

Hamas: history, funding and interventions



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Hamas

Hamas is a Palestinian terrorist organization which mainly consists of Islamic paramilitary forces. The name Hamas , means Islamic Resistance Movement.

This Palestinian Islamic group was formed way back in 1987 as a result of the Israeli taking up most of the West Bank or Gaza strip. The militant group was founded by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. He was of Egypt origin and was strongly supported by many charitable organizations and other social institutions. The Palestinian militants who are mostly Islamic affiliates, was therefore formed with the main aim of driving Israelis out of the West Bank.

This was hence achieved through massive rocket attacks launched by the Hamas on the Israeli civilians as well as those who occupied the Gaza strip on the West Bank to get the Israeli moving back to Israel. The long-term goal of the Hamas has therefore been to establish strong Islamic states on all Palestinian territories that predominantly belonged to Palestine. The Hamas mainly fight for the restoration of Palestinians historic rights. The group's leader was at one time quoted for stating that the military operations of the group would cease once Palestinian historic rights were restored (Levitt & Ross, 2007).

Most scholars believe that Hamas is a socio-political organization. Hamas mainly occupy the Gaza side of Palestine. Therefore, the Hamas are mainly located in the Gaza strip on the Palestinian side where they won a majority of the parliamentary seats.

Hamis is found on a solid document which by all means mimics terrorist tactics and lifestyle. The original document that binds the Hamas strongly

condemns the Israeli and declares war on them. The group is however not poised towards the destruction of Israelites alone. It is also concerned with the social wellbeing of the Palestinians.

Prior to the formation of the Hamas group, the Israeli government subjected the group to thorough economic sanctions. Diplomatic sanctions were also rife in the new organization. This almost grounded most of their operations at the initial stages before they gained foot and became independent.

There are two main branches within the group. The first is concerned with the social programs which have seen the construction of many schools, mosques and hospitals. Many of the schools within the Palestinian territories are built by the Hamas. The Hamas work in cohorts with the Muslim governments to provide the social amenities to its people. Many suggest that this has indeed impacted on the image of the organization and presented it as a positive organization, save for the destruction of Israel that it commits its members to.

The second branch of the Hamas organization is concerned with the military operations. This is carried out below the surface and is led by Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades. This second branch was created in 1992. In addition, the militant group of Hamas operates independently and at times contradicts their own Hamas policies. The military faction of the Hamas at most times gives the group a dark image since many researchers have associated the group with destruction and murder. It is important that we understand the many faces of Hamas to appreciate their role in the Muslim world. Hamas is thus against any Israeli invasion of historically Palestinian territories.

They are however the main cause of conflict in the Gaza strip. Understanding the genesis of the conflict is key to knowing how the Hamas operate and coordinate.

Who funds the Hamas ?

The Hamas obtains most of its cash from its supporters, who are mainly Palestinians and Arabs in different countries. They send money to support the military and social programs of the group. According to Milton-Edwards and Farrell (2010), the Hamas also get financial aids from the Muslim states who are enemies of the Israelis. These states buy arms and send the shipment to the Gaza strip to sustain the military operations of Hamas within the area.

There have been efforts to try and block the accounts of the Hamas group, but all have been futile. Researchers confess that as long as Hamas receives support from the Muslim world, it is highly unlikely for the group to cease its operations within the West Bank. Although many of their supporters deny having any links with the terrorist group, it is evident that the Hamas have more friends and supporters than enemies. If anything, it is only the Israelis who are enemies of this militant group and this is the reason for their existence.

The biggest supporter of the Hamas group is Saudi Arabia which contributes up to 50% of the group's finances (Hroub, 2006). Mishal and Sela (2000) estimate that the annual budget of the militant terrorist group is approximately, 70 million US dollars; this is a large budget which requires the support of several outside fronts to be able to meet it. Most of This

money goes towards supporting schools, hospitals and religious organizations that are predominantly Muslim based.

