

MEMMO

March 11, 2007

Maintain Pressure on Hamas-led 'Unity Government'

The proposed Palestinian “unity government” reached last month in Mecca by Hamas and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas fails to meet the international community’s minimal conditions to receive aid and recognition. The agreement does not accept Israel’s right to exist, reject violence or accept previous Israeli-Palestinian accords. Easing pressure now would enable Hamas to consolidate power over the PA without requiring it to reform from a terrorist group into a legitimate political party. The world must stand firm and insist that a new Palestinian government persuasively demonstrate a real willingness to negotiate peace with Israel.

The Mecca agreement does not meet any of the international community’s requirements for recognition and aid, while Hamas has rededicated itself to Israel’s destruction.

- The unity agreement neither recognizes Israel nor renounces violence. Instead, the agreement stresses “the importance of...confronting the occupation,” which means the use of violence and terror, since Hamas considers all of Israel occupied Palestinian territory.
- Immediately after signing the agreement with Abbas, top Damascus-based Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal called for attacks on Israel, saying, “We devote ourselves to the battle for Jerusalem and the Aqsa Mosque, the battle for our prisoners, in order to recover our rights and enable the refugees to return to their homes [inside Israel].”
- Hamas adamantly insists that the agreement does not recognize Israel. Ahmad Yusuf, an advisor to Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, said, “What happened in Mecca does not include recognition of Israel but includes some moral and political issues that would control Palestinian internal relations. The political agenda of the unity government has no indication of recognizing Israel.”

REPEATED REJECTIONS

HAMAS LEADERS REFUSE TO ACCEPT ISRAEL AND REJECT VIOLENCE

“The question of recognition [of Israel] did not arise in the discussions held. Nobody asked us to do so.”

—Hamas political chief
Khaled Meshaal,
February 10, 2007

“I personally will not head any government that recognizes Israel.”

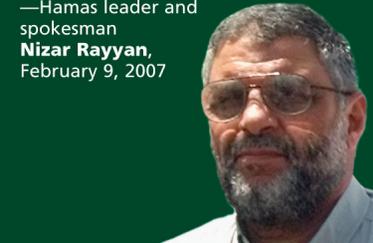
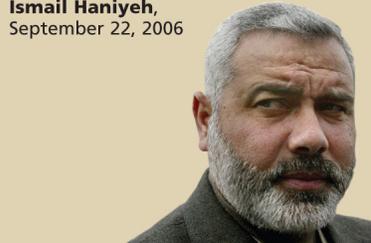
—Hamas’ PA Prime Minister
Ismail Haniyeh,
September 22, 2006

“We will never recognize Israel. There is nothing called Israel, neither in reality nor in the imagination.”

—Hamas leader and spokesman
Nizar Rayyan,
February 9, 2007

“Hamas still sees resistance as a strategic option and will not make any concessions until—if Allah wills it—we shall be victorious in Palestine.”

—Hamas’ representative in Lebanon
Osama Hamdan,
February 14, 2007



- The agreement also fails to require Hamas to accept previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements. In a separate letter to Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas merely calls on Hamas to “respect” previous agreements, which Ismail Radwan, a top Hamas spokesman, said “does not mean recognizing the legitimacy of the Zionist entity.”

The agreement solidifies Hamas control of the Palestinian government.

- Hamas, a U.S. and E.U.-designated terrorist organization, will continue to hold a dominant majority of the Palestinian legislature and a plurality of cabinet seats.
- Though the new Palestinian cabinet will include non-Hamas members, Hamas has the power to nominate a candidate for the crucial position of interior minister, who has authority over the security services.
- Haniyeh, the current prime minister who is expected to head the new Palestinian government, will also continue to have the authority as prime minister to fire cabinet ministers.
- Speaking just after the agreement was signed, Haniyeh said he is not prepared to reconcile with Israel, saying, “I will, God willing ... never compromise on the national patrimony [estate inherited from one’s ancestors] of the Palestinian people.”
- Haniyeh, who formerly ran the “security” wing of Hamas and the office of the late Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, has repeatedly refused to accept the international requirements, saying in December, “Resistance is the only solution and the Palestinian government will never recognize Israel.”

International pressure is having an impact on Hamas and should not be eased until the terrorist group meets the international conditions.

- Hamas, feeling the weight of international pressure, hopes the creation of a unity government will provide a means to ease financial restrictions without the need to make real changes.
- Hamas knows that without international financial aid it is unable to meet the needs of its constituents and risks increasing voter backlash. Financial hardships have already led to worker strikes, greater criticism of the government and rising internal violence.
- Easing international pressure before Hamas accepts the international community’s demands will only alleviate the Palestinian public’s pressure on Hamas and allow it to strengthen its position with the electorate.
- The PA government must recognize Israel, renounce violence and adhere to previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements, including the Roadmap.
- The Roadmap requires the PA in the first stage of a renewed peace process to launch “sustained, targeted and effective operations aimed at confronting all those engaged in terror” and to begin the “dismantlement of terrorist capabilities and infrastructure.”