" (a slogan borrowed from the Arab Spring). The main points of his speech and the audience's reactions were the following:

1) **Haniya praised the Tunisian people**, who after many years of Westernization and **the obliteration of their Islamic identity, chose, in free elections, to restore it**. He blessed the Tunisian people in the name of Hamas leaders who had been killed, especially **Yahya Ayyash** ["the engineer," who was responsible for a series of deadly suicide bombing attacks in Israel], the anniversary of whose death, he said, was marked by Hamas.

2) In response the crowd shouted "There is no Allah but Allah and **the shaheed is the friend of Allah.**" They also shouted "With spirit and blood we will redeem you, Palestine," "**Khaybar, Jews, the army of Muhammed will soon return,**"<sup>5</sup> "**Jew, coward, Palestine will not be ashamed.**" Throughout the speech the audience waved Al-Nahda, Hamas and Palestinian flags.

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<sup>5</sup> Khaybar is the name of a settlement in the Arabian Peninsula from which Muhammad expelled the Jews during his conquest to impose Islam. Anti-Semitism rooted in Islam exploits the historic, problematic meeting between the Jewish tribes living in the Arabian Peninsula and the prophet Muhammed (who tried in vain to convert them to Islam) **to prove the eternal nature of the conflict between Israel and Judaism and adapt it as a contemporary model to kill Jews.**

3) Ismail Haniya said that today there was a new Middle East and the crowd responded with cries of "Death to Israel." He said they would never recognize Israel, and the crowd repeated his words. He emphasized that "Israel no longer has partners in Egypt or Tunisia" and the crowd responded with prolonged applause and cheers.

4) Haniya said that "the new Middle East will be based on adherence to resistance [i.e., the path of terrorism] and jihad," stressing "Palestine [stretching] from the [Jordanian] river to the [Mediterranean] sea." He added that "we say to Israel that times have changed, and at this time Israel no longer has regional allies. It is the time for the people, the Arab Spring and time for Palestine, Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa." Haniya promised the Muslim nation that "we will not relinquish one inch of Palestine, we will not give up our weapons."

5) Haniya ended his speech by calling on the Arab peoples to establish a "Jerusalem army" "because Jerusalem is in danger" and the audience responded with shouts of "Jihad, jihad and martyrdom." His final words were "Jerusalem, we are coming," "long live Arab Islamic Palestine" and the audience shouted them back.



Ismail Haniya speaks at the arena in Tunis above a banner reading "The people want the liberation of Palestine." During the speech the crowd repeated the slogan several times (YouTube).



The enthusiastic crowd shouts "There is no Allah but Allah and the shaheed is the friend of Allah," after Haniya mentioned Yahya Ayyash, "the engineer" of Hamas' suicide bombing attacks (YouTube).