

Palestinian Terrorist Organizations, Pioneers of Global Terrorism: Is Hamas Entering the Global Arena?

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Palestinian Terrorist Organizations, Pioneers of Global Terrorism: Is Hamas Entering the Global Arena?

Dr. Ely Karmon

Abstract

This article examines the recent intrusion of Hamas on the international terrorist arena, following its barbaric attack on Israeli territory and Israeli citizens, and the ensuing war in Gaza. It addresses the question if the Hamas's leaders decision to go global follows the pattern of international terrorism by the various Palestinian terrorist organizations since the 1960s and what are the odds that it will become a new actor threatening the international community, like its predecessors.

The Palestinian terrorist organizations had a pioneering role in the use of terrorism as a strategic tool on the global arena. The two main Palestinian organizations, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Fatah, were the backbone of this process of radicalization and violence, trailed by smaller Palestinian factions. No other organization in the world, of any ideological color, had such a long, wide range and influential terrorist activity between the mid-1960s to the 1990s.

Palestinians' innovative and sophisticated terrorist methods, used against Israel and the West, were emulated, or copied, by numerous organizations. Leaders and thousands of members of radical German leftist organizations, Armenian groups; Argentinians of MONTONEROS, Basques of ETA, etc, were trained in Palestinian camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and South Yemen. Some cooperated operationally with the Palestinians. The success of the Palestinian terrorists and the global spread of their attacks couldn't have been achieved without Arab state's sponsorship, like Syria, Iraq, Libya, South Yemen, and Iran, or the support of the USSR and its Eastern European intelligence agencies. Even Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, and the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards profited from the professional terrorist skills of the Palestinians.

Keywords: Hamas; Israel; Gaza; Palestinian Terrorist Organizations; PFLP; Fatah.

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Background

On October 7, 2023, a Jewish holiday, the Islamist Hamas, the organization controlling Gaza since a military coup in June 2007, staged from the Strip a surprise vicious assault by land, sea, and air. The October 7 assault's scope and lethality against Israel have no precedent in the 16 years Hamas has controlled Gaza, and the nature of the violence stunned Israelis. It was the worst pogrom against Jews since World War II, with terrorists gunning down the young at a music festival, slaughtering the old at a string of kibbutzim,

killing children wherever they could be found, raping women, torturing victims while alive, and mutilated once dead. More than 1,400 people, including 28 children, were killed, and some 240 others, including 33 children, were taken hostage. In response to the October 7 attacks, Israel's cabinet formally declared War on Hamas.

The reports of what Hamas terrorists did in southern Israel recalled the savagery of the Islamic State's rampage in Syria and Iraq. U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin described what Hamas did as "worse than ISIS." French President Emmanuel Macron took the analogy further, suggesting that an international coalition such as the one that fought al-Qaeda and the Islamic State should now defeat Hamas. He said that Israel was not alone and that "France is ready for the coalition, which is fighting in Iraq and Syria against ISIS, to also fight against Hamas."¹

Some scholars, like Monica Marks, argue that the comparison of Hamas = ISIS is not valid because "Hamas's Islamist character and theological convictions are less important than its self-styled vision of being the armed standard-bearer of Palestinian national liberation." Others, like Itzhak Weismann, argue that Hamas has tolerated other religious groups in Gaza. "Hamas tried to be inclusive of all of Gaza's population...In contrast, ISIS would murder any Muslim who didn't pray at the correct time."²

These scholars minimize the cruelty of Hamas's militants against their brethren from Fatah, when they killed in four days in mid-June 2007 more than 200 members of the Palestinian Authority's security services, some thrown from high buildings. Palestinian Authority (P.A.) President Mahmoud Abbas accused Hamas of "killings ... and massacre" during its siege of Gaza.³

The bloody military coup was the first sign, six years before the formation of ISIS/Daesh, that Hamas began to behave as a brutal, bloodthirsty organization, ready to assassinate its brethren and impose a regime of fear and political, social, and religious dictatorship.

Since June 2007, Hamas has conducted arbitrary arrests of political opponents, tortured detainees, clamped down on freedom of expression and assembly, and violated due process rights enshrined in Palestinian law. The victims have frequently been leaders, activists, and supporters of Fatah, especially those with suspected ties to a security force or those who sought to undermine Hamas' rule after its electoral win in January 2006.⁴

At the same time, Hamas, like ISIS, also broke Salafist and jihadist groups that did not respect or approve of its hegemony in Gaza. In August 2009, Hamas police killed Khaled Banat (aka. Abu-Abdullah al-Suri), a Syrian national of Palestinian descent, believed to

1 Ishaan Tharoor, "Israel says Hamas 'is ISIS.' But it's not." The Washington Post, October 25, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/people/ishaan-tharoor/?itid=ai_top_tharoori

2 Ibid.

3 "Palestinian president rips Hamas' 'bloody coup'", CNN, June 22, 2007, <https://edition.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/meast/06/20/gaza/index.html>

4 "Internal Fight. Palestinian Abuses in Gaza and the West Bank," Human Rights Watch Report, July 29, 2008, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/07/29/internal-fight/palestinian-abuses-gaza-and-west-bank>

be the head of the military wing of Jund Ansar Allah (“Warriors of the Companions of God”). This al-Qaeda-inspired group briefly proclaimed “the birth of an Islamic emirate” in the Gaza Strip. Jund Ansar Allah’s leader, Sheikh Abdel-Latif Moussa, died in the fighting in the southern city of Rafah on the border with Egypt. Sheikh Moussa had managed to attract scores of young men, some of whom had styled themselves after jihadi fighters in Afghanistan and Iraq, wearing their hair and beards long and even affecting the same dress. The Hamas authorities cracked down on other jihadi groups as they have emerged, including the Army of God, allied to the large Dogmouh clan, which was implicated in the kidnapping of BBC journalist Alan Johnston in 2007.⁵

Al-Qaeda and its branches in India, North Africa, the Sahel, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen applauded the October 7 attack. They cast it in the framework of a global jihad against the “Zionist-Crusader” alliance. ISIS addressed the attack on October 19 in an editorial in its weekly al-Naba. It condemned Hamas for the folly of fighting “under the banner of the Iranian Axis.” It offered a “practical plan” for putting an end to the “petty state of the Jews”: fighting not only in the Palestinian territories but also targeting “the Jewish presence” throughout the world, in particular in the United States and Europe. Eradicating the Jewish state would also require attacking the West and “the apostate Arab armies and governments” that support Israel’s existence.⁶

It is not clear if Hamas leaders took al-Qaeda’s and ISIS’s recommendations seriously or if it had planned to go global parallel to the October 7 attack on Israel. Still, on October 14, several suspected Hamas members who planned attacks against Jewish institutions in Europe were arrested in Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark.

