

The Islamic Liberation Party and its Relations with the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority

Dr. Asaf Maliach
ICT Researcher

Since its establishment the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami - HT) denounces any participation in the political system, such as joining parliaments or other elected councils. HT views democracy as a "Bid'a" (a negative innovation that was adopted by Islam over the course of hundreds of years as a result of infidelity), since it serves the will of the people and represents the "cultural invasion" of the West into Muslim countries. As such, the Party condemned participation in the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council which took place on January 25, 2006.¹



As the elections drew nearer, the Party's activities in this area intensified, to the point of violent confrontations with other party representatives in Hebron and the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. For example, on January 13, 2006, following Friday prayers, there was a scuffle between Hamas activists and HT members inside al-Aqsa Mosque after an HT member went onstage, denounced the Hamas decision to participate in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections and called for its excommunication. Three days later, on January 16, HT published a special brochure criticizing any participation in the Palestinian elections, declaring that the elections "represent an American-led effort with the goal of strengthening the recognition 'tendency' of the Jewish existence." Informed sources from Hebron reported that HT carried out an extensive propaganda campaign against the elections and called upon the public not to participate. In contrast, however, to other issues taken on by HT that were met by widespread public support, such as the electric company issue, in this case HT was unable to rally the citizens to actively protest the elections.²

This article will analyze whether the emergence of an Islamic party at the head of the Palestinian Authority (PA)-a party that refuses to recognize Israel and espouses the implementation of Shari'a (religious Muslim law) in gradual steps-has caused a change in HT's view of the PA. Does the Party continue its opposition to the PA due to its foundation on the Oslo Accords? How does the Party view the intentions of Hamas to sign a *Hudna* (temporary long-term peace treaty) with Israel and to test the "National Peace Document" (signed in the Hadarim Prison in May 2006), not to mention the delays in implementing Shari'a as the sole legal system of the PA?

Hizb al-Tahrir's Relations with the PA Prior to the Rise of Hamas³

Hizb al-Tahrir's stance in regards to Mahmoud 'Abbas (Abu Mazen) and the PA prior to the rise of Hamas was unambiguous. During the Sharm al-Sheikh Summit on February 8, 2005, HT bitterly criticized the "Authority" and argued that the Summit was both a plot to scalp Palestine to the Jews and just another step in a long series of humiliating concessions.⁴ HT sees Abu Mazen as a marionette of the American government, whose objective is to maximize the worldwide Muslim recognition of Israel ("the Jewish entity"). In HT's view, Abu Mazen is a pawn of the "Jewish entity" and he "tours all over the world" only to achieve normalization of relations with Israel. In the internal domain, the Party views Abu Mazen as a leader who forced himself onto the Palestinian people and doesn't promote their national aspirations. To date, HT's activities against the PA are primarily exemplified by propaganda, homiletic sermons, and criticism.⁵

Hamas Victory in the Elections: A Conspiracy by the United States, the European Union, Abu Mazen, and Israel

HT's response to the Hamas victory in the elections was not long in coming. The day after the elections, senior HT members hurried to give interviews to the Arab media, in which they emphasized that the Hamas victory was a "Western imperialist conspiracy against Islam and the Muslims" with the goal of providing Islamic authorization to handing Palestine over to the Jews.⁶

On January 28, 2006, three days after the elections, HT published a manifesto under the title *Controlling the Regime in the Shadow of the Occupation - a Trap that Leads to Recognition of Israel*. The manifesto declares HT's sorrow over the "harmful" elections and explains that the rise of Hamas was intended to bring a breath of life to a regime that was practically on the verge of collapse, and even worse, was likely to cause a revival of attempts to find "tactical" solutions to peace with Israel. The rise of Hamas to power was seen as premeditated by the "imperialist infidels" (meaning the United States and the European Union) in conjunction with Abu Mazen and with Israel in order to cause Hamas to recognize Israel. Hamas, according to HT, fell into the trap.⁷

