

The political thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement HAMAS

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Khaled Meshaal



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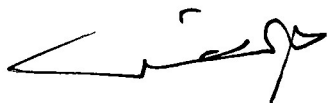
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To my dear brother Mahathir:

The political thought of the Islamic Resistance Movement HAMAS

With my best
wishes and
Duaá ,

Khalid
Meshaal

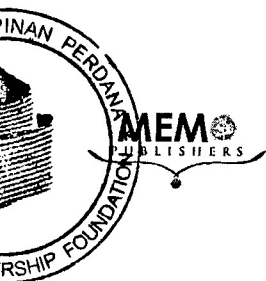


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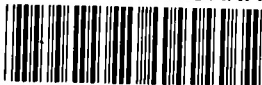
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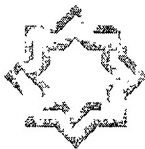
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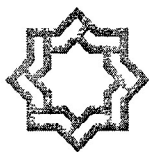
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Introduction

What is Hamas's philosophy and vision for liberation? This book offers an authoritative answer and more. It examines the Palestinian, Arab, Islamic and humanitarian roles in the quest for liberation; the extent to which that vision is influenced by the reality of political division, and the incoherence and fragmentation that dominates the Arab reality. It clarifies Hamas's position towards the prevailing alliances and blocs, how the movement views them and how ethnic and sectarian plurality can be employed to serve in the struggle for freedom.

Covering the controversy about the relationship between Hamas and the wider Islamic movement, the author examines the common ground in order to see what makes Hamas stand out, and asks who benefits from, or serves, whom. He explains why Hamas does not recognise Israel and why this remains non-negotiable despite the widespread pressure to do so as a requirement for being brought into the fold of the international community. Given the movement's position on this, will it ever negotiate with Israel, and is its stance based on Islamic jurisprudence or merely political interests? On a religious level, what defines Hamas's position in relation to Jews and Christians, the former as the occupiers and the latter as partners in the struggle, albeit as a Palestinian minority?

The book also looks at the status of the Palestinian woman within the liberation struggle. It spells out the intellectual, political and nationalist dimensions of the role of the Palestinian woman and, more specifically, her role in Hamas.

As the factional divide appears to be as wide as ever, how does Hamas view the Palestine Liberation Organization? Is it still a suitable framework and point of reference to represent all Palestinian people and lead their struggle? This leads naturally on to the whole issue of how Hamas views other Palestinian factions involved in the national struggle. Talk of Hamas joining the PLO has not yet borne fruit; however some in the movement see this as a means to revive the internationally-acknowledged legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

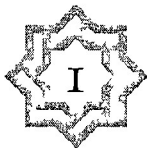
The author wonders aloud about Hamas's realism and asks if there is any scope for flexibility given the movement's immutable principles. Where do they begin and where do they end? Do they stem from an internal decision or a previous reading or are they a consequence of pressure and the burdens of reality?

Finally, how does Hamas view the future of the region? What is its assessment of the future of the crisis-ridden Zionist-Israeli project in Palestine?

This is a political and intellectual reading with a nationalist dimension presented by Khaled Meshaal [Abu Waleed], the head of the political bureau of the Islamic Resistance Movement in Palestine – Hamas. It is the result of an extended dialogue conducted with Atif Golani, editor-in-chief of the Jordanian newspaper *As-Sabeel* in July 2010.

**The Information Bureau
2013**





Resistance or Liberation

Use of the terms ‘resistance’ or ‘liberation’ does not imply a restriction to one or the other. That is because liberation is the goal and others have adopted the name before Hamas. We named ourselves ‘resistance’ because that is what we believe to be the means to liberate our country. There is no contradiction between the means and the objective.

If at some point we speak about ‘liberation’, we are referring to the objective; and when we speak about ‘resistance’, we are referring to the means to achieve the objective. There is no harm, therefore, if we choose this or that term; as long as we are, in all circumstances, working with the two together. Our aim is ‘liberation’ and our means is ‘resistance’.

When Hamas was established in late 1987, the option of armed struggle had suffered a serious setback. Palestinian weapons and fighters were dispersed after 1982 and we had to restore attention to the fact that resistance and armed struggle were both entirely legitimate in the face of Israel’s brutal military occupation of our land. Of course, this was not to be as an alternative or substitute for liberation, and certainly not by restricting the role to resistance without liberation. The aim of our resistance is liberation and the path to liberation is resistance, steadfastness, confrontation and sacrifice.