German police arrested four suspected Hamas members, three detained in Berlin and another in the Netherlands, who were planning a terror attack against Jewish institutions in Berlin. Bild, the German tabloid, reported that “the three men have close ties to senior leaders of Hamas’s military wing.” According to German prosecutors, Hamas leaders in Lebanon had tasked the operatives with moving a cache of weapons from a depot in an undisclosed European location to Berlin to carry out an attack. The weapons were due to be “kept in a state of readiness in view of potential terrorist attacks.”⁷

Police arrested three people in Denmark suspected of planning a “terror.” The Danish Prime Minister described the plot as being “as serious as it gets,” and authorities in Denmark said they would up security at Jewish sites. On January 12, 2024, Danish prosecutor Anders Larsson confirmed that the case “has links to Hamas”.⁸ Danish media

5 “Islamist leader killed in clashes with Hamas police,” AFP, August 15, 2009, <https://www.france24.com/en/20090815-islamist-leader-killed-clashes-with-hamas-police>

6 Cole Bunzel, “Gaza and Global Jihad. Why the Hamas-Israel War Is Unlikely to Revive ISIS and al Qaeda,” Foreign Affairs, November 2, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/gaza-and-global-jihad>

7 Jane Prinsley, “Hamas terror plot to attack Jews in Europe foiled by police,” The Jewish Chronicle, December 15, 2023, <https://www.thejc.com/news/world/hamas-terror-plot-to-attack-jews-in-europe-foiled-by-police-iy0zp4mt>

8 “Danish police link foiled terror plot to Hamas,” AFP, January 13, 2024, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2440771/amp>

say the arrests were linked to the organized crime street gang Loyal to Familia, which is banned in Denmark.⁹

The arrests come as concern mounts globally over possible terror attacks from Hamas outside Israel. A joint statement from Mossad and the Shin Bet security service said that the arrests “thwarted a terror attack plot that aimed to kill innocent civilians in Europe.”

It is the first time since its inception that Hamas has staged terrorist attacks outside the Middle East, where it has been active mainly in southern Lebanon.¹⁰

It seems, therefore, that on the backdrop of its defeat in the War in Gaza, Hamas returns to the old Palestinian international terrorism strategy, which the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) initiated in 1968.

The Threat of Global Terrorism

Global terrorism is a strategic threat to the international community and a destabilizing factor in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and even Europe. The Sunni jihadists and the Iranian Shia terrorism are the main generators of present global terrorism.

However, a historical analysis proves that the Palestinian terrorist organizations had a pioneering role in the use of terrorism as a strategic tool in the global arena. The two leading Palestinian organizations, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Fatah, were the backbone of this process of radicalization and violence, trailed by more minor Palestinian factions. No other organization in the world of any ideological color had such a long, wide range and influential terrorist activity between the mid-1960s and the 1990s.

Palestinians’ innovative and sophisticated terrorist methods, used against Israel and the West, were emulated, or copied, by numerous organizations, including Hezbollah and al-Qaeda: suicide bombings, hijacking of civil planes, barometric or liquid bombs on flying planes, attacks on schools, worship places, media outlets. Important leaders and thousands of members of the German Red Army Fraction and Revolutionary Cells, Kurdish PKK, Armenians of ASALA, Argentinians of MONTONEROS, Basques of ETA, etc, were trained in Palestinian camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and South Yemen. Some cooperated operationally with the Palestinians.

The success of the motivated and innovative Palestinian terrorists and the global spread of their attacks couldn’t have been achieved without the Arab state’s sponsorship. Syria, Iraq, Libya, South Yemen, and Iran, after the 1979 Islamist revolution, provided

9 Zdravko Ljubas, “Danish Court Bans a Street Gang,” Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), September 6, 2021, <https://www.occrp.org/en/daily/15112-danish-court-bans-a-street-gang>.

10 Ely Karmon, “Hamas: Threat on the International Arena After the End of the War in Gaza,” International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) Special Report, December 31, 2023, <https://ict.org.il/hamasthreat-on-the-international-arena-after-the-end-of-the-war-in-gaza/>

political, financial, logistical, training support and, above all, safe haven, mainly to serve their own strategic regional and international interests. Some states formed their own "Palestinian" groups to be used in the fight for predominance in the Arab world.

Newly published documents since the fall of the Soviet empire demonstrate the critical role of the USSR and its Eastern European satellites in support of Palestinian terrorist organizations and the manipulation of leftist revolutionary groups for the destabilization of Western Europe.

Not only were Palestinian organizations among the first to use terrorism in the international arena on a large scale, unprecedented until then, but they also had an essential role in the spread of international terrorism by the emulation of their new modus operandi and the use of their camps in Jordan, Lebanon, and South Yemen, in many cases with the support of the host states, as haven and platforms for enhancing their military and operational capabilities.

The Palestinian organizations and groups played an essential role in the intricate battles for regional power or as proxies of the radical Arab states, challenging Western interests in the Middle East.

Finally, the fundamental role the intelligence services of the Soviet Union and its allies in Eastern Europe had in enhancing the operational capabilities of these Palestinian organizations and the very sophisticated clandestine methods they used in this subversive endeavor turned not only against Israel but also against Western Europe, was lately exposed.

How did Global Terrorism Develop?

Paul Wilkinson explains how political terrorism turns into international terrorism: "International terrorism in its most obvious manifestations is a terrorist attack carried out across international frontiers, or against a foreign target in the terrorist's state of origin. Yet international dimensions often take a more indirect form: a terrorist group may seek foreign cash, weapons, political support, or other resources. Or its members and leaders may occasionally find safe havens abroad or establish ad hoc cooperation with friendly foreign states and terrorist groups."¹¹

Martha Crenshaw pointed out that "what made the phenomenon of terrorism noteworthy in the 1970s was its internationalization. There appeared to be a growing collaboration among groups based in different countries. Interest in terrorism as an international problem was heightened in the 1980s by the prominence accorded to 'state-sponsored' terrorism, usually defined as proxy or surrogate warfare".¹²

11 Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State* (2nd ed.) (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 181-82.

12 Martha Crenshaw, "Current Research on Terrorism: The Academic Perspective," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 15 (1992), pp. 3-11.

The Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), established in October 1954, was the principal nationalist movement during the Algerian War against the colonial power, France. The FLN followed a strategy of terrorism against “soft targets” (usually non-military, lightly guarded civilian targets, which were much easier to attack and more likely to induce reprisals) to keep pressure on the French forces and expand their support.¹³ In August and September 1958, the FLN opened a new front in their terror war in France with bombings and attacks on police stations and strategic supply reserves that were being sent to French troops in Algeria.¹⁴

The terrorism the Latin American guerrillas exerted peaked during the Cold War, from 1945 to 1989. The Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara in 1959 has been an example to follow by the socialist movements, which emerged in several countries after the success of the Revolution: in Colombia, the FARC, ELN, and M-19, Venezuela, the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN), in Peru the Shining Path, in Chile the MIR, among others. In Brazil, the ALN-Acao Libertadora Nacional (Action for National Liberation), the group formed by the famous urban guerrilla theorist Carlos Marighella, kidnapped the U.S. ambassador in 1969 and the Swiss ambassador in 1970. VPR-Vanguardia Popular Revolucionaria (Popular Revolutionary Vanguard) VPR kidnapped the Japanese consul in Sao Paulo in March 1970 and participated in the kidnapping of the West German ambassador in June 1970. Marighella argued that it was necessary to attack investors to increase the likelihood and severity of economic downturns. Urban guerrillas consciously sought to implement his approach as part of an effort to weaken the national economy and kidnap executives of foreign businesses in many parts of Latin America, especially in Argentina, Uruguay, and Peru.¹⁵

However, it is of note that the Algerian FLN and Latin American terrorist groups rarely, if at all, fought beyond their specific national borders, as the Palestinians mostly did.

The Palestinian terrorist organizations entered the international arena in July 1968 with one of the first and longest political hijackings of a civilian – El AL plane – to Algiers for political goals. The Palestinians were emulating what they considered the exemplary revolutionary struggles of the nationalist Algerian FLN and the radical leftist Latin American groups.

Palestinian Organizations Take the Lead.

Palestinian organizations played an increasing role in international terror after the Six Day

13 Zack Rish, “Failure, Success and Lessons Learned: The Legacy of The Algerian War and Its Influence on Counterinsurgency Doctrine,” Thesis Presented to the Graduate School of Clemson University, May 2010, https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1820&context=all_theses

14 Kelsey Lilley, “A Policy of Violence: The Case of Algeria,” E-International Relations, September 12, 2012, <https://www.e-ir.info/2012/09/12/a-policy-of-violence-the-case-of-algeria/>

15 James M. Lutz and Brenda J. Lutz, “International Terrorism in Latin America: Efforts on Foreign Investment and Tourism,” *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3, Fall 2006.

War of 1967, exerting a direct influence on other terrorist organizations. The participation of German terrorists in operations carried out by the PFLP, such as the hijacking of planes in European skies and attacks on strategic targets such as OPEC headquarters in Vienna, as well as the emergence of 'Carlos' (Ilich Ramirez Sanchez) as a master of international terror, intensified fears in the mid-1970s that terrorist organizations were forming networks that threatened Western democratic states.

In a 1974 article, Brian Jenkins, the known veteran expert on terrorism, wrote: "Recently, terrorism has been used most successfully by Palestinian guerrillas... [Their] success is bringing their cause violently and dramatically before the eyes of the world... At the same time, one must wonder what their success means for the future. Will it inspire groups with equal capacity for violence but with far less claim to legitimacy (author's emphasis) to try to extort concessions from the world merely in exchange for an end to their violence?"¹⁶

International terrorism has had a destabilizing effect on global order. Campaigns of terrorism or specific incidents of terrorism directed against targets in the foreign diplomatic or business community have embarrassed several governments, weakened some of them, and no doubt contributed to the downfall of a few. It has also raised questions about the national responsibility. "When terrorists from one nation train in another nation to board a plane in a third nation to carry out an act of terrorism in a fourth nation, who is responsible? What basic responsibilities does every nation have in deterring the acts of terrorism against citizens of another nation?" asked Jenkins.¹⁷

Once the Vietnamese struggle was dropped from the international agenda after the United States, South Vietnam, Viet Cong, and North Vietnam signed "An Agreement Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam" in January 1973, the Palestinian struggle took its place in the sympathies of the radical leftist organizations around the world. The Palestinian national poet Mahmud Darwish expressed this sentiment: "A few years ago [we] were supposed to receive food and clothes parcels ... and behave like good children. Our role was that of a refugee. When we changed our role, the world also changed its attitude towards us. We exchanged a mentality of pride and individual heroism for one of collective, organized, revolutionary action with evident and just goals. In the global consciousness, the torch has passed from Vietnam to us. Can we meet the challenge? (author's emphasis)."¹⁸

Palestinian Terrorist Organizations Cooperate with Other Organizations Around the World.

Many researchers pointed to financial and technical assistance as proof of growing links

16 Brian M. Jenkins, "International Terrorism: A New Kind of Warfare," RAND Paper, June 1974, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P5261.html>.

17 Ibid.

18 Quoted from an article in *Shu'un Filastiniyya* of September 1973, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 168.

between national and international terrorist groups. Examples of such collaboration were the Palestinian training camps in Jordan and Lebanon. The fact that most terrorist organizations belonged to the revolutionary left and had affiliations with the USSR or its satellites in the communist bloc or the Third World gave rise to theories of a Soviet-led international conspiracy against the West.¹⁹

According to Israeli estimates, some 40 different international terrorist groups - half of them European, while the remainder were from Latin America, Africa, and Asia - received training, weapons, intelligence, and logistical support from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. In exchange, these groups complied with PLO requests to use their members on intelligence-gathering and reconnaissance missions in Israel, as couriers, as arms and explosives smugglers, and in operations against Israeli and Jewish targets in their respective home countries.²⁰

In early 1970, the entire RAF faction (Baader, Meinhof, Ensslin, Mahler, and another four or five individuals) left Germany in two groups for Lebanon and Jordan to train in the Fatah camps. Before the events of September 1970 in Jordan, the group returned to West Germany, where it began its terrorist activities in earnest. German terrorists who trained in Palestinian camps maintained ties with Palestinian organizations, coordinated the training of other groups, and helped German terrorists escape to the Middle East.²¹ Palestinian organizations felt a deep commitment towards their German comrades; kidnappings and hijackings were conducted in an attempt to pressure the West German authorities to release jailed terrorists.²²

German neo-Nazis were also cooperating with Fatah. Ties between them can be traced back to the period following the 1967 Six Day War, when a minuscule rightwing German group, the Bund Heimattreuer Jugend ("Association of Young People Loyal to Their Homeland"), formed a Wilfskorp Arabien ("Arabic Reserve Corps"). However, their attempted liaison with Al-Fatah never came to much and eventually died out. Three years later, these links were re-forged by Udo Albrecht, the founder and leader of the Freikorps Adolf Hitler ("Adolf Hitler Free Corps"), when he and twelve of his men fought alongside the Palestinians in Jordan against King Hussein during Black September events in 1970.²³

19 Paul Wilkinson and A.M. Stewart (eds.), *Contemporary Research on Terrorism* (Aberdeen: The University Press, 1987), p. xvi.