This manifesto warned Hamas about embarking on the same journey as Fatah, who eventually recognized Israel:

in the beginning there were Palestinian organizations, headed by Fatah, that were founded on the declaration of liberating Palestine from the sea to the river, exterminating the Jewish state and non-recognition of it. In due time it fell in the slew of compromises: what began as a crack in the strategic objectives to establish a state in all of Palestine, developed into an agreement to establish a state on all land that would be liberated through negotiation and recognition of Israel, and concluded in an Authority whose sovereignty is limited and whose prime minister and government ministers stand behind the Jewish barricades and are humiliated while waiting to receive permission to pass through. Now Hamas is expected to go through the same journey. Here it (Hamas)

removed from its election campaign the non-recognition and destroying of the Jewish state, and its strategic goal to liberate all of Palestine and not negotiate with anybody who supports the Jews was replaced by the discussions with the Quartet who supports the Jews. The temporary destination, in other words the return to the 1967 borders, became a permanent solution. The non-recognition of the existence of the state of Israel turned into non-recognition of the occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip... the problem is not the West Bank or Gaza, even if a sovereign state is established there. The problem is Palestine.⁸

Hasan al-Hasan, the deputy chairman of HT Britain, also argued about the conspiracy against Hamas. According to him, the rise of Hamas was allowed in order to cause it to gradually give up its principles, but because the United States, the European Union, the United Nations and the Security Council have yet to receive an official recognition of Israel from Hamas, the international community has imposed economic sanctions against the PA, intended to force Hamas to admit that it is unable to rule and as a result return power to Fatah. Al-Hasan added that the return of power to Fatah is meant to hurt Hamas' image, since it will be portrayed as having misled the Palestinian people with glamorous declarations that it wasn't able to fulfill.⁹

During the 9th Caliphate Conference organized by HT on May 4, 2006 in Bir Zait University, north of Ramallah in the PA, Ahmad al-Khateeb, HT's spokesman in the northern West Bank, argued that the United States is implementing a policy of "embracement" vis-à-vis the various Islamic movements and their participation in Arab and Muslim governments in order to delay as much as possible the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate, to spread the recognition of Israel and to fortify the Jews in Palestine. According to al-Khateeb, the Muslims must be aware of the conspiracy and understand that the only way to liberate Palestine is to establish an Islamic state that will motivate Muslim armies towards liberating the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the rest of Palestine.¹⁰

HT calls upon Hamas to give up the regime and not respect the agreements signed between the Palestinian authority and Israel

In the victory speech delivered in Damascus by Khalid Mash'al, head of Hamas' political bureau, on January 28, 2006, he mentioned that Hamas is a realistic movement that is aware that the PA is based on the foundation of the Oslo Accords. According to him, Hamas is willing to fulfill all accords signed by the PA, stipulating that this does not contradict Hamas' principles and does not violate the Palestinians' rights.¹¹

On the background of declarations by Mash'al and others, such as Palestinian Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyya's allegation that Hamas is allegedly willing to live with the agreements signed with Israel - even though it is against them, as seen in the Sykes-Pico Agreement - HT called upon Hamas not to respect the agreements, including the Road Map, and expressed disappointment that Haniyya did not even declare that Hamas will at least operate to change the agreements. In its view, sitting down at the negotiating table with Israel will not achieve any more goals than those obtained by Fatah, in other words,

an Israeli withdrawal from several major cantons in the West Bank while protecting settlement blocks in the Jordan Valley, whether through negotiations or unilateral withdrawal.¹²

In regards to the readiness of Hamas to sign a *Hudna* with Israel, HT argued that this act alone will legitimize Israel's right to exist, just as the party's argument that Hamas' participation in the elections and its subsequent rise to power in a PA based on the Oslo Accords point to recognition of Israel.¹³ An article published on March 2, 2006 on HT's media office website stated:

Hamas should not have fallen down this slope and taken over the PA that is based on a treacherous agreement that was signed with those who exploit the land of Palestine under the protection of the enemies of Islam and Muslims in the United States and Europe. Recognition of the treacherous agreements and the process of surrender is the same as recognition of the Jewish entity.¹⁴

