



Hamas and the Popular Resistance Committees called on their supporters to donate money using the virtual currency Bitcoin

February 3, 2019

Overview

Hamas and the Popular Resistance Committees, two terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip, **recently called on their supporters to donate money using the virtual currency Bitcoin**. To date, requests for donors have been made by Abu Obeida, spokesman for **Hamas's military wing**, and by the Al-Nasser Salah al-Deen Brigades, **the military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees**. The reason for these calls at the present time may be a combination of financial distress and the benefits of anonymity provided by Bitcoin. According to Arab media reports, this was **the first time that Hamas's military wing called for financial donations to be made using Bitcoin** (Al-Jazeera Net, January 30, 2019).

► As for the **method of transferring the donations**, the publications of these organizations indicate that:

◆ **Hamas:** Hamas's military wing issued a request to the public to donate to the organization using Bitcoin. A few days later, it published a virtual wallet address **in blockchain**, to which the donations may be transferred¹. An examination of the wallet's address indicates that **the wallet was opened only recently, on January 31, 2019. So far, it has been used for 43 buying and selling transactions to date.**

◆ **The Popular Resistance Committees:** The military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees published a **blockchain** virtual wallet address. An examination of the wallet's address indicates that **the wallet has been active for more than three years** (with transactions having been made since October 2015). Bitcoins are being bought

¹ **Blockchain** is a technological computing concept enabling secure online business activity and verification of business transactions between different parties without the need for a central management entity. The central entity is replaced by encrypted "blocks" of information generated through network-based peer-to-peer (P2P) collaboration. The first and best known blockchain application is the Bitcoin. The blockchain concept was conceived along with the invention of this currency. Most of the decentralized currencies are based on similar technology, with the blockchain being used to register all the transactions in the currency, so it functions as an open distributed ledger (Wikipedia).

and sold on an almost daily basis (according to the website, over 4,000 transactions were performed).

► To the best of the ITIC’s knowledge, **these are the first public calls of this type by Palestinian terrorist organizations.** Up to now, the ITIC has encountered ISIS calls for Bitcoin donations after the fall of the Islamic Caliphate. Unlike the Palestinian organizations, which use blockchain transfers, ISIS refers potential donors to virtual currency buying and selling sites **based in Europe**².

► **The Palestinian organizations’ fundraising campaign in the Gaza Strip is yet another example of the terrorist organizations’ use of virtual currencies, mainly Bitcoin, to finance terror activity.** The anonymity provided by trading in these currencies, their availability, and the ability to carry out money transfers around the world quickly and easily without the need for identification or exposure enable these organizations to transfer funds earmarked for terrorist activity without supervision by authorities or banks while circumventing international regulations against money laundering.

Hamas calls on its supporters to help it through Bitcoin donations

► On January 29, 2019, **Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas’s military wing,** used his Telegram account to call on all supporters of the “resistance” and the Palestinian cause to help and transfer donations to Hamas using Bitcoin. **He promised** to inform donors about the method to be used to transfer the donations **at a later date.** In his post, Abu Obeida noted that Israel was fighting the “resistance” (i.e., the terrorist organizations, in this case, Hamas) in every way, including by stopping the (financial) aid. However, he wrote, supporters of the “resistance” throughout the world would fight all of Israel’s efforts **and would provide (Hamas) with all the means to help the “resistance”** (Shehab Twitter account, January 29, 2019).

²See the ITIC’s Information Bulletin from December 6, 2017: “Drive for Bitcoin donations on an ISIS-affiliated website.”



Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas's military wing, calling on all supporters of the organization (the "resistance") to transfer Bitcoin donations (Shehab Twitter account, January 29, 2019)

► Following Abu Obeida's call, the Palestinian public apparently began asking questions about the use of Bitcoin. Therefore, a day after his call was posted, Hamas published an **article and an infographic about the Bitcoin** in the Hamas-affiliated newspaper Al-Resalah (Al-Resalah.net; Al-Resalah's Facebook page, January 29 and 30, 2019). According to the Hamas infographic, daily trade in the currency amounts to \$6 million, and the total amount on the Internet is estimated at \$61 billion.



