

MIDDLE EAST

Hamas wants Palestinians dead, it is time to face the truth

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Statements made by Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, intercepted by the secret services and published on 10 June by the *Wall Street Journal*, rightly made some noise. "Civilian deaths are a necessary sacrifice" and "we got Israel exactly where we wanted it", indicate very

clearly the strategy of Hamas and the cynicism of its leaders.

But in truth, the surprise of so many commentators is curious. That this is the thinking and modus operandi of Hamas, and that the carnage of 7 October last, with videos showing the ferocity of the attackers, was aimed precisely at triggering Israel's reaction was already quite clear. We have always said this, and indeed as early as October 2023 we wrote: "In conceiving the carnage of 7 October, Hamas was counting precisely on Israel's revenge, functional to the design of blowing up the entire Middle East in order to eventually assert its law. The death of so many Palestinian civilians is music to the ears of Hamas terrorists, who have always used civilians as human shields, because they know that so many Palestinian deaths mean more support for their cause'.

And indeed, in another interception, also published by the *Wall Street Journal*, Sinwar tells Hamas political leaders, sitting with mediators from Egypt and Qatar, not to make any concessions, but instead to call for a definitive end to the war, adding that a high number of civilian deaths would increase international pressure to stop Israel's attack.

Let's be clear, this does not justify Israel's 'revenge', nor the manner in which it is conducting the war (and here too: the *Daily Compass* said this many times); not only that, as is evident from these statements, by doing so the Netanyahu government is playing right into Hamas's hands and thus approaching defeat.

But we should also once and for all understand that Sinwar's words are not only a demonstration of political cynicism, but also the expression of a culture that exalts death, that wants it: for others but also for itself. For more than twenty years, the jihadists themselves have been telling us this and yet we pretend nothing has happened. We should remember Osama bin Laden's 'theorem': 'We will win because we love death more than Westerners love life'.

The great scholar of Islamic terrorism, Olivier Roy, in a book published in 2016, *Le djihad et la mort*, explained precisely how at the heart of jihadism is a nihilist conception, a death instinct and "not the construction of a utopia".

Yesterday, in order to dampen international reactions to Sinwar's words, Hamas spokesman Ghazi Hamad denied [in a statement to Al Arabiya](#) that is not actually what he said. Yet Ghazi Hamad himself on 24 October, just over two weeks after the 7 October massacre, had made no dissimilar statements. [In an interview on Lebanese TV](#), he had extolled the terrorist action, also announcing others: 'Israel is a country that has no place in our land. We must remove that country, which is a political, military and security catastrophe for the Arabs and Islamic nations, and it must be finished. We are

not ashamed to say this, with all our strength'. And heralding more clamorous actions until the goal is achieved, he explained: 'Will we have to pay a price? Yes, and we are ready to pay it. We are called a nation of martyrs, and we are proud to sacrifice martyrs'.

It is this perverse concept of martyrdom that we have to deal with, the same one that has produced suicide bombings in Europe and the United States, systematically targeting innocent people. So, if one really cares about the fate of the Palestinian people, then it is necessary to acknowledge once and for all that Hamas too is its executioner and not its defender.

Moreover, Yahya Sinwar and Ghazi Hamad's statements also help to understand what is happening now in the chess game between Israel and Hamas over the ceasefire plan presented by the United States. Netanyahu's difficulty in accepting the stop to the military operation is mirrored by Hamas's position, which suggests a substantial acceptance of the plan but proposing "amendments" that go in the direction of a definitive Israeli stop to the war, a condition that they already know Netanyahu cannot accept as a precondition.

Unfortunately, the road not only for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also for a temporary cease-fire is still steeply uphill: Hamas and the Netanyahu government have objectives that do not coincide with the urgency felt by US President Joe Biden to cool the tension in view of the presidential elections in November.