From another viewpoint, there was talk at various times that the duty of the Palestinian people is to keep the flame of the conflict burning through resistance. That is to say, that the aim of the resistance is to preoccupy and exhaust Israeli resources, deny the country any security and stability, and encourage the Palestinian people to participate in the struggle. This does not mean that the responsibility of the Palestinians is confined solely to being some kind of ‘rapid deployment force’ as they are the prime party in the struggle to bring about an end to the occupation and liberate their country.

As such, we as a movement do not confine ourselves to resistance to the enemy occupation, even though that is a fundamental part of our *raison d’être*. We are also planning for liberation, and strive to achieve it through our efforts as a movement, the efforts of the Palestinian people and their revolutionary forces, the support of the Arab and Islamic nations and freedom-loving people around the world.





The Liberation Formula

From the very beginning, it has been clear that the Palestinian issue is not simply a conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis. It is, instead, a conflict between the Muslim Ummah [transnational body of believers] and Israel's colonial expansionism, the threats from which go way beyond the borders of historic Palestine.

This was understood very early on, with no room for doubt or controversy regarding the nature of the conflict. This is what compelled the Arab states to go to war with the Zionists. It also inspired many Arab and Muslim volunteers to participate actively in the conflict over the years.

Regrettably, the failure to understand the nature of the conflict and the desire by some to abandon their responsibility in this regard have bolstered the narrow nation-state logic, which has recently begun to overwhelm the perception of some official Arab parties. They fancy that they possess the ability to lessen the burden of the conflict with the Zionist state. This has subsequently impacted on official Palestinian policy, especially after the Palestinian leaders shifted their emphasis from resistance to negotiations. At the time, they believed that it was possible to dispense with Arab-Islamic support so long as the way was clear to engage in direct negotiations with Israel and the United States.

During that period, talk about the independence of Palestinian decision-making and the ‘Palestinisation’ of the conflict grew louder. Propagation of this view contradicted, necessarily so, the Islamic and Arab context of the conflict. This shift coincided with the Palestinian leadership’s gradual abandonment of the option of armed struggle, especially after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the dispersal of Palestinian weapons and fighters to various Arab lands. Armed struggle was then abandoned altogether.

This dangerous shift in the focus of the conflict had grave negative consequences for the Palestinian cause, the Arab reality and the struggle against Israeli injustice; we are suffering from them to this day. When Hamas arrived on the scene it wanted to reset the compass, address the dangerous deviation that had taken place and restore the value of the Arab-Islamic and, indeed, the humanitarian dimensions of the conflict against Zionism.

We believe that this is a conflict involving the entire Arab and Islamic world, which is a partner in the struggle over and above support for the Palestinian resistance.

We have tried to plant this conviction among Arabs and Muslims, people and leaders, elites and political movements. Our aim is to establish it practically in the culture, conduct and management of the conflict on the basis of participation; that has been our slogan since the early days. We aspire to translate it into a permanent and institutionalised programme of action, not just seasonal outbursts or passing emotions. At the same time, we seek to ensure that this does not imply the abandonment of Palestinian sovereignty, or the handing over of our national decision-making process to anyone else. It is clear at the moment that the current leadership has basically surrendered our sovereignty to external influences, notably Israel and the US.

We can’t afford to follow the old, mistaken view that as long as the conflict with Israel has Arab and Islamic input then the Palestinians should wait and see what the Arab states do with their armies. These countries were believed to be the most capable of effecting a military

victory over Israel with its massive armoury, including nuclear weapons, and support from world powers.

The 'Palestinisation' of the conflict exaggerated Palestinian specificity at the expense of the Arab-Islamic dimension. This position was justified by pointing to Arab shortcomings and their betrayal of the Palestinians, as well as the preoccupation of the Arab states with their own national problems. At the same time, they have continued to delude themselves by claiming that they alone are able to direct the conflict. This is clearly an error, especially as the means that they possess are no more than negotiations and agreements which have to obtain the approval of western capitals, especially Washington DC.

Our view is that the Palestinian people should not be spectators to their own freedom struggle and simply wait for others to do something about it. They are at the heart of the conflict and they should be the first to fulfil their duty. Likewise, the Arab and Islamic world is expected to engage in defence of their mutual destiny, moving beyond moral support and solidarity.

