

# Introduction

## **The Pivotal Importance of Understanding *The Hamas Covenant* and Its Ramifications**

We are fortunate the Palestinian wing of the Muslim Brotherhood known as “Hamas” chose to write down its *Covenant* in 1988. *The Hamas Covenant* is a revealing window into the heart and soul of today’s Islamic extremists. Hamas providing the written document was a great unintentional service by an Islamic fundamentalist group, benefitting secular Muslims, Christians, non-believers and especially Jews. Sixty years after Hasan al-Banna established the radical Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt Hamas compiled the concise ideological document explaining the religio-philosophical pillars of the movement. The *Covenant* was also presented as a Palestinian “nationalist” platform, but removing the facade reveals the current demands on followers and the future world as extremist political Islamism envisions it. Now translated to English, the *Covenant* is accessible to hundreds of millions of Westerners. The central pillar of the ideology is commitment to Islam through Jihad, with Jews presented as the manifest and hidden enemy ultimately destined for annihilation. The document is clearly antisemitic, but other people groups such as “Crusaders” (Christians) and “Tatars” (Far Easterners) are also labeled as enemies of Islam. Social ideals and economic systems such as capitalism, socialism, communism, and with a bit of research and interpretation, democracy as well, are all considered anti-Islamic ways of life, and in essence pagan and/or Jewish plots (Koran 5:82). The root of each clause in the *Covenant* stretches back decades, at times even as far back to the rise of Islam in the seventh century CE.

Hamas is not a Palestinian liberation movement in the secular sense of the term. It advocates fundamentalist, revolutionary Islamic initiatives no less extreme than the Muslim Brotherhood dominated Sudan, Khomeinist Iran, or the Taliban dictatorship in Afghanistan prior to 2001. All are

“diocentric,” or theocratic regimes; Allah or God is the center of all law, worship and action. In the year 2011, we saw these ideals in action, revolution throughout the Arab/Muslim world and the increase of political Islamification. Sometimes conquest occurred in a moderate fashion, such as in Tunisia, but more often it was radical, as in Egypt where we also witnessed the rise of the Salafist movement which made the Muslim Brotherhood victory look flexible. To this day the Western media refers to the Arab uprisings of 2011 as the “Arab Spring,” inferring protestors sought liberty, democracy and individual human rights. This may have been true at the very outset. However, in actuality, the “Arab Spring” was really an “Islamic Awakening.” Hamas fits the pattern well; its objectives are Islamic, demanding *Sharia* law. Secular nationalism seeking cultural liberation and individual rights is its enemy, not its objective. The secular Palestinian nationalist group Fatah was evicted from Gaza in 2007. In essence, Fatah’s exit made Hamas among the first victors in the “Islamic Awakening.” Palestine is only one small geographic region in the overall effort for the “liberation” of the entire Muslim world from any secular or non-Islamist way of life.

Based on “*fatwas*,” or religious judgments, the physical conquering Holy War, or Jihad, is said to be imperative among believers. Islam’s Holy War has two steps. First, there is what is termed “defensive” Jihad, meaning the recapture of lands held by Muslims at some point in history such as the Iberian Peninsula, the Balkans, India and Israel. The second, or “offensive” step, involves the remainder of the planet, including North and South America, Russia, etc. Believing otherwise is either a misread of *The Hamas Covenant* and the texts comprising the foundation upon which it rests, or groundless optimism. One other option remains; whereby Hamas leadership, its followers and Muslim Brotherhood activists worldwide were not telling us the truth and developed a harsh fundamentalist document as an inspiration for Jihad and world conquest, simply as a bargaining chip in what some refer to as “posturing.” This last option appears highly unlikely, and demands feeding outright lies to believers and enthusiastic supporters. The *Covenant* was written as a Divinely inspired work in the name of Allah for the Hamas faithful, more than for anyone else. *The Hamas Covenant* does not seek to deceive non-believers; it is clear in its message. Those who do not take it at face value deceive themselves and endanger all concerned.

