



Rabbi Weiner's Feb. 2009 Bulletin Article

It is my great hope that as I write this month's column that by the time that the bulletin reaches you, the fighting in Gaza will be over. Yet even if we are fortunate enough to see a cessation of hostilities, I personally believe that as long as Hamas retains any type of military or political power, it will only be a matter of time before hostilities are resumed again.

I am not sure how much the people really know about Hamas, its history, its origins, and its goals. Yes, people know about Israel, and know a little bit about the Palestinian Authority (which in my opinion is only slightly better than Hamas, but that's fodder for another bulletin article), and know a little bit about the peace process. But with all the conflicting messages in the media, the "cycle of violence" type explanations of the real causes of the fighting (as if the dispute in the middle east was a modern reply of the Hatfield's vs. McCoy's) as well as the years of terrorists attacks that have preceded it, I am always amazed by how little people really know about Hamas. So allow me tell you a little bit about it. And lest you think that I am making this up, I am taking all this from Hamas' own words. Hamas is very clear about it's goals and aspirations. It is their apologists and "peace at any cost" advocates who misconstrue their words.

Hamas is the acronym for *Harakat al-Muqāwamat al-Islāmiyyah*, meaning "Islamic Resistance Movement." It was founded in December of 1987 as an offshoot of the Muslim brotherhood and understands itself to be an arm of Islamic resistance in historic Palestine. According to its very charter, its goal is destruction of Israel and its replacement by an Islamic state. Its apologists in the western world call them freedom fighters, and point out that Israel calls it a terrorist organization. They fail to mention that the United States, Canada, Japan, and many members of the European Union classify them as terrorists as well.

Hamas not only opposes the road map for peace, the working formula for negotiations accepted by Israel, the Palestinian authority, United States, and the United Nations, but promotes violence against those Palestinians who do. In its most recent display of intra – Palestinian violence last year, it fomented a mini civil war in Gaza against those forces loyal to the Palestinian Authority in a most brutal way, murdering and torturing its rivals by the hundreds. It is sad yet nonetheless important to know that many of the weapons that are now being used against Israel were themselves captured from these forces, who

themselves had been armed by the Israeli government as well as our very own CIA.

As we begin to understand a little bit about Hamas, its tactics become much easier to understand. It's indoctrination of youth to hate Jews, it's fascination with martyrdom, and even the thousands of rockets and missiles that they have fired into Israel in the last several years all are consistent with its goal of destroying Israel, and murdering it's Jewish population. Even it's horrifying and immoral tactic of hiding its weapons among the civilian population of Gaza, and firing at Israel indiscriminately from behind homes and schools serves their interest as well. They do not seek to better the lives or improve the conditions of their fellow Palestinians, but rather use civilian casualties to further discredit Israel.

The Hamas movement makes no secret of its goals and aspirations. While shocking and hard to read, we ignore their words to our peril. There is one particular aspect of their charter, which does merit particular attention today. Article 32 of the Hamas charter speaks of a Jewish conspiracy to undermine Arab nations, which they attribute to the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion." Making this anti-Semitic forgery places so central to their ideology is quite revealing, and makes them the ideological companions of groups like the Nazis, and the Aryan Nation. Remember that the next time some dovish Jewish organization sends you a letter or an email talking about negotiating with the "moderate elements" of Hamas.

By the time the bulletin arrives at your homes, President Obama will have assumed office. The great crisis that Vice-president Biden predicted would test the mettle of the Obama administration has already arrived. Several months ago President Obama traveled to Sderot, the Israeli community near the Gaza border that has been so devastated by the missile attacks over the last 7 years and fully supported, in clear and unambiguous language, Israel's right to defend itself against such attacks. It will be the responsibility of the entire pro-Israel community to remind him of his promise. And that will take truly understanding what Hamas is, and encouraging this administration to understand it as well.



Jewish Community Center of Paramus
E. 304 Midland Ave., Paramus NJ 07652
Phone: (201) 262-7691 Fax: (201) 262-6516
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