



Diplomatic incident: India protests presence of the Palestinian ambassador at a rally in Pakistan where a speech was given by a leader of the terrorist organization which carried out a mass-killing attack in Mumbai (177 killed)

January 10, 2018

- ▶ The Indian government recently protested to the Palestinian Authority (PA) over the participation of **Walid Abu Ali (Abu Iyad), the PLO ambassador to Pakistan**, at the "Defense of Jerusalem" rally. The mass rally was held in the city of Rawalpindi in the province of Punjab in Pakistan on December 29, 2017. It was organized by the Defense of Pakistan Council (Difa-e Pakistan).
- ▶ Among the participants at the rally were senior figures of Salafi-jihadist organizations. **The Council chairman, Maulana Sami ul Haq, considered Taliban founder along the Afghan-Pakistani border, called for a jihad to liberate Jerusalem and Kashmir** (al-Jazeera, December 31, 2017; MEMRI, January 2, 2018). A speech was also given by **Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, leader of the Lashkar-e-Taiba ("Army of Madinah"¹) terrorist organization and the Jumaat ud-Dawa, its political-social wing, who called for the "liberation" of Palestine and Kashmir.**



"Defense of Jerusalem" rally (Twitter account of @Amair943, December 29, 2017).

- ▶ **Lashkar-e-Taiba is a Salafi-jihadist terrorist organization with close ties to al-Qaeda. It was responsible for the attack carried out in Mumbai, India, in 2008, which killed 177**

¹ Madinah is the second most holy city of Islam, after Mecca.

people, including foreign nationals, among them six Israelis/Jews (see Appendix).² The United States designated Lashkar-e-Taiba a terrorist organization in December 2001. After the attack in Mumbai, Lashkar-e-Taiba was outlawed in Pakistan, but its political-social wing continues to act freely. The Defense of Pakistan Council, which organized the rally in Rawalpindi, is a coalition of more than forty political and religious organizations, one of which is the Jumaat ud-Dawa, Lashkar-e-Taiba's political and social wing. Lashkar-e-Taiba leader Hafiz Muhammad Saeed is also vice president of the Defense of Pakistan Council.



Twitter account of the Defense of Pakistan Council, which describes itself as "United against the aggression of the United States and India" (Twitter account of @DPCOfficial, January 8, 2018)

Statements by Hafiz Muhammad Saeed at a rally attended by Palestinian ambassador

► Speeches were given at the rally by Salafi-jihadist operatives, including **Lashkar-e-Taiba leader Hafiz Muhammad Saeed**. He said, "Today the worshippers of the cow [i.e., Buddhists] have united with the worshippers of the calf [i.e., Jews]. **We will raise a strong movement against both** [i.e., against India and Israel] **for the liberation of Palestine and Kashmir**" (Twitter account of @Amair943, December 29, 2017). He added, "Every child of the Muslim nation is willing to be cut and die for the defense of Jerusalem. The war erupting in the Middle East will be very dangerous. As a consequence of it, **Israel will be obliterated from the face of the earth.**" He added that "If America does not desist from conspiracies, its supremacy will be buried in Jerusalem." (MEMRI, January 2, 2018).

² For further information, see the December 24, 2008 bulletin, "Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistani Islamic organization that is part of global jihad, was responsible for the Mumbai terrorist attack (November 2008) More than 170 people (including six Israelis/Jews) were killed in the deadly attack."



Right: A quotation from Hafiz Muhammad Saeed as issued by the Defense of Pakistan Council, which organized the rally. Left: Hafiz Muhammad Saeed (right) and Walid Abu Ali, the Palestinian ambassador to Pakistan (Twitter account of @Amair943, December 29, 2017).


Indian protests and PA responses

- ▶ **General Walid Abu Ali (Abu Iyad)** was sworn in by Mahmoud Abbas as PA ambassador to Pakistan on November 14, 2012. According to his Facebook page, during his career in Pakistan he has carried out extensive diplomatic activity and often meets with other diplomats and members of the Pakistani administration. On December 30, 2017, India protested to the PA over Abu Ali's participation in a rally also attended by "the terrorist Hafiz Saeed." Following the protest, **the PA recalled Abu Ali because of his participation.**
- ▶ The Palestinian foreign ministry issued a statement that **"his participation was an unintended mistake, but not justified."** Therefore the decision had been made to recall him immediately in accordance with instructions from Mahmoud Abbas. The PA, according to the statement, was working to preserve good relations with India, and appreciated its position on the Palestinian cause and its recent vote in the UN General Assembly (Wafa, December 30, 2017).