20 Bruce Hoffman, "Recent Trends in Palestinian Terrorism," *The Rand Paper Series*, May 1984.

21 In September 1970 King Hussein of Jordan repressed an attempt by Palestinian organizations to take control of the kingdom by force. Most of their militants were either killed or expelled to Lebanon or other countries. These events were called 'Black September' and led to a new wave of Palestinian international terrorism. Bassam Abu-Sharif and Uzi Mahnaimi, *Tried by Fire. The Searing True Story of Two Men at the Heart of the Struggle between the Arabs and the Jews* (London: Warner Books, 1995), pp. 66-67.

22 The last RAF official statement ended with the following tribute to the Palestinians: 'We will never forget the comrades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) who lost their lives in the fall of 1977 in an act of internationalist solidarity, seeking to liberate the political prisoners'. See Statement of the RAF (the 1998 disbanding of the Rote Army Faction), March 1998, p. 14.

23 Bruce Hoffman, "Right-Wing Terrorism in Europe Since 1980," *The Rand Paper Series*, October 1984.

Consolidating military expertise and accumulating weapons and funds enabled the PLO to aid Third World states, which then backed its diplomatic demarches at the United Nations, Non-Aligned Movement, Organization for African Unity, and other multilateral organizations. Fatah (as well as the PFLP and DFLP) also assisted a wide range of revolutionary movements in their capacity, this effort being overseen directly by Khalil al-Wazir, the commander of Fatah's armed wing al-Assifa, through a dedicated "liberation movements bureau." Among the beneficiaries were the anti-Shah groups in Iran (both Islamist and Marxist), Argentinian Montoneros, Salvadoran FMLN, Sri Lankan Marxist Tigers, southern Thai Muslims (Fatanis), and the African National Congress, to name but a few.²⁴

New information was published, shedding light on the cooperation between the Argentinian Peronist Montoneros organization and Fatah, which gives a good idea of how critical such relations were for disseminating international terrorism. In August 1972, Rodolfo Galimberti, one of the military leaders of Montoneros, traveled to Lebanon to receive military training.²⁵ He was hosted by the PLO and met Abu Jihad, the military leader of Fatah.²⁶

At the end of 1976, the operational capacity of the Argentine guerrilla organizations in general and of Montoneros, in particular, was disarticulated; its militants killed, disappeared, or tried to survive in hiding, isolated from their referents and with a leadership that had decided to take refuge abroad. The Montoneros leaders, exiled in Madrid, decided to recruit volunteers for what they called the Counteroffensive against the military regime in Buenos Aires. About two hundred applicants responded to the draft, were uniformed, trained in isolated European locations, and, after a selection, sent to complete military training for two months in the camps of Al-Fatah in Lebanon. The agreement with the Arabs had a secret clause: Fatah offered training camps, military instructors, and RPG7 missiles. Montoneros would install a plastic explosives factory in southern Lebanon. In September 1978, Montoneros established a permanent office in Beirut led by a female militant codenamed "Alicia."²⁷

The saga of the Fatah – Montoneros' strategic cooperation, with the knowledge and support of Syria, described in minute detail in a six hundred pages book by sociologist Pablo Robledo, teaches a lot about the strategic significance of the Palestinian support to international terrorism.²⁸

24 Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), pp. 452-3.

25 Gisela Marziotta, "Rodolfo Galimberti, delegado de la juventud en Puerta de Hierro," PÁGINA 12, 23 de mayo de 2020, <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/267729-rodolfo-galimberti-delegado-de-la-juventud-en-puerta-de-hierro>

26 Jorge Pinedo, *Montos y Fedayines. La solidaridad internacional de las organizaciones revolucionarias, a través de las contraofensivas de Montoneros*, ENE 20, 2019, <https://www.elcoheteealuna.com/montos-y-fedayines/>

27 Larraquy, Marcelo, "La política militar de Montoneros durante el Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (1976-1980)," Tesis presentada con el fin de cumplimentar con los requisitos finales para la obtención del título Licenciatura de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Buenos Aires en Historia, 2007.

28 Pablo Robledo, *Montoneros y Palestina, de la revolución a la dictadura*, Editorial Planeta, 2018.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon disrupted a crucial part of the infrastructure of several terrorist groups. The PLO has not recovered from the effects of the invasion and has been largely exiled from Lebanon. A direct result of the invasion was probably the disruption of the Armenian terrorist group ASALA (the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia), based in Beirut. The need of these groups to relocate and, in some instances, to replace leaders and sources of funds has resulted in a temporary lull in worldwide terrorist activity.²⁹

In the wake of the invasion, the PLO naturally turned to this array of international groups and asked them to repay the debts for training, weapons, and intelligence supplies they had received. In the second half of 1982, France's Action Directe bombed several Israeli diplomatic offices and business concerns. In July 1983, the Greek Revolutionary Popular Struggle bombed an Israeli export concern and a Jewish-owned travel agency; in September and October, the Communist Armed Group and Communist Metropolitan Front respectively claimed credit for the bombing of two Jewish community centers in Milan and Rome; in September, Colombia's M-19 stated that it was responsible for the bombings of the Israeli Embassy and ambassador's residence in Bogota. Unclaimed attacks against Israeli or Jewish targets were recorded in West Germany, Austria, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Ecuador.³⁰

At the end of the 1980s, revolutionary left-wing terror activities in Western Europe were almost entirely eradicated. Palestinian terrorism was reduced to sporadic activity of small organizations. At the international level, Palestinian terrorists carried out isolated acts as their sponsor states (Libya, Iraq, Syria, and then Iran) became increasingly deterred by the prospect of confrontation with the West, particularly the U.S.

