



Intelligence and Terrorism
Information Center
at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)

News of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

January 16-31 2006

Socio-political earthquake in the Palestinian Authority



Hamas victory parade in Gaza after the elections (Al-Jazeera TV, January 27, 2006)



Hamas election campaign poster: "One hand builds...the other resists" [i.e., reform within the PA and continued terrorism against Israel]

Content

* Main events

* Statistical data

* Hamas victory

Main Points

- The focal point of the events of the past two weeks was the sweeping Hamas victory (and the concomitant resounding Fatah defeat) in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections. It symbolized a historic reversal and indicated fundamental changes in the Palestinian socio-political system. In our assessment, the shock waves will be felt in the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation and beyond in the Arab-Muslim world. The elections created a new situation in the Palestinian Authority (PA), in which the legislative and operative branches are controlled by rival factions, each having a different agenda.
- Israel, the United States and the European community have repeatedly stated that Hamas cannot be a partner until it gives up its use of terrorism and its goal of destroying Israel. They reiterated their demand that the PA, headed by Abu Mazen, dismantle the terrorist organizations, prevent terrorist attacks and fulfill its commitments to the road map. Abu Mazen is attempting to provide solutions for two pressing problems: to form a new government (Who will form it, and based on what platform?) and to prevent the freezing of the foreign aid the PA is dependent upon, i.e., tax and customs duties from Israel and contributions from abroad (mainly Europe).
- **On the ground:** during January 2006 there was a certain decrease in the extent and lethality of terrorist attacks as compared with December 2005. The most conspicuous event of the past two weeks was the suicide bombing attack at the old Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv, planned and carried out by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the terrorist organization most active during 2005. The Israeli security forces continued their intensive counter-terrorist actions against the PIJ infrastructures in northern Samaria, during which terrorist-operatives who were involved in suicide bombing attacks were detained and killed.

- The latest suicide bombing attack was carried out on January 19 by **Sami ‘Abd al-Hafez ‘Antar**, 22, a resident of Nablus. He blew himself up in a fast-food restaurant at the old Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv, wounding 31 civilians, one of them seriously. The Jerusalem Battalions, the terrorist-operative wing of the **Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)** claimed responsibility for the attack. **The PIJ is the Palestinian terrorist organization that has carried out the greatest number of suicide bombing attacks since January 2005.**



A poster commemorating Sami ‘Abd al-Hafez ‘Antar, calling him “the hero of the heroic action in Tel Aviv [Tel Rabi] that sent shock waves through Zionist security” (From the PIJ’s Internet site).

A senior PIJ terrorist-operative detained near Jenin

- On January 22, an action carried out by the Israeli security forces in the village of Silat al-Harithiya (northwest of Jenin) led to the detention of **Hussein Bahjat Anis Jaradat**, one of the heads of the PIJ infrastructure in the Jenin region.
- Hussein Jaradat was detained during the 1990s because of his PIJ involvement. He was released in 1996 and returned to the ranks of organization. The terrorist infrastructure in northern Samaria, of which he was a senior operative, **planned, organized and carried out five lethal suicide bombing attacks during the “lull in the fighting”** of 2005, killing dozens of Israelis and wounding hundreds.

PIJ head detained in Qabatiya, south of Jenin

- On January 24, an IDF action in Qabatiya led to the detention of **Mahmoud Ass’ad Rashed Abu Roub**, 20, originally from Jordan, and head of the Qabatiya PIJ infrastructure. He joined the PIJ ranks a few months ago and worked closely with senior organization operatives in northern Samaria. He was involved in shooting attacks and weapons acquisition and manufacture, and recruited suicide bombers. Two other armed terrorists were detained with him.

Senior Hamas terrorist-operative killed in Tulkarm

- On January 17, during an IDF action, **Thabet Mahmoud ‘Iyadeh Salah al-Din** was killed after he opened fire on IDF soldiers, wounding one of the them. He was a senior terrorist-operative in the Hamas infrastructure in Nablus, trained in the preparation of powerful explosive devices. During 2003-2004 he planned several suicide

bombing attacks in Israel which were prevented by the Israeli security forces, one of which was a double attack planned to be carried out in Rosh Ha'ayin in June 2004.

