

Hamas Demands That Israel Supply More Medical Equipment, Or Else

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The Hamas terror group warned on April 17 that Israel will be held responsible for the consequences unless more medical equipment for dealing with the coronavirus is brought into the Gaza Strip.

The report, from the *Times of Israel*, is [here](#):

“Israel will be the one that bears responsibility for an outbreak of the virus in the Gaza Strip; and therefore it must make it easier for shipments of aid to arrive and it is the one who needs to send these medical means,” said Khalil al-Hayya, the deputy Hamas leader in Gaza, according to the *Ynet news site*.

Has Khalil al-Hayya forgotten that the outbreak of the virus in the Gaza Strip had nothing to do with Israel? On March 22, Hamas itself announced that the first cases of the coronavirus in Gaza were those of two Palestinians who had returned, infected, from Pakistan, and that they entered Gaza through the Egyptian crossing at Rafah. They did not set foot in Israel.

As of Saturday, there were 13 confirmed coronavirus cases in the coastal enclave.

A senior Israeli source told Channel 13 last week that Hamas was deeply concerned about a potential spread of the coronavirus in the densely crowded Strip and was interested in a prisoner exchange deal with Israel that would include medical assistance.

Hamas wants – or rather, it demands – medical assistance from Israel. But why does the terror group think Israel “owes” them this assistance? It is the leaders of Hamas who, engaged in colossal corruption, have diverted to their own pockets nearly \$8 billion that could have gone to building hospitals, fully equipped to Western standards, with ICU units, ventilators, PPE (masks, gloves, hospital gowns), and to training medical personnel. The people of Gaza need to know that just two of their former Hamas leaders, Khaled Meshaal and Mousa Abu Marzouk, amassed gigantic fortunes, with Meshaal’s estimated to be between \$2.5 and \$5 billion, and Mousa Abu Marzouk’s believed to be at least \$2.5 billion. Other leaders, such as Hamas’ current head Ismail Haniyeh, have managed to accumulate tens of millions of dollars apiece. In Gaza itself, there are 600 Hamas millionaires, living in their lavish villas, indifferent to the poverty of the people whose welfare they claim to care about so much. It is hard to understand why the Israelis do not raise this matter of the theft of so much of the generous aid the Palestinians in Gaza have received. Neither that culture of unending corruption, nor those

fantastic fortunes, can be denied.

As for the aid money that has not disappeared into the leaders' foreign bank accounts and real estate, for years Hamas has chosen to spend money that might have gone to improve the health care of Gazans into expensive rockets and missiles and hundreds of terror tunnels (each of which costs several million dollars to construct). The health care system in Gaza is indeed in a sorry state, but that has nothing to do with Israel. It is the result of the billions lost to corruption, or misspent on war-making, by Hamas.

Gaza, under an Israeli-imposed blockade since 2007, is one of the most densely populated territories on Earth and has a struggling health system. Israel says the blockade is necessary to prevent arms from reaching Hamas and other Palestinian terror groups there.

That comment appears to link the fact of Gaza's "struggling health system" to the "Israeli-imposed blockade." It's a factitious connection. Let's not forget that Israel has never blocked either medicines or medical equipment from reaching Gaza. The only time some medicines have been temporarily withheld has had nothing to do with Israel. It is the Palestinian Authority, which is in charge of ordering and paying for medicines for Gaza, that sometimes chooses to withhold their delivery in order to express its displeasure with Hamas. In March Israel donated to the Palestinians in Gaza from its own supply thousands of test kits and thousands of PPE (masks, gloves, hospital gowns). It has also delivered medical supplies donated by others, including the recent delivery of 50,000 masks. During a single week in mid-April Israel delivered, from its own stores, 88 tons of medical supplies and equipment to Gaza. Among the world's countries, Israel is currently the largest donor of medical supplies to Gaza.

Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh said on April 15 that he was optimistic about reaching an agreement with Israel and that the terror group was ready for indirect negotiations, adding that the coronavirus crisis had created a "historic junction" to progress on these talks.

"We have four prisoners [two captured soldiers, and two civilians who wandered into Gaza] and we are ready for indirect talks," Haniyeh said in a television interview with the Gaza-based al-Araby TV network. "I'm optimistic about the possibility of reaching an agreement with the occupation in order to complete a prisoner exchange deal and achieve our goals."

Haniyeh gave a long list of demands that Israel must meet ahead of talks, including the release of all sick prisoners, child prisoners, elderly prisoners, female prisoners and prisoners who were released in the 2011 Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange who were afterwards rearrested on charges of subsequent terror attacks.

Haniyeh seems not to understand the relative strength of the parties; he is attempting to impose a *diktat* though he is no position to do so. He appears unaware that it is not Israel, but Hamas, that is the supplicant. Israel wants back its two soldiers and two civilians whom Hamas has been holding prisoner, and is prepared to make a swap, but the laundry list of those Hamas wants Israel to free is absurdly long. Israel would find particularly unacceptable the demand that it free, for the second time, prisoners it had freed once before, but who had then gone right back to conducting other terror attacks that led to their re-imprisonment.

Here's a suggestion as to how the Israelis should take the occasion to answer, publicly, Haniyeh and other critics of Israel's response to the coronavirus crisis:

"We wish to remind Mr. Haniyeh that the coronavirus outbreak

in Gaza for which he blames Israel in fact originated with two Palestinians who returned to Gaza from Pakistan, and who re-entered Gaza through the Egypt-Gaza crossing. This was recognized by Hamas in late March; Mr. Haniyeh appears to have forgotten what his own spokesman admitted at the time.

“In addition, Mr. Haniyeh implies that Israel is responsible for the parlous state of the health system in Gaza. It is not Israel’s fault. Khaled Meshaal, a former Hamas leader, has helped himself to between \$2.5 and \$5 billion dollars from the aid given to the Palestinians. Mousa Abu Marzouk, another former leader, had amassed at least \$2.5 billion dollars from that aid. These figures come from Arab sources. Mr. Haniyeh himself has a net worth of tens of millions of dollars; 600 lower-level Hamas apparatchiks have at least one million dollars apiece. Had those billions of dollars gone instead to the health care system in Gaza, the situation in its hospitals today would be very different.

“Nor should Mr. Haniyeh forget that the expensive rockets and missiles and other weaponry Hamas has purchased, and the costly terror tunnels it has built, used monies that could instead have paid for new hospitals, more ICU units in existing hospitals, ventilators, PPE, and other medical equipment that Gaza now sorely lacks. That money could also have paid for training Palestinian medical personnel. It was Hamas’s choice to spend the aid money as it did.

“Let’s not forget the medicines and medical equipment that Israel delivers to Gaza, both from its own stores, and from international organizations as well. Hundreds of tons of medical supplies have been delivered to Gaza in the past month alone. No Arab state has sent as many medical supplies to Gaza as has Israel. Does Mr. Haniyeh dispute that?

“Now, about that release of prisoners he demands that we accept....”

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