Although the heart of this work rests on an appreciation of *The Hamas Covenant* itself, most have never read the seminal document, and among those who have, few relate to it seriously. Readers fail to take the text at face value despite the fact it declares itself as a modern day religious document, also known as “The Charter of Allah.” A look at history recalls most “thinking” people never cared to indulge in reading the texts presented by Lenin, Mao or Hitler. Despite the dangers such ideals continue to embody for today’s global society, the writings of Ayatollah Khomeini are ignored, as are those of his Sunni ideological partner, Sayyid Qutb, who was the major inspirational source for Hamas and considered the “Father of 9/11.” *The Hamas Covenant* gives an overall picture of Muslim Brotherhood thought. The same perspective is held by its radical offshoots, such as the Salafists, and its two most infamous children, al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. Without the Muslim Brotherhood it would be difficult to imagine Osama bin Laden. Understanding the *Covenant’s* contents is crucial for those who value freedom, the democratic lifestyle and Western society as a whole. Jews, more than all others as the proclaimed ultimate perfidious enemy of Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood, need to be aware of the rabid antisemitism contained in Hamas doctrines. Jews are to suffer death as their “rightly earned” fate to pay for the evil deeds Hamas and their universal extension, the Muslim Brotherhood, attributed to them. A few may save their own lives, provided they subject themselves to the constraints of Sharia or Islamic law.

One weighty counter point is clear; the Muslim Brotherhood is an Islamist political organization not representing all Muslims. Many estimate that of the one and a half billion Muslims worldwide, only a 15 percent minority supports the Brotherhood. This percentage may no longer hold true after 2011 and therefore a reassessment may be in order. This leads others to believe that we may be speaking of possibly 30-40 percent of the worldwide Islamic population supporting the Brotherhood, or numerically half a billion Muslims or so, quite a large minority.

This book concentrates on what the *Covenant* advocates and how those ideals played out historically, especially concerning Jews. This discussion will deal with Muslim-Jewish relations as well as the attitude in the *Covenant* toward Jewish nationalism, which culminated in the modern State of Israel. The *Covenant* was written less than three decades ago and reflects anti-Jewish attitudes, which permeated Arab/Muslim society in previous centuries and

are influential to this day. *The Hamas Covenant* is the ultimate integration of these Islamist ideals with traditional Christian European antisemitism. Committed to print, the combination became holy writ.

Whether the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas are more or less popular at any given moment is less of a concern. In early 2016 Hamas remains on the defensive after the overthrow of the Morsi regime in Egypt and its own unsuccessful military encounter with Israel known as the Protective Edge Operation. Jihadists are involved in the continuing turmoil in Libya, Syria and Iraq but have not been able to declare victory. Lately they are facing the gains of the more liberal, secular nationalist democratic trends as we note in Tunisia. Yet Jihadists often retake the offensive, evidenced by the rise of the Islamic State and its allies. Regardless, Hamas ideals are integral to the Islamist political mind in the Arab world, and are not about to vanish. Due to temporary set-backs as a result of conflict with Israel, the Egyptian blockade and the resulting economic nosedive, Hamas was negotiating entry into a short-term national unity government with Fatah as part of the Palestinian Authority framework said to be arranging general elections in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Win or lose, Hamas ideals will certainly gain traction, and the Islamic wheel will continue to turn. Hamas captured Gaza by force and may eventually take the Fatah-dominated West Bank through the ballot box, should elections take place at all. At worst, Hamas will view itself as delayed in achieving its ultimate goals, but it certainly has not conceded the battle for Israel's destruction and Islamic rule from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

Internationally, the Muslim Brotherhood and their more radical offshoots are a grave challenge to the West, especially if their ideals become main stream in the Arab world. The Islamists declare their plans outright and implement them on a practical level. These are not unbalanced or insane individuals advocating extremist Islamic ideologies, but rather highly intelligent political leaders and clerics. Too often we hear Western commentators, whether liberal or conservative, declaring extreme Islamic perspectives as "insane." The people touting Hamas doctrine are no more mentally unbalanced or illogical than the Czarists, Bolsheviks, Nazis, Maoists, Khomeinists, or those who support the democratically elected regimes in the West. It is a danger if the West declares Islamist zealous types "insane," and thereby not responsible for their actions. Alternatively,

understanding *The Hamas Covenant* ideology can be the first step in containing the real and potential threat of Jihadi Islam. Failing to do so may extract an unbearably heavy price. Successful Jihad must be well thought out; the *Covenant* shows us that Jihad is a plan, not just a whim.