Right: Palestinian ambassador Walid Abu Ali (left) holds hands with Hafiz Muhammad Saeed (center) at the rally (Indian Zee News YouTube TV channel, December 29, 2017). Left: Hafiz Muhammad Saeed (right) next to PLO ambassador to Pakistan, Walid Abu Ali (al-Jazeera, December 31, 2017).

► **Tahir Ashrafi**, head of Pakistan Ulema Council (council of Islamic sages), said he had asked Mahmoud Abbas to return Ambassador Walid Abu Ali to Pakistan, with the result that Mahmoud Abbas will renew his diplomatic activity on January 10, 2018. However, the Palestinian foreign ministry denied the report, claiming the PA ambassador to Pakistan was currently in PA territory (firstpost.com, India, January 8, 2018).




Ministry of External Affairs
Government of India


Press release on India's reaction over the Palestinian Ambassador in Pakistan's association with terrorist Hafiz Saeed

December 30, 2017

1. Government of India has strongly conveyed to the Palestinian side that the Palestinian Ambassador in Pakistan's association with terrorist Hafiz Saeed, who is proscribed by the United Nations, at an event in Rawalpindi on 29.12.2017, is unacceptable. The concerns were conveyed both in New Delhi to the Palestinian Ambassador and in Ramallah to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, State of Palestine.
2. The Palestinian side has conveyed deep regrets over the incident and assured the Government of India that they are taking serious cognizance of their Ambassador's presence at this event. They have said they will deal with this matter appropriately. It was also conveyed that Palestine highly values its relationship with India and stands with us in the war against terrorism, and will not engage with those who commit acts of terror against India.
3. We take note of the assurances given by the Palestine side.

New Delhi
30 December 2017





دولة فلسطين
وزارة الخارجية والبعثات

Statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates

The Spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates stressed on the commitment of the State of Palestine and keenness to maintain strong and friendly relations with the Republic of India, as well as its support to the efforts made by the Republic of India in its war against terrorism and in that regard the State of Palestine affirms its stand with the Republic of India in dealing with its terrorist threats, as our nations are real partners in the war against terrorism.



The State of Palestine highly appreciates India's support in its tireless efforts to end the Israeli occupation and the establishment of an independent State of Palestine on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and this is especially seen in the honorable position that India has taken by voting in favor of the resolution in the United Nation General Assembly last week.

On the basis of the principled and firm Palestinian position, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates considered the participation of our ambassador in Pakistan in a mass rally in solidarity with Jerusalem, held in Rawalpindi on Friday and in the presence of individuals accused of supporting terrorism is an unintended mistake, but not justified. Accordingly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates under the direct instructions of the President of the State of Palestine to recall the Palestinian Ambassador to Pakistan immediately.

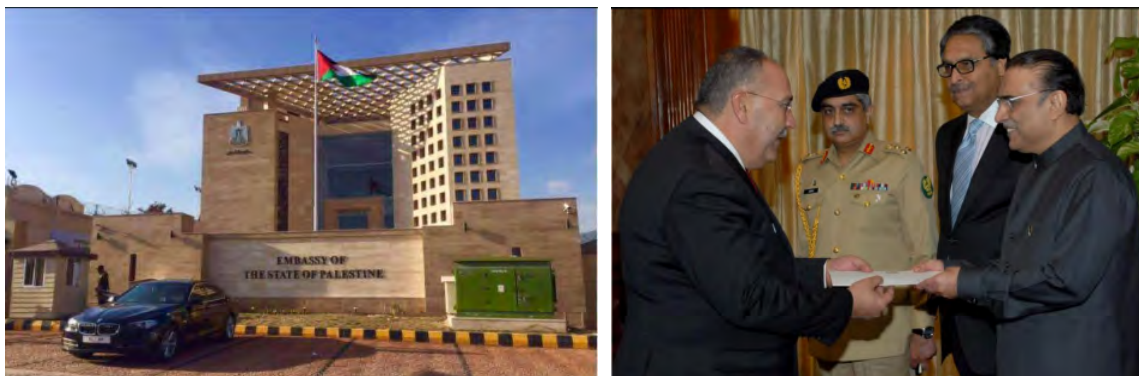
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30th December 2017

تلفون : 2943140/42/41 فاكس : 2943165/7/6/8 بريد إلكتروني : media@mfa.ps
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The Indian protest and the Palestinian response (Twitter account of BJP, December 30, 2017).



