

PALESTINE HAMAS

Party Portrait

Hamas is a fundamentalist Sunni political party with both a social service wing (Dawah) and a militant wing (Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades). The group, founded after the first Intifada in 1987, seeks the complete liberation of Palestine, and has been designated a terrorist group by Israel and the US. Hamas won the Palestinian elections in 2006, but did not take control due to sanctions by the Quartet. In 2007, Hamas took control over the Gaza Strip. Attempts for reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas have been made since 2006, but none have lasted. The group does not formally recognize Israel or engage in negotiations, though it has informally and indirectly negotiated with Israeli officials and recently softened anti-Israel language in its charter. The military wing of Hamas intermittently launches rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip and Israel has launched several military campaigns into Gaza in the past ten years. The Gaza Strip is currently in a state of humanitarian crisis.

Key Interests

- Achieve Palestinian liberation in all of historic Palestine
- Achieve recognition and implementation of Right of Return for Palestinian refugees
- Create Islamic governance over the West Bank and Gaza

Sources of Leverage

Political - UN Security Council Resolutions, both past and present, against Israeli actions in the West Bank and Gaza, connections to other Islamist groups and Diaspora Palestinians, currently holds one Israeli citizen in prison and has the bodies of two Israeli soldiers
Economic - Support from Qatar, Iran, Turkey, independent donors
Soft Power - Hamas's refusal to recognize Israel and claim to Palestinian land is a source of leverage in relation to its Palestinian constituents and Israel itself. The group's claims against Israel offer it moral legitimacy as a Palestinian representative group in some circles and constitute a threat for the Israeli public
Military - The armed wing, Izz a-Din al-Qassam Brigades, maintains guerilla military operations (rocket launching) from the Gaza Strip

Regional Strategy

Hamas provides social services and employment to Palestinians in the Gaza strip to enable their control and garner support from constituents. To do so, the party maintains tunnels under the Gaza blockade to have continued access to resources. The party refuses to recognize Israel or engage in negotiations and maintains strong deterrent actions against Palestinians seen to be too close to 'normalizing' relations with Israel. Hamas also seeks to mobilize ideological and economic support from political Islamists around the Arab World.

Powerful Individuals

Yahya Sinwar (Leader of Hamas as of February 2017), Khaled Meshaal (Previous Leader of Hamas), Ismail Haniyeh (Senior Hamas Member)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Coalition - Build coalition with other Islamist parties in the region;
Reconcile - With Fatah and create unity government;
Increase social services wing - Garner Palestinian support;
Call for third intifada - A new concentrated movement of nonviolent resistance and violent opposition against Israel;
Increase rocket launches - Against Israel or, alternatively, end all attacks to increase political legitimacy;
Revise Hamas charter - To garner international community support;
Denounce ties with Muslim Brotherhood - to Partner with Egypt and call for regional security agreement.

Internal Conflicts

There is conflict within Hamas as to the levels of terrorism or negotiations to engage in, and the political and military wings have had a divisive relationship due to this question. Hamas factions within Gaza, the West Bank, Israeli prisons, and the Diaspora all have different views on what stance to take in relation to Israel.

Memberships

N/A

Allies

N/A

Partners

EGYPT Muslim Brotherhood, HOLY SEE, IRAN, LEBANON Hezbollah, QATAR, TURKEY

Rivals

EGYPT Government, EUROPEAN UNION, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, ISIS, JORDAN, PALESTINE Civil Society, PALESTINE Fatah, RUSSIA, SAUDI ARABIA, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES,

Adversaries

ISRAEL, UNITED STATES

Active Armed Opponents

N/A

Proxy

N/A

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

Individuals and organizations in QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, IRAN, and SYRIA Government, and HUMANITARIAN ACTORS