

# Meet the New Hamas, Same as the Old Hamas

by Joseph S. Spoerl (August 2017)



In May 2017, Hamas released a [“Document of General Principles and Policies”](#) in which it attempts to recast its message to the world so as to make it more palatable to Westerners and others. It does this by, among other things, ostensibly eschewing the anti-Semitism that was such a strong feature of the original [1988 Hamas Charter](#) (or Covenant)<sup>1</sup>.

In an [interview](#) with the *New York Times*, outgoing Hamas leader Khaled Meshal stated, “We are making it clear that ours is a liberation project—not about

religion or the Jews.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the new “Document of General Principles and Policies” makes the following statement: “ Hamas affirms that its conflict is with the Zionist project not with the Jews because of their religion. Hamas does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish but wages a struggle against the Zionists who occupy Palestine.”<sup>3</sup>

There are at least six reasons for not taking this claim seriously.

First, anti-Semitism is central to Hamas propaganda, as documented copiously in the Appendix to this article, and Hamas has not renounced or ceased producing such propaganda. For example, in April 2017, just as Hamas was about to release its May 2017 Document, Hamas member of the Palestinian legislature Marwan Abu Ras gave a [Friday sermon](#) at a mosque in the Gaza Strip in which he said, “History attests that in every era, the Jews were the most abhorred of people. Throughout history, the most hated race was the Jewish race . . . Why did [Hitler] hate the Jews? Because they are a people of treachery and betrayal . . . Therefore, we can never accept the Jews . . . ”<sup>4</sup>

Bear in mind that the speaker was a Hamas elected official and that Gaza Strip mosques are strictly monitored and controlled by Hamas and staffed by Hamas appointees. And when perusing the Appendix below, bear in mind that most of the items are taken from broadcasts on the official Hamas TV station, Al-Aqsa TV.

Secondly, Hamas has made it clear that it has not revoked its 1988 Charter, which remains its statement of foundational principles.<sup>5</sup>

Thirdly, strictly speaking, the Hamas Charter of 1988 focused its anti-Semitic language (mostly) on Zionists, for example, describing the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as the blueprint for the Zionist project (Article 32) and

accusing the Zionists of aiming to “annihilate Islam” (Article 28). The May 2017 Document continues in this vein, albeit in somewhat less florid language, asserting that “The Zionist project does not target the Palestinian people alone; it is the enemy of the Arabic and Islamic Ummah posing a grave threat to its security and interests. It is also hostile to the Ummah’s aspirations for unity, renaissance, and liberation and has been the major source of its troubles. The Zionist project also poses a danger to international security and peace and to mankind . . . .” (#15). In short, Zionism is a global threat against Islam and, indeed, humanity: any Hamas supporter familiar with the 1988 Charter will get the point immediately. As in the 1988 Charter, the 2017 Document merely takes all the classical tropes of anti-Semitism and focuses them on Zionism, noting that “it is the Zionists who constantly identify Judaism and the Jews with their own colonial project and illegal entity” (#16). In effect, Hamas is saying that it is at war with all Jews except those who are anti-Zionist, thus it is not anti-Semitic. This can hardly be regarded as a serious repudiation of anti-Semitism.

Fourthly, the release of the May 2017 Document coincides with a [tightening of the grip](#) by hardliners on the Hamas Politbureau.<sup>6</sup> These include former Hamas Interior Minister Fathi Hammad, who [told](#) Al-Jazeera TV on September 16, 2016: “I address the American people: Is it conceivable that a handful of Jews control your policies, your military, your money, and everything . . . ? We have five million of the Zionist enemy here [in Israel], and they control the world. Perhaps there are ten million more of them in America. These ten million control over 280 million Americans.”<sup>7</sup> Hammad’s use of the term “Zionist” in this statement as a synonym for “Jew” makes his anti-Semitism as clear as can be. And in an [interview](#) on Hamas’ Al-Aqsa TV on December 14, 2010, Hammad made no pretense of focusing on “Zionists,” asserting: “The Jews have become abhorred and loathed outcasts, because they live off of corruption and the plundering of the peoples—not only the Arab and Islamic peoples, but all the peoples of the world.”<sup>8</sup> The suggestion that leaders such as Fathi Hammad have abandoned anti-Semitism is hardly credible.