- He recently moved the focus of his operations from **Nablus to Tulkarm**, where he was active in rehabilitating the local Hamas infrastructure. His activities in Tulkarm were financed by the Hamas infrastructure in Nablus. He spent the past few months manufacturing explosive devices in a laboratory he set up in Tulkarm; it was exposed by the IDF and destroyed. There were 10 kg. (22 lbs.) of homemade explosives, various types of explosive devices, the raw materials used in making explosives, and electronic components and detonators in the laboratory.

Two senior PIJ terrorist-operatives killed near Jenin

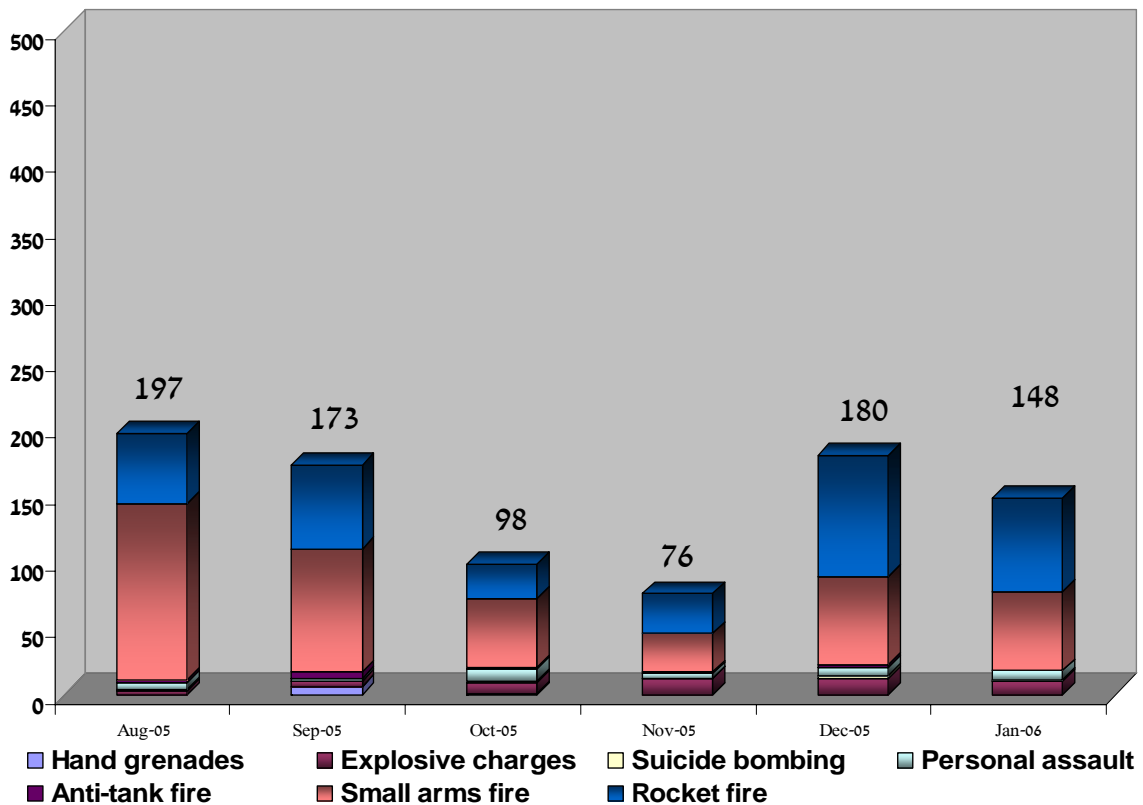
- On January 31, terrorist-operatives opened fire on Israeli security forces during detentions in the village of 'Arabeh (south of Jenin). In the ensuing firefight two senior PIJ terrorists operating in northern Samaria were killed, **Nidal 'Ali 'Abd al-Latif Abu Sa'adeh** and **Ahmad Hisam Sayyid Tubasi**. They belonged to a terrorist infrastructure **responsible for a series of suicide bombing attacks and actively preparing others**.
- **Nidal Abu Sa'adeh**, 28, a resident of the village of 'Illar north of Tulkarm, was involved in the past in **criminal activities**, mostly related to stolen cars. He used his criminal experience to dispatch suicide bombers to Israel. During 2005, working with the PIJ infrastructure in northern Samaria, he was directly involved in suicide bombing attacks within Israel.



