

MEMMO

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Hamas-Fatah Unity Would Cripple Peace Efforts

The announced formation of a Hamas-Fatah unity government represents a direct affront to Secretary of State John Kerry and a severe blow to Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. Hamas is an Islamist terrorist organization that seeks Israel's destruction and attacks innocent civilians. Any Palestinian government that includes Hamas cannot be a negotiating partner unless it meets longstanding Quartet demands enshrined in U.S. law: recognize Israel, reject violence, and accept previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

The prospective Hamas-Fatah unity government gravely undermines the cause of peace, democracy and human rights.

- Under the agreement, Hamas is allowed to participate in the government and elections without first having to meet the Quartet's (America, European Union, United Nations, and Russia) conditions.
- Hamas staunchly opposes Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas's efforts to reach a peace agreement with Israel. "The Palestinian Authority must end the negotiations," Mahmoud Zahhar, a senior Hamas leader, said in March.
- The Hamas charter, published a year after the organization's 1987 founding, is laced with anti-Semitism and racism, rejects peaceful efforts to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and calls for the destruction of Israel through *jihad*. Hamas considers all of Israel to be occupied territory.
- Hamas's past involvement in Palestinian politics has not moderated its objective to destroy Israel and build a radical Islamist society. Hamas seized Gaza by force in 2007 and now rules the territory through fear and the imposition of its version of Islamic law.
- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the unity government would be incompatible with efforts to reach a peace agreement. "Does [Abbas] want peace with Hamas, or peace with Israel?" he asked. "You can have one but not the other. I hope he chooses peace. So far he hasn't done so."
- State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki expressed dismay yesterday over the announcement and its potential impact on peace talks. "It's hard to see," she said, "how Israel can be expected to negotiate with a government that does not believe in its right to exist."



Fatah and Hamas leaders celebrated their new unity government.

Participation of terrorist groups in the PA government would violate previous agreements, international standards and democratic principles.

- Hamas's participation in future PA elections violates the Oslo Interim Agreement, which states that political parties or individual candidates that "commit or advocate racism" or "pursue the implementation of their aims by unlawful or undemocratic means" must be banned.

- All of Israel's agreements with the Palestinians are predicated upon their recognition of Israel's right to exist and forswearing the use of violence — two conditions that Hamas refuses to accept.
- Democracies often prohibit extremist and violent groups from participating in the political process because they are anti-democratic and lack respect for the very process in which they seek to participate. For instance, the Council of Europe, a parliamentary body reflecting the broad political will of Europe, has passed a resolution allowing for the dissolution of a political party when it “uses violence or threatens civil peace and the democratic constitutional order of the country.”

Hamas's rocket attacks against Israel, support for terrorism, and oppressive rule of Gaza demonstrate its extremist character.

- Since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip, terrorists have indiscriminately fired thousands of rockets at Israeli population centers, including more than 100 rockets so far in 2014.
- Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh praised an April 15 terrorist attack that killed an Israeli civilian, saying it “brought back life to the path of resistance.” He added, “We tell the enemy and anyone who thinks he is able to tame the West Bank [that] ... the West Bank will be the future point of our struggle with the enemy.”
- Hamas has abolished freedoms that Gazans previously enjoyed. It has restricted the types of content in movies, music and television, and has imposed draconian punishments against perceived offenders in accordance with its interpretation of Islamic law.

America must continue to insist that it will not work with or provide aid to the unity government unless it accepts the Quartet principles.

- “Any Palestinian government,” said Psaki yesterday, “must unambiguously and explicitly commit to nonviolence, recognition of the state of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations between the parties.”
- Leading members of Congress have condemned the agreement. “Not only does this action potentially derail any hope of a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, it puts in jeopardy future U.S. assistance to the Palestinian Authority,” said Rep. Kay Granger (R-TX), chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs.
- Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY), the ranking member of the House Appropriations Committee, expressed similar sentiments, saying the agreement “is disappointing and counterproductive to achieving a lasting peace in the Middle East, and jeopardizes U.S. assistance.”
- The Obama administration has consistently reinforced the Quartet principles. “To play a role in fulfilling Palestinian aspirations, and to unify the Palestinian people, Hamas must put an end to violence, recognize past agreements, and recognize Israel's right to exist,” President Obama said in his landmark 2009 Cairo speech.
- “We will not, we will never, work with terrorists,” then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in 2012. “Hamas knows what it needs to do if it wishes to reunite the Palestinians and rejoin the international community. It must reject violence, honor past agreements with Israel, and recognize Israel's right to exist.”
- The United States has consistently declared Hamas a terrorist organization and rejected any attempts to engage Hamas prior to its acceptance of the three criteria. President Clinton first designated Hamas a terrorist organization in 1997, and this policy has been fully supported and strengthened by subsequent U.S. administrations.
- Under U.S. law, no American aid can be provided directly to the PA unless the government and its members have publicly committed to the Quartet principles.