As such, both dimensions of the conflict are important; it is not right that either should take precedence over the other, or succeed at the expense of the other. Artificial exaggeration of the Palestinian dimension isolates it from its Arab and Islamic context. Hamas believes that the Arab, Islamic and humanitarian dimensions of the conflict are important, stemming from a firm conviction that the Zionist State of Israel is a western enterprise targeting the Arabs and Muslims worldwide. This is what makes the conflict a global, not a local, issue. It is telling that one European leader, Spain's Jose Maria Aznar, has gone on record saying that the demise of Israel would mean the demise of Europe.

Thus, just as there are those who believe that Israel represents their civilizational spearhead in the region, it is important for it to be challenged by an Arab, Islamic and humanitarian response.

The religious dimension to the conflict also spreads it beyond the responsibility of the Palestinians, for Palestine's history and status

makes it exceptional for Muslims and Christians alike. Jerusalem was the first *qibla* [direction of prayer] of the early Muslims; it is where Prophet Muhammad [peace and blessings be upon him] was taken on his miraculous night journey and ascent to heaven. The Holy City is the gateway from the earth to the heavens; a blessed place in a blessed land; the land of the prophets and divine scriptures; and of the birth and life of Jesus the Messiah, upon whom be peace. Palestine is not on the periphery of the Arab and Islamic lands; it is at their heart and the centre of the world. It is, therefore, natural, indeed inevitable, that this conflict will have a huge significance within its Arab, Islamic and humanitarian context.

The religious and juridical dimensions emphasise this; whenever the enemy occupies a part of any land it is the duty of its inhabitants to defend it. Here, geographic proximity has its importance. The closer one is to the centre, the greater one's role becomes. After this the nexus widens, so after the Palestinian centre, the priority falls on the Arabs, then the Muslims, and then the humanitarians across the world.

Thus, our philosophy is founded on a premise which emphasises the importance of the Arab, Islamic and humanitarian context of the conflict without limiting or marginalising the Palestinians' role. We may lead the resistance and sacrifice much on the front line of the confrontation, but we can also demand the Arab and Islamic nations participate in the liberation struggle.

Some people believe that the balance of power, which is very much in the occupiers' favour, and the magnitude of the conflict, with its global dimensions intertwined with both western and eastern agendas, have made the Palestinian people incapable of steadfastness. Such people are wrong. It is true that the Palestinian people cannot by themselves bear the burden of the struggle, not least because it is an international conflict, not a local dispute. Nevertheless, they are able to take the initiative and, by the grace of God, be steadfast and patient; to fight against the occupation of their land by all means necessary and with all means at their disposal, as is their legal right.

The Palestinians are a great people who possess strong will and determination, and an enormous ability to make sacrifices, but it is unjust for them to be left alone to carry the fight to Israel. This does not contradict the independence of Palestinian decision-making, nor does it imply foreign meddling in Palestinian affairs. On the contrary, Arab and Islamic participation in the struggle reinforces the power of the Palestinians; it does not weaken them. External support protects them from Israeli and American blackmail. When left isolated, as they are today, the Palestinians are the victims of foreign pressure and the injustice this brings to the table.





The National Stance and Arab Disunity

Reason and logic dictate that we strive to lift the people from the status quo of occupation into freedom. We recognise the sad truth about the condition of the Arab world and the obstacles it faces. Equally, we are aware of the tyranny of parochialism and the discord in Arab policies generally.

Some regimes have attempted to negatively influence the popular mood and direct it toward its parochial logic, even though the people usually have a much healthier outlook than officialdom regarding the nation-state and its insular priorities. However, sometimes events and conditions are exploited to fuel local conflicts. Such an approach is wrong, especially when we see that the world today is transcending nation-states in a shift towards quasi-federal blocs, as with the European Union, for example.

One of our problems as a nation is that we tend to be very quick in adopting the latest fads, negativity and consumerism. On the other hand, we are very slow to take on board successful practices and experiences from elsewhere if, indeed, we notice them at all.

We live in a world with a globalised economy, easily accessible mass media and social networks, effective communications and transport,

and common influences. Because of this, planning is moving towards the establishment of blocs and planning on a continental rather than national scale. Opinion is divided on whether or not we adopt this approach even though our own history provides an excellent example of such thinking in practice. We must build on this premise, with our own distinctive experience, while remaining open to the experiences offered by the world around us.

