

Jimmy Carter and Hamas

by Joseph S. Spoerl (July 2015)

In the midst of last summer's war between Israel and the Hamas regime in Gaza, Jimmy Carter [wrote](#): "...the United States and the EU should recognize that Hamas is not just a military but also a political force. Hamas cannot be wished away... Only by recognizing its legitimacy as a political actor – one that represents a substantial portion of the Palestinian people – can the West begin to provide the right incentives for Hamas to lay down its weapons."[\[1\]](#)

Carter is certainly right that Hamas "represents a substantial portion of the Palestinian people." After all, Hamas won the last elections held in the Palestinian Authority, in January 2006.[\[2\]](#) As of July 2014, 35% of people in the West Bank and Gaza had a favorable opinion of Hamas (and 32% in Lebanon, 39% in Jordan, 38% in Egypt)[\[3\]](#) – a minority, to be sure, but a large one (consider that 35% of American voters identify as Democrats and 28% as Republicans[\[4\]](#)). As of August 2014, public opinion polls showed Hamas actually winning both presidential and parliamentary elections in the Palestinian territories if they were held at the time of the poll and a majority of West Bankers supporting the transfer of the violent methods of Hamas from Gaza to the West Bank.[\[5\]](#) Polling as of September 2014 also showed a Hamas lead over Fatah in both hypothetical presidential and legislative elections,[\[6\]](#) and polling results from December 2014 continued to give Hamas an edge over Fatah.[\[7\]](#)

What Carter fails to realize, or chooses to ignore, is exactly what this popularity reveals about Palestinian society in general. Hamas, after all, is not shy in proclaiming its beliefs to the world. Hamas devotes considerable resources to its propaganda division, which includes TV and radio stations, newspapers, Internet sites, as well as indoctrination spread through its vast social welfare network.[\[8\]](#)

Benny Morris, a leading historian of the Arab-Israeli conflict, points out that "Hamas is deeply, essentially anti-Semitic,"[\[9\]](#) and a study of Hamas propaganda certainly supports Morris' judgment. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the anti-Semitic propaganda of Hamas is openly genocidal. For Jimmy Carter, this fact apparently is no impediment to insisting on the "legitimacy" of Hamas, nor does Carter feel the need to reflect on what it tells us about Palestinian society that so many Palestinians support a political party for which genocidal Jew-hatred is a central tenet. (And lest anyone think that this hatred for Jews is a response to Israeli government policies, it is important to realize that it was [central to Palestinian Arab nationalism](#) long before there was a modern state of Israel.[\[10\]](#))

Let us consider a few representative broadcasts from Al Aqsa TV, Hamas' satellite television channel, founded in 2006. These broadcasts represent the official voice of Hamas and show us exactly the message that Hamas wishes to drum into its Arabic-speaking Palestinian audience.

On July 25, 2014, Al Aqsa TV [aired](#) a mosque sermon from the Deir Al-Balah Mosque in the Gaza Strip, in which the preacher said: "Our doctrine in fighting you (the Jews) is that we will totally exterminate you. We will not leave a single one of you alive, because you are alien usurpers of the land and eternal mercenaries. ... Wherever the Jews lived, they spread corruption."[\[11\]](#)

On May 2, 2014, a Hamas children's show on Al Aqsa TV included the following [exchange](#) between a little girl and the child host and moderator:

“Child host (Rawan): ‘Tulin, why do you want to be a police officer? Like who?’

Girl (Tulin): ‘Like my uncle...’

Child host: ‘OK, so what does a policeman do?’

Nahul (adult in giant bee costume): ‘He catches thieves and people who make trouble.’

Child host: ‘And shoots Jews. Right?’

Girl: ‘Yes.’

Child host: ‘You want to be like him?’

[Girl nods]

Child host: ‘Allah willing, when you grow up.’

Girl: ‘So that I can shoot Jews.’

[Nahul the bee cheers]

Child host: ‘All them? All of them?’

Girl: ‘Yes.’