Notwithstanding, although HT ridiculed Hamas for "waiving" its principles, the Party conveyed optimism that Hamas will "reconsider" and give up its authority, thus saving itself from committing a big sin and from turning itself into an instrument of the "infidels".¹⁵

HT is convinced that the odds of Hamas staying in power are minute

HT officials are convinced that the PA is in fact run by Abu Mazen and Fatah, and as such the governmental corruption and hunting down of various Islamic organizations' activists that were present before the rise of Hamas is still going on. Hasan al-Hasan, deputy chairman of HT Britain, argues that a continuation of this situation will cause Hamas to quickly lose its popular support among the Palestinian nation.¹⁶

Al-Hasan is convinced that Hamas is sitting on a powder keg that sooner or later will explode. According to him, the integrity of Hamas ministers, coupled with their decency and their "abstaining from beans and falafel (middle-eastern foods)" during their weekly meetings will not solve the problems of poverty and overpopulation among the Palestinians. Al-Hasan argues that as long as the PA's treasury is empty, Abu Mazen and Fatah actually run the PA, the security apparatus is retained by Fatah, the internal and international pressures continues and the media conceals Hamas' values and exposes its deficiencies - the chances of the Hamas-led government to survive are minute and in the end it will be forced to accept the international plans.¹⁷

Similar statements were made in a conference organized by HT on February 2, 2006 on the grounds of the al-Aqsa Mosque under the slogan "The Elections Results of the Palestinian Legislative Council" (the name of the speaker was not provided):

In regards to the election of Hamas, it is indeed an election of Islam, since the people in their nature are superficial and they chose Hamas not because of the name but rather

because it lifted the flag of Islam. However, once it is clear to them that things are being managed according to the plans of the large imperialistic countries, they will voice non-confidence against Hamas. History shows that the Islamic movements that lacked a correct political consciousness in fact served the imperialist attempts to hurt Islam and Muslims more than the secular movements.¹⁸

Hasan al-Hasan expressed sharp criticism of Hamas' attempts to raise funds from the Arab countries, since according to him those same states declared their recognition of the state of Israel under the Saudi Initiative that was accepted at the Arab League Summit in Beirut on March 28, 2002. According to him, the Arab countries are unable to resist implementing the policies of the United States and European Union, especially the United States who is closely allied to Israel. Furthermore, the Arab states are no less corrupted than the regime Hamas replaced, and they are just as interested in seeing a failure of the Hamas campaign, since its success will comprise a direct threat on those same regimes.¹⁹

"Reform is the Solution"

According to HT spokesmen, every Islamic movement that was permitted to participate in the parliamentary elections was required to depart from its platform of the destruction of the state of Israel and was required to replace their slogans from "Islam is the Solution" to "Reform (Islah) is the Solution" (al-Islah huwa al-Hal).²⁰

Hasan al-Hasan, like other senior members of HT, presented two possible scenarios in the eventuality that Hamas decides to continue to hold its reign:

The Islamic scenario. The Hamas government will adopt Islam as the only source of authority in all spheres - politics, communication, economy and society. It will cancel the PLO and as a result will cancel all agreements rooted in it, including the PA. As such, it will shut down the casino in Jericho, force television broadcasters and secretaries to dress in religious clothing and forbid broadcasting of Marsel Khalipha's (a Lebanese political musician) songs as well as all other national songs that "ridicule Allah". According to al-Hasan, on the one hand this scenario will raise strong opposition of forces opposed to political Islam, not only in the local sphere but also internationally. On the other hand Hamas will win the unconditional support of all the Islamic advocates, including most of the Islamic Ummah - from whom it will draw its power. Such a Hamas-led government will represent, according to al-Hasan, a significant danger to the Arab regimes. Notwithstanding, al-Hasan is convinced that since Hamas, as well as its voters did not prepare themselves for such a scenario, this instance is unlikely to occur.