On the subject of the nation state and the narrow prejudices it inevitably produces, there are two levels of approach; official and popular. In the latter case, the people have proven their ingenuity, consciousness and affinity to their basic causes. We have confidence that the people are generally immune from the narrow nation-state infection. However, we are convinced that the matter requires additional mobilisation, awareness, persistent effort and the provision of a functional programme.

The official level embodies the basic problem. Yes, we acknowledge that there is a reality upon which some or many have ordered their affairs. We are not asking the regimes or governments to abandon that reality in one go, because it is substantial. What we call for is that the concerns of the nation-state and local interests should not override Arab and Islamic interests and common concerns. It should be recalled that there are already official organs which join the varied sections of the Ummah together, such as the League of Arab States and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, even though they may be seen as traditional and not performing their role as effectively as most would like. Yet we can develop and activate them to serve us all; to protect our interests and our security and uphold our dignity in the world.

The Arab and Islamic people have proven that however much they try to distance themselves from the Palestine issue, the reality on the ground draws them towards it. This is because the issue of Palestine is not ordinary and nor is its relationship with the Ummah. Regardless of how much some try to distance themselves from an encounter with

the Zionist state, they cannot do so. Even those who have concluded peace treaties with Israel find themselves incapable of achieving the objectives they proclaimed so proudly in the detail of the agreements. Even today, many years later, they still do not feel safe from Israel's mischief-making, aggression and expansionist designs.

The parochial logic does not meet or fulfil even the demands of the local entities to which some have restricted themselves. Egypt, for example, concluded the first peace treaty with Israel three decades ago. Despite this, its "ally" still targets Cairo's role in the region, Egyptian security and the sources of the River Nile upon which so many in Egypt depend. As for Jordan, the Israelis still speak about it being the 'alternative Palestinian homeland'; "Palestinians already have a state," they proclaim, "and it is called Jordan."

Hamas deals with such matters in a realistic fashion. We favour a gradual approach to extricate ourselves from the current situation. Acknowledging the obstacles and challenges we face, we do not force the people to adopt our convictions against their will. Instead, we have adopted persuasive tactics, positive engagement and the maintenance of good relations while, at the same, staying well away from any interference in the internal affairs of other countries. We seek to work gently in order to arrive at mutual agreement and understanding.

The Islamic Resistance Movement does not say to the Arabs, 'come and assume the responsibility on our behalf as Palestinians'; rather we say, stand with us, and we will stand before you in the vanguard. We will be the first to sacrifice and become martyrs; and to be detained, wounded and have our homes demolished. We present the Palestinian issue to others from the position of those who assume such responsibilities before we ask them to share the burden with us. It is not right that the nation-state should inhibit the Arab and Islamic nation from assuming its real role in the conflict with Zionist Israel. Although the significance, consequences and dangers of the enemy's daily policies

unfold on the ground in Palestine, in practice they affect the Ummah, whether it wants it to or not, propelling it towards participation in the conflict.

There is no doubt that Arab and Muslim thinkers, intellectuals and elite have a prominent role in enunciating these things, especially those who focus on the Arab and Islamic dimension of the Palestinian issue. They must ensure adherence to this concept and propagate it. We believe that nobody, politicians included, should surrender to narrow political demands. Instead, they should think across a broader political spectrum and not limit themselves in the narrow confines of the nation-state. No one is more responsible for this than the intellectual who by necessity is liberated from political pressures and their obligations.

Such people are required to communicate the pulse of the nation. Their natural mission is to inspire and then convey good news. They are the people who should always strive to bring the nation back to its fundamentals; to the basics of the conflict; and to its true dimensions. I believe that if the intellectuals do not accept this mission, they have committed a grave error against themselves, their country and the Ummah. Moreover, they would have flouted their responsibilities as intellectuals.

Evoking the Arab and Islamic depth to this conflict is very important, as is arousing the humanitarian concerns. Perhaps the “Freedom Flotilla” which set out to break the siege of Gaza is a model for all of these dimensions. As the flotilla demonstrated, the conflict is pricking the conscience of humanity. Hence, it is unacceptable for us or anybody else to limit the conflict to Palestine and Palestinians when there are solidarity activists who are neither Arabs nor Muslims, but Christians, Jews and people of no particular faith other than faith in the basic goodness of human beings.