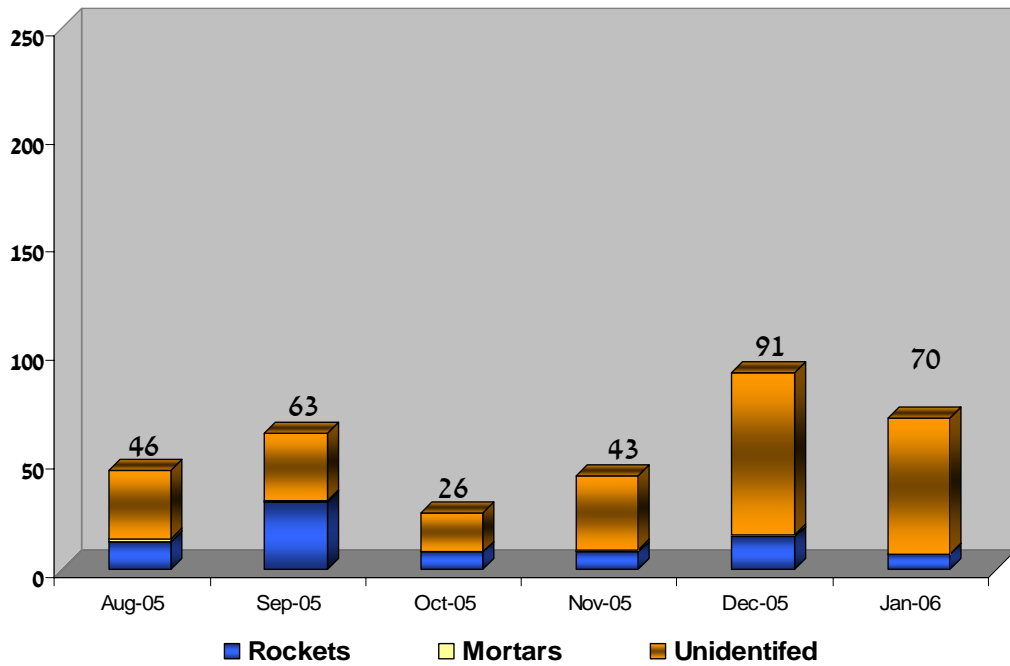
Abu al-Walid, PIJ Jerusalem Battalions spokesman, warns of stiff retaliation for the killing of the two terrorist-operatives in ‘Arabeh (Al-Manar TV, January 31)

Statistical Data

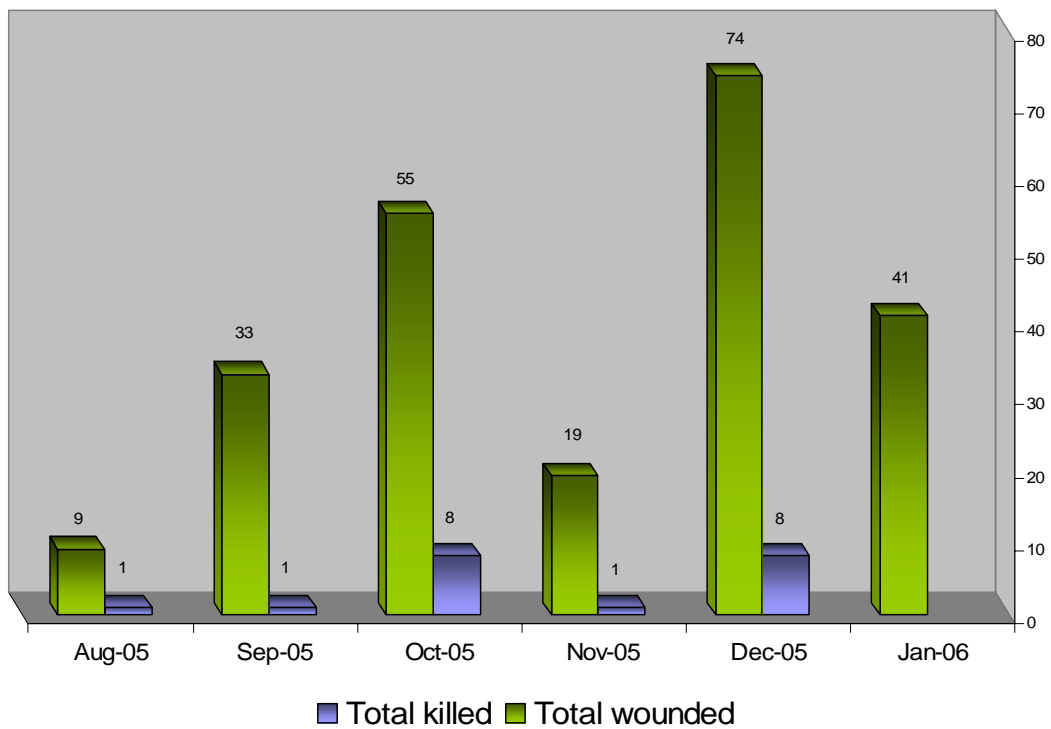
Monthly distribution of attacks since the disengagement



