

JIHAD

Hamas: terminal of an international terrorist network

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**Stefano
Magni**



The war suddenly unleashed by Hamas against Israel on October 7, comes exactly fifty years after the Arab Yom Kippur attack of 6 October 1973. There is the same aggression on a Sabbath feast day which catches Israel unprepared, the failure of the intelligence

services, the heavy losses of Israelis lives, the unexpected alertness of its enemies. But, the parallels end there. What we have been witnessing over the last two days, is not a conventional conflict between regular armies. It is an operation somewhere between a military offensive and a terrorist action, a 'raid' typical of desert peoples re-enacted in modern times.

We also saw similar scenarios in Mumbai in 2008 and more recently closer to home: Paris in 2015. The attackers act in small, mutually coordinated cells, supported by units already inside enemy territory, attack defenceless civilian targets, kill indiscriminately, and capture hostages (their real 'booty'). The massive salvoes of rockets, the hallmark of all previous Hamas attacks, this time served only as a diversion. The actual operation took place with terrorist groups infiltrating population centres, including the city of Sderot.

The most heinous aspect of this type of action, apart from the trauma of the immediate victims, is the ostentation of cruelty. The pictures of the civilians killed, the wounded, the blood, the corpses brought to Gaza as trophies, the houses blown apart and devastated, go 'viral' and circulate on the net, often artfully edited, even with music in some cases. It must serve to galvanise one's ideological base and simultaneously terrorise the adversary. The stricken population, above all, fears it could meet an atrocious end even when hiding at home, and loses all sense of security.

Al Qaeda, and then Isis, had accustomed us to this kind of cruel spectacle before disappearing from our radar. Hamas caught the more distracted Western public off guard, because no one associated the Palestinian Islamist party, undisputed master of Gaza since 2007, with the typical violence of jihadists. But the ideological matrix of Hamas is the same as that of Al Qaeda and therefore also of ISIS, the unrestrained splinter of Al Zawahiri and Bin Laden's movement. The common matrix is that of the Moslem Brotherhood (which the ideologist Al Zawahiri was an exponent of). And jihadist ideology, including that of Hamas, not only justifies but even demands the killing of religious enemies. It attacks Jews without distinguishing between military and non-military personnel.

That Hamas is the Palestinian arm of the Muslim Brotherhood is specified in its own 1988 charter. In Article 2 we read: "The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the branches of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. The Muslim Brotherhood movement is a worldwide organisation, one of the largest Islamic movements of the modern era . It is characterised by a profound understanding, precise notions, and a total mastery of all Islamic concepts in all spheres of life: in visions and beliefs, in politics and economics, in

education and society, in statutes and the law, in apologetics and doctrine, in communication and art, in visible and invisible things, and in every other sphere of life”.

Its preamble contains a quotation from Hassan al-Banna, the Egyptian founder of the Brotherhood: “Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it”. Besides this call to destroy the Israeli state, we also find in the same statute the call to kill Jews. Article 7, on the *Universality of the Islamic Resistance Movement*, has become infamous: “... the Islamic Resistance Movement has always tried to fulfil the promises of Allah, without asking how long it would take. The Prophet - prayers and peace of Allah be upon him - declared: “The Hour will not begin until you fight the Jews, until a Jew will hide behind a rock or a tree, and the rock or tree will say: ‘O Muslim, O slave of Allah, here is a Jew behind me; come and kill him”.

Formed in the First Intifada, also as internal opposition to Arafat's leadership, Hamas distinguished itself by its terrorist actions in the 1990s, when it opposed the peace process that began with the 1993 Oslo Accords. In fact, Hamas has never accepted any peace plan, nor any proposal for the partition of two peoples into two states, because it considers Palestine indivisible by divine right: “The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine is a sacred deposit (waqf), Islamic land entrusted to the generations of Islam until the day of resurrection - we read again in the statute, Article 11 - It is not acceptable to give up any part of it. No Arab state, nor all the Arab states as a whole, no king or president, nor all the kings and presidents put together, no organisation, nor all the Palestinian or United Arab organisations have the right to dispose of or cede even a single piece of it, because Palestine is Islamic land entrusted to the generations of Islam until the day of judgement”.

Precisely because of its intransigence, Hamas grew during the Second Intifada (2000-2005) with acts of suicide terrorism and especially numerous rocket and mortar attacks against Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip. When Prime Minister Ariel Sharon decided on the unilateral withdrawal of all Jews from the Strip, Hamas became the dominant force in the region. In 2006, with a first incursion into Israeli territory, it kidnapped Corporal Gilad Shalit, who was released only after five years of negotiations in exchange for a thousand prisoners. Also in 2006, a real Palestinian civil war began, with the Hamas uprising against the regime of Abu Mazen, Arafat's successor, ruled by the 'secular' Fatah party. Hamas had won the elections, obtaining an absolute majority in Gaza. But Fatah never accepted the outcome and after a year of unsuccessful attempts to compromise on power sharing, an internal war broke out, resulting in around 600 deaths. In 2007, the conflict was won by Hamas with the seizure of power in

Gaza. Since Shalit's kidnapping and even more so since Hamas seized power, the city and the territory of the Strip have been embargoed by Israel. Hamas has turned it into an Islamic emirate under its absolute control.

The survival of this emirate, despite the embargo, depends on international support that has changed over time. Being part of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas has also received aid from Turkey (the case of the Mavi Marmara ship that tried to breach the blockade in 2010 is famous), Qatar, and the network of mosques linked to the movement around the world, but at the same time also from Assad in Syria, out of common enmity against Israel. In 2011, with President Morsi coming to power in Egypt, the Palestinian movement had an important foothold in Cairo, at least until Al Sisi's coup in 2013. The new ally, however, is increasingly Iran. An intelligence estimate of the aid provided by Tehran speaks of \$6 million a month, which has grown to \$30 million a month in recent years. The latest generation rockets, especially long-range missiles, are all Iranian-made. And probably the military advisers who trained the Hamas firing groups for this latest major incursion are also Iranian. Iran is a Shia revolutionary republic. Hamas, like all Muslim Brothers, is Sunni. But, united in their hatred for Israel, it's easier to turn a blind eye.