

Not All Palestinians Were Sad to See the Last of Qassem Soleimani

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of Hamas, was in Tehran for the funeral of Qassem Soleimani. He was the only non-Iranian speaker at the funeral. The details are [here](#):

The leader of the Hamas terror group spoke at the Tehran funeral of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani on Monday, crediting the Quds Force leader with building his and other Palestinian groups.

What Soleimani “provided to Palestine and the resistance has brought them to the position they are in today in terms of power and steadfastness,” Haniyeh said.

Dubbing Soleimani “the martyr of Jerusalem,” Haniyeh said his

death would not deter Palestinian terror groups from fighting.

“I affirm that the resistance project in Palestine to confront the Zionist project and resist the American domination project will not be broken, be weakened or hesitate,” Haniyeh said. “It will continue along its firm path, the path of resistance, until it drives out the occupiers from our land and Jerusalem.”

Soleimani, the head of the IRGC’s expeditionary Quds Force, had an outsized role in managing Iran’s network of proxy groups, including Lebanon’s Hezbollah and Shiite militias in Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere.

While Hamas, the de facto ruler of the Gaza Strip, has at times been supported by Iran, it has also resisted moving too close to hardliners in Tehran, unlike fellow Gazan terror group Islamic Jihad, which has built up a large arsenal thanks in large degree to support from the Islamic Republic.

Haniyeh’s words make clear that Hamas views Soleimani’s killing as a great loss; his high-level participation in Soleimani’s Tehran funeral, bespeaks a complete rapprochement between Hamas and Iran. There had previously been conflict over Syria, where Iran supported Assad’s government, and Hamas had supported the largely Sunni opposition to the Alawite dictator. Both parties now appear to have gotten beyond that, with Hamas recognizing it is more important to retain Iran’s support than to express solidarity with fellow Sunnis in Syria.

Iran and Hamas have in recent years sought to reinvigorate their relationship after the two found themselves on opposite sides in the early years of the Syrian civil war. In the past several years, senior Hamas figures have visited Tehran and praised the Islamic Republic for vowing to support Palestinian terror groups in Gaza. However, Hamas has also

sought to maintain ties with other countries such as Egypt which largely views Iran as a regional foe.

Egypt has been useful to Hamas, serving as a go-between with Israel to establish the shaky ceasefire that Hamas now deems to be in its interest. But Egypt is no friend of Hamas. It remains deeply suspicious of Hamas, which it rightly regards as closely linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, the Egyptian regime's nemesis. And Egypt's opposition to Iran and its designs in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon remains implacable

Haniyeh's appearance at the Tehran funeral for Soleimani, alongside Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and other top leaders of the Islamic Republic, could be read as a signal that the group is seeking to identify even more closely with Iran.

But it comes as Hamas has also shown a willingness to work more closely with Egypt on a truce agreement with Israel, which has been taking shape in recent weeks.

Hamas notably stayed on the sidelines during a flare-up between Israel and Gaza's Iran-backed Islamic Jihad in November, reportedly annoying some in Tehran. A column in a Tehran daily last week accused Hamas of allying with Israel by refusing to enter the fight.

There are still differences between Hamas, which badly needs a ceasefire with Israel, and the fanatics in Tehran who want Hamas to keep fighting Israel down to the last Palestinian. But pictures from the funeral posted by Khamenei's website showed Haniyeh just steps behind the supreme leader, and he was one of only a handful of speakers, including Soleimani's children. It seems that between Hamas and Iran, all is forgiven.

Haniyeh, who left Gaza in December on a multi-country tour,

the first time he has traveled beyond Egypt since 2017, told the crowd that the “resistance” will not be bowed in its aims by assassinations.

“I say that the project of resistance in Palestine and the region will not be weakened or fall into a recession,” Haniyeh said. “Assassinations will only make us more strong, and persevere and insistent on moving toward the liberation of Jerusalem and Palestine.”

The Hamas chief [called Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif](#) on Sunday and expressed his condolences to him on the death of Soleimani.

Zarif thanked the Hamas chairman for the call and said that Iran would continue to back “the Palestinian people’s rights and resistance in defense of its land and holy sites,” the terror group’s report said.

But as we shall see in the next installment, not all Palestinians were sad to see the last of Qassem Soleimani.

While Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad proclaimed their deep grief over Soleimani’s death, some Palestinians on social media did not share that view, but saw Soleimani as a killer of their fellow Sunni Muslims.

There is more on Palestinians divided in their views of Soleimani [here](#).