The disintegration of the USSR and Yugoslavia, the increase in radical rightwing terrorist activity in Europe and the U.S., the suicide bomb attacks on the Israeli Embassy and the Jewish community center (AMIA) in Buenos Aires (1992 and 1994, respectively), the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York (1993) and of the federal building in Oklahoma City (1995) – once again reminded the world of the dangers of terrorism.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Palestinian organizations have been superseded by militant Islamist organizations whose activities extend beyond the Middle East or Islamic countries. Palestinian camps in southern Lebanon have been supplanted by Hizballah camps in the Lebanese Bekaa Valley, which trained Turkish, Kurdish, and Algerian terrorists, this time under the tutelage of Iran.³¹

It is less known that Palestinian terrorism influenced the Hezbollah operational leadership and even the Iranian defense and terrorist infrastructure, although they belong to the

29 Bonnie Cordes, Bruce Hoffman, Brian M. Jenkins, Konrad Kellen, Sue Moran, William Sater, "Trends in International Terrorism, 1982 and 1983," The Rand Corporation, August 1984.

30 Bruce Hoffman, "Recent Trends in Palestinian Terrorism," The Rand Paper Series, May 1984.

31 Ely Karmon, *Coalitions of Terrorist Organizations: Revolutionaries, Nationalists and Islamists*, (Brill Academic Publishers: Leiden and Boston), May 2005.

Shia brand of Islam.

Having obtained de facto authority over much of southern Lebanon by the 1969 Cairo Agreement, the PLO became the dominant force over much of Lebanon's Shiite heartland. Wealthy and well-armed, the PLO recruited large numbers of Shiites into both its ranks and those of closely allied Lebanese militias. From the late 1960s onwards, many Shiites joined armed Palestinian groups. Certain Shiites even attained considerable expertise and responsibility within Palestinian organizations.³²

Anis Naccache, a Lebanese citizen, joined the Fatah in the early 1970s and worked closely with the PFLP. While with Fatah, Naccache recruited arch-terrorist Imad Mughniyeh, who later rose to become Hezbollah's top operative. In the early 1970s, Naccache became a friend and associate of Venezuelan-born Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, known as Carlos the Jackal, and took part in one of his most dramatic operations, the attack on a meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries in Vienna in December 1975. Years later, Naccache and four other men were convicted in the July 1980 failed attack in France on Shahpour Bakhtiar, Iran's prime minister before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. In 1990, France pardoned Naccache and his four accomplices on demand by Iran-backed terrorists who set off deadly bombs around Paris in 1986. Until the mid-1990s, he played a vital coordination role between the leadership of the Palestinian resistance and that of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.³³

Imad Mughniyeh joined Fatah in his teens, serving in Yasser Arafat's Force 17 security unit. He joined Hezbollah and became its head of the security apparatus. He was indicted for his role in planning and participating in the June 14, 1985, hijacking of a TWA commercial airliner that resulted in the murder of one U.S. citizen. He was involved in the kidnapping of U.S. hostages in Lebanon in the 1980s, the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, in which 63 people died, and the 1984 kidnap/murder of Chief of Station/Beirut William Buckley. Mughniyeh joined Iranian diplomats in organizing the July 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people. The Argentines wanted him for the March 17, 1992, bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in which 23 died. He was believed behind the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut that killed 241 U.S. soldiers and the kidnappings of six Americans and five French citizens. He was killed in an explosion in a car in Damascus, Syria, on February 12, 2008.³⁴

Indeed, most of Hezbollah's cadres had received paramilitary training in Palestinian camps, where the basic curriculum prepared combatants for guerrilla warfare against

32 Marc R. DeVore and Armin B. Sta'hli, "Explaining Hezbollah's Effectiveness: Internal and External Determinants of the Rise of Violent Non-State Actors," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, January 27, 2014.

33 "Former Fatah terrorist who recruited Hezbollah's Mughniyeh dies of COVID-19," *The Times of Israel*, February 23, 2021.

34 Edward F. Mickolus, *The Terrorist List. The Middle East*, Praeger Security International, (Westport, Connecticut (London) Vol. 1: A-K.

Israel.³⁵

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini saw that the Palestinian cause's centrality to the Arab world could serve as a gateway for him to spread his revolutionary ideology to the otherwise unreceptive and predominantly Sunni Arab Street. Khomeini found a willing partner in Yasser Arafat, the leader of the Palestinian nationalist movement. Arafat, for his part, considered Khomeini a tool to turn Iran against Israel and thereby deprive the Jewish state of one of its most important regional and few Muslim allies. Arafat also developed a personal relationship with Khomeini. When Khomeini came under pressure from Saddam Hussein in 1978, the ayatollah considered seeking refuge among Arafat's Palestinian militias in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley but eventually moved to France.

Between 1976 and 1978, Fatah trained Khomeini's revolutionaries in Lebanon and provided funds, guidance, and equipment. Fatah effectively created and tutored the nucleus of what would become the Iranian regime's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and intelligence apparatuses. By 1977, Fatah had trained more than 700 of Khomeini's fighters, including the cleric's sons Mustafa and Ahmad.³⁶

Arafat welcomed the Iranian Revolution's success, viewing it as a turning point in the Palestinian struggle against Israel, and arrived in Tehran on February 5, 1979, with a 31-member Fatah and PLO delegation. The group included many of the best-trained commandos of Fatah Force-17, Arafat's personal security service, whom he assigned to protect Khomeini. A 1980 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) memorandum indicated that about half a dozen PLO-linked Palestinians remained in Tehran to train the nascent IRGC.³⁷

Palestinian Influence in Al-Qaeda

After September 11, 2001 (9/11), there was a need to conceptualize a new form of terrorism, what the president of the United States defined as "global terrorism." The new concept focused on the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization.

The Palestinian connection to global jihad began in the 1980s during the War in Afghanistan. It assumed a concrete form long before the establishment of al-Qaeda, as thousands of Muslim volunteers – Arab and non-Arab, including scores of Palestinians – came to Afghanistan to help the Afghani mujahideen (holy warriors) fight the Soviet invaders and the pro-Soviet Afghani regime. At that time, Palestinian Sheikh Abdullah Azzam organized their arrival, training, and dispatch to the battlefield; his aide-de-camp

35 Former Fatah terrorist who recruited Hezbollah's Mughniyeh dies of COVID-19.

36 Iran and the Palestinian Nationalist Movement, United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI), June 2020, https://www.united-againstnucleariran.com/sites/default/files/Iran_and_Palestinian_Movement_0692020_JMB.pdf

