

NATIONAL REVIEW

What Hamas Leaders Think

Neither John Kerry nor the media show any awareness of the group's stated goals and core beliefs.

By Douglas J. Feith & Trevor N. Parkes — August 6, 2014

One of the remarkable features of the recent Gaza war was the ineffectiveness of American diplomacy. Secretary of State John Kerry's efforts to negotiate a ceasefire continually fell flat. One reason was that Kerry acted as if he were mediating between two friends of the United States and his task was to arrange a win-win outcome. His spokesperson told the *Wall Street Journal* that he hoped to arrange for Israel to grant economic and other concessions to persuade Hamas's leaders to accept a ceasefire. Kerry's apparent assumption was that Hamas's leaders prefer peace to war, care about the humanitarian and economic concerns of ordinary Palestinians, and are willing to compromise. What basis does he have for these views?

It would be hard for anyone to see Hamas that way after reading the group's articles of faith as set out in its 1988 "Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement." One can say nothing meaningful about Hamas's ideas or goals without reference to the Covenant. Yet Secretary Kerry not only failed to refer to it, he appears to be unaware of it. Then again, where would he have learned about it?

He sure didn't hear about it from the news media. Journalists from major news outlets virtually never mention Hamas's Covenant. Since the kidnapping of three Israeli teenagers on June 12, 2014, and the ensuing Gaza war, print journalists and television and radio reporters have produced thousands of reports on Hamas and the war. We searched on Google for the period June 12 to August 4 for "Hamas Covenant," "Covenant," "Hamas Charter," and "Charter" on the websites of the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, the *Guardian*, *Time*, and CNN, but there was virtually no mention of the Hamas Covenant. We searched news articles, excluding opinion pieces, letters, and comments. The *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, and the *Guardian* failed to mention the Covenant at all. *Time*

magazine referred to it in two articles, the *Wall Street Journal* mentioned it in one article, and CNN mentioned it in two. Only the *Washington Post* brought it up repeatedly—that is, in two articles and in four blog posts. But all of the references were brief, more or less in passing, without elaboration.

Nor was Kerry likely to hear about the Covenant from his own State Department or from the White House. Running the same search on the White House and State Department websites, we found no mention of it by any officials there in the last eight weeks. That's not surprising, because journalists talk daily with U.S. and other officials, and if the officials consider a matter important, they highlight it for the reporters, who will usually then include it in their stories. The two CNN articles, for example, both use the same quote from Israeli deputy foreign minister Danny Ayalon, in which he refers to the Hamas Covenant. And the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time* magazine, and the *Washington Post* quoted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, not any U.S. officials, talking about the Covenant.

Hamas is the Arabic acronym for Islamic Resistance Movement; and its Covenant, in its own words, “clarifies [the Movement’s] picture, reveals its identity, outlines its stand, explains its aims, speaks about its hopes, and calls for its support, adoption and joining its ranks. Our struggle against the Jews is very great and very serious.” The Covenant declares:

- “Withdrawal from the circle of struggle is high treason and a curse on the doer.”
- “There is no solution to the Palestinian Problem except by *Jihad*. The initiatives, operations, and international conferences are a waste of time and a kind of child’s play.”
- “The Islamic Resistance Movement is an outstanding type of Palestinian movement. It gives its loyalty to Allah, adopts Islam as a system of life, and works toward raising the banner of Allah on every inch of Palestine.”
- “Even though the Islamic Resistance Movement looks forward to fulfill the promise of Allah no matter how long it takes because the Prophet of Allah says: *The Last Hour would not come until the Muslims fight against the Jews and the Muslims would kill them, and until . . . a stone or a tree would say: Muslim or Servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me; come and kill him.*”

- “When an enemy occupies some of the Muslim lands, *Jihad* becomes obligatory for every Muslim.”
- “As far as the ideology of the Islamic Resistance Movement is concerned, giving up any part of Palestine is like giving up part of its religion.”
- “Due to the Islamic Resistance Movement’s knowledge of the participating parties of the conference, and the participants’ past and present opinions and stands on Muslim interests, the Islamic Resistance Movement does not perceive that the [Arab--Israeli peace] conferences are able to deliver the demands, provide the rights, or do justice to the oppressed. Those conferences are nothing but a form of enforcing the rule of the unbelievers in the land of Muslims.”
- “The Motto of The Islamic Resistance Movement: ...*Allah is its Goal. The Messenger is its Leader. The Quran is its Constitution. Jihad is its methodology, and Death for the sake of Allah is its most coveted desire.*”

When Kerry does his diplomatic work on the Gaza war, the Hamas Covenant is the elephant sitting on the negotiating table. It stares down and mocks anyone who thinks that Hamas leaders are peace-loving pragmatists seeking nothing more than a freer and more prosperous life for their people. It makes no sense for Kerry to pretend the elephant isn’t there — or to pretend it’s a manageable pet.

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