Monthly distribution of rocket and mortar fire



Monthly distribution of Israeli casualties



Nine buildings razed at Amona

- Enforcing an Israeli high court decision, approximately 6,000 soldiers, policemen and border guards took over Amona, an illegal settlement north of Ramallah. Bulldozers destroyed nine buildings after a violent clash with non-resident settlers.
- The evacuation of approximately 4,000 settlers, most of them adolescents, deteriorated into violence. According to IDF data, 52 security personnel and 172 civilians were wounded during the evacuation, none of them seriously with the exception of two security personnel and one civilian. Twenty-two settlers were detained and more detentions are expected.

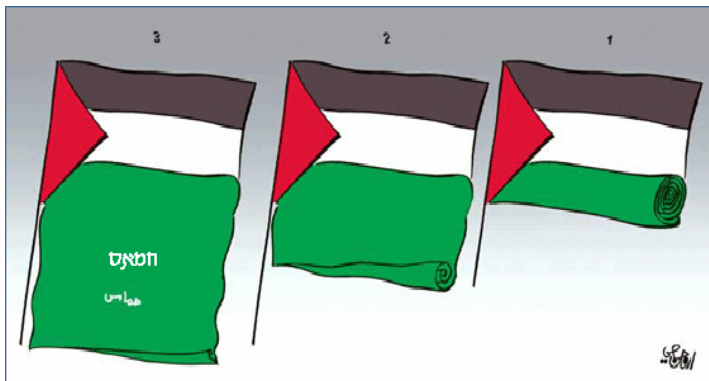


Clash between settlers and security personnel during the evacuation of Amona

(Picture: Ronen Zevulun, Reuters)

The Internal Palestinian Arena

The Hamas Palestinian Legislative Council victory in the eyes of Arab cartoonists...



Two cartoons which appeared in Lebanese media after the Hamas victory. Left, from Al-Nahar, (January 29). Right, from Al-Mustaqbal (January 28).

The Hamas victory (first evaluation)

- In the **Palestinian Legislative Council** elections, held on January 25 (for the second time in PA history), Hamas gained a **sweeping victory** over they severely trounced **Fatah**. It won **74** of the **132** seats, leaving Fatah with only **45**.
- The results indicate **a historic about-face in Palestinian society and politics**. The main points are:
 - A. For the first time, Hamas officially sits on the Palestinian Legislative Council and holds a majority – approximately 56% -- of the seats.
 - B. It defeated Fatah, which held sway over the Palestinian national movement for four decades.

C. The process of transferring political power from the “outside,” that is, those who came from Beirut and Tunis with Arafat, to the “inside,” those who grew up in the territories, has been completed.

D. The “middle generation” now controls the Palestinian Legislative Council (with approximately 67% of the representatives) and is being joined by the “younger generation” (about 8%).

