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Hamas' Rejectionism Undermines Peace Efforts

One year after winning Palestinian elections, the terrorist group Hamas—responsible for killing more than 500 people, including two dozen Americans since 1989—continues to reject international demands to recognize Israel, renounce violence and accept previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements. This refusal, its failure to release a kidnapped Israeli soldier and increasing internal Palestinian chaos severely hampers renewed peace efforts being pursued by Israel, the United States and moderate Palestinians.

Hamas supported and carried out attacks against Israel during its first year in power.

- Palestinian terrorists during the past year carried out nearly 600 shooting attacks, planted 400 roadside bombs—compared to 149 in 2005—and fired more than 1,000 rockets into Israel.
- Hamas backed a Jan. 29 suicide bombing that killed three people at a bakery in Eilat, calling the attack a “natural response” and saying the Palestinian people are “entitled to defend” themselves. While the bombing was the first inside Israel during the past nine months, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) thwarted nearly 200 potential suicide attacks in the last year.
- Palestinians last year smuggled into Gaza massive amounts of weaponry, according to the IDF, including 33 tons of military-grade high explosives, 20,000 assault rifles, 38 long-range Qassam missiles, 12 anti-aircraft guided missiles, 95 anti-tank rocket launchers, 410 anti-tank rockets and 20 precision-guided anti-tank missiles.
- Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh made clear that Hamas will continue to use violence, saying in a Dec. 18 speech at Tehran University that “we will never recognize the usurper Zionist government and will continue our jihad-like movement until the liberation of Jerusalem.”

Internal Palestinian violence and political infighting impedes diplomatic progress between Israel and the Palestinians.

- Internal instability and infighting casts doubt on whether the Palestinians will be able to engage in serious negotiations with Israel. Intense fighting between Hamas and Fatah during the past several days has resulted in 30 deaths, including of a 2-year old boy.
- Hamas' leadership is obstructing unity talks with Abbas through its rejection of any formulation that even hints at accepting international demands to recognize Israel and end violence.
- Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit recently criticized the Palestinians for “losing a chance” for peace because of the continued infighting, which he described as “a misery and shameful.”

Israel is taking steps for peace despite the continuing violence and internal Palestinian chaos.

- In a major speech in November, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert laid out a political vision for the Palestinian people, declaring that Israel is willing to offer the Palestinians an independent state with territorial contiguity in the West Bank if they recognize Israel and end terrorism.
- After meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in December, Olmert announced a series of steps to help the Palestinian people, including the easing of checkpoints and the release of Palestinian tax money to Abbas, despite continuing rocket attacks into Israel.
- Olmert has agreed to three-way summit next month with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Abbas as a way to explore ways to renew negotiations. Fawzi Barhoum, a Hamas spokesman, immediately rejected the idea of the meeting.

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- The international community must continue to withhold diplomatic recognition and aid from the Hamas-controlled PA until it recognizes Israel, ends terrorism and accepts previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements.
- Hamas must release Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who was kidnapped by the terrorist group without provocation last summer.
- The United States and its allies must hold the Hamas government accountable for its ongoing ties with Iran, which has funded the Palestinian arms build-up and actively encouraged its efforts to destroy Israel.

Basic Facts Summary

- **Hamas supported and carried out attacks against Israel during its first year in power.**
- **Internal Palestinian violence and political infighting impedes diplomatic progress between Israel and the Palestinians.**
- **Israel is taking steps for peace despite the continuing violence and internal Palestinian chaos.**
- **Renewed Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts are unlikely to succeed unless Hamas recognizes Israel and ceases its support for terrorism.**