For advocates of democracy and conflict resolution, no room exists for compromise as far as the Islamists are concerned. When Arabic-speaking Islamists explain their intent to conquer the world, they mean it literally. Hamas preaches “the truth” to their own people, garnering solid support for their unshakable religious values and actions. At times Hamas and other Islamists will engage in “pragmatic” policies such as a “*hudna*,” or temporary Islamic cease-fire, to ensure organizational self-preservation. A *hudna* is not a ceasefire dedicated to mutual recognition and the peace process, but rather for Islamists to gain breathing space to retrain, re-arm, and go on the offensive as a Divine command when the time is right. Their mindset is very different from a secular politician calling a cease-fire for negotiations. In the Hamas world, tactical moderation is a prudent tool during difficult times. The Islamist leadership, whether political or military, acts in the name of Allah. The Israeli/ Palestinian conflict represents the local military front for Hamas, but global Jihad is the overall strategy, and Islamic victory is the ultimate objective.

To understand Islamists, specifically Hamas, one needs a historic and ideological perspective which spans generations and emphasizes the last one hundred and fifty years. This book focuses on that timeframe, and particularly emphasizes the impact the establishment of the State of Israel has had on Islamist/Jihadi activism. In Islam, the negative image of Jews began from the time of the first clash between Jews and Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula some fourteen hundred years ago. The Koran records anti-Jewish attitudes in numerous clauses which continue to be used in promoting Islamist Judeophobia to this day. At first, the Jews were a vicious enemy. Later they became a conquered people living in the subservient “*dhimma*” status under the restrictive Charter of Omar statutes developed during the seventh and eighth centuries CE. Throughout Islamic history the dominant Jewish stereotype was of a scheming coward who would never succeed in his plots. It is crucial for anyone discussing Hamas and its Islamist allies to understand that discriminatory Islamic anti-Jewish attitudes began more than a millennium ago, prior to the rise of modern political Zionism.

The advent of Jewish nationalism triggered Islamist reactions to the Jewish struggle for equality and independence. The stereotype of the Jew shifted from a scheming coward, to one of a rising and oppressive evil at the outset of the twentieth century. By the time of Israel's independence, Islamic antisemitism, as represented by the Muslim Brotherhood, augmented itself with many Czarist/Nazi stereotypes developed during the previous century. Traditional Islamic antisemitism provided fertile ground for the integration of the two traditions, particularly in light of the successful battle for survival of the State of Israel in the geographical heart of the Arab Islamic world.

One often forgets it is the intellectuals who set the pace of thought in a community, whether in the name of peace or hatred. The power of Arab/Muslim scholars, most notably Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb and Abdullah Azzam set the tone by bringing Jihad, antisemitism, and increasing opposition to all secular ideals including Arab nationalism. These perspectives are at the forefront of modern Islamist movements in the Arab world today. The above activist ideologues were the conduit to fanaticism among Arab Islamists, most notably in their attitude toward Israel and world Jewry. Hamas sees its primary battle against Jewish national legitimacy and denies the continuation of the Jewish connection to the ancient homeland, the Land of Israel. In line with the Islamist-Jihadi understanding, the Jews broke their covenant with Allah, were banished from the Land twice and were never to return. Until the twentieth century, this theological understanding made perfect sense when looked at through the historical record of the Jewish People's expulsions, wanderings and persecutions. In the mind of Islamists, the Jewish bond to the Land was annulled for eternity. Jihadi Islam, as expressed by Hamas, adopted the worst Czarist/Nazi antisemitic stereotypes and demanded Jewish destruction, whether in Israel or the Diaspora. Still, the Islamic faithful lived and live the contradiction of a re-established independent Jewish nation in the Land of the Covenant as expounded upon in the *Tanakh*, also called the Hebrew Scriptures, or Old Testament. For Jihadi activists, battling the State of Israel became and remained the immediate primary front. It was the theological anomaly of Jewish independence, which demanded correction. The global enemy, Diaspora Jewry, was next in line.