E. The status of the Christians has been weakened.

F. There has been a significant increase in the number of **women** on the Council (up 7% from 6% to 13%).

G. About 33% of the elected representatives come from the field of **education**, 8% from the field of religion, and the rest are professionals, mostly doctors and a few lawyers. **Most of them come from the middle (and upper-middle, but not upper) class.**

- The election results created a new situation, in which **the legislative and operative arms of the PA are controlled by two rival factions, each with a fundamentally different position and agenda.** On the one hand, the presidency is held by Abu Mazen, to whom Palestinian law gives broad, autonomous powers in many areas (foreign relations, internal affairs, security), and on the other, the **Palestinian Legislative Council is now controlled by Hamas, which has its own agenda** and which can make it extremely difficult for Abu Mazen to advance his initiatives and policies. At first it would seem that Fatah and Hamas would agree on many points, particularly those dealing with internal Palestinian politics. **However in reality, frustration and the desire for revenge, alongside the need for transparent political rehabilitation, are likely to drive Fatah into a stance of militant opposition.**

Shock waves felt through Fatah and its security apparatus

- The stunning Hamas victory sent shock waves accompanied by deep frustration throughout Fatah, and forcefully brought inter-generation struggles to the surface (the middle and younger generations vs. the old guard). One manifestation was a series of violent clashes, and during the most serious, on January 28, hundreds of armed Fatah operatives broke into the Legislative Council building in Ramallah and demanded the resignation of the Fatah leadership. Other incidents included calls for the dissolution and reconstruction of Fatah institutions, the resignation of local Fatah leaders, the immediate rejection of Fatah's joining the Hamas government and the ousting of 74 Fatah members who independently proposed their candidacy in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections.



Abu Mazen votes... a drop in the bucket (Palestinian TV, January 25)

- The Hamas victory cast its shadow on the Palestinian security forces as well, worried that they may now become subordinate to Hamas and its desire to settle old scores. To calm nerves and broadcast a message of continuity and control, Abu Mazen ordered that the **security forces would be directly subordinate to him until further notice** (Al-Bayan, January 30). Ismail Haniyeh, who headed the Hamas list of candidates,

responded by saying that Hamas would oppose transferring responsibility for the Palestinian security forces from the government to the president, although the opposition would be expressed through “dialogue and understanding” (Haaretz, February 1).

Forming the new government

- One of the immediate concerns on the internal Palestinian political agenda is forming the new government. It is a difficult task, especially considering Abu Mazen and Hamas’s fundamental positions and agendas and the demands of the international community that Hamas change its platform and methods.

- The PA chairman and heads of Hamas are now examining a number of possible alternatives:
 - A. The establishment of a government clearly identified with Hamas.

 - B. The establishment of a government of technocrats headed by “independent” figures supported by Hamas.¹

 - C. The establishment of a Hamas-Fatah coalition government (a possibility currently rejected out of hand by Fatah).

 - D. Hafez Barghouti, the editor of the Palestinian official newspaper Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda, proposed an other alternative, a presidential government which he called “a national rescue government,” headed by Abu Mazen himself (Al-Jayat Al-Jadeeda, January 31).

¹ Ismail Haniyeh stated that such a government would include Palestinian figures (specialists and businessmen) living abroad. Some of them, he claimed, have already contacted Hamas and expressed their willingness to help (An interview with Amira Hass, Haaretz, February 1).

- Abu Mazen announced that he intended to meet with Hamas leaders to discuss forming the new government. In the meantime, a Hamas delegation left the Gaza Strip for Egypt and Syria. Its intention was to meet Hamas leaders operating outside the PA and to formulate a common position regarding the new government and the movement's path in the future. The delegation would then visit some of the Arab countries.

Transferring funds to the PA

- The Hamas victory increased PA fears that the tax and customs duties forwarded by Israel would be frozen (about \$53 million, according to the Palestinian Economic Minister),² as would contributions from abroad (particularly Europe). The Israeli government has as yet not transferred about 200 NIS million held for the PA. According to reports, at its next meeting the government is expected to deliberate the issue of aid to the interim PA government.
- As far as the PA is concerned, **freezing funds is liable to severely affect its ability to function and to pay salaries and welfare benefits.**³ Abu Mazen therefore called upon the Quartet and contributing countries to continue providing economic aid to the PA to keep it from collapsing (Palestinian News Agency, January 30). Amongst the Palestinian

² In an interview with Mazen Sancret, the national economic minister (Ma'a News Agency, Ramallah, February 1).