On Saturday, Hamas and Islamic Jihad set up a mourning tent for Soleimani in Gaza.

This mourning tent, and Haniyeh’s speech at the funeral in Tehran, aroused the anger of many Palestinians who saw Soleimani not as the backer of Hamas, but as the killer of Sunnis in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. They were furious that Hamas would take the side of the Revolutionary Guards

head, responsible for so many Sunni deaths.

Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad leaders have been facing sharp criticism from several Palestinians and other Arabs for setting up a mourning tent in the Gaza Strip for [Qasem Soleimani](#).

The critics took the two Iranian-backed Palestinian groups to task for expressing condolences over the death of Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps who was killed in a US assassination last week, and accused them of seeking to appease Tehran in order to ensure continued financial and military support.

Of course, Hamas and PIJ want financial and military support from Iran, and also from Iran's lone Arab ally, Qatar. Why shouldn't they attempt to please Iran by celebrating the anti-Sunni arch-terrorist Soleimani, if it brings the desired result? Morality has never been Hamas' strong suit. The group is perfectly willing to make a deal with the devil, even one who is a Shi'a.

They [the Palestinians against Soleimani] also accused Hamas and PIJ of "trading in religion, hypocrisy and disregarding the blood of thousands of Muslims" killed by Soleimani's force and allies in a number of Arab countries.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh on Sunday phoned Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and offered condolences over the "martyrdom" of Soleimani. Haniyeh praised Soleimani for his support for the Palestinian people," according to a Hamas statement.

PIJ secretary-general Ziad al-Nakhalah also phoned the Iranian foreign minister to offer condolences over the death of Soleimani.

"The martyrdom of Soleimani is a sign of pride and dignity in

the face of America and the Zionist entity,” Nakhalah said, according to a PIJ statement. “The martyrdom of Maj.-Gen. Soleimani is a big loss, but it won’t break the [Palestinian] resistance.”

The PIJ, like Hamas, has been the recipient of Iranian military aid. It appreciated Soleimani’s largesse, and was indifferent to the fact that both funds and weaponry came from the Shi’as of Iran. Hamas, PIJ, and Iran are united in their fanatical hatred of Israel, which bridges those other, sectarian, divides that normally matter so much to Muslims.

The Palestinian Authority has not reacted to the assassination.

Mahmoud Abbas has been much more cautious about taking a side on Soleimani. So far he’s said nothing. He doesn’t want to antagonize potential Arab financial backers in the Gulf, already cool to him and his cause, but does not want, either, to anger Iran which might, in turn, cause Tehran to channel all of its help, and that of its ally Qatar, to Hamas, and work to undermine the PA, perhaps even to help bring Hamas to power in the West Bank. Both Hamas and the PIJ, unlike the PA, know they can’t expect any money from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, or the other rich Gulf states, so have little to lose by siding with Iran in mourning Soleimani. What Arab money Hamas gets comes from Qatar, which is an Iranian ally, and the only Arab state, other than Iraq, that officially mourned the death of Soleimani.

In several posts on social media, many Palestinians and Arabs expressed outrage also over statements by Hamas and PIJ in which they offered condolences to Iran’s leaders.

“Why is Gaza setting up a mourning tent for the murderer Soleimani?” remarked Amr Al-Mogy, an Egyptian Facebook user.

Nadia El Shafei, another Egyptian, replied: "Because they are all traitors."

Mona Mohamed also replied by posting on Facebook: "Terrorists accepting condolences over the death of their terrorist leader and employer. Nothing unusual about that."

Another Egyptian Facebook user, Dr. Bahjat Kamal, commented: " Hamas is accepting condolences over the killing of the despicable Soleimani, who killed, burned and displaced Sunnis in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen."

Mohamed Htaibat, a Jordanian professor of Islamic studies, also denounced Hamas and PIJ.

"Iran and its proxies, who present themselves as the defenders of the Palestinian cause, don't really care about Palestine," he said on Facebook. "Hamas made a mistake by failing to understand the reality other than through its interests. This will result in Hamas's gradually distancing itself from its Arab environment. It will also lose support among Arabs and Muslims. Anyone who stands with Iran is standing against Sunnis."

Palestinian political analyst Ibrahim Hamami reacted with fury to the obituary statements published by Hamas and PIJ. In a post on Twitter, he said: "A statement by Hamas mourning the murderer Qasem Soleimani represents a moral decline, political suicide and hostility towards our nation. It's inconceivable that a meeting took place [in the Gaza Strip] and a decision was taken to issue such a catastrophic statement."