The foundation of Palestinian Jihadi Islam pre-dates 1948, but underwent serious repression by secular Arab nationalism in the 1950s. Ironically, in the

1970s under Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood flourished again. Their regaining of power was primarily due to the Israeli focus on destroying the nationalist Palestine Liberation Organization or PLO led by Yasir Arafat. Israel unwittingly empowered the Islamists. Both secular PLO ideals and Hamas doctrines developed between the 1960s and 1980s. The secular PLO wrote and revised its ideals in the 1960s and 1970s. Hamas doctrines were committed to print in the late 1980s. There were and are cross-influences between *The Palestinian National Charter* and *The Hamas Covenant*, especially concerning policies calling for the destruction of the Jewish State. The two documents differ in their approach to the Jewish People on a global scale. Hamas seeks wide-range Jewish destruction, while the PLO denies all national memory and identity pertaining to the Jews. The PLO approach defines Judaism as a religious congregation devoid of peoplehood and homeland, discounting large portions of the *Tanakh* and Jewish historical consciousness.

An analysis of the interaction between Jewish nationalism and Palestinian Islamism is required in order to understand the unique characteristics Hamas embodies. Study must include the period well before the 1948 War and continue through 2000. The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, calling itself "Hamas" by late 1987, solidified its base despite serious disabilities, through trial and error, failure and success vis-à-vis Israel and the PLO/Fatah. From 2000 onward, Hamas won popular acclaim both through elections and the military conquest of the Gaza Strip. To date, we have over fifteen years of history revealing Hamas ideological triumph intertwined with their pragmatic approach, which is necessary to guarantee survival of the group. Most notably, Jewish nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism clashed on physical, ideological and religious levels. The conflict continues to this day.

By and large, Hamas plays a significant militant function in the worldwide Islamist movement, despite the perception by many who believe its true role is limited to the Palestine national struggle. Hamas is, in fact, one small actor in the global Islamic offensive. Along with other Islamists, Hamas, which is only nominally identified as Palestinian, takes great pride in the 2011 Islamic Awakening. Hamas made serious inroads in its struggle against Palestinian Arab secular nationalism and in its battle with the Jewish State and the West. Still, the Hamas Revolution remains incomplete as secular Palestinian national aspirations persist. Nevertheless despite difficulties, the world

Islamic Revolution including Hamas continues to move forward to attain their final objectives.

Such circumstances lead us to the overall question as to whether there can be peace with Hamas and by extension the Muslim Brotherhood. The Koran makes both positive and negative statements about Jews, Christians and others. Over the years, Muslim jurists have abrogated, or abolished, the idea of reconciling positive and negative contradictions in the Koran. They disregard positive statements and emphasize demands for discriminatory *dhimma* status regulations and Jihad against adversaries. Specifically, abrogation is fully invoked by denying God's covenant with the Israelite/Jewish People and their rights to the Land of Israel, precepts clearly stated in the Koran. Abrogation may be the key to conflict resolution, not only with Hamas, but with the entire Muslim world. As Muslim jurists reserve the right to nullify positive comments about non-Muslims in the Koran, they also have the power to reinstate such beliefs, thus canceling calls for Jihad and the destruction and dominance over Jews, Christians and others. Global Islamic leadership can use their own discretion in acting within the theological bounds of responsibility and using abrogation for a pluralistic interpretation of the Koran, as opposed to encouraging Jihad and erasing possibilities for peace. This suggestion may sound naïve, yet when we consider the alternative of continuing Jihad perpetuated against the entire world in an era of weapons of mass destruction, "reverse abrogation" may be the only answer that can alter Islamist thinking at its core. Attempting to impose Western ideals on Islamists offers virtually no possibility of curtailing conflict.