³ Former Palestinian finance minister, Salem Fayyad, stated that **two thirds** of the salaries of PA employees are paid by the tax and customs duties forwarded by Israel (Al-Bayan, January 30).

population, especially merchants and PA employees, fears of an economic collapse have also arisen.⁴

- On the other hand, Hamas heads stated that they **would not agree that conditions** be imposed on the receipt of western aid. Hamas leader Khaled Mashal, in an interview with the British *Guardian* on January 31, called for the Arab-Muslim world to provide reparations to the PA if limitations were placed on funds from abroad, saying: “Our people in Palestine should not need to wait for any aid from countries that attach humiliating conditions to every dollar or euro they pay, despite their historical and moral responsibility for our plight.”

Hamas’s propaganda campaign

- After the elections Hamas began a propaganda campaign targeting the international community (especially the European countries), the Arab-Muslim world and even the Israeli public opinion. Its aim was to soften the hard-line negative stance against it by distorting or hiding its (unchanged) extremist position and thus to gain recognition and legitimacy.
- For that reason, in recent public statements Hamas leaders have been more modest when referring to their fundamental positions and have stressed so-called pragmatic aspects. They include not rejecting the idea of negotiations with Israel (without changing the movement’s principles) and an agreement – with conditions – to a long-term cease

⁴ The Palestinian stock market fell sharply in response to the Hamas victory.

fire (*hudna*). Dr. **Mahmoud al-Zahar**, a Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, said that the movement would be willing to consider a long-term cease fire in return for the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital, and the so-called right of return. Musa Abu Marzuq, another senior Hamas leader, said that the movement would be willing to discuss a cease fire with the international community.

A Selection of Responses to the Hamas victory

Israel

- Acting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert stated that **Israel would not negotiate with a Palestinian government which included a terrorist organization calling for the destruction of Israel**. A PA led by Hamas would not, he said, be a partner and if such a government was established, the **Palestinian Authority would become a terrorist authority and Israel would treat it as such** (Ynet Internet site, January 26, Maariv, January 27).
- At a government meeting on January 29, Ehud Olmert stated Israel's position, as follows: "Without a specific renouncement of terrorism, a recognition of the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security, a recognition of all agreements, understandings and commitments taken upon itself by the PA and without removing from the Hamas covenant all sections relating to the destruction of the State

of Israel, Israel **will have no contact with Palestinians**” (Internet site of the Prime Minister’s Office, February 1).⁵

- In the spirit of those principles, on January 30 Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni called upon the international community to demand that Hamas be disarmed and that its (1988) covenant calling for the destruction of the State of Israel be cancelled, that Hamas renounce violence and recognize the agreements signed between Israel and the Palestinians.
- Shaul Mofaz, Minister of Defense, while visiting the city of Lod municipality on January 29, stated that Israel’s guidelines in dealing with Hamas were the following:
 - ✿ **Israel’s policy was based on two principles.** The **first** was that the State of Israel was firm in its demand that after the elections **Abu Mazen fulfill his commitments, that is, he would deal with the terrorist infrastructures and then follow the road map.** The **second** was that **there would be no dialogue with Hamas as long as it remained a terrorist organization.** The fact that Hamas won the elections did mean that Israel would recognize a government it was part of. **“Democracy does not legitimize terrorism.”**
 - ✿ He added that if Hamas returned to its terrorist way, **Israel would react with every means at its disposal, including targeted killings.** Currently, he said, the PIJ was the organization carrying out most of

⁵ Sami Abu Zuhri, a Hamas spokesman, replied that **Hamas** would **“adhere to its principles”** and that **“the source of the problem was the occupation”** (Agence France-Press, January 29).

the attacks, and Israel was acting and would act against it without compromise.

International responses

The United States

- After the Hamas victory spokesmen for the American government again expressed the United States' opposition to Hamas because its covenant called for the destruction of the State of Israel and because of its armed terrorist-operative wing. American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, before speaking with members of the Quartet (See below) announced that the American government would examine all its Palestinian aid programs and would not fund an organization in favor of violence against Israel simply because it was in the government. However, the American government was aware of the Palestinians' humanitarian needs and it was implied that the United States would consider transferring aid to an interim Palestinian government.
- American president George Bush, delivering his State of the Union address on January 31, discussed the threats and dangers posed by the Middle East. He stated that **the Hamas leaders had to recognize Israel, disarm, renounce terrorism and work towards lasting peace.**