Child host: ‘Good.’”[\[12\]](#)

On August 10, 2012, Al Aqsa TV [aired](#) a sermon delivered by Deputy Speaker of the Hamas Parliament Ahmad Bahr, in which he said, "Oh Allah, destroy the Jews and their supporters. Oh Allah, destroy the Americans and their supporters. Oh Allah, count them one by one and kill them all, without leaving a single one."[\[13\]](#)

On May 16, 2011, Hamas member of Parliament and cleric Yunis Al-Astal made the following comments in an interview [aired](#) on Al Aqsa TV:

The [Jews] are brought in droves to Palestine so that the Palestinians – and the Islamic nation behind them – will have the honor of annihilating the evil of this gang. ... All the predators, all the birds of prey, all the dangerous reptiles and insects, and all the lethal bacteria are far less dangerous than the Jews ... In just a few years, all the Zionists and all the settlers will realize that their arrival in Palestine was for the purpose of the great massacre, by means of which Allah wants to relieve humanity of their evil.[\[14\]](#)

Al Aqsa TV broadcast a [public address](#) by the Foreign Minister of the Hamas regime in Gaza, Mahmoud Al-Zahar, on November 5, 2010, in which Al-Zahar made the following statements:

Why did France, in 1253, expel and uproot the Jewish entity, which was represented by the ghetto? Why did they expel them? Because they sucked the blood of the French, because they shed the blood of the French, slaughtered them, stole their money, and conspired against them. At the end of the day, the French had no choice but to expel them in 1253. [Al-Zahar goes on to make the same assertion about the expulsion of Jews from other medieval European countries, from ancient Egypt, and from Germany under Hitler] ... The series of expulsions continues to this day. Blood continues to be shed, martyrs continue to fall, our sons continue to hoist the banner high, and Allah willing, their expulsion from Palestine in its entirety is certain to come. We are no weaker or less honorable than the peoples that expelled and annihilated the Jews. The day we expel them is drawing near.... We have learned the lesson – there is no place for you among us, and you have no future among the nations of the world. You are headed to annihilation.[\[15\]](#)

On February 8, 2010, Al Aqsa TV ran an [interview](#) with Abdallah Jarbu, the Hamas Deputy Minister of Religious Endowments (the ministry responsible for staffing and supervising mosques in the Gaza Strip), in which Jarbu said:

[The Jews] suffer from a mental disorder, because they are thieves and aggressors. ... They want to present themselves to the world as if they have rights, but in fact, they

are foreign bacteria – a microbe unparalleled in the world. It's not me who says this. The Koran itself says they have no parallel: 'You shall find the strongest men in enmity to the believers to be the Jews.' May He [Allah] annihilate this filthy people who have neither religion nor conscience. I condemn whoever believes in normalizing relations with them, whoever supports sitting down with them, and whoever believes they are human beings. They are not human beings. They are not people. They have no religion, no conscience, and no moral values.[\[16\]](#)

The openly genocidal anti-Semitic rhetoric of Hamas is entirely consistent with the [Hamas Covenant](#), published on August 18, 1988 to articulate the organization's foundational principles and never altered or withdrawn since.[\[17\]](#) The Covenant describes a vast Jewish conspiracy that controls the world media, the United Nations, and Western governments; this conspiracy was behind the French and Bolshevik revolutions and World Wars One and Two. "Wherever there is war in the world, it is they who are pulling the strings" (Article 22). The aim of the Jewish/Zionist conspiracy is "to break societies, undermine values, destroy people's honor, create moral degeneration and annihilate Islam" (Article 28). Note especially the claim that the Jews/Zionists are out to "annihilate Islam." What this entails is that permanent peaceful co-existence with the Jewish state of Israel is simply out of the question. The struggle of Hamas against Israel is a struggle of light against darkness, of holy virtue against the diabolical source of all corruption on earth. It is inconceivable that Hamas could teach such lessons to its own people and then turn around and announce that they have decided to accept peaceful co-existence beside the Jewish state of Israel (except perhaps as a temporary truce or *hudna* to allow Hamas to rebuild its strength and prepare for the next offensive[\[18\]](#)).

Consistent with his benign view of Hamas, Carter calls for at least a partial lifting of the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip and for ending Israel's policy of separating the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. He indirectly acknowledges Israeli security needs by calling for "international monitors" under the aegis of the UN to prevent the smuggling of weapons into Gaza. Given the track record of the UN, it is not plausible to think that UN monitors could or would keep weapons out of Gaza, nor would the Israeli government be inclined to entrust Israel's security to the UN. Hamas has a long history of receiving arms from Iran and has recently repaired its relations with Iran after tensions surrounding the civil war in Syria.[\[19\]](#) Any loosening of the blockade on Gaza would surely lead to a surge in weapons smuggling, with Iranian assistance.