Moreover, many of the Islamic charity organizations support the Hamas and contribute immensely towards their large budget. Iran is also known to fund the Hamas budget though only to a small proportion. There are also several other Arab states that fund the group's operations since most if not all the Arab states are anti-Israel. Private charities continuously support the group's operations in the West Bank. These social institutions have supported Hamas for decades as a result of the group's affiliation to construction and development projects such as building schools, hospitals and religious organizations and institutions.

Are they a threat to the U. S?

The US supports Israel with massive proportions. The US support for Israel has never been concealed. On the other hand, the Hamas are enemies of the Israelis. This makes the circle complete; the US is therefore at threat of the Hamas. A keen look at the policies of the Hamas reveals that the Hamas group mainly fights Israeli forces that have occupied sites that are historically Palestine territory.

According to Rosaler (2003), recent attacks on the US, including the 9/11 terrorist attacks were mainly propagated by forces believed to be of Hamas origin, the Al-Qaeda. The Hamas are closely linked to the Al-Qaeda, the main terrorist cell which makes the US shiver.

The US directive to ban Hamas from accessing Jordan in 1999 sparked enmity and brutal underground war within the West Bank region. This action

put US on the spot as a potential target. Furthermore, it is also evident that the US supports 100% of all Israeli military operations against the Hamas terrorist cell. The US often fights such distant war in the guise of ending terrorism. As such, the US invasion of Iraq had a hidden agenda. One of the reasons was to fight terrorist cells within the region which extended to the Hamas territories. The other reason which has often been largely contradicted is that the US has vested interests in the oil deposits within the region.

Critics argue that the US is indeed putting its head into a bee hole by supporting the Israelis. The amount of support that Hamas has amassed from the Arab world is astonishing. It is only a matter of time before the group grows into other major branches and wedges continuous terrorist attacks on the Israelis and their formidable allies, the US.

Tactics employed by the Hamas

The Hamas has adopted several tactics that it uses to fight their wars. One of these tactics is through using children as human shields. This has been condemned by the Human Rights organizations worldwide. Israel claims to be in possession of a video footage showing the Hamas using children as human shield. In a country where there is no law, this kind of action cannot be effectively punished. Hamas continue to use this tactic to date while fighting their wars against the Israeli and its allies within the West Bank.

Young children are often taught at an early age to hate the Israelites and declare war against them. These children are later used to fight in wars with Israeli forces. Most of the children who are used are normally given specific

targets which they would walk to and blow up. For instance, in 2002, a child walked into a convoy of Israeli soldiers and blew himself up killing the entire group of soldiers. This sparked a series of attacks on the Hamas within the Gaza Strip.

Moreover, the Hamas also use children combatants during war. This has also been largely condemned owing to the fact that children are not to be used at war. The children combatants are recruited through the Hamas website for children, the Al Fateh (Tamimi, 2007). Children combatants are revered for their skill and innocence at war, making them unsuspecting soldiers who kill with impunity. The children combatants are often trained by the Hamas groups in institutions established for this purpose. They are viewed as patriots and are hence given specific targets where they would launch attacks on civilians on a regular basis.

Tamimi (2007) insinuates that Israeli forces within the West Bank have learnt their lessons not to trust children walking into their convoy. As such, any child approaching them is usually taken out immediately.

The Hamas also wedge attacks on civilians of Israeli origin. This is a tactic that the group has used for many years now. It is mainly carried out by bombarding civilian dwellings in Israeli territories believed to be historically Palestinian territory. The Human Rights Watch has faulted Hamas for crimes against humans, by using children combatants and human shield and also for launching civilian attacks. This tactic has left Hamas with more enemies than friends.

Attacks on civilians include car bombs, roadside bombs in areas or roads frequented by the civilians of Israeli origin, among other terrorist-like attacks. Rockets are often sent at targeted Israeli buildings and civilian territories, a fact that has often sparked enmity between the Israeli allies and the Palestinian Hamas affiliates.

