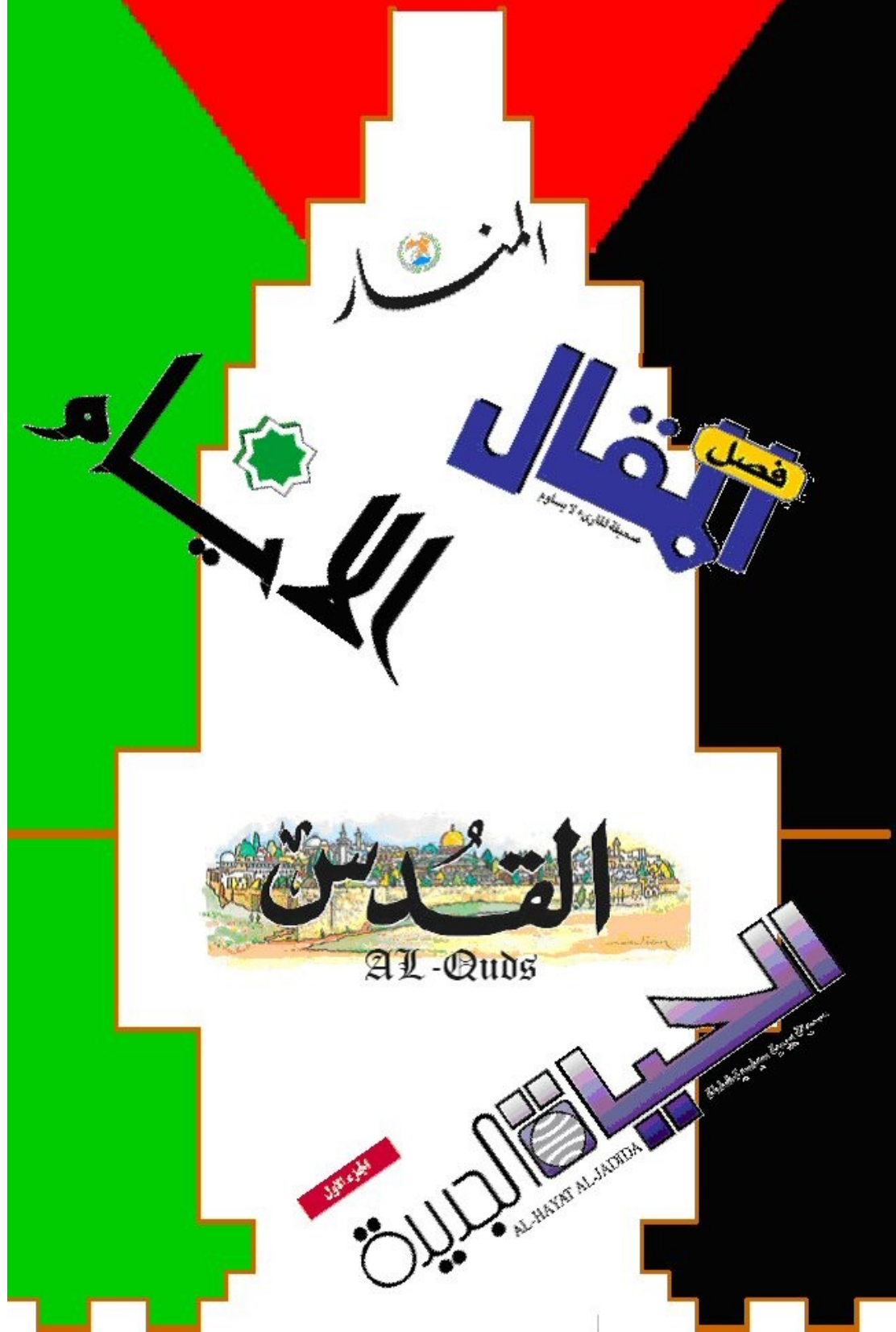


Inside the PA



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Editor's note:

Welcome to the ninth 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

" Hamas enjoys political flexibility without giving up Palestinian legal rights."