**Right: The beginning of the article explaining what Bitcoin is (Al-Resalah.Net, January 29, 2019).
Right: Infographic explaining what Bitcoin is (Al-Resalah.Net, January 30, 2019)**

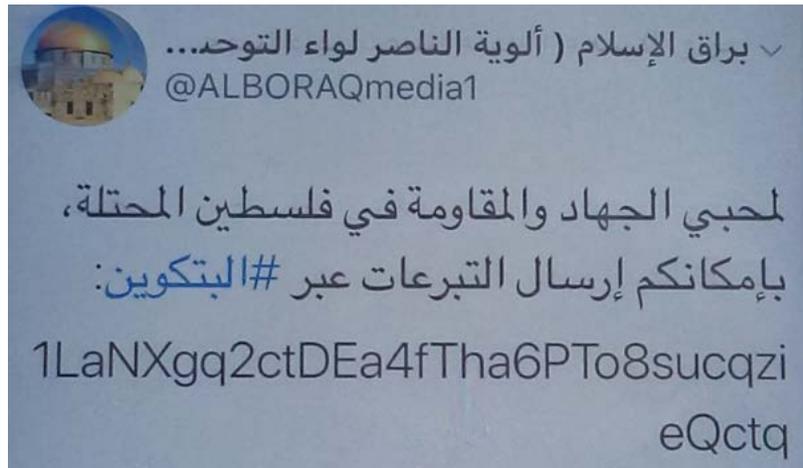
► A few days later, a virtual wallet address to which the donations may be transferred was posted. An examination of the wallet's address indicates that it has been operating since **January 31, 2019**. So far, 43 Bitcoin buying and selling transactions have been carried out.



Hamás's military wing's poster with details of the virtual wallet to be used for transferring donations (Safa, January 31, 2019)

The Popular Resistance Committees' use of the virtual currency

► Concurrently with Abu Obeida's call, the Al-Nasser Salah al-Deen Brigades, the military wing of the Popular Resistance Committees, **used its Twitter account to call on the public to donate via the virtual currency**. The call read: "For those who love jihad and the resistance in occupied Palestine, you can send donations through Bitcoin." The announcement included a link to a **Twitter account by the name of Boraq al-Islam**, Al-Nasser Salah al-Deen Brigades, the Al-Tawhid Brigade (Boraq al-Islam Twitter account, Al-Nasser Salah al-Deen Brigades; Al-Tawhid Brigade, January 29, 2019). The Popular Resistance Committees also posted links to private Telegram accounts that could be contacted by anyone in need of assistance and/or explanations.



Twitter account apparently used by the Popular Resistance Committees. The tweet included a virtual wallet address in blockchain (Boraq al-Islam Twitter account, Al-Nasser Salah al-Deen Brigades, Al-Tawhid Brigade, January 29, 2019)

- The address in the tweet is that of a **virtual wallet in blockchain** to which donations to the Popular Resistance Committees may be transferred. An examination of the wallet's address indicates that it **has been active for more than three years** (with transactions having been made since October 2015). **Bitcoins are being bought and sold on an almost daily basis.** According to the tweet, more than 4,000 transactions have been carried out in the virtual wallet of the Popular Resistance Committees.

Summary		Transactions	
Address	1LaNXgq2ctDEa4fTha6PTo8sucqzieQctq	No. Transactions	4151
Hash 160	d5ba1694704b933ae1768baeb6b44dd10de33aa	Total Received	862.68553979 BTC
		Final Balance	0.83278589 BTC

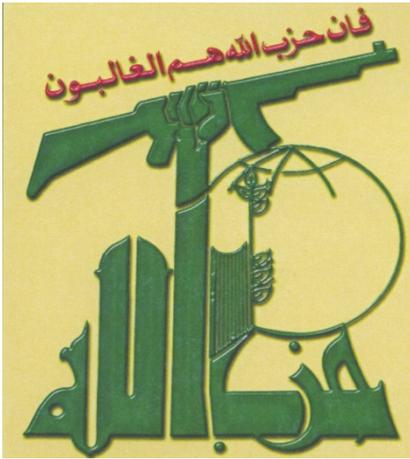
Request Payment Donation Button

Transactions (Oldest First)

Transaction ID	Date	Amount
1LaNXgq2ctDEa4fTha6PTo8sucqzieQctq	2015-12-26 12:42:58	1 BTC
1Egs9cjAAYLm2mUT18bUURzTTWZS4J7vx		2.5997 BTC
1LaNXgq2ctDEa4fTha6PTo8sucqzieQctq		-1.0001 BTC

The blockchain address of the virtual wallet

The Popular Resistance Committees is a terrorist organization established in 2001 by Jamal Abu Samhadana, a senior Fatah operative. They were joined by operatives who had left other organizations. The organization operates in the Gaza Strip in accordance with a policy determined by Hamas. The organization has close ties with Hezbollah. In the past, the organization was suspected of participation in the abduction of Gilad Shalit (June 25, 2006).



Right: The insignia of the Popular Resistance Committees Left: The insignia of Hezbollah, which is a source of inspiration for the Popular Resistance Committees (YouTube, January 15, 2019).