Sectarian and Ethnic Contradictions

Dealing with the subject of sectarian and ethnic contradictions in Arab and Muslim countries requires a large measure of consciousness given their far-reaching influence on the present and future of Arab and Islamic lands. It is important, therefore, to consider a number of dimensions when discussing this important subject.

The first is to recognise the reality accurately and in a balanced way. Hamas is aware that there is a great degree of plurality and diversity in the Middle East and Islamic lands. There is plurality of religion, schools of thought, ethnicities and nationalities. It is not right to ignore this plurality in terms of its knowledge base, influence, impact and demands.

Secondly, the Ummah has been living with pluralism and diversity for a long time. Generally speaking, this did not previously lead to conflict or damaging fragmentation; so why are communal conflicts ignited so easily today?

The Arab and Islamic people lived with pluralism for centuries and accepted it; civilisations mixed freely and displayed respect and tolerance for religious, sectarian and nationalist differences. As a result, they benefited from that diversity and used it positively, not as a factor

to instigate hatred and conflicts. We believe that we must regain that healthy state of mind and reject all calls for any form of antipathy or internal conflict. Furthermore, it is a historical fact that Muslims, Christians and Jews lived under Islamic civilisation with a unique blend of tolerance, cooperation and interaction.

Likewise, it is wrong to instigate bloody feuds between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Yes, there are divisions and differences of opinions that we all acknowledge; no one denies that, but it is not right that they should be used as a means to provoke conflict. Such moves harm the unity of the Ummah and its interests. Nor is it right to enter into nationalist or ethnic conflicts between Arabs, Kurds, Turkmans and Berbers, etc. We are a nation in which ethnicities and nationalities have intermingled, schools of thought have coexisted and cultures have varied within the framework of a single Ummah. Islam may not have been the religion of all therein, but Islamic civilisation was certainly the common civilisation, and why should that not be the case again?

The third dimension is the hostile agenda which instigates these feuds; “divide and rule” is the classic imperialist tactic used by the colonial Zionists and western states in order to dominate the Middle East and control its resources. They recognise that the Ummah has an ancient history and possesses strong internal bonds so they planned to sever such ties through colonialism and alien hegemony over the region. Thus, it is necessary for us not to fall into the trap laid by Zionist and American - or Zionist American - agendas.

Fourthly, the cure for these conditions is for the Ummah to reawaken and regain its spiritual and physical health. An unhealthy body is going to be afflicted by disease. When there is weakness in the immune system, illnesses and diseases proliferate with the first change in the surrounding environment. The weakness from which the Ummah suffers today, especially in light of the many enemies and aggressors, fosters the growth of internal conflicts in various forms, some instigated deliberately. The solution is not to respond

to these on the pretext that we are defending “Arabism” against other nationalisms or its opposite; or defending Islam in the face of other religions; or defending Sunnis, Shiites or other sects and schools of thought in the face of “different” co-religionists. This is the logic of the weak and seriously ill.

We say to our sons and officials, who fear that groups in the region or elsewhere can be exploited; the solution is not to fall into the traps set by others by playing along with disputes and divisions. The real cure lies in the reawakening of the Ummah from its weak condition; acquiring the means of power; and marshalling its efforts to confront its real enemies. Only then will plurality contribute towards power and not be an element of weakness and fragmentation.





Relations with the Islamic Movement

Hamas as a liberation and resistance movement, and by virtue of its Islamic identity, history and roots in the Muslim Brotherhood, has interacted with Islamic movements around the world in the common interest. We are proud of this origin, history and background; and of the degree of commonality between ourselves and Islamic movements in the Arab and Islamic lands, however we do not restrict Hamas to these alone.

Given Hamas's role as a national liberation and resistance movement, the uniqueness of the conflict in Palestine and its Arab and Islamic dimensions, Hamas remains open to various national, intellectual and political currents in the Arab and Islamic worlds. We cooperate with them and share certain common interests. The movement adopts this position because it recognises the demands of the conflict and its responsibility toward the Palestinian people. We strive to mobilise and unify efforts for the sake of Palestine and prosecute the conflict with Zionist Israel for the wider aspirations, security and common interests of the Ummah.