— Hamas leader Zahar dismisses the prospect of a funding cutoff to the PA.

This Week in the PA

- *In Doha, Hamas delegation tours Qatar*
- *In Cairo, Hamas leaders meet to discuss strategy*
- *In Ramallah, PLC prepares to convene*
- *In Ramallah, German FM Steinmeier meets PA leaders*

NEWS DIGEST

1. PA TURNS TO ISLAM
2. HAMAS AGENDA: CONTROL OF THE PA, WAR AGAINST ISRAEL
3. PA NO LONGER CONDEMNS ATTACKS ON ISRAEL
4. PA PANICS AS HAMAS ARRIVES
5. ABBAS DISAPPEARS
6. ISLAMIC JIHAD DEVELOPS EXTENDED-RANGE ROCKET

PA Turns to Islam

The Fatah movement might be going to the opposition, but the PA-owned media has found Islam. PA dailies and media, including those owned by the Fatah movement, have been adopting Islamic symbols, rhetoric and even advertisements. The newspapers have become boosters of Hamas and certainly its agenda of Islamic resistance.

The PA-owned Al Hayat Al Jadida is a prime example of this phenomenon. For the last decade, this was the most strident nationalist daily in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and stood for Palestinian militancy that appeared almost secular in nature.

No longer. Over the last few weeks, Al Hayat Al Jadida has turned perceptibly to support a Hamas agenda in both images and content. Hamas now commands the front page; The PA has disappeared.

As a result, the newspaper crowed over Russia's invitation to Hamas for talks with the leadership in Moscow. Next to the article published on February 11 was a photograph of women holding a Koran in a demonstration on Jerusalem's Temple Mount against cartoons that appeared in European newspapers.

The newspaper accused Israel of preventing prayer at Al Aqsa by limiting worshippers to those 45 and over. Nearby were ads for Radio Quran in Nablus, a Hamas-aligned station that features Koran readings, Islamic thought and programs for Muslim children.

Al Hayat Al Jadida columnists, not long ago ardent critics of Hamas, have become the boosters of the movement. Yusef Al Qazaza might be a Fatah employee and, thus, a supporter of the Palestinian agreements with Israel. But today, Al Qazaza supports Hamas's position to deny recognition of and negotiations with Israel. The headline of Al Qazaza's column on February 11 said all: "Recognition for What?"

Still, the embrace of the PA-owned media of Hamas has not been without qualms. The other PA-owned daily, Al Ayyam, stresses Russia's condition that Hamas must recognize Israel and support peace activities.



Al Hayat Al Jadida. February 11, 2006

A foreign gift to the Palestinian people turns out to be rotten.

Another way in which Hamas is still being criticized in print is with regard to its silence concerning Israeli assassinations of Fatah and Jihad operatives. Al Aqsa military commander, Mohammed Hijazi, wondered why Hamas has not protested the death of Palestinian fighters. "What is strange is the Hamas position that has not condemned the killing of the resistance leaders," Hijazi said.

Even Al Hayat Al Jadida has left plenty of room for questions to Hamas. In an "open letter to the Hamas leadership," Jenin attorney Ghassan Barham congratulated Hamas on its victory and then proceeded to propose an agenda for any new PA government. The agenda included reform, end of poverty and the implementation of government decisions.



Al Quds. February 11, 2006

**The Danish cartoons controversy
conceals the crises in Iraq and the Palestinian Authority.**

But Barham makes it clear that he shares Hamas's strategy. He said the Palestinians want Hamas to confront Israel, the European and the United States and not blink in the face of threats to cut off foreign aid. Barham also saw no benefits to dealing with Israel.

"Negotiations with Israel achieved nothing except for corruption," Hijazi said.

Hamas Agenda: Control of the PA, War Against Israel

Hamas has released its agenda that stresses control of the Palestinian Authority, including security agencies, as well as war against Israel.

Hamas's leader in the Gaza Strip, Mahmoud Zahar, said any government led by his movement would place security at the top of the agenda. In an interview with Egyptian Nile television on February 7, Zahar also stressed honest government, justice and transparency in finances and investment.

But the top of the Hamas agenda was Israel. Zahar pledged that Hamas would not

recognize Israel or end its war against the Jewish state.



Al Quds. Feb. 11, 2006

**Hamas caught between the alarm
of Israel's Olmert and the welcome of Russia's Putin.**

"Hamas will not abandon or budge a single inch from the Palestinian people and will keep its weapons as long as the Israeli occupation remains in Palestinian lands," Zahar said.

Zahar dismissed fears that the PA would lose foreign funding from the West. He said Hamas would increase significantly aid from Arab and Islamic countries.

"Around 60 percent of the PA funds comes from those countries, thus, we are aspiring to maintain such aid and increase them if possible," Zahar said. "Hamas enjoys political flexibility without giving up Palestinian legal rights."

Indeed, Hamas leaders insist that none of the Arab countries have pressed the movement to recognize Israel. This has included Egypt, the largest Arab ally of the United States and

a longtime host of Hamas and other Palestinian groups. Egypt, led by intelligence chief Omar Suleiman, has been holding talks with Hamas over the last week in an attempt to ensure the smooth transfer of power from Fatah.

"The issue of recognizing the Hebrew state wasn't discussed in the meeting as they know that it's totally rejected by Hamas today and in the future," Hamas leader Ismail Haniya said.

Indeed, the PA media have confirmed that Egypt has been defending Hamas from international pressure. The media quoted Egyptian presidential political adviser Osama El Baz as saying on February 7 that Hamas should not be pressured. Earlier, El Baz met Masha'al.

"No party has the right to place conditions on the Palestinians or to ask them to make concessions," El Baz said.

Hamas leaders stress that it would not concede on their demand for control of PA security agencies. They warned that any law passed by the outgoing Palestinian Legislative Council would be overturned.

"We expect the Hamas-led government to control the security services which according to the law fall under the responsibility of the interior minister," Hamas spokesman Mushir Al Masri said.

Khaled Masha'al, regarded as the de facto chief of Hamas, said the movement would not accept a government with "reduced authority." The official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported on February 8 that Masha'al said Hamas would maintain its right to control all areas of the PA, including security.

Masha'al said Hamas's leading priority was "ending the Israeli occupation of the

Palestinian land." Later, Masha'al revised his message in an interview with the BBC, saying a "long-term truce" with Israel was possible.

"We now say that if Israel withdraws to the 1967 borders, there could be peace and security in the region and agreements between the sides until the international community finds a way to solve everybody's problems," Masha'al said on February 8. "Any truce would be long-term but limited, because there's a Palestinian reality the international community must deal with. There are those kicked out of their land in 1948, the international community must find a solution for those people."

"When Israel changes, come and ask me to change," Masha'al added.

PA No Longer Condemns Attacks on Israel

The Palestinian Authority has halted condemnation of Palestinian attacks on Israel. Instead, the PA has directed its attention against Israeli retaliation.

The PA media no longer criticizes the daily Palestinian missile attacks from the Gaza Strip against Israel. The attacks have been conducted largely by the ruling Fatah movement and Islamic Jihad.

PA-owned newspapers and electronic media refer to every Palestinian who attacks Israel a "martyr," a term that often makes his family eligible for aid. This term applies to all those Palestinians who wage attacks, regardless of their target – even if it is the Gaza Strip border terminal at Karni, the main crossing point for cargo to and from the area.



Al Hayat Al Jadida. Feb. 12, 2006

Palestinian seeks to compare Muslim aid to European aid

This appeared to mark a change from 2005 when the PA occasionally dismissed Palestinian missile strikes against Israel as ineffective. PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and Interior Minister Nasser Yusef had maintained that 90 percent of Palestinian missile launches ended up in the Gaza Strip rather than in Israel.

Instead, the Interior Ministry now condemns Israeli air strikes on Palestinian missile gunners. On February 7, the ministry issued a statement that called on the international community to stop the Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip.

"The Israeli government will take responsibility for the outcome of such attacks, which resulted in the death of seven Palestinians in the past 72 hours," the statement said.

PA Panics As Hamas Arrives

The Palestinian Authority has sought to undo its security policy as Hamas prepares to take over the government.

The PA has released 33 operatives from the Islamic Jihad. The 33 had been detained in Jericho for about two years on security offenses concerning attacks against Israel.

Palestinian sources told the Al Quds daily on February 10 that some of the detainees had completed their sentences. They said the order for the release of the Jihad detainees was issued by PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas.

Other detainees were kept in Jericho to protect them against Israeli attacks. They had been wanted by Israeli authorities for killing or injuring Israelis. These Jihad operatives were ordered to stay in Jericho.

Jihad leader Nafez Assam said the release was the result of an agreement between the PA and Islamic Jihad. He did not elaborate.



Al Quds. Feb. 10, 2006

**The anonymity of the kidnapers and their victims,
'friends of the Palestinian people.'**

Abbas's attitude had been drastically different when an Egyptian diplomat was abducted by gunmen in the Gaza Strip on February 9. Hossam Museli, identified as the Egyptian military attaché in the Gaza Strip, was abducted by a group termed the Al Ahrar Brigades.

At that time Abbas and Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei issued several statements published on the front page of the Palestinian dailies that condemned the abduction. The newspapers also published cartoons and columns that criticized the Fatah practice of kidnapping foreigners, particularly those responsible to develop the PA territories.

PA security forces searched everywhere for the Egyptian military attaché. Even Hamas announced its participation in rescue efforts. By February 11, the Interior Ministry had announced that Museli was found unharmed.

In anticipation of a Hamas-led government, the PA has also sought to institute last-minute personnel changes to help Fatah officials. Hamas's Palestinian Information Center reported that Fatah members were being promoted in several ministries as well as in the PA radio and television industry.

"Any decisions of such nature without any legal bases will be dealt with accordingly," Hamas leader Khaled Masha'al said on February 8.

Abbas Disappears

The Palestinian Authority has a president, or chairman. But you wouldn't know it from reading the newspapers.

PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas has virtually disappeared from the front pages of Palestinian dailies. Abbas, who led his Fatah movement to a resounding defeat in the

Palestinian Legislative Council elections, no longer represents a significant force in

Palestinian society.

Indeed, the only prominent coverage Abbas has received in the Palestinian press is the issuance of denials that he will resign. On February 11, the Palestinian dailies placed a small item on the top of the front page that claimed that Abbas was not being pressured to resign.

The stories quoted Fatah leader Farouk Khaddoumy, who denied that he sought Abbas's resignation. Khaddoumy said he did not issue a statement to any Palestinian newspaper calling for the PA chairman to step down.

Ironically, the impact of Abbas's resignation appeared so slight that even the story was buried in Al Quds, the largest circulation daily in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

