



Senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas figures praise Iran's military support and threaten that in the next war the rocket fire from the Gaza Strip will reach all the cities in Israel and the "resistance axis" will coordinate its actions on all fronts.

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Overview

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) leadership recently visited Iran and Lebanon to meet with the Iranian leadership and Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah. They also gave interviews where they the deep bond between Iran and the "Palestinian resistance." Recent statements from both PIJ and Hamas **spokesmen were more focused and to a certain extent more detailed about the Iranian support and its influence on a future war with Israel** (after a long period during which PIJ and Hamas spokesmen were vague regarding Iranian support). In ITIC assessment, that is because both organizations want to **increase their deterrence of Israel** and to **reward Iran with public praise** for its military and financial support. Iran wants to show itself as the main supporter of the Palestinian organizations to **increase its influence in the Gaza Strip to improve its status vis-à-vis Egypt.**

► In recent statements from senior Hamas and PIJ figures the following points were made prominent:

- ◆ **The centrality of Iranian support for the "Palestinian resistance" [i.e., Hamas and the PIJ]:** Today Iran is the only country supporting the "resistance" with **weapons, money, the technical knowhow for rocket manufacture, logistics and political guidance**. In addition, during the recent visit of a PIJ delegation to Iran, senior Iranian figures said Iran could support the "Palestinian resistance" by **training its operatives**. Palestinian **spokesmen praised Iran's support** despite the international pressures on Iran.
- ◆ **All the cities in Israel will be within rocket range during the next war:** Hamas and the PIJ **have the capability to fire thousands of rockets that can reach not only Tel Aviv, but cities at much greater distances**. Thus during the next **war all the cities in Israel will be within the range of Palestinian rockets**. A PIJ leader admitted that some of the rockets fired at Tel Aviv during Operation Protective Edge had been manufactured in Iran (Fajr 5) and some had been manufactured in the Gaza Strip with Iranian knowhow.

- ◆ **The members of the "resistance axis" [i.e., Iran, Syria and Hezbollah] will join forces in the next war against Israel:** A PIJ leader said the "axis" members have close operational relations, and in a future war **they will work together from the south, the north and the center of Israel and will use all their capabilities.** (Note: After Operation Protective Edge Hamas called to establish new fronts in a future war against Israel, especially in Lebanon.)
- ▶ In ITIC assessment, **the statements reflect the nature of the discussions held during recent weeks by senior PIJ and Hamas figures with the Iran leadership and senior Hezbollah figures.** The main issues in the statements were Iranian **military support for the Palestinians, especially the provision of weapons, technical and financial support, and broadening the fronts where the "resistance axis" will fight in the next war against Israel.**

Appendix

Iranian support for the Palestinian terrorist organizations reflected in statements from senior PIJ and Hamas figures

Ziyad al-Nakhalah interviewed by the Iranian al-Alam TV station



PIJ leader Ziyad al-Nakhalah interviewed by the Iranian al-Alam TV station (al-Alam website, December 30, 2018).

- ▶ During a visit to Iran by a PIJ delegation at the end of December 2018, PIJ head Ziyad al-Nakhalah was interviewed by the Iranian al-Alam TV station. He was asked, in view of his recent meeting with Hassan Nasrallah and the visit of a Hamas delegation to Iran headed by Mahmoud al-Zahar, whether **in 2019 the "resistance axis" could be expected to set up a joint operations room.**¹
- ▶ Al-Nakhalah answered that all the "resistance forces" shared mutual openness and that the bonds between them had never been severed. He added that **Hezbollah, the PIJ, Hamas and all the forces of the "resistance axis" were in constant communication and that they had a common vision, based on "resistance to the Zionist enterprise."** He said that all the members of the "resistance axis" cooperated with one another without limitation or restriction. They had, he claimed, continuous collaboration and **in every future war would operate against Israel in the north, the south and the center.**²
- ▶ Asked if he was responding to information he had about Israel's alleged intention to "blow up the situation" in the Gaza Strip or on the Lebanese or Syrian borders, al-Nakhalah

¹ i.e., an operations room with representatives from Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas and the PIJ.

² In the past senior Hamas figures made similar statements. Based on lessons from Operation Protective Edge senior Hamas figures prominently expressed the need to open new fronts against Israel in the next round of fighting, with the emphasis on Lebanon (For further information, see the March 12, 2015 bulletin, "Senior Hamas figures publicly call for the opening of new fronts in the next campaign against Israel, with an emphasis on carrying out attacks from Lebanese territory."

answered that the regional "resistance axis" and the "resistance forces" had their own plans and views about confronting Israel. He added that if it were a question of a large-scale regional aggression against an "axis" member, **the response to the "aggression" would be coordinated with all the "axis forces."** The "resistance axis," he claimed, **was one integrated body and would respond to any aggression with all its capabilities** (al-Alam TV, December 30, 2018).