If the Arab and Islamic lands constitute our depth, the Islamic Movement s in various locations have a special strategic value. We have

benefited from their experience, expertise and moderation. There is no doubt that the Islamic Movement is recognised for its moderation; this is not contradicted by armed struggle and resistance. The latter is a weapon used to confront foreign aggression and end the brutal military occupation of our land; it is not a weapon directed against any Arab or Islamic country.

The utilisation of a comprehensive understanding of Islam in the methodology used by the resistance; its moderation and rectitude; the openness to and tolerance of the other; endeavouring to serve the people; concern with local community and national issues; as well as interest in the nation's affairs are all adopted by the Islamic Movement to provide an attractive, effective and positive legacy. Hamas has benefited from this legacy credited to the wider Islamic movement. That does not mean, however, that there were no errors along the way. Every human endeavour includes mistakes as well as accomplishments. As such, we must acknowledge the good within everyone.

Hamas also seeks to benefit from all of the other political movements which support the Palestinian cause. In varying degrees we are trying to activate and develop this support to the level of participation. The Arab and Islamic grassroots, with all of their political and intellectual shades of opinion, forces, parties and movements are profoundly motivated by the cause and are drawn towards it. They support the resistance efforts of the Palestinian people and their steadfastness. Just as the Islamic movement is respected on the street for its visibility and influence, so too does Hamas appreciate the role of other groups who have struggled for justice.

During the two heroic *intifadas* [Palestinian uprisings] and at every important stage of the Palestinian struggle, there has been distinct Arab and Islamic support. The role of the Islamic movement, alongside other forces, has stood out in the context of this activism and we have benefited a lot from the momentum thus created. I believe that the decision-makers in western capitals, not to mention the Zionist

enemy, are well aware of the importance of this outreach of Hamas and the Palestinian people in the Arab and Islamic lands, especially now that it has spread across the welcoming realm of humanity.

This cycle of influencing and being influenced does not mean that organizations are necessarily interlinked. The organizations of the Islamic movement are independent of each other; each works within its own sphere and is responsible for its own decisions and strategies. The movements have their own organizational and methodological frameworks, structures, independence and analyses. At the same time, they have their Islamic identity and common intellectual frames of reference which do not conflict with those of the nationalists or the interests of the homeland and Ummah. Islamic movements also have common concerns with other forces across the Ummah aside from Palestine, such as American hegemony and the invasion and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, to name but three.

It must be pointed out that Islamic movements in various locations have also benefited from Hamas. Its success as a national liberation movement with an Islamic identity constitutes a success for the Islamic Movement s around the world. Hamas has contributed to the development of the contemporary Islamist experience, adding to it and helping it to mature militarily and politically. In its openness to others and in its responses to the burning questions of today, Hamas has contributed to the development of intellectual understanding and Islamic juridical views on important issues. New understanding has been developed with practice, encounters and challenges, leaving a legacy for future generations.

There is no doubt that, by the grace of God, Hamas's experience constitutes a development and legacy for the Islamic movement in the field of resistance. It also affirms Hamas's strength as an advanced model of the Islamic movement for resistance to foreign occupation. Equally, it is a testimony of Hamas's role in the field of politics, its participation in institutional decision-making and involvement in the democratic process, that it was able to do all three while maintaining

responsibility for the people of Palestine and their basic requirements on a daily basis.

At various times, misunderstandings have arisen about the Islamic movement, not least regarding the magnitude of its role and involvement in national work. Many of these have been unjust and damaging. Some may have been shaped by specific historical events when members of the movement were not allowed to participate in the struggle against the Zionist Israeli occupation. Hamas then emerged with the vast and profound experience to compensate for this absence – which in most cases was due to coercion by the powers that be and not by choice – and to provide momentum and a clearer model for resistance and confronting the occupation. In one respect, this also added to the capital of the Islamic resistance apart from it being a natural nationalist expression practiced by Muslims fulfilling their national responsibility. We are part of our people and, therefore, a necessary component of their national movement, their experience of occupation and their choice of armed struggle and resistance.





Negotiating with the Enemy

According to strategic thinking and conflict management, negotiations are an extension of the struggle. They are a way of conducting the war in a different manner. Whatever you take away from the negotiating table is a consequence of your position on the ground and the outcome of the balance of power in the field. If you are defeated on the ground, you will, without doubt, be defeated in the negotiations. Just as war requires a balance of power, similarly, negotiations also need a balance of power. Likewise, peace requires a balance of power; it is not achieved between a weak party and a strong one. That's not "negotiation" but the surrender of the weaker side.