#### **A Personal Perspective**

To conclude this introduction, I offer my personal perspective on these issues. I originally moved to Israel, or made "*aliya*," in the 1970s. I followed Labor Zionist ideals advocating secular Jewish nationalism and universal socialist humanist values, believing all people could find their place on earth. Overall, this meant I believed in compromise concerning the Land of Israel and the establishment of a Palestinian State, provided the Palestinians accepted Israel's right to exist. Thus, I supported the Rabin-Peres initiative and the Oslo Accords in the 1990s. To me it seemed clear that Israel was established to ensure the continued existence of the Jewish People. In order to end the decades-old conflict with the Palestinian Arabs, there needed to



be a compromise and the re-establishment of the two-state solution rejected by the Palestinians and Arab world in 1947-48. An agreed upon “End of Conflict” through the establishment of an independent Palestinian State would ensure both groups’ existence and allow each to preserve their national and religious identities through nation state sovereignty and joint security arrangements. Neither side was obligated to accept the other side’s narrative as the defining truth, but they would commit themselves to understanding the other side’s narrative was the absolute truth for him or her despite years of antagonism. One would look to the future in building a better tomorrow with two national entities living side by side.

From the Israeli perspective, *The Palestinian National Charter* needed to be revised by the secular PLO/Fatah. A two-thirds majority as proclaimed by the PLO itself could accomplish this change, particularly since we are not speaking of a sanctified document, but rather one admittedly written by men. Altering the *The Palestinian National Charter*, as was agreed to in late 1998, would prove Palestinian goodwill and pave the way for conflict resolution. In comparison, *The Hamas Covenant* cannot be altered; its contents are considered the word of Allah. The *The Palestinian National Charter* was never changed and the Oslo peace process broke down when it seemed the sides were very close to agreement. It appeared to me the Hamas ideological impact was much greater than previously imagined and should be credited with heavily influencing secular Palestinian and Fatah/PLO thinking, yet for years I kept those thoughts on hold.

In the 1990s as a result of the Oslo Accords there was great hope for conflict resolution. That hope was deferred indefinitely in 2000 by what is often referred to as the “Second Intifada,” but in reality was a war, or “Low Intensity Conflict.” From that point on, Fatah and Hamas appeared unified in their anti-Israel approach. Even in North America, most of the pro-Palestinian groups on college campuses rarely argued over the terms of the Oslo Accords and the conditions for a two-state solution, but rather they sought to influence the average student not only to question Israel’s legitimacy, but to demand its destruction. The idea for this book came about from my own and my colleagues’ experiences on college campuses engaging with the general student body during lecture tours pertaining to Arab-Israel issues of war and peace. In particular, discussions with Zionist student activists, both Jewish and non-Jewish, proved most informative. The pro-

Israel students were constantly under attack in the never-ending debate concerning Palestinian and Israeli matters. Even advocating the two-state solution, as most pro-Israel students did, was usually not good enough. The issues were less about borders, settlements, security or even “Palestinian refugees,” but rather the continued questioning of Israel’s right to exist. The distinct tinge of antisemitism was quite noticeable, especially when confronting the unholy alliance of certain Muslim and Arab activists working alongside the extreme leftist fringe-anarchists. Such attitudes manifested with questions and debates laced with inferred accusations of Jewish influence, especially concerning finances and the media, thereby forcing US support for Israel against American and Western interests.