37 "CIA report reveals budding Tehran-PLO relationship in 1979," Jerusalem Report, January 16, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/cia-report-reveals-budding-tehran-plo-relationship-in-1979-536895>

was his reverent pupil and close friend, Osama Bin Laden.³⁸

Azzam joined Fatah guerrilla bases in Jordan in 1968-70 before he became an Arab mujahideen leader in Afghanistan until his assassination there in 1989.³⁹ As late as 1989, Azzam declared, "I am Palestinian, and if I found a way to Palestine and al-Aqsa, I would fight there." Palestine appears to have been on Azzam's mind throughout his life. His earliest and last books - notably *The Red Cancer* (1980) and *Hamas: Historical Roots and Charter* (1990, were about Palestine. For Azzam, the liberation of Jerusalem was an inescapable religious duty. "Palestine is a matter of creed [aqida]," he often said, suggesting that one could not be a Muslim and not want to fight for the liberation of Palestine.⁴⁰ Azzam subsequently articulated a strategic argument according to which the jihad in Afghanistan was a necessary stage in a process that would eventually lead to the liberation of Palestine.⁴¹

However, it was only after the outbreak of the Intifada - or the "jihad of the Intifada" as he called it - that he got back to more practical activism for the cause. In the last two years of his life, he wrote extensively on Palestine, fundraised for Hamas, and trained Palestinians in Afghanistan, intending to send them back to the Territories for operations. Some have suggested that Azzam wrote the Hamas charter because the text is included at the end of his book on Hamas.⁴²

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has contributed to global jihad not only through Abdallah Azzam but also through two of his most critical Palestinian successors: Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi in Jordan and Omar Abu Qutadah in London.⁴³

The two leading editors of two Islamic magazines -- *Al-Mukhtar al-Islami* [The Islamic Assortment] in Cairo and *Al-Tali'ah al-Islamiyyah* [The Islamic Vanguard] in London, were Dr. Fathi Shqaqi and Dr. Bashir Nafi`. These co-founders of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad were in close contact with the founders of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Egyptian Islamic Groups (*Al-Gama'at al-Islamiyyah*). The ideas of *Al-Qai'dah* and *Al-Tali'ah* originated actually from the Palestinian arena. The only difference was the focus on Afghanistan and the Afghani Mujahidin by Azzam and the focus of Shqaqi and Nafi`

38 Asaf Maliach, "Abdullah Azzam, al-Qaeda, and Hamas: Concepts of Jihad and Istishhad," INSS, Military and Strategic Affairs, Vol.2. No. 2, October 2010, [https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/systemfiles/\(FILE\)1298359986.pdf](https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/systemfiles/(FILE)1298359986.pdf)

39 Yezid Sayegh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State. The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 627.

40 Hegghammer, T. (2020). *The Caravan: Abdallah Azzam and the Rise of Global Jihad*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 23-4.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 323. His wife has also said he wrote it, although in another interview she said that Hamas "contacted him to write the introduction and edit the document." However, it is very unlikely that he contributed substantially, if at all, to the charter.

43 Reuven Paz, "Sawt al-Jihad: New Indoctrination of Qa'idat al-Jihad," *The Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM) Occasional Papers*, Vol. 1, Number 8 (October 2003)

on Palestine and the Palestinians.⁴⁴

Arab states support Palestinian terrorist organizations.

Egypt, Algeria, Libya, and Syria provided Palestinian terrorist groups that operate against targets in Israel and Israeli nationals and Jews throughout the world with arms and training bases; Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states provided them with financial support. Well-financed, well-equipped, and well-trained, they are the most truly international terrorists, having struck targets in the Middle East, Europe, North America, and Asia, noted Brian Jenkins.⁴⁵

In July 1977, the CIA Directorate of Intelligence report noted that most of the terrorist operations mounted by Palestinian groups were, for the first time since 1971, directed against Arab targets. At the same time, direct governmental support of terrorist groups was most evident and most extensive with respect to small Palestinian splinter formations associated with the rejectionist wing of the fedayeen movement. Libya remained at the forefront of such activity, but as perhaps most dramatically demonstrated by the 1976 hijacking operation of an Air France Airbus jet airliner with 248 passengers to the Entebbe airport in Uganda by two members of the PFLP- External Operations, several other African and Middle Eastern countries were involved as well. Dissatisfaction with the consequences of Syrian intervention in the Lebanese crisis brought Iraq into somewhat greater prominence on the terrorist scene than in the past as the principal patron of the Black June Movement - a small Palestinian group believed to have been responsible for at least nine attacks on Syrian or Jordanian targets during the last three months of 1976.⁴⁶

In 1979, the CIA noted an increase in the number of international incidents and their attendant casualties, much of it attributed to the export of Middle Eastern conflicts to Western Europe. Iraq and Fatah battled each other in European capitals. Radical Arab states opposed to a political settlement with Israel initiated by Egypt in 1977 continued to work closely with extremist Palestinian terrorist groups. Iraq's use of Black June as a surrogate in battling the moderate Fatah was particularly noteworthy.⁴⁷

As disunity continued to beleaguer the Palestinian movement, several radical Arab governments have taken advantage of these differences by sponsoring guerrilla organizations to further their own ends. However, radical Arab governments have

44 Reuven Paz, "Messianism: The Brotherhood of Global Jihad," South Asia Terrorism Portal, October 2001, <https://www.satp.org/terror/paz>.

45 Brian M. Jenkins and Janera Johnson, "International Terrorism: A Chronology, 1968-1974," A Report prepared for Department of State and Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, March 1975.

46 Fatah: The Revolutionary Council, also known as Abu Nidal Organization (on its leader's name ANO) called itself Black June for actions against Syria. "International Terrorism in 1976," CIA Directorate of Intelligence report, July 1977.

47 "International Terrorism in 1979," CIA National Foreign Assessment Center Research Paper, January 1980.

realized that their previous extensive support of Palestinian terrorism often proved counterproductive in their dealings with the West. As a result, there has been a notable decline in government patronage of international terrorist attacks.⁴⁸

The Soviet Union and its Eastern Allies Manipulate Palestinian Terrorist Activities.

Interpreting terrorism as the consequence of geostrategic rivalry between the superpowers was common during the Cold War years. According to this view, the Soviet Union supported international terrorism to stir up trouble in Western democracies or pro-Western nations to destabilize and weaken the United States and its allies. The Soviets have turned to what Edward Luttwak calls the 'tools of empire.' It agreed to support leftist guerrilla groups and terrorist organizations because it realized they could become useful allies.⁴⁹

One of the many KGB secret documents published after the fall of the Soviet regime is highly relevant to this aspect of its sponsorship of Palestinian terrorist organizations, in this case, the PFLP.