Negotiating with one's enemies is acceptable, in both Islamic law and in international laws and conventions. There are periods in the conflict when negotiations with the enemy are required. That is, of course, on a logical and juridical level. Negotiations as an instrument and means can be acceptable and legitimate at certain times but may be rejected and prohibited on other occasions. In other words, negotiations are not rejected *per se*, and are certainly not rejected out of hand now and forever.

During the time of the Prophet [peace be upon him], and in later periods including the time of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, negotiations were most certainly conducted with the enemy within the framework

of a clear understanding, specific philosophy, certain vision, rules and regulations that governed them. That was very different to the bitter and miserable manner of those who pursue negotiations with the enemy today and regard them as their sole strategic option, to the exclusion of all others.

If resistance itself is a means and not an objective, it is inconceivable that negotiations could be made an objective - a sole option and permanent programme rather than a means or tactic that can be resorted to when needed and strategically-advantageous.

The Qur'anic understanding of this matter is clear. Allah Almighty says, "But if the enemy inclines towards peace, do thou [also] incline towards peace, and trust in God: for He is the One that hears and knows [all things]."¹ The connotation is that negotiations are acceptable, reasonable and logical, in our understanding as a people with a just cause, when the enemy is forced to pursue them; when they come to us to negotiate and they are prepared to pay the price and respond to our demands. If, however, we seek negotiations, hanker after them and consider them our only option, then we will be the losers. The one who is forced to negotiate is usually the one who pays the price. Allah says in another blessed verse, "Be not weary and faint-hearted, crying for peace, when you should be uppermost: for God is with you, and will never put you in loss for your [good] deeds."² Here, it is necessary to point out that the first verse noted above, "But if the enemy inclines towards peace, do thou [also] incline towards peace" was preceded by Him saying, "And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows."³ This means that power and the possession of its means will force the enemy to incline to peace.

1. The Holy Qur'an: 8: 91

2. Ibid, 47: 35

3. Ibid, 8: 60

If the enemy inclines towards peace and negotiations, it is the fruit of struggle, resistance and possession of power. Whoever considers negotiations to be removed from resistance, and without controlling the reins of power, will for all practical purposes head for surrender. Among the greatest examples of this was the USA post-Second World War; it did not make peace with Japan and Germany but imposed the surrender and capitulation of its enemies.

In short, peace is made by the strong and not the weak. Negotiations can serve the strong but not the weak. When the objective conditions and requirements of negotiations are present, foremost of which is the positioning of a sufficient amount of balance and relative strength; and when the need for it is confirmed at the appropriate time, not hastily nor too slowly, it is possible to become one of the chosen options. Then it would be regarded as an instrument and means to an end and not an objective or strategic choice. Negotiation is a tactical tool. Just as war is not a permanent condition and has certain requirements and conditions, so too do negotiations.

With such a precise vision of negotiations conducted with extreme caution, strict rules and at the correct time, then they become acceptable in the context of managing the conflict. Without such conditions they lead only to surrender in the face of a dominant enemy, disregarding legal and human rights and lowering the ceiling of demands and political positions.

Regrettably, for the most part, the Arabs and Palestinians are in an extremely sorry state of affairs in this respect, without any negotiating cards, support, manoeuvres, margins of concealment and subtlety. The Palestinian ranks are completely exposed, to the extent that they move towards peace talks while claiming that this is their only strategic option. If your enemies know that you do not possess anything except negotiations; you don't speak about anything except peace; and don't possess any other option, why should they make concessions to you?

The Palestinian Authority says that negotiations are the only option and tactic to achieve peace, while its agents engage in security

coordination with the Israeli enemy and implement the so-called Road Map and its security demands, without the Israelis offering anything in return. What would force Olmert or Netanyahu or any other prime minister to give the PA anything in return?

Negotiation in the Palestinian case is outside of its objective context. With pure political logic, it lacks resistance and is not backed by any essential supporting cards to play. The Vietnamese negotiated with the Americans when the latter were in retreat. Their negotiations enabled them to close the last chapter of the occupation and American aggression. Accordingly, to the degree that one possesses powerful cards on the ground, and uses them properly, successful negotiations will result and conditions can be imposed on the enemy.