As for Israel facilitating travel between the West Bank and Gaza, Carter ignores the serious problems this could cause. Top Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Zahar has openly [stated](#) that if Hamas

could establish the military forces in the West Bank that it now has in Gaza, it could conquer Israel in short order.^[20] There is plenty of evidence that Hamas has not given up on its desire to [take over the West Bank](#) as it took over the Gaza Strip in 2007.^[21] The Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, has also [called for](#) arming the West Bank, as Iran has armed Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.^[22]

Instead of blaming the genocidal hatred and violent irrendentism of Hamas for subverting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, Jimmy Carter prefers to put all the blame on Israel. For Carter, genocidal Jew-hatred is no worse than a mere peccadillo, not even worthy of a moment's notice. In the meantime, he demands that Israel take steps that would do nothing to promote peace but would almost certainly empower Hamas and its Iranian supporters to unleash ever-more lethal attacks against the Jews of Israel.

^[1] Jimmy Carter and Mary Robinson, "How to Fix It: Ending this war in Gaza begins with recognizing Hamas as a legitimate political actor," *Foreign Policy*, August 4, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/04/how-to-fix-it/>. See also Jimmy Carter and Gro Harlem Brundtland, "No Gaza, No Peace: A Lasting settlement in the Holy Land is still possible. But Israel must end the siege on Gaza first," *Foreign Policy*, May 14, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/14/jimmy-carter-gro-harlem-brundtland-gaza-israel-palestine-peace/>.

^[2] Beverly Milton-Edwards and Steven Farrell, *Hamas* (Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010), p. 259. Hamas won not with a majority but a plurality of the popular vote, 44% vs. 41% for Fatah, but this was enough to win a majority of the seats in the Palestinian legislature, since the Fatah vote was split between several Fatah candidates running in many of the districts.

^[3] Pew Research Center, "Concerns about Islamic Extremism on the Rise in Middle East, Negative Opinions of al Qaeda, Hamas and Hezbollah Widespread," July 1, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/01/concerns-about-islamic-extremism-on-the-rise-in-middle-east/>.

[4] Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, "A Closer Look at the Parties in 2012, GOP Makes Big Gains among White Working-Class Voters," August 23, 2012, <http://www.people-press.org/2012/08/23/a-closer-look-at-the-parties-in-2012/>.

[5] Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, "Special Gaza War Poll," 2 September 2014, <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/special-gaza-war-poll>.

[6] Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, "Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No. 53," 29 September 2014, <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/496>.

[7] Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, "Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No. 54," 3-6 December 2014, <http://www.pcpsr.org/en/node/600>.

[8] Joshua L. Gleis and Benedetta Berti, *Hezbollah and Hamas: A Comparative Study* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), pp. 165-170.

[9] Benny Morris, *One State, Two States: Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 156.

[10] Joseph S. Spoerl, "Palestinians, Arabs, and the Holocaust," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 26:1-2 (Spring 2014), pp. 14-47, <http://jcpa.org/article/palestinians-arabs-and-the-holocaust/>

[11] " Hamas Sermon from the Gaza Strip: Our Doctrine Entails Exterminating the Jews," Middle East Media Research Institute, Clip No. 4376, July 25, 2014, <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/4376.htm>.

[12] " Hamas to kids: Shoot all the Jews," by Itamar Marcus and Nan Jacques Zilberdik, Palestinian Media Watch, May 5, 2014, http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc_id=11384#.

[13] " Hamas Official Ahmad Bahr Preaches for the Annihilation of Jews and Americans," Middle East Media Research Institute, Clip No. 3538, August 10, 2012, http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/3538.htm.

[14] " Hamas MP and Cleric Yunis Al-Astal: The Jews Were Brought to Palestine for the 'Great Massacre' through which Allah Will 'Relieve Humanity of their Evil,'" Middle East Media Research Institute, Special Dispatch No. 3840, May 16, 2011, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/print5288.htm>.

[15] " Hamas Leader Mahmoud Al-Zahar Justifies Persecution of Jews in History and Promises that Jews 'Are Headed to Annihilation,'" Middle East Media Research Institute, Special Dispatch No. 3373, November 12, 2010, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/print4761.htm>. See also: " Hamas senior Mahmoud al-Zahar has recently given a vicious anti-Semitic speech to justify the elimination of Israel and the deportation of Jews from the 'entire territory of Palestine'. The speech contains themes reminiscent of those found in Al-Zahar's anti-Semitic book No Future Between Nations, found on board the Mavi Marmara," The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, November 11, 2010, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/data/pdf/PDF_10_294_2.pdf.

[16] " Hamas Deputy Minister of Religious Endowments: Jews Are Bacteria, Not Human Beings," Middle East Media Research Institute, Clip No. 2415, February 28, 2010, http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/2415.htm