The Quartet and the European Union

- On January 30, after a meeting in London, Quartet ministers stated that all the members of the future Palestinian government had to be committed to non-violence, recognition of Israel and an acceptance of all previous agreements and commitments, including the road map. They also stated that the PA had to ensure law and order, to prevent terrorist attacks and to disarm the terrorist infrastructures, and added that it was unavoidable that all future aid would be examined in the light of the Palestinian government's commitment to the aforementioned principles.
- However, they Quartet ministers also expressed support of steps intended to provide financial aid to the interim Palestinian government. For the European Union (EU) that meant that it would not immediately stop transferring funds to the PA but would reexamine such transfers after the new Palestinian government had been formed.
- In response to the Quartet's announcement, Hamas spokesman **Sami Abu Zuhri** said that he refused to accede to the demands that the organization abandon violence and recognize Israel as a condition for participation in the Palestinian government. He claimed that the Quartet's demands should focus on ending the "occupation" of the "territories" and not on continued concessions from the Palestinians (Al-Quds newspaper, February 1).
- During a press conference with Abu Mazen in Ramallah, **German Chancellor Angela Merkel** called upon Hamas to recognize Israel's right to exist and to relinquish violence. She added that only if those principles were accepted would it be possible to continue forwarding funds to the PA. She noted that Germany would find it difficult to

support an entity which did not recognize Israel's right to exist and did not accept the progress already made in the peace process (Reuters and BBC, Ramallah, January 30).

The Arab world

Egypt

- The sweeping victory of Hamas, which is the Palestinian branch of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, must, in our assessment, have led to apprehension in those Arab countries harboring a strong radical Muslim opposition. One country which might particularly be affected is **Egypt**, which has every reason to fear the aftershock of Hamas's victory.
- Editorials in Egyptian newspapers stated that Hamas had to change its path or risk losing support. A January 31 editorial in Al-Ahram called upon Hamas to adapt itself to its new role and to reexamine its political platform. Omar Suleiman, Egypt's intelligence chief, after Egyptian president Mubarak had met with Abu Mazen, stated more concretely that "Hamas could form the Palestinian government" **only if it recognized Israel, abandoned violence** and honored the agreements the PA had signed with Israel. If it did not, Abu Mazen would not ask it to form the government (Agence France-Presse, February 1).⁶

⁶ Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri answered that Hamas would examine Omar Suleiman's statements.

Syria

- The Syrian régime was demonstrably pleased with the Hamas victory. On January 28 Syrian president Bashar Assad met with the Hamas delegation led by Khaled Mashal, congratulated them and praised “Palestinian democracy.”



Syrian president Assad in a meeting with the Hamas delegation. To the left of Assad is Hamas leader Khaled Mashal (Syrian TV, January 30).

- The Syrian media congratulated Hamas: on January 26 Radio Damascus noted that the Palestinians had expressed their desire that the Legislative Council “would support the Palestinian intifada” and that “the Council [would be] a weapon in the hands of the [Palestinian] people.” In the same context the station also praised the “jihad,” that is, the terrorist attacks against Israel carried out during the lull in the fighting. It also praised the armed “struggle” (i.e., anti-Israeli terrorism), which “expelled” Israel from the Gaza Strip, and “drove back most of the Zionist parasites [sic] from most of the West Bank.”
- The smug satisfaction demonstrated by Syria comes, in our assessment, from Assad’s view of the Hamas victory as a defeat for Israel and American policy in the Middle East, and the Syrian régime’s hope that it will be possible to use the victory as leverage to advance Syrian

interests, the first of which is to reduce the international pressure on Bashar Assad's régime.

Hezbollah

- On January 28, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah telephoned Khaled Mashal to congratulate him on Hamas' election victory.
- Senior Hezbollah leaders repeatedly stated that the Hamas victory allowed the weapon of "resistance" (i.e., terrorism) to strike a blow at the United States and Israel and their plans for the region. Sheikh Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah's second in command, said that the whole world would have to get used to Hamas's victory because it meant that in the future Muslim candidates would win elections in elections in other Middle Eastern countries (Reuters, Beirut, January 27).



Birds of a feather flock together...: head of the Hamas political bureau, Khaled Mashal (left) and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah