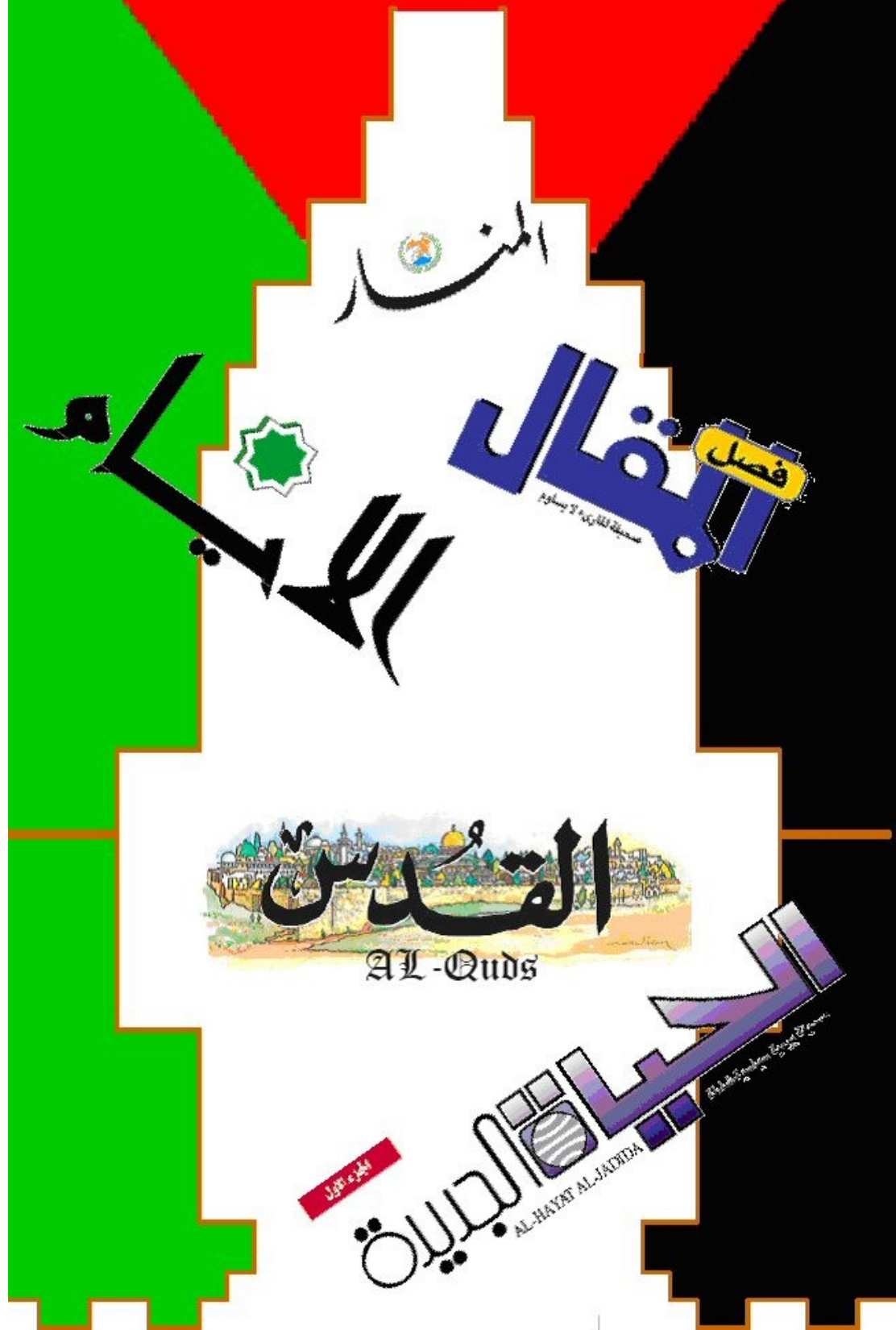


Inside the PA



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Editor's note:

Welcome to the seventh edition of "Inside the PA," a weekly on-line publication designed to provide an open-source and yet valuable insight into the workings of the Palestinian Authority. We will review important statements by senior PA officials and developments within Palestinian society as taken from the Palestinian and Arab media.

QUOTABLE

" Only force has produced results."

-- Hamas leader Masha'al sees no reason for a peace settlement with Israel.

This Week in the PA

- *In London, Quartet convenes to discuss Hamas victory*
- *In Ramallah, Hamas recruits support for government*
- *In Ramallah, Fatah holds protests over W. Bank and Gaza Strip*
- *In Ramallah, PA Chairman Abbas leaves for Jordan*
- *In Gaza City, Hamas delegation leaves for Europe*
- *In Gaza City, Hamas's Masha'al seeks to enter Gaza Strip*
- *In Gaza City, Fatah gunmen raid EU office*

NEWS DIGEST

1. MASHA'AL BECOMES KING OF PALESTINIANS
2. PA FORCES REJECT HAMAS CONTROL
3. FATAH SAYS 'NO' TO HAMAS
4. HAMAS STRATEGY REMAINS FLUID
5. PA DOES NOT CONCEDE ON INTERNATIONAL AID
6. PALESTINIAN VOTERS LIED TO POLLSTERS

Masha'al Becomes King of the Palestinians

The Hamas victory in the Palestinian legislative elections last week makes Khaled Masha'al the kingmaker of the Palestinian people. Masha'al, one of the bloodiest terrorists in the Middle East, will decide Hamas policy, including whether Hamas or its allies attack Israel or the United States.

Masha'al, 49, could control hundreds of millions of dollars per year pledged by the Arab and Islamic world as well as the European Union. He will have access to the new guns and equipment provided by the West and will represent the Palestinian Authority to such countries as Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, Saudi Arab and Turkey -- in other words, the Islamic world.



Al Quds. Jan. 28, 2006

PA Chairman Abbas shows Hamas leader Haniyeh the chair of the prime minister.

The PA-controlled media have focused on Masha'al regarding him as the leader of the Hamas movement and the new force in the Palestinian people. Palestinian newspapers feature Masha'al on the front page of even the PA-owned dailies, such as Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida.

The Palestinian dailies extensively quote Masha'al and regard his words as Hamas policy. In contrast, PA Mahmoud Abbas has been ignored.

But to understand the true hierarchy in Hamas one must read the movement's newspaper, Al Risala. There, the pecking order is clear. The late Hamas founder Ahmed Yassin is on the front page, Masha'al then leads the inside page, followed by Mahmoud Zahar and Ismail Haniyeh.

Masha'al has his bosses as well. They are Iran and Syria, both of whom employ terrorist groups as part of their military strategy. The meaning of this is that the Palestinian people, with the full support of the international community, have entrusted their fate to two of the biggest sponsors of terrorism in the world.

The first goal of Masha'al is to transfer the PA in a Hamas state. He rejects the U.S.-drafted roadmap that calls for a Palestinian state. He said there is no point in negotiations with Israel.

"Only force has produced results," Masha'al said. "Hamas will continue its strategy of resistance until the Palestinians' legitimate rights are restored. It will not compromise with Israel and will remain committed to the step-by-step policy on reform of Palestinian affairs."



Al Quds. Jan. 29, 2006

Hamas leaves gun at the door of the prime minister's office

Masha'al no longer openly calls for Israel's destruction. Instead, he says the Hamas

charter stipulates the end of the "Israeli occupation."

"The statute does not in fact call for the destruction of Israel," Masha'al told the Italian daily La Repubblica. "In Arabic, it says: 'End the Israeli occupation of Palestine.' We don't want to eliminate them, only to obtain our rights. For that reason, the paragraph remains."

Masha'al was born near Ramallah and his family left for Kuwait during Arab-Israeli war in 1967. He studied physics at the University of Kuwait and eventually was appointed a professor. He also became active in the Arab campaign to destroy Israel.

In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait and Masha'al fled to Jordan, where he dedicated himself to Hamas. In 1997, Masha'al was attacked by Mossad agents in Amman and injected with a poison. Two Mossad agents were captured by Jordanian police and Israel agreed to provide an antidote that saved Masha'al.

Jordan's King Hussein also forced Israel to free Hamas founder Ahmed Yassin. Later, Hussein expelled Masha'al to Qatar and from there to Damascus. Masha'al became the head of Hamas's political bureau and directed millions of dollars to Hamas operatives in the Gaza Strip as well as Judea and Samaria.

Since the assassination of Yassin in 2003, Masha'al has become the undisputed leader of Hamas. Masha'al decides Hamas policy, operations and financing; he has obtained tens of millions of dollars from Iran and formed the cooperation between Hamas and Hizbullah.

In December 2005, Hamas announced it would become part of Iran's military arm. Masha'al, during a visit to Teheran, said Hamas would help retaliate for any Israeli or U.S. attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. This was the first time the Sunni-based Hamas offered to join a foreign power, and in this instance it was a Shi'ite rival.

The Hamas victory has galvanized the Arab street. For rich Gulf Arab states, Hamas will become a leading cause. Countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia would be able to erase a PA debt or compensate for a Western financial pullout. Hamas might also garner tens of millions of dollars from mosques throughout the world.



Al Ayyam. Jan. 29, 2006

'Top of the News':

Palestinian family waits for their meal.

Sunnis in Iraq will also be bolstered by the Hamas victory. Hamas has legitimized jihad as a genuine expression of the Arab people.

Thus Arab leaders are eager to congratulate Masha'al in wake of the Hamas victory. This includes Qatari Emir Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, one of the leading Gulf allies of the United States.

Masha'al said that as the de facto head of the PA he would release terrorists under its control. This would include Ahmed Saadat, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Saadat has been held in Jericho under Western supervision for ordering the assassination of Israeli Tourist Minister Rehavam Zee'vi in Jerusalem in 2001.

Masha'al plans to come to the Gaza Strip within the next few days where he would find safe haven in what has become a major terrorist region in the Middle East.

The PA-controlled Al Quds daily said the EU wants to help Masha'al settle in the Gaza Strip. On January. 27, Al Quds quoted sources close to the PA as saying that the EU plans to ask the United States to press Israel to allow Masha'al's entry to the Gaza

Strip as early as this week.

Masha'al has made it clear that his job would be to lead the Islamic war against Israel. He has called for the formation of a Hamas-led Palestinian army in the Gaza Strip that would include PA security forces.

"We are ready to unify the weapons of Palestinian factions, with Palestinian consensus, and form an army like any independent state," Masha'al said. "We have succeeded in the resistance and we will succeed in politics, reforms and change. We have been chosen by our people and we assume our responsibility."

PA Security Forces Reject Hamas Control

The Palestinian Authority will not allow Hamas to take control over the security forces. Interior Minister Nasser Yusef told a police graduation ceremony on January 29 that security forces take their orders only from PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. Yusef said Abbas remains the commander of PA police and security agencies.

The PA, Yusef said, would protect government offices and institutions. He rejected Hamas statements of forming an army together with PA forces. "We will not allow anybody to form a separate military apparatus in this country," Yusef said..



Al Quds. Jan. 29, 2006

Palestinian wonders whether he will still work after Hamas victory.

The day after Yusef made these statements, Fatah gunmen tried to raid the European Union office in Gaza City. Dozens of Fatah members, armed with assault rifles and

grenade launchers rallied in front of the EU office and fired in the air. They warned Danish and Norwegian nationals that they would be vulnerable to attack after an anti-Muslim cartoon was published in a Scandinavian newspaper.

"We warn the citizens of the above-mentioned governments against not taking this warning seriously because our groups are ready to implement it across the Gaza Strip," one of the gunmen said, reading from a prepared statement.

PA police did not make any arrests. Fatah gunmen have been abducting foreigners, particularly Westerners, over the last year. Later, the Danish representative to the PA apologized for the newspaper cartoon.

Fatah also organized similar protests in the West Bank city of Bethlehem. Hundreds of people marched from the Dehaishe refugee camp along the Bethlehem-Jerusalem road to the UNRWA.

Fatah Says 'No' to Hamas

Fatah has launched a massive show of force meant to mobilize its forces throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinian Authority dailies featured articles and pictures of Fatah rallies that demonstrated against Hamas.

The PA dailies tried to understand the Hamas victory of the Palestinian Legislative Council and the defeat of Fatah. Al Ayyam contained column after column with such headlines as "Fatah -- Where to?" "Will Hamas Repeat the Fatah Experience," "What After the Hamas Victory?"

On January 27, a key leader of the Fatah Executive Committee told the Al Ayyam daily that the committee decided not to participate in a Hamas-led government. The meeting was chaired by PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, who is also the leading Fatah figure in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"The decision of not sharing government led by Hamas was taken unanimously," the unidentified Fatah leader said. "We will be in opposition."

Abbas also decided to fire Fatah members who ran as independents in the PLC elections.

At least 74 such candidates were expelled from the movement, Al Quds reported on January 30.



Al Quds. Jan. 28, 2006

**Palestinian floating on 'fanciful slogans'
lands toward the cactus of 'reality.'**

As a result, Palestinian dailies pulled out the stops and reported on Fatah demonstrations and clashes throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Unlike the ambiguity that characterized such developments only a week ago, the newspapers identified Fatah as the force that raided the PLC and shattered windows.

Al Ayyam featured a full page of photographs of Fatah gunmen calling for the resignation of the Fatah Central Committee. Across the page were editorials that criticized Fatah, with headlines such as "The Crisis of Victory," and "Fatah Failed in the PA Leadership ... Will the Way Be Paved to the Opposition?"

"We have to work now on rebuilding Fatah movement to back again as strong as it was," Fatah veteran and PA negotiator Saeb Erekat said. The Fatah-sponsored Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades resorted to threats against Fatah politicians. Al Aqsa issued a statement that threatened to "liquidate" any politician who joins a Hamas government.

Hamis Strategy Remains Fluid

Hamis has remained elusive in its short-term goals in the aftermath of its capture of the Palestinian Legislative Council. The movement, seeking to avoid an immediate showdown with the international community, has examined several options.

One option is to form a Cabinet of technocrats. The ministers would be Hamas-aligned professionals that would not be directly identified with the movement. Such a Palestinian government could present itself to forums around the world without the taint of terrorism.

Hamas leader Ghazi Hamad outlined the strategy in an interview with Al Ayyam on January 27. He said Hamas was examining the formation of a so-called Cabinet of technocrats. Hamad said such a government could attract Fatah support as well as participation.

Hamad, regarded as a liberal in Hamas, said the movement in the Gaza Strip was consulting with leaders in the Diaspora. He said Hamas wants to form a wide-based Palestinian government.

"The option for lining up the government is open, including the formation of a technocrat government," Hamad said. "But the paramount priority of Hamas is to form a national coalition government so Hamas offers all to share in the government particularly Fatah."



All eyes on Hamas-dominated PA

Hamad, however, said Fatah has not expressed much interest. He did not indicate the identities of the proposed new ministers and whether they would contain members of the previous Cabinet.

"Hamas is interested to form the next government with a wide national sharing," Hamad

said. "But the signals from Fatah are discouraging."

Hamas has revised its message, particularly in interviews to the Western media. Hamas leaders such as Ismail Haniyeh and Mahmoud Zahar have raised the prospect of a so-called hudna, or ceasefire with Israel in an attempt to maintain aid from the West.

On January 30, Haniyeh held a news conference in Gaza City in which he appealed to donor nations not to cut aid to the PA. Haniyeh said the Hamas would ensure that any aid undergo proper accounting.

"We in Hamas are ready to meet and have an open dialogue with the Quartet," Haniyeh said. "We assure you that all the money will be spent under your supervision."

In contrast, Hamas leaders in Damascus and other Middle East capitals ruled out any change in the positions of the movement. They said they would not be pressured by Western threats of an aid cut-off.

"Cutting off funds now will be a punishment of the Palestinian people, not of Hamas," said Mohammed Nazzal, member of the Damascus-based Hamas political bureau, told the Al Arabiya satellite channel on Jan. 30. "If the European Union countries and the American administration see this as a means that could lead to a change in Hamas' strategic position then they are dreaming and are mistaken. Hamas will never accept that."

PA Does Not Concede on International Aid

The Palestinian Authority might end up under Hamas control. But the PA has not given up on its expectation of foreign aid.

The Palestinian bureaucracy continues to highlight its need for professionals capable of garnering foreign aid from Western donors. Advertisements in PA dailies call for bilingual university graduates able to work with Western governments.



Al Ayyam. Jan. 28, 2006

West stops aid to Palestinians.

On January 29, Al Quds contained a host of ads for Palestinian consultants. The consultants would be required to recruit aid from Canada for projects that include the development of the industrial park in Ramallah.

The issue of international aid is regarded as the litmus test of any successful PA government. About \$900 million of the PA's \$1.6 billion annual budget comes from foreign aid.

The PA and Palestinians receive \$400 million from the United States and another 300 million euro from the European Union. Israel, through the relay of sales tax funds, is also a major contributor. The PA has 137,000 employees.

"We will see how Hamas will supply \$120 million to pay the PA employee salaries and how it will coordinate with the Israelis to help sick patients and merchants as well as retreat from its previous accusations that we are callers of Israel," Mohammed Dahlan, seen as the leading Fatah figure in the Gaza Strip, said.

Fatah leaders, including PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, have sought to serve as a contrast to Hamas, which has ruled out recognition of Israel. Despite his failure to implement his platform, Abbas told PA television on January 26 that he would negotiate

with Israel and disarm terrorist groups.

"I am committed to implementing program on which you elected me a year ago," Abbas said. "It is a program based on negotiations and peaceful settlement with Israel."

Abbas has pledged to bypass the Hamas government in negotiating with Israel. He said such negotiations could be conducted through the PLO, of which he is chairman.

"We are going to reactivate the role of the PLO," Abbas said.

Palestinian Voters Lied to Pollsters

On late Jan. 25, all the major pollsters predicted a Fatah victory. The pollsters predicted that Fatah would beat Hamas by up to seven percent in elections for Palestinian Legislative Council.

The next day, the official results came in and Hamas trounced Fatah - 74-45. The pollsters were shocked and Fatah was furious. How did the pollsters manage to get it so wrong?

Nabil Kukali, director of the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion, spent the next few days trying to find an answer. On January 29, he published a study of the PLC elections and the exit polls taken.

Kukali's conclusion, published in Al Quds, was that Palestinians who voted for Hamas lied. Kukali said Hamas voters told pollsters that they voted for Fatah.



**Arab interior ministers meeting:
'Democracy is unimportant on the road to a Palestinian state.'**

The study discusses 16 reasons why the exit polls flunked. The bottom line was that the voters lied.

Kukali said Fatah and independent voters were simply afraid to tell the pollsters that they voted for Hamas. He said many of them that the pollsters were Fatah activists who would report the voters to the authorities.

Many of these voters worked for the PA or were aligned with Fatah. They were scared of endangering their status.

The Palestinian attitude toward pollsters has raised questions regarding the veracity of other surveys. On January 30, a survey by the Ramallah-based Near East Consulting institute reported that 73 percent want any Hamas-dominated PA to end its advocacy for the destruction of Israel.

The survey also reported that 84 percent of the 1,200 Palestinians surveyed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip support a peace agreement with Israel. The poll said 86 percent of respondents PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas to remain in his post.