The second scenario: Hamas will follow the path of Fatah that began with "no to recognition, no to negotiation, and no to appeasement," and ended with autonomy over less than twenty percent of Palestinian territory, as well as humiliation as a party. According to al-Hasan, this scenario seems more likely. As proof of this it can be seen that Hamas opened ties with all those who opened the door to it, beginning with Egypt and ending with Russia, in order to show its "flexibility" and in the hope of projecting a

positive impression that would help it escape the isolation imposed against it.²¹

HT Demands to Maintain the State of War against Israel

In the manifesto published by HT on January 28, 2006, the Party called upon Hamas to maintain the current "state of war" against Israel as long as there is no Caliph who can liberate Palestine. The Party emphasized that the comprehensive liberation of Palestine will be attained only after the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate and under the flag of Islam: "the day will come when the knights of Islam will follow the paths of the greats (military leaders) that conquered Palestine, liberated it and protected it. *They will put an end to the Jewish entity and will return all of Palestine to the bosom of Islam.* Those who negotiated with the Jews and recognized their state, even on a sliver of Palestine, will be wrapped in disgrace in this lifetime and will suffer torments in the afterlife."²²

In the manifesto published on May 7, 2006 on the Internet web site of HT France, it was written that "it is not possible to wait for the United States, the chief supporter of Israel, and Europe to find a utopian peace plan. *Peace will not exist as long as Israel exists.* The Muslims are the masters of their own destiny with the help of Allah. *The Islamic state will be announced anew, Muhammad's army will rise anew and will liberate Palestine.*"²³

Summary and Conclusions

Hamas' landslide victory in the elections and the fact that at the head of the PA now sits an Islamic party that refuses to recognize Israel and espouses the existence of Shari'a, for now in gradual steps, did not cause a shift in HT's opinion regarding the PA. HT continued to express a negative view towards the PA, due to its being based on the Oslo Accords, and the readiness of Hamas to sign a temporary long-term peace treaty ("Hudna") with Israel. Hamas's willingness to test the "National Peace Document" signed in the Hadarim Prison in May 2006 and its decision not to implement Shari'a as the sole legal apparatus in the PA did not help matters. According to HT, Hamas must give up its power, and the sooner, the better.

Further, about six months ago Dr. Imran Waheed, the media representative of HT Britain published a series of articles attacking Zeyno Baran, the director of the International Security and Energy Programs at the Nixon Centre, based on the latter's claim that HT serves as a conveyor belt for terrorists.²⁴ The question must be asked: Why is Waheed attempting to justify himself? Does HT not incite against the West, namely the United States and Israel, day and night? Did HT's branch in Jordan not call on September 2, 2005 for a militant Jihad against the West, primarily the United States ("the end of American tyranny will be done by the hands of the Muslims") and Israel ("its end is a 'simple task' and its existence is conditioned on Western interference and the 'betrayal' of Muslim leaders")? Is the ultimate objective of HT, like Hamas, not to destroy the state of Israel and erase it from the face of the earth? Does HT not argue, like Hamas, that a true peace will not exist as long as the state of Israel exists?²⁵

HT can not hide behind the guise of a pragmatic movement that does not implement terrorist activities as long as it uses radical religious terminology that is no different than the lexicon employed by Islamic terror organizations such as al-Qa'ida, the Lebanese Hizballah and the Egyptian al-Jihad. Thus, no member of HT can be justified in claiming that the words of Zeyno Baran represent "a tired claim that lacks any intellectual foundation."²⁶

1 Hazim, al-Amin, "11 Aylul a'ada al-i'tibar ila al-jihad ghayr al-maddi" ("September 11 gave rise to the reexamination of the unconventional jihad"), *Dar al-Hayat*, (March 20, 2004); Taqiuddin, an-Nabhani, *Political Thoughts*, (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1999), p. 116.

2 "Khilaf fiqhi bayna Hamas wa-Hizb al-Tahrir" ("Islamic law disagreements between Hamas and Hizb al-Tahrir"), *al-Mu'tamar* (Sana, Yemen), (January 24, 2006); The daily report of the Civil Administration in Judea and Samaria, (January 14, 2006); PNN, (January 16, 2006).

3 See, also, Asaf, Maliach, "The Islamic Liberation Party: From Pragmatism to Radicalism?", *ICT Articles*, (December 6, 2005).

