

Worried About its Image, Hamas Now Says No to Swastikas

by Hugh Fitzgerald



When the Israelis posted a photograph of Palestinians on August 2 holding aloft the Palestinian flag with a swastika painted on it, Hamas initially said nothing. It did not explode in outrage, it did not demand that those who flew the flag with the painted swastika be punished, or even that the symbol of the mass-murdering Nazis be taken down.

That initial indifference of the Palestinian leaders to, or even approval of, the swastika on the flag was not surprising. The Palestinians have flown their flag with a swastika painted on it before, on April 20, 2018. On the same day, they let loose an incendiary kite, also with a swastika painted on it. No Palestinian objected at that time, or since.

After all, the Palestinians and the Nazis go way back. The leader of the Palestine Arabs (the “Palestinian people” had

not yet been invented) from the 1920s to the late 1940s was the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin El Husseini. El Husseini, a great admirer of Hitler, spent the war years in Berlin, where he met with the Fuhrer and urged him not to let Jews escape to Palestine, but to keep them in Europe where they might be properly dealt with. The Mufti knew that Hitler would understand. While enjoying a comfortable life in wartime Berlin, the Mufti became friends with Heinrich Himmler and with Adolph Eichmann. He is even believed to have traveled with Eichmann to see Auschwitz up close. It must have been a most inspiring visit.

Among his contributions to the Nazi war effort, the Mufti raised three S.S. brigades among the Bosnian Muslims. After the war he somehow managed to escape being charged as a war criminal by the Allies, and ended up, safe and sound like so many Nazi war criminals, in an Arab land, where the Allies could not reach him. And he lived out his days, in Cairo, without ever being called to account.

The photograph of the swastika flag raised by Palestinians attempting to breach Israel's security fence was first posted online by Israelis, then picked up and reposted by many others. It took several days for Hamas to figure out that this was damaging to their cause. It made them look bad, as if Hamas supported the Nazi ideology, which, of course, some of its members do.

The message went out from Hamas: no more swastikas. And why was this? Not because Hamas had anything against them. Not because Hamas was ashamed that some Palestinians would identify with the Nazis. No, the swastika should no longer be painted on Palestinian flags "so that the Israeli occupation cannot take advantage of it."

But it's too late. The Israelis can tell the world that the reason the swastika flag is no longer being flown by the Palestinians in Gaza is not moral revulsion, but only so that,

in Hamas' own words, "the Israeli occupation cannot take advantage of it."

That swastika'ed flag leads naturally to another Nazi-related topic that Israel should bring up.

Here's what the Israelis can now post:

"When Palestinians flew their flag with the swastika painted on it at the Gaza border on August 2, none of the leaders of Hamas or the PA objected. No one among the 6,000 Palestinians present objected to the flying of that swastika flag that day. Nor, it should be remembered, had any Palestinians objected to the swastika flag or to the kite with a painted swastika on it, that they flew in April 2018.

"None of the Palestinians at the time that flag was flown on August 2, or in the days since, has denounced that painted swastika as the symbol of absolute evil, sure to cause pain to the Jews of Israel. No Palestinian has demanded that those who flew that flag be punished. It took a full three days after Israel had posted a video of the flag for Hamas leaders to finally realize it was bad for their image, and only then did they instruct their members not to fly such flags in the future, so that 'the Israeli occupation cannot take advantage of it.'

"This is an appropriate time, we think, to ask the Palestinian leaders whether they will at long last denounce the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin El Hussein, for his enthusiastic collaboration with the Nazis. He was, after all, the unchallenged leader of the Palestinians from the early 1920s to the late 1940s. In wartime Berlin, he met with Hitler. He urged the Führer not to let Jews escape to Palestine, but to keep them in Europe for a different fate. Hussein became friends with Heinrich Himmler and Adolf Eichmann. He raised three S.S. brigades of Bosnian Muslims. He may have visited Auschwitz with Eichmann. After the war, he escaped prosecution

as a war criminal and found refuge in Cairo. We allow ourselves to believe that today's Palestinian leadership will denounce the Mufti for his wartime activities and, in the same spirit, prosecute those who flew that swastika flag on August 2."

How do they handle that? What can they say?

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