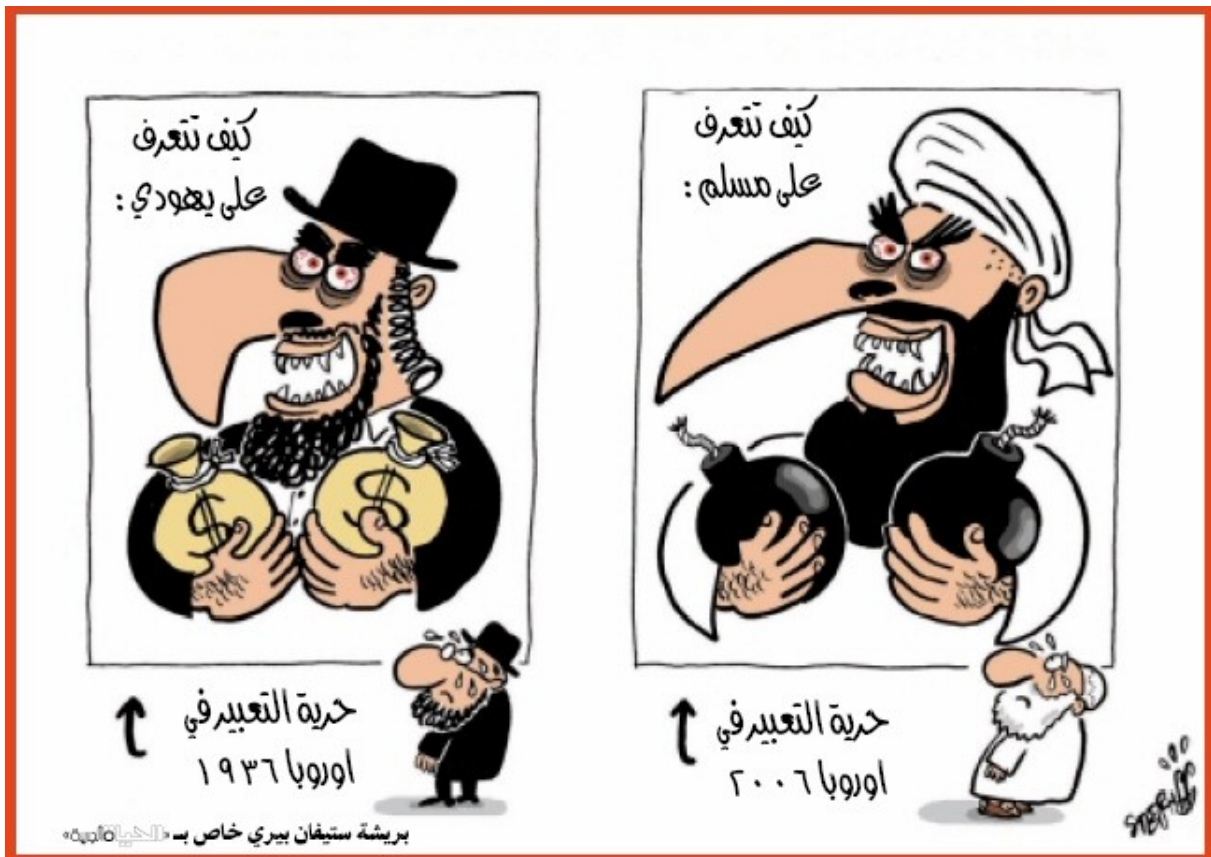
Islamic Jihad Develops Extended-Range Rocket

Islamic Jihad has announced the development of an extended-range rocket.

Jihad's military wing, Al Quds Brigades, said on February 11 that it has succeeded in developing a rocket that could be fired from the Gaza Strip and strike the Israeli city of Ashkelon. Al Quds said the rocket was more lethal than previous Jihad weapons.

Islamic Jihad spokesman Abu Hamza said the engineering unit has produced a new variant of the Quds rocket. He explained that the new rocket was an enhanced version of the Quds 101 rocket already deployed by Jihad.

Quds 101 was said to have been tested by the organization and to have already undergone production. The new weapon was said to measure 2.3 meters; Abu Hamza reported that it was capable of striking Ashkelon, and that Jihad would continue to develop its rocket launching capabilities.



Al Hayat Al Jadida. February 8, 2006

Europe, 1936: 'How to Recognize a Jew.'

Europe, 2006: 'How to Recognize a Muslim.'

Fatah, for its part, also announced that the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in the Gaza Strip has acquired an extended-range rocket; it is said to have a range of 13-16 kilometers and a more powerful warhead that contains TNT. Until now, Fatah has used the Kassam-2 missile developed by Hamas. Fatah said it has also acquired Soviet-origin Grad missiles.

On February 9, the Palestinian Human Rights Center reported that a Palestinian rocket fired from the Gaza Strip struck a home in Beit Lahiya. The center said the rocket traveled 300 meters and struck the home belonging to Sabr Mohammed Abdul Dayem. The rocket exploded in the living room.