Right: Ambassador Walid Abu Ali presents his credentials to former President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, December 25, 2012 (Facebook page of Ambassador Walid Abu Ali, December 28, 2012).

Left: The lavish embassy of the "state of Palestine" in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan (Facebook page of Ambassador Walid Abu Ali, February 3, 2017).

Appendix

Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of Madinah)

- ▶ Lashkar-e-Taiba is a Salafi-jihadist Pakistan terrorist organization, established in 1987 (or 1989) **to fight the Indian presence in Kashmir**. The organization has **ties to al-Qaeda**. It was established with **funding from Saudi Arabia and the support and sponsorship of Pakistani intelligence**. **Behind its foundation was the fierce Pakistani-Indian conflict over Kashmir**. Over the years, the organization clearly took on the characteristics of **a global jihad organization with a radical Islamist ideology, with close operational ties to al-Qaeda**.
- ▶ **Lashkar-e-Taiba was responsible for eleven coordinated terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India, between November 26 and 28, 2008. Two of the attacks were carried out in hotels frequented by Western tourists** (the Taj and the Oberoi Trident). **The attacks killed 177 people and wounded about 300. Among those killed were six Israelis/Jews who were in the Beit Chabad at the time of the attack**, and about 30 other foreign nationals (from the ITIC bulletin, December 24, 2008).
- ▶ **The combined terrorist attack in Mumbai** was complex and demanded precise planning, good intelligence, ongoing logistic and operational preparations, daring and a high level of operational competence. Its objective was **to kill as many Indians as possible, damage India's economy** (Mumbai is India's economic and financial center) **and undermine India's internal political fabric**. A Jewish-Israeli target (Beit Chabad) was also chosen.
- ▶ Moreover, the terrorist attack in Mumbai, and the Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist attacks that preceded it, were meant **to create tension between India and Pakistan**, both countries with nuclear capabilities, both threatened by al-Qaeda. The Indian government, based on the interrogation of the one terrorist who was caught alive, and on intelligence information received during and after the attack, **immediately blamed Pakistan, where the Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist squads were based, trained and handled for the attack**.
- ▶ **Hafiz Muhammad Saeed**, who heads Lashkar-e-Taiba, is a Pakistani who was born in the Punjab province in 1948. In the past he was a professor of Islamic studies at the University of Engineering and Technology in Lahore, Pakistan. During the early 1980s **the University of Lahore sent him to Saudi Arabia** for an MA in Islamic studies and Arabic. While in Saudi Arabia **he met with a number of Saudi religious figures who encouraged him to support the jihad against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan**. They convinced him to recruit **Professor**

Zafar Aqbal, one of his academic colleagues, for the struggle in Afghanistan. With other radical Islamists, he established a Salafi-jihadist organization called "**The Center for Preaching and Guidance**," whose military wing was called **Lashkar-e-Taiba**. After the Russians withdrew from Afghanistan, **Lashkar-e-Taiba began focusing on India and Kashmir**. Today **Hafiz Muhammad Saeed is head of Jumaat ud-Dawa in Pakistan**, the political-social front of Lashkar-e-Taiba.

► After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States, and after it the Pakistani president at the time, Pervez Musharraf, began exerting pressure on Lashkar-e-Taiba. **In December 2001 the United States designated it as a terrorist organization and froze its assets**. After the attack on the Indian parliament (2001), which heightened the tension between India and Pakistan to the point of confrontation, **Musharraf forbade the organization's activity**. Following that, the Pakistani security forces detained Lashkar-e-Taiba leader Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, but he was released a few months later. However, **Jumaat ud-Dawa, the organization's political-social wing, was not outlawed in Pakistan**. It continues to operate publicly and Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, who participated in the rally in Ravalpindi, is considered the organization's *emir* (leader) (Twitter account of @Amair943, December 29, 2017). Jumaat ud-Dawa continues to provide Pakistanis with humanitarian aid, to conduct a network of seminars and to publish periodicals (al-Jazeera, December 30, 2017).