Amr Abu Amin, a Palestinian from Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, said those who set up the mourning tent for "the murderer Soleimani represent only themselves."

"It's regrettable to see a mourning tent in the Gaza Strip for the murderer Soleimani," he added.

Jihad Hils, a Palestinian writer and Islamic preacher from Gaza City, said he “strongly disagreed” with the decision taken by Hamas and PIJ to set up a mourning tent for the IRGC commander.

“Soleimani was a murderer,” Hils said on Facebook. “Those who are mourning him don’t represent us. The Palestinians stand with their Muslim brothers. The enemy of the Muslims is our enemy. He who kills Muslims also kills us.”

Majed Abdel Nur, another Palestinian writer from the Gaza Strip, said the time has come to hold Hamas to account for its hostile positions towards Arabs.

“Those who support murderers are also murderers. It’s time to hold the [Hamas] traitors to account.”

Sheikh Kamal al-Khatib, deputy head of the Islamic Movement in Israel, posted a Facebook comment on Saturday in which he described Soleimani as the “Iranian military commander of Baghdad, Damascus, Beirut and Sanaa.”

In his post, Khatib wrote: “I never believed that you would arrive in Jerusalem to be martyred there as commander of [the] Quds Force. You have n killed at Baghdad Airport as you arrived from Damascus to pursue your plans to kill Muslims and displace them in Damascus, Aleppo, Idlib, Baghdad, Mosul and Fallujah. Jerusalem is pure and can be liberated only by those who are pure.”

A “murderer,” the “enemy of the Muslims,” a “traitor” who “pursued your plans to kill Muslims,” “the man who killed, burned and displaced Sunnis in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen” – for many Arabs including, it turns out, many Palestinians, that was Qaem Soleimani. A killer of Sunnis who deserved what he got.

No Arab state save Qatar set up a mourning tent for Soleimani,

whom Sunni Arabs rightly regarded as a sinister projector of Shi'a Iran's power. For Egypt, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and others, the Revolutionary Guards were viewed as intent on sowing conflict and promoting Shi'a interests in Yemen through their Houthi proxies; in Iraq through the Shi'a militias that were trained, financed, and given weaponry by Iran; in Syria, where Iranian troops helped Bashar Al-Assad's forces, and in Lebanon, where Iran-backed Hezbollah fighters have become the most powerful force in the country, much to the fury not only of Sunnis and most Christians, but also of many Shi'a.

Ismail Haniyeh's appearance at the funeral came as hundreds of thousands of people massed in Tehran to bid farewell to Soleimani, the country's most powerful general. He was killed in a US drone strike early Friday near Baghdad airport in an attack ordered by US President Donald Trump, who said the Quds commander had been planning an "imminent" attack on US diplomats and forces in Iraq.

Mourners chanted "Death to America" and "Death to Israel" and waved flags of Iran, Iraq and Lebanon among others, as they marched down Tehran's Enghelab Street on Monday morning.

Khamenei, who had a close relationship with Soleimani, wept at one point during the traditional Muslim prayers for the dead. The crowd and others wailed.

At the same time, news of Soleimani's killing sparked loud expressions of joy and reveling in the Arab world, particularly in Iraq, the Persian Gulf, and parts of Syria and Lebanon. People danced in the streets, handed out sweets, and bought cakes to celebrate the death.

So there we have it. All of the Arab states, save for Qatar,

were delighted with the death of Soleimani. He was seen, rightly, as a murderer of Sunnis, working for an aggressive Shi'a regime, as it extended its tentacles throughout the Middle East. Only among the Palestinians was there strong support for Soleimani. And even there, some Palestinians begged to differ with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Mahmoud Abbas prudently kept his own counsel, while Hamas and the PIJ have been wallowing in their public grief. Hamas and PIJ set up a mourning tent in Gaza. The Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh spoke – an honored guest – at Soleimani's funeral in Teheran. He expressed both his gratitude to Soleimani for his aid, and grief at his death. Yet, at the same time, there have been more than a few Palestinians on social media who have vented their anger with Hamas for mourning the loss of Soleimani.

It could be that the death of Soleimani will have widened the abyss even further between the Arab states and Shi'a Iran, for the former were glad, while the latter lamented. At the same time, the reaction to the death of Soleimani may also have caused another split within the Palestinian camp, between those who saw Soleimani as their champion against the Zionists, and others who saw him as the slaughterer of Sunnis in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon. If that widening of the abyss between the Arab states and Iran, and of the split among Palestinians, comes about as the result of Soleimani's death, then it could be said of Qassem Soleimani that "nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it."

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