4 "The summit of Sharm El-Sheikh is a vital stage in a series of humiliating concessions", *Hizb al-Tahrir official website*, (February 8, 2005).

5 "Ziyarat Mahmoud 'Abbas mu'akharan ila washintun, bayna al-sakhab al-i'lami hawlaha w-waqi'uha" ("Abu Mazzen's Last Visit in Washington, the Wide Publicity Surrounding him, and the Reality"), *Media Office of Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, (December 4, 2005).

6 See, for example, an interview with Mahmoud 'Abd al-Kareem, a senior member in HT Lebanon, (January 26, 2006). (Audio). Details of the interviewer and location are not available.

7 "Tawalli al-Sulta fi dhill al-'ihtilaal - Sharak yaqud al-waqi' fihi ila al-'i'tiraf bi-dawlat Yahud" ("Taking control over the regime in the shadow of the occupation - A trap which leads to the recognition of the Jewish state"), *al-Nahda* (London), (February 13, 2006). The conspiracy theory is discussed in the smallest details also in an article written by 'Abdullah 'Abd al-Rahman that was published on March 2, 2006 on the internet website of HT's media office. The article also blames Muhammad Dahlan and the Egyptian "scalpers" as having a hand in the conspiracy, see, 'Abdallah, 'Abd al-Rahman, "Adwa' 'ala fawz Hamas fi al-intikhabat al-tashri'iyya al-falastiniyya wa-taklifuha bi-tashkil al-hukumah al-muqbilah" ("Spotlight on Hamas' win in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections and its framing of the next government"), *Media Office of Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, (March 2, 2006).

8 "Taking control over the regime in the shadow of the occupation - A trap which leads to the recognition of the Jewish state", *Ibid*; See, also, 'Abd al-Rahman, *Ibid*; In the beginning of May 2006 behind the walls of the Hadarim Prison in Israel the "National Peace Document" was signed between Marwan Barghuthi, a senior member in Fatah, and 'Abd al-Khaliq al-Natshe, a Hamas member of the Palestinian parliament. The document is meant to serve as a basis for negotiation between Fatah and

Hamas beginning in the end of May. Although the document does not explicitly mention recognition of Israel, the first clause states that "the Palestinian nation present in the homeland and in the Diaspora aspires to liberate its land and to fulfill its self-definition, including to establish an independent state with its capitol in Jerusalem on all lands occupied in 1967, to guarantee refugees the right to return and to release all prisoners and detainees." The joint document emphasizes the Palestinian factions' entire adherence to the option of armed resistance alongside the national and public struggle, however it hints that the struggle must be concentrated solely in the territories. In addition, the document discusses several principles that are supposed to guarantee an avoidance of a civil war in the PA and operational cooperation between the two organizations, chiefly, a reorganization of the PLO, new elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council and the establishment of a united government. According to the document, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad will join the various PLO institutions by the end of this year. Abu Mazen blessed the document and described it as an "important plan" that represents a foundation for a future Palestinian policy. Palestinian Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyya said that the agreement signed in the Israeli prison between Fatah and Hamas, which hints at a recognition of Israel and the '67 borders, is "an important agreement that must be studied in-depth." See, Arnon, Regular, "Haniyya: Nivdoq hamismakh hamekir be-yisra'el bi-gvulot '67" ("Haniyya: We will check the document which recognizes Israel in '67 borders"), *Ha'aretz*, (May 12, 2006), and also, Arnon, Regular, "Larishona: 'Ish Hamas qara le-hesder bi-gvulot '67" ("For the first time: Hamas member calls for arrangement in '67 borders"), *Ha'aretz*, (May 12, 2006), and also, an interview with Mahmoud 'Abd al-Kareem, a senior member in HT Lebanon, (January 26, 2006). (Audio).

9 Hasan, al-Hasan, "Al-Khizannah farighah wa-al-'amn biyad Fatah wa-al-'amr li-'Abbas, fa-'ayna Hamas?" ("The treasury is empty, the security in the hand of Fatah and the authority to Abbas, and where is Hamas?"), *Middle East Online*, (April 14, 2006).