Guerilla warfare is perhaps the oldest tactic that Hamas continues to employ against Israeli forces within the West Bank. The Gaza Strip has been described as the home of guerilla tactics by the Hamas militant groups. It is here that many of the Israeli forces have died as a result of the guerilla warfare.

How dangerous is the group today?

- Hamas is closely linked with major terrorists and pose a great security risk in the airspace and Israeli allied countries, such as the US.
- The group is also dangerous since it teaches children of Muslim origin to hate Israelis and the United States.
- The increasing number of suicide attacks within the Gaza Strip threatens to kill more innocent civilian in the coming future, hence the Hamas are dangerous.
- It is not clear when and where they will strike next. Their guerilla tactics makes them very dangerous.
- The terrorist attacks advanced by the Hamas threaten to stall economic developments within the West Bank region.
- Their proximity to civilians makes the group to be extremely dangerous as most of the casualty during wars wedged by them is innocent civilians.

- The group threatens regional peace at the Gaza Strip as well as the West Bank, hence making human life in these areas to be a challenge. The Hamas militant activities often leave many displaced away from their homes as they seek a safe haven.
- The group threatens international peace since its supporters offer a strong force against its enemies. The result may be two fronts facing each other, that is, the Israeli being supported by the United States and the Hamas being supported by the Arab nations such as Saudi Arabia. A World War may be brewing and waiting to happen.
- If left undeterred, the Hamas are likely to fight and displace the Israeli who have lived in the West Bank for years. This threatens the well being of the Israelis as they are exposed to being refugees.
- The Hamas group continues to develop underground cells which are a threat to the international security from the past terrorist activities witnessed.

Conclusion

The Hamas is an Islamic Resistance Movement which fights to restore the historic Palestine territories. This group has been a formidable force within the West Bank and Gaza Strip for years. Its main activities have been military organization against the Israelites as well as building schools, clinics, religious institutions among other social institutions.

The Hamas group was formed way back in 1987 under the leadership of the Egyptian brother, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. It derives its financing from Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. Private charity institutions also support and finance the activities of the Hamas. The Hamas have a policy

book which they follow, although this is beginning to be sidelined as the group advances. The militant branch of the group is mainly independent, managing its own affairs under Izz al-Din Qassam.

Hamas therefore poses a serious threat to the security of the United States following several threats that the group has made against the United States for supporting the Israelis. The US on the other hand has remained vigilant in its support of the Israeli forces in the West Bank region.

Hamas use several dirty tactics to fight their wars including the use of children combatants. Children are also used as human shields during war, a fact that has been largely condemned by the Human Rights Watch dogs. Hamas also uses guerilla war tactics to effectively fight within the West Bank region against Israeli forces. Perhaps the worst tactic used by the Hamas is civilian attacks and suicide bombings which are rampant in densely populated districts in the West Bank region. This has often led to the killings of hundreds of innocent civilians.

The Hamas thus pose a great security risk owing to the group's affiliation to terrorist activities such as suicide attacks, roadside bombs among other terrorist characterized attacks. The Hamas has thus grown into a fully fledged terrorist group and no longer merely advocates for the restoration of the Palestine historic rights.

Recommendations

Stopping the activities of the Hamas group will indeed be an uphill task owing to the large support that the group has amassed in the recent past. The Hamas group receives most of its support from the Arab nations which

are foes with Israelis. It would be impossible to suggest that the Hamas military operations would be stopped through convincing the Arab countries not to support the group's activities. What about the private charity organizations?

The best way therefore to stop the Hamas from advancing would be to place international sanctions on countries that support Hamas. These sanctions should be aimed at crippling the country's economy such that there is very little that the countries can do in terms of foreign trade. International sanctions would work perfectly against the supporters and allies of the Hamas by denying them trade opportunities.

The other recommendation would be to perhaps get to the root of the group's leadership using intelligence and eliminating them one by one. This would cripple the group's organization and thus they cannot be able to wedge any war.

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