Ali Baraka, Hamas representative in Lebanon, interviewed by the media of the Iranian-supported Iraqi militia

► On November 23, 2018, Ali Baraka, Hamas representative in Lebanon,³ was interviewed by the Iraqi al-Nujaba satellite TV channel, affiliated with the Movement of the Noble Ones (*harakat al-nujaba*).⁴ The Movement of the Noble Ones is an Iraqi Shi'ite militia **handled by Iran** with strong ties to Hezbollah. The main points of Ali Baraka's interview were the following (al-Nujaba satellite TV YouTube channel, November 23, 2018):

- ◆ **The historical ties between Hamas and Iran:** Hamas' ties to Iran are not new and did not begin during the Trump era. The ties have been close and deeply rooted since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. According to Ali Baraka, when Israel expelled Hamas operatives to Marj al-Zahour in south Lebanon in 1992, Iran was in contact with them and established its ties to Hamas and the PIJ. Since then, he claimed, **Iran has not stopped its support for the Palestinian "resistance."**
- ◆ **Current Iranian support for Hamas: Today, according to Baraka, Iran is the only country supporting the Palestinian "resistance" with money and weapons.** Iranian

³ **Ali Baraka**, Hamas representative in Lebanon, is 52 years old and lives in Beirut. He was born in the Burj al-Shemali refugee camp in Lebanon. In 2015 he was the first senior Hamas figure to go to Iran to meet with the Iranian leadership in order to improve the relations between Hamas and Iran (which had worsened since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011. His role entails maintaining close relations with Hezbollah).

⁴ The so-called **Movement of the Noble Ones (*harakat al-nujaba*)** is an Iraqi Shi'ite militia established in 2013 by Sheikh Akram al-Kaabi. The sheikh has had close ties to Iran since his extensive activity against the American forces in Iraq. **The Movement of the Nobles, which operates in Syria, is handled by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps' Qods Force and is also supported by Hezbollah, with which Sheikh al-Kaabi has had close relations for years.** Iranian and Hezbollah support turned the Movement of the Nobles into one of the strongest and most important Shi'ite militias in Iraq. In return for the "special treatment" the movement received, **it is expected to carry out future "strategic missions" for Iran.** Those missions include securing the Iraqi-Syrian border, securing the Iraqi side of the Baghdad-Damascus supply route and even involvement in the conflict with Israel. For further information, see December 31, 2017 bulletin, "The Movement of the Noble Ones (*harakat al-nujaba*), Portrait of an Iraqi Shi'ite militia operated in Iraq and Syria by Iran and intended for future "strategic missions."

support makes stability and strength possible for the "resistance" in the Gaza Strip. For example, the "resistance" used most of its arsenal of rockets in Operation Protective Edge. After the Operation **Iran was the only source for the money they needed to manufacture new rockets and acquire weapons and equipment.**

◆ **Hamas as part of the "resistance axis" against Israel:** Baraka was asked if a large scale war between Israel and the Palestinians broke out, would the "resistance forces" be with them and support them. He answered that **Iran provides financial and military support, and Hezbollah provides logistic and political support.** He said he hoped that in the future Iraqi support would also be provided to the "resistance" in Palestine.

◆ **Hamas' military capabilities: Baraka claimed Hamas could fire rockets from the Gaza Strip at locations further than Tel Aviv, which was about 50 miles away.** He said that in 2012 [Operation Defensive Shield] they attacked Tel Aviv. In 2014 [Operation Protective Edge] they attacked Haifa, which is about 100 miles from the Gaza Strip. Currently, he claimed, their rockets had even greater ranges and could reach all Palestine. He repeated that there was no place in "Palestine" that the rockets of the "resistance" in the Gaza Strip could not reach, **and that was in addition to the rockets of the "resistance" in Lebanon [i.e., Hezbollah].** He said that **some of the rockets fired at Tel Aviv were Iranian, and some which had been manufactured locally were similar to the Iranian Fajr 5** (medium-range rockets that reach central Israel).