Hence, in order that negotiations do not become a threat and a burden, it is necessary to send a clear message to the enemy that you are keeping all options open, not only by words but also with deeds. The negotiator will not succeed if he does not rely on multiple options. That is to say, to the extent that you are prepared to negotiate, you must also be ready to go to war. If the negotiations reach a dead-end, then you must be prepared to resort to war, attrition or resistance. Without this, there is no value in negotiation. We must remember that negotiations in ancient wars were, in many instances, conducted on the battle field. Either the negotiators arrived at a solution or they resumed the fighting. Negotiation, therefore, is an instrument and a tactic in the service of the strategy. It is not a strategy in its own right. Likewise, it is not an alternative to resistance and the strategy of confrontation with the Israeli occupation.

Moreover, negotiation must be backed by unity in the national position. If a party deems negotiation useful and goes ahead with it alone, deciding on behalf the national group, it is placed in a difficult position and, for sure, gives the enemy an opportunity to exploit the situation. Such an undertaking can also force the negotiator to make major concessions so that he does not acknowledge the failure of his negotiating choice. In that case, he chooses to promote his personal

interests at the expense of the national interest, so that he will not be exposed before his people and others.

Negotiation, remember, has its scope and its specific fields; it is not an absolute choice in all matters, for there are some things which are non-negotiable. The pivotal national constants, for example, are non-negotiable. No rational person negotiates on every issue, especially the fundamentals of the national cause. Regrettably, the current practice of the Palestinian negotiators breaks all of these rules.

Although from a purely theoretical point view negotiation with the enemy is not unlawful or prohibited, without the correct approach and management it can be counterproductive and destructive.

In the Palestinian context, Hamas believes that negotiations with Israel are the wrong approach. Offers have been made to the movement to negotiate directly with Israel but it refused. Offers were also made to our leadership to meet several Israeli leaders, some in positions of authority [for example, Eli Yishai, the leader of the Shaas Party], and others from the peace camp. Hamas rejected all of these offers. Negotiating today with the current balance of power serves the enemy, not the Palestinians. The reality of the conflict has not developed on the ground to a point where it forces the Zionists to resort to negotiations. Indeed, Israel still refuses to withdraw from our land and does not recognise Palestinian rights. Negotiations in these circumstances are a frivolous gamble.

In the light of our weakness and the asymmetric nature of the conflict and balance of power, Israel is using negotiation as a tool to boost its image within the international community. It exploits this to gain time and to create new facts on the ground through the construction of settlements, the expulsion of the indigenous inhabitants, the Judaisation of Jerusalem and the destruction of Palestinian neighbourhoods. Likewise, it benefits by using negotiations as a cover to carry out its crimes and force the ceiling of Palestinian demands to be lowered. Israel also exploits the negotiations to normalise relations with the Arab and Islamic countries, infiltrate them and distort the

What is Hamas's philosophy and vision for liberation? Why doesn't it recognise Israel despite intense international pressure to do so? How does it view the PLO? Does it have scope for flexibility given its immutable principles? How does it view the intellectual, political and nationalist role of women as a whole, and more specifically, within the liberation struggle?

These are just a few of the questions that continually crop up and struggle to find adequate address in western discourse on the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas.

This book offers an authoritative answer to these questions and more. It examines the Palestinian, Arab, Islamic and humanitarian roles in the quest for liberation; the extent to which that vision is influenced by the reality of political division; and the incoherence and fragmentation that dominates the Arab reality. It also clarifies Hamas' position towards the prevailing alliances and blocs, how the movement views them and how ethnic and sectarian plurality can be employed to serve the struggle for freedom.

Khaled Meshaal is a Palestinian leader and has been the head of the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas's political bureau since 1996. He was born in

1956 in the West Bank village of Silwad and has lived in exile since the Six-Day War of 1967.



Meshaal joined the Muslim Brotherhood in 1971 and following the official founding of Hamas in 1987, he assumed leadership of its Kuwaiti branch. In 1991 he moved to Jordan until the organisation was expelled in 1999. He then moved to Qatar briefly before settling in Syria. With the outbreak of the Syrian Revolution, he returned to Qatar in 2012 where he currently resides.

In 1997, Meshaal was the subject of a bungled assassination attempt by agents of the Israeli intelligence agency, Mossad. In 2010, he was listed 18th on British magazine the New Statesman's list of "The World's 50 Most Influential Figures 2010". He is married with three daughters and four sons.



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