Simultaneously, a very different local political event was unwinding on the hilltop where I reside in central Galilee. I live in the small town of Eshchar, which at the time had 76 families. It is a community advocating pluralism concerning religious, secular and traditional Jewish lifestyle. In 1998, we were faced with questions concerning our neighbors living in the unrecognized Bedouin village of Arab al-Nai’m. They lived in corrugated tin shacks and were expected to move at the government’s behest to one of the neighboring Arab or Bedouin villages, a plan they refused to accept. Some of my more liberal neighbors decided to help the Bedouin tribe in various ways, often putting themselves at loggerheads with the regional council and by extension the authorities in Jerusalem. With enough issues on my plate as the volunteer local council chairman of our community, the Bedouin subject was not my priority, though demands to take action to help Arab al-Na’im mounted. External forces also began to add pressure, including the arrival of certain left-wing activists from outside organizations—whose motives I often questioned, inquiries by the press, and warnings that the calm relations between our two communities could be disturbed. It seemed imperative to meet with the Bedouin local council. I was forewarned there would be a litany of complaints from their representatives, which proved accurate.

That same day I met them in June 1998, we agreed upon a reasonable geographical border between our two communities. Within a few weeks our general assembly approved advancement of the border policy. We convinced the ministry of interior and the regional council to allow for the development and establishment of a permanent Bedouin village. It was made clear to us that such an initiative by two communities was basically unheard of, and that

we would need to bear responsibility for the consequences of our decisions. At that point, the government, regional council and local volunteers took over. Personally, I was never involved again except for dealing with a technical planning issue or two.

The community border agreement led to what would become a short-lived exaggerated optimism on my part. I believed Jews and Arabs could work together locally and that the Oslo Accords would succeed in ending the clash between Israel and the Palestinians. After the failed talks between Ehud Barak and Yasir Arafat in the summer of 2000, Arab riots exploded in Galilee. On our hill though, despite certain attempts to incite our neighbors against us, relations remained cordial.

Once again I thought in terms of Hamas as the spoiler. No doubt other forces were at work in the Galilee, but certainly the Hamas inspired “Islamic Front” in Israel had an influence either directly, or through more secular aspects of Palestinian nationalism. Hamas doctrine and antisemitism were now in our backyard. Just five years previously it appeared peace was around the corner. On the other hand, Arab al-Na'im moved ahead with plans for permanent establishment, although not all went smoothly due to drawn out negotiations between residents and the government concerning town planning, lands, and financing. In 2013, infrastructure and housing construction commenced.

Such divergent experiences made me ponder the possibilities for peace. Whatever understandings existed on our hill would not work with more extreme elements. Between developments with Arab al-Na'im, the Galilee riots, my acquaintance with student issues in America, and the overall situation in this corner of the Middle East, I realized the pressing necessity for conflict resolution. Islam's doctrines and underlying attitudes had to be considered for their impact on all Muslims, including those with more secular viewpoints. I began living a contradiction as I witnessed the almost daily terror attacks and suicide-homicide bombings in the early 2000s. The need to investigate Islamic extremism became more paramount as did finding non-military solutions, if any existed. Hamas won the Palestinian parliamentary elections in early 2006, overthrew the PA government in Gaza in June 2007, and essentially established an Islamic mini-state, clashing with Israel in the Cast Lead Operation of 2008-09.

Together, the popular support for and rise of Hamas forced my realization that the roots of this renewed anti-Zionism and antisemitism were far deeper than I previously imagined. Liberal democratic peace-making solutions inspired by Enlightenment ideas would be of little help. Would the future hold never-ending conflict, or was there hope? I needed to explore some very disturbing realities, and only then look for answers. In retrospect, two major truths emerged: *hudnas* do not lead to peace, and Islamist ideals will rebound and therefore need to be fundamentally altered as relates to non-Muslims, most notably Jews.

At that time, I made the decision to scrutinize *The Hamas Covenant* and to write a short booklet to get to the core of the matter. Of course, as we all know, once delving into a specific realm of research there are far too many topics to cover and questions to answer to limit writing to only a short booklet. This work is the result of my studies. Although reading this book may not be the most pleasant at times, my hope is that people will become more aware and better educated upon doing so. After all, it is a matter of self-preservation, not only for the State of Israel and Jews wherever their domicile, but for anyone who refuses to accept the dictates of Jihadi Islam.

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