Fifthly, Hamas has a well-documented history of dissembling, especially when addressing non-Muslims. In 1993, as revealed by FBI surveillance, Hamas operatives met in Philadelphia to establish a new front in the United States, which they would subsequently call the Council on American-Islamic Relations or CAIR.<sup>9</sup> The Hamas officials at the 1993 Philadelphia meeting called for outright dishonesty to mask the true agenda of CAIR. “I swear by Allah that war is deception,”<sup>10</sup> said one, quoting the Prophet Muhammad. “Deceive, camouflage, pretend... Deceive your enemy . . . politics is a completion of war.”<sup>11</sup> This kind of duplicity is a standard part of the Muslim Brotherhood *modus operandi* in Western countries (and, as its 1988 Charter makes clear, Hamas is a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood—something not mentioned but also not denied in the May 2017 Document). In a 2004 [investigative report](#) on the Muslim Brotherhood in the U.S.A., the *Chicago Tribune* noted: “Documents obtained by the *Tribune* and translated from Arabic show that the U.S. Brotherhood has been careful to obscure its beliefs from outsiders.”<sup>12</sup> To better deceive their American audience, the Hamas operatives in Philadelphia in 1993 decided to create a new organization, CAIR, one whose “Islamic hue is not very conspicuous . . . Let’s not hoist a large Islamic flag and let’s not be barbaric-talking,”<sup>13</sup> as one participant put it. Yet when addressing fellow Muslims, Hamas operatives speak their mind openly, as when Hamas military leader Sheikh Muhammad Siyam [told](#) an audience in Los Angeles in 1994, “I’m going to speak the truth to you. It’s simple. Finish off the Israelis! Kill them all! Exterminate them! No peace ever!”<sup>14</sup> The May 2017 Document gives Hamas rhetorical flexibility: when addressing true believers, they can stress that the Hamas Charter of 1988 remains in full force; and when addressing gullible Westerners, they can invoke the May 2017 Document and insist (insincerely) that their dispute is only with “Zionists” not Jews qua Jews.

Finally, there is the unmistakable fact that the May 2017 “Document of General Principles and Policies” proclaims Hamas’ intention to commit politicide against the world’s only Jewish state. It makes it clear that “Palestine” encompasses the entire former British Mandate, including Israel proper as well as the West Bank and Gaza: “Palestine, which extends from the River Jordan in the east to the Mediterranean in the West . . . is an integral territorial unit” (#2);

“Palestine is an Arab Islamic land” (#3). The goal of Hamas is “to liberate Palestine” so defined (#1); “There shall be no recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist entity” (#19); “Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea,” although it considers the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, including a full “right of return” for the Palestinian “refugees,” as a “formula for national consensus,” whatever that means (#20). Any establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, however, will be a mere step towards the full “liberation” of “Palestine,” and such a (partial) Palestinian state will be a staging ground for ceaseless war against Israel, since “Resistance and jihad for the liberation of Palestine will remain a legitimate right, a duty and an honour for all the sons and daughters of our people and our Ummah [i.e. the whole Muslim world]” (#23; cf. #25-7). Hamas also makes clear its ongoing commitment to building up its military capacity and waging terrorism against Israelis: “Resisting the occupation with all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws . . . ” (#25) and “Hamas rejects any attempt to undermine the resistance and its arms. It also affirms the right of our people to develop the means and mechanisms of resistance” (#26).

In short, despite its new “Document of General Principles and Policies,” Hamas has not changed at all. It remains committed to the destruction of Israel by any means at its disposal, including indiscriminate attacks on Israeli civilians, and its world-view is still marked by deep Jew-hatred.

#### *Appendix: Documenting Hamas Anti-Semitism*

(Sources listed in reverse chronological order)

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<sup>2</sup>Declan Walsh, "Hamas Leader Plays Final Hand: Trying To Lift Group's Pariah Status," *The New York Times*, May 2, 2017, <https://nyti.ms/2pujYaf>.

<sup>3</sup>Hamas, "A Document of General Principles and Policies," available on the Hamas website [www.hamas.ps](http://www.hamas.ps), <http://hamas.ps/en/post/678/a-document-of-general-principles-and-policies>, section #16.

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<sup>5</sup>*The New York Times* reports that Hamas "has not even formally repudiated the 1988 charter...", Declan Walsh, "Hamas Leader Plays Final Hand: Trying to Lift Group's Pariah Status," *The New York Times*, May 2, 2017, <https://nyti.ms/2pujYaf>