PIJ praise for Iranian al-Fajr rockets in 2013. Right: Notice on the PIJ military wing's website reading "Using the al-Fajr will lead to victory." Left: Notice on the PIJ military wing's website shows two operatives carrying an al-Fajr rocket.⁵

- ◆ **Hamas-Iraq relations:** Baraka stressed Iraq's importance. He said that today Hamas had no representation in Iraq and hoped to renew relations with the new Iraqi government. He expressed his appreciation for the role of the Iraqi army in the 1948, 1967 and 1973 wars, and said he hoped the Iraqi army would again support the Palestinian "resistance." He claimed Hamas' ties to the Iraqi "resistance factions" dated from the days they stayed in Tehran during the 1990s.



Ali Baraka, Hamas representative in Lebanon, interviewed by the Iraqi satellite channel al-Nujaba (al-Nujaba YouTube channel, November 23, 2018).

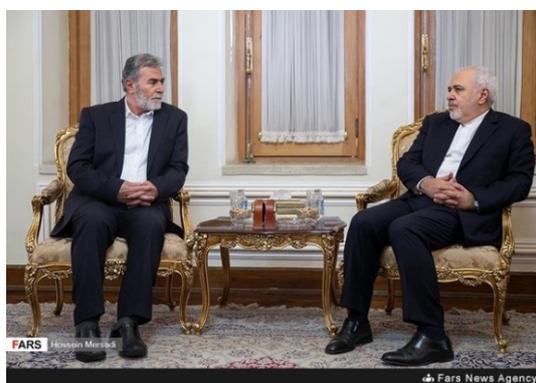
PIJ delegation visits Iran

The PIJ is a Palestinian terrorist organization, the second largest after Hamas. **It is Iran's preferred proxy in the Palestinian arena.** Recently-elected secretary general Ziyad al-Nakhlah maintains close relations with senior Iranian figures, especially **Qassem Soleimani**,

⁵ From the January 20, 2013 bulletin, "Iranian support for the Palestinian terrorist organizations: Iran supports the military buildup of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip and seeks to rebuild their military capabilities after Operation Pillar of Defense, especially their rocket-launching networks. (Full Version)"

commander of the IRGC's Qods Force, who plays an central role in Iran's military support for the Palestinians.

► At the end of December 2018 a delegation of the PIJ leadership, headed by Ziyad al-Nakhalah, visited Iran. They met with **Mohammad Javad Zarif**, the Iranian foreign minister, and with **Ali Shamkhani**, secretary of the Supreme Council for National Security. Both said Iran would always support the Palestinians and the "Palestinian resistance" as one of the fundamental principles of Iran foreign policy (IRNA in Arabic, December 29 and 30, 2018). In addition the delegation met with **Ali Larijani**, the speaker the Iranian Majlis (parliament) (Filastin al-Yawm, January 2, 2019).



Right: Mohammad Zarif (right) meets with the PIJ delegation (Fars News Agency in Arabic, December 30, 2018). Left: Al Shamkhani (right) meets with the PIJ delegation (mojnews.com, December 30, 2018).

► On December 31, 2018, the delegation met with **Ali Khamenei, the Iranian supreme leader**. Ziyad al-Nakhalah noted the support and important function of Iran in preventing efforts to rob the Palestinians of their rights. He said that the "resistance's" capabilities and strength were stronger now than ever before, so that if a war broke out, **Tel Aviv and all the other cities in Israel would be within the range of the thousands of rockets in the hands of the "resistance"** (IRNA in Arabic, Filastin al-Yawm, December 31, 2018).



The PIJ delegation meets with Ali Khamenei, the Iranian supreme leader (Ali Khamenei's website, December 31, 2018).

► Ziyad al-Nakhalah and the PIJ delegation also met with **Hossein Ashtari, the Iranian chief of police and chief commander of Iran's Law Enforcement Force**. Ashtari said Iran's internal security forces were prepared to support the "resistance" in every way possible. He added that they had many capabilities and that he was prepared to help train "Palestinian resistance" operatives (ISNA, January 1, 2019).



Ziyad al-Nakhalah meets with Hossein Ashtari, the Iranian chief of police, the chief commander of Iran's Law Enforcement Force (ISNA, January 1, 2019).

Hassan Nasrallah meets with Ziyad al-Nakhalah

► On December 20, 2018, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah met in Lebanon with the PIJ delegation headed by Ziyad al-Nakhalah. Nasrallah congratulated his guests on the election of the new political bureau. **Both sides stressed the "jihad brothers' connection" of the "resistance movements"** [i.e., terrorist organizations] in Lebanon and Palestine, **especially the PIJ-Hezbollah connection**. They discussed challenges and opportunities for a "resistance" and "resistance axis" plan (Hezbollah's public relations website, December 20, 2018).