In a Top-Secret document from April 23, 1974, the Chairman of the Committee for State Security [KGB] Andropov reports to "Comrade L.I. Brezhnev" [Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the governing Communist Party] that since 1968, it has maintained secret working contact with Wadia Haddad, head of the PLFP's external operations section. In a confidential conversation at a meeting with the KGB resident in Lebanon in April 1974, Wadia Haddad outlined a prospective program of sabotage and terrorism by the PLFP, which aims "to increase the effectiveness of the struggle of the Palestinian movement against Israel, Zionism and American imperialism." The main thrusts of the planned sabotage and terrorist operations are: - employing unique means to prolong the "oil war" of Arab countries against the imperialist forces supporting Israel, carrying out operations against American and Israeli personnel in third countries, carrying out acts of sabotage and terrorism on the territory of Israel, The PLFP is preparing several special operations, including strikes against large oil storage installations in various countries (Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf, Hong Kong), the destruction of oil tankers and super-tankers, actions against American and Israeli representatives in Iran, Greece, Ethiopia, Kenya. According to the report, the KGB has "a degree of control over the activities of the PLFP's external operations section while observing the necessary secrecy...In view of the above, a covert consignment of foreign-produced arms and ammunition was carried out in the neutral waters of the Gulf of Aden at night, with no direct contact, and with full observance of secrecy."⁵⁰

48 Ibid.

49 Edward Luttwak, 1983. *The Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union*. New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 63–64.

50 Vladimir Bukovsky, *Soviet Archives*, http://www.bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/terr-wd/0903_plo75a-Eng-Stroilov.pdf

Official documents of the KGB later revealed that Haddad had already been recruited by the Soviet intelligence in the late 1960s. The Soviet Union provided the PFLP fighters with weapons, ammunition, and other military and intelligence assistance in order for the organization's terrorist activities to continue, even though the Soviets had publicly declared that they opposed the path of the struggle chosen by the PFLP.

Conclusion

To return to Hamas's new role as an international terrorist organization, a new analysis by U.S. intelligence agencies has warned that Hamas' credibility and influence have grown dramatically in the two months since the October 7 terror attack. The group has successfully positioned itself across some parts of the Arab and Muslim world as a defender of the Palestinian cause and an effective fighter against Israel. The conflict may do more to boost Hamas' influence outside of Gaza than within it, where years of poor governance have bred mistrust.⁵¹

Christopher Wray, FBI chief, said at a congressional hearing that since the start of the conflict in Gaza, multiple foreign terrorist organizations have called for attacks against Americans and the West and predicted that the Hamas attack would inspire the greatest U.S. terror threat since ISIS.⁵²

Colin P. Clarke, director of research at The Soufan Group, claims that the scale and sophistication of the October 7 Hamas terrorist attacks have led many counterterrorism analysts to revisit their assumptions about the group's intent and capabilities, and it could transform the organization into a global threat. Speaking in early December on Al-Aqsa television, senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri called for attacks against Israel's allies, specifically the United States and the United Kingdom. "We need violent acts against American and British interests everywhere, as well as the interests of all the countries that support the occupation," Zuhri said.⁵³

Hamas seems to be hoping that its ideology, its cause, and its brand will go global in much the same way the Islamic State did. Its propaganda is resonating with the Western public, especially younger generations and many university students who have turned out in large numbers at anti-Israel demonstrations and protests. Hamas is a different organization after the October 7 attacks. It has openly declared its desire to ensure that the War does not remain contained to Gaza but also threatens Israel and its supporters

51 Katie Bo Lillis, "US intelligence analysis warns Hamas' influence has grown since its attack on Israel," CNN, December 21, 2023, https://www.applevalleynewsnow.com/news/politics/national-politics/us-intelligence-analysis-warns-hamas-influence-has-grown-since-its-attack-on-israel/article_11902c63-03d5-51e7-8183-7eb8e2e0c61d.html

52 "Hamas attack will inspire greatest US terror threat since Isis, FBI chief says," Reuters, November 1, 2023, https://www.scmp.com/news/world/middle-east/article/3239886/hamas-attack-will-inspire-greatest-us-terror-threat-isis-fbi-chief-says?module=hard_link&pgtype=article

53 Colin P. Clarke, "Could Hamas Become a Global Threat?" Foreign Policy, December 19, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/12/19/hamas-terrorism-threat-global-europe-germany-arrests/>

worldwide.⁵⁴

It seems for now that the Hamas military infrastructure will be destroyed by Israel, even if it will need more time. Its leaders in Gaza will either be killed in the fighting or exiled in the framework of some agreement. The West Bank will remain under control by the IDF, the intelligence agencies, and the Palestinian Authority security forces. This will happen if the P.A. is finally accepted as a partner in Gaza's political and economic reconstruction.

So, from what platform will Hamas be able to act as an international terrorist actor, on the model of Fatah, the PFLP, and other smaller organizations active between the end of the 1960s and 1980s?

Lebanon

The most obvious is Lebanon, which already serves as a basis for missiles fired by Hamas from Southern Lebanon to Northern Israel, under the strategic umbrella of Hezbollah and active support of Iran.

Following the 2017 blockade of Qatar by its Gulf rivals and their regional allies and after Turkey's recent rapprochement with Israel, Lebanon became the destination of choice for Hamas leaders who could no longer find refuge in those two countries. Thus, in the summer of 2018, Saleh al-Aroui, deputy head of the Hamas Political Bureau, positioned himself in Beirut, where he could freely pursue his political and operational activities.⁵⁵

Hamas's Lebanese headquarters are in the city of Sidon. Hamas's 'Construction Bureau,' based in Lebanon, contains specialized departments responsible for different activities, such as weapons manufacturing, military intelligence, combat training, communications, funding, planning, logistics, security, and foreign relations. The units set up operational cells while preparing attack plans against Israel. The Al-Shimali and the Khalid Ali units have hundreds of operatives in Lebanon. They engage in recruiting operatives, conducting training, and special courses (snipers, anti-tanks, attack drones, etc.). Hamas's activities in Lebanon occur with the assistance and supervision of the Palestine Branch of the Iranian Quds Force. Hezbollah is also involved in Hamas activity in Lebanon and assists it.⁵⁶

It is of note that according to German prosecutors, Hamas leaders in Lebanon had tasked the operatives arrested in Germany in December 2023 with moving a cache of weapons from a depot in an undisclosed European location to Berlin to carry out an

54 Ibid.

55 Souhayb Jawhar, "Lebanon: New Strategic Base for Hamas," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 17, 2022, URL: <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/88184>

56 Tal Beer, "Exposing Hamas's Growing Front in Lebanon – Infrastructure and Activity," ALMA Research and Education Center, Special Report, October 2021, <https://israel-alma.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Hamas-Growing-Front-in-Lebanon-%E2%80%93-Infrastructure-and-Activity.pdf>

attack. This also means that Hamas has already prepared weapons depots on European soil.⁵⁷

Lebanon could be indeed the main Hamas “abroad” platform: existing military and political infrastructure, significant Palestinian population, direct support, and defense umbrella from Hezbollah, and influential Iranian presence.