10 Ahmad, Salim, "Hizb al-Tahrir ya'qudu mu'tamar al-Khilafah al-tasi' - 'ala abwab al-Khilafah" ("Hizb al-Tahrir sets the ninth Caliphate conference - on the verge of the Caliphate"), *al-Quds* (Jerusalem), (May 4, 2006), p. 4.

11 "Mash'al: Sanata'amal bi-waqi'iyah shadida ma'a waqi' Uslu wa-sanas'i li-i'adat tartib awda' Munathamat al-Tahrir" ("Mash'al: We will act realistically with the situation written to us by Oslo and will operate to reorganize the PLO"), *al-Ayyam* (PA), (January 29, 2006).

12 'Abd al-Rahman, *Ibid*; An interview with Mahmoud 'Abd al-Kareem, a senior member in HT Lebanon, (January 26, 2006). (Audio).

13 "Isra'il tusadir amwalan lil-sulta wa-Merkel tatajanab liqa' Hamas" ("Israel confiscates funds of the Palestinian Authority and Merkel avoids meeting with the Hamas"), *al-Jazeera*, (January 30, 2006); "Mash'al ya'rudu 'ala Isra'il Hudna mashrutah" ("Mash'al offers Israel a conditional armistice"), *BBCArabic*, (January 31, 2006).

14 'Abd al-Rahman, *Ibid*.

15 An interview with Mahmoud 'Abd al-Kareem, a senior member in HT Lebanon, (January 26,

2006). (Audio); "Taking control over the regime in the shadow of the occupation - A trap which leads to the recognition of the Jewish state", *Ibid*.

16 Al-Hasan, *Ibid*.

17 Al-Hasan, *Ibid*; Abu Mazen vetoed the establishment of the new security apparatus - "The Assistant Apparatus to the Security Forces" - that began to operate on May 17, 2006, and declared it illegal. This apparatus is an attempt to give official authorization to the operations of the military wing of Hamas and other armed organizations, including some under the "National Resistance Committees". Palestinian Interior Minister Sa'id Siyam explained the need to create the new apparatus since the current security forces are not fulfilling their duties as planned, thus there is a need to "assist" them. In fact, this is a military force in every sense of the word, which is meant to aid the Hamas government in their daily confrontations against Fatah officials and other apparatuses (including the Preventive Security Apparatus which is composed of the hardcore Fatah and do not obey the Palestinian Interior Minister's orders). In this regard, it must be mentioned that following the PA elections and the Hamas victory, Abu Mazen appointed Rashid Abu Shubak, former head of the Preventive Security Apparatus, as supervisor over the new security framework labeled "interior security", which includes apparatuses of the Palestinian interior ministry, who were supposed to be under the authority of Hamas however in fact were under Abu Mazen's authority.

18 HT conference held on February 2, 2006 on the grounds of the al-Aqsa Mosque under the sign "The Election Results of the Palestinian Legislative Council". (Audio).

19 Al-Hasan, *Ibid*.

20 HT conference held on February 2, 2006 on the grounds of the al-Aqsa Mosque under the sign "The Election Results of the Palestinian Legislative Council". (Audio).

21 Al-Hasan, *Ibid*.

22 "Taking control over the regime in the shadow of the occupation - A trap which leads to the recognition of the Jewish state", *Ibid*.

23 "La Solution Pour La Palestine", ("The Solution for Palestine"), *al-Badil* (HT France), (May 7, 2006).

24 Imran, Waheed, "Re: Fighting the War of Ideas, Foreign Affairs, Volume 84, Number 6", *HT Britain*, (May 17, 2006); Imran, Waheed and Sajjad Khan, "Fighting the War of Ideas - Revisited", *HT Britain*, (May 17, 2006); "Who is Zeyno Baran?", *HT Britain*, (May 17, 2006).

25 "al-Amn al-Urduni ya'taqil sab'a min a'da' Hizb al-Tahrir" ("The Jordanian security service arrested 7 members of Hizb al-Tahrir"), *al-Jazeera*, (Septembr 6, 2005).

26 Waheed and Khan, *Ibid*.