Syria

When the Civil War broke out, about 650,000 Palestinian refugees were living in Syria in 14 refugee camps. Many Palestinians have sided with the Syrian regime and served as reservoirs for recruiting by the Syrian army. The al-Quds Brigade is the Palestinian force with the highest level of military capabilities. It was established in October 2013 and has about 3,500 fighters. The Galilee Forces (Kuwat al-Jalil) are a militia-like military force established in 2012. Several thousand fighters come from the Palestinian refugee camps.⁵⁸

Hamas was not only highly critical of Assad during the Syrian Civil War but actively supported his opponents, especially rebel organizations affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood. Over the years, there has been a slow but steady rapprochement between the Syrian regime and Hamas, in part as a result of pressure exerted by Iran and Hezbollah, which sought to unify the “Axis” forces in their resistance to Israel. It was only in October of last year that Hamas formally reestablished ties with the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.⁵⁹

Although the mood in Syria is generally supportive of the Palestinians, Assad is not interested in supporting Hamas, as the price is a possible threat to his survival. Iran may also prefer to keep Syria out of the conflict to safeguard its “Syrian asset” and activate it when Tehran decides.⁶⁰

Taking into consideration the long period of distrust between the Syrian regime and the Hamas leadership and the present strategic considerations of Damascus, it is hard to see Syria becoming a platform and safe haven for an international terrorist campaign of Hamas.

Paradoxically, it could be the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), which could profit from its good relations with the Damascus regime to use its territory as a launch pad for

57 Jane Prinsley, Hamas terror plot to attack Jews in Europe foiled by police.

58 “Armed Palestinian forces, militias and organizations handled by the Syrian regime in the Syrian civil war,” The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, March 19, 2018, <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/armed-palestinian-forces-militias-organizations-handled-syrian-regime-syrian-civil-war/>

59 Andrew Waller, “Is Syria’s al-Assad supporting Hamas for political gain or optics?” Al-Jazeera, December 10, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/10/syrias-al-assad-and-supporting-hamas-all-for-political-gain-or-optics>

60 Carmit Valensi and Tal Avraham, “Syria and the Israel-Hamas War: Symbolic Support, Short of Escalation,” INSS Insight, December 24, 2023, <https://www.inss.org.il/publication/assad-war/>

international terrorism.

Turkey

Since Hamas's victory in the Palestinian Authority parliamentary elections in 2006, Turkey has had very robust relations with Hamas, in the larger context of Erdogan and his party's, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), ideological and strategic goals.

Turkey's operative support to Hamas materialized when the Mavi Marmara, a Turkish ship carrying a sizeable Turkish militant group from the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri İnsani Yardım Vakfı - IHH) leading an international flotilla, tried to break the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip in May 2010. The Turkish leaders supported the provocative aid flotilla, which terminated an Israeli military operation and the death of nine violent Turkish militants of the IHH.⁶¹

Since the Mavi Marmara diplomatic crisis between Turkey and Israel in 2010, and more so since the 2011 agreement between Israel and Hamas to release Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in exchange for 1,027 Palestinian prisoners and the expulsion of 10 operatives to Turkey, Turkey has become a "second home" for Hamas militants and terrorists. There, they invest efforts to recruit members, build financial resources, and cooperate with other actors against Israel. Since 2014, Turkey has been host to Salah al-Aroui, a senior Hamas political bureau member and the prominent operative commander responsible for establishing, funding, and strengthening the Hamas military-terrorist infrastructure in the West Bank, operating out of his headquarters in Istanbul. The Islamist ideology of the AKP and Hamas contributed to a deepening of their relationship, as they share common values and vision.⁶²

Israel's signing of the Abraham Accords has helped the Jewish state establish substantive relationships with the Arab states in its neighborhood and marginalized Ankara. Israel and Turkey have succeeded in spring 2023 in reestablishing diplomatic ties at the ambassadorial level.

Turkey condemned the civilian deaths caused by Hamas's October 7 rampage in Israel but also urged Israeli forces to act with restraint in their response. Then, Turkish President Erdogan, in his most vital comments on the Gaza conflict, declared that Hamas was not a terrorist organization but a liberation group fighting to protect Palestinian lands. Indicating that the normalization efforts between the two countries were suspended, Erdogan accused Israel of taking advantage of Turkey's "good intentions" and said he

61 Ely Karmon & Michael Barak, "Erdogan's Turkey and the Palestinian Issue," Perspectives on Terrorism Research Notes, Vol.12, Issue 2, April 2018, <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/customsites/perspectives-on-terrorism/2018/2018-02/06-erdogan%E2%80%99s-turkey-and-the-palestinian-issue-by-ely-karmon--michael-barak.pdf>

62 Ibid.

had canceled a previously planned visit to Israel.⁶³

As Hamas has maintained at least part of its operative infrastructure in Turkey and the Erdogan regime seems eager to stand behind the Islamist movement at all costs, Turkey could be a preferred platform for future terrorist activity in Europe and possibly Central Asia.

Iran

Iran has supported Hamas after it took control of Gaza in June 2007 in developing its military and security apparatuses. Hamas benefits considerably from Iran's provision of weapons, technology, know-how, and training. This support allowed it to carry out the October 7 attacks against Israel. The Islamic Republic has viewed Hamas as an important Sunni ally in the Palestinian arena, and it used this relationship to advance its regional goals, particularly vis-à-vis Israel.

The probable fall of the Hamas regime will compel all Hamas leaders to find a safe haven from Israel's wrath. Undoubtedly, Tehran could be one of the safest places for them to take refuge.

This could also be the opportunity for both Hamas and Iran to cooperate and advance their anti-Israeli and anti-Western strategy through a field in which Tehran has become a master: international terrorism.

63 Tuvan Gumrukcu and Huseyin Hayatsever, "Turkey's Erdogan says Hamas is not terrorist organisation, cancels trip to Israel," Reuters, October 25, 2023,.: <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkeys-erdogan-says-hamas-is-not-terrorist-organisation-2023-10-25/>