

Why the Anti-Israel Terror Never Seems to End

Last month's announcement that Ismail Haniyeh had been chosen as the new head of Hamas was hardly surprising, nor does it portend any change of great significance. Under Haniyeh's predecessor, Khaled Mashaal, Hamas retained its place as one of the most evil and notorious terror organizations. The difference is that unlike Mashaal, Haniyeh was actually born and is based in Gaza, which is Hamas' terror stronghold, unlike other Hamas leaders like Mashaal who operate out of privilege and bounce from one luxury hotel to another.

On the surface, one might be inclined to think this is good, to have a Hamas leader, a man of the people as people supposedly think of him, living among the people whose interests he purportedly claims to represent. But the reality is that this will change little if anything in the day-to-day well-being of Gazans, or reduce the overall Hamas terror threat. With Haniyeh's Hamas, there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

Under Haniyeh, from Gaza, Hamas launched a war against Israel in the summer of 2014, during which they fired some 5,000 rockets at Israel, doing so under the cover of civilian neighborhoods, hospitals and other public buildings. They cynically prevented civilians from leaving these areas which had been turned into staging grounds for battle, knowing that Israel would hesitate to fire back at the risk of collateral damage, and knowing that when Hamas creates death on either side of the border, they use it to their advantage.

This cynical use of civilians for cover was highlighted recently in the case of a Gaza woman who had been commuting to Israel for cancer treatment. At the border crossing, it was found that rather than carrying medicine, she had explosives.

Not only does this show how Hamas will stop at nothing to smuggle weapons and harm Israel, but it cast a cloud on others being able to come to Israel to receive humanitarian aid.

Some castigate Israel altogether for allowing anyone to come from Gaza for humanitarian needs as long as Hamas is in control and Gaza is used as a terrorist base. Nevertheless, Israel still allows it. But when Israel gets any significant good visibility as a result, Hamas closes the border crossing so nobody can get through. Better their own people die than Israel get any recognition for its goodwill providing these life-saving services. This is all the more the height of hypocrisy as Haniyeh's own daughter has received medical treatment in Israel.

Hamas has also constructed an extensive network of terror tunnels beneath Gaza so much so that some joked they should be hired to excavate the new Tel Aviv subway. Terror tunnels cross the border between Gaza and Egypt, between Gaza and Israel, and run like an underground maze throughout Gaza. These allow Hamas and other terrorists to operate literally underground, facilitating and fueling their terror infrastructure. Estimates are that one tunnel can cost \$1 million and use around 50,000 tons of concrete. Close to a million tons of concrete were poured into the terror tunnels before 2014. The money and supplies needed to pay for these tunnels is stolen directly by Hamas from Palestinian Arabs in Gaza. Imagine the homes, schools and hospitals that could be built to improve the lives of Palestinian Arabs in Gaza if Hamas were about building and not destroying.

Hamas has also cynically stolen and syphoned off millions in cash and other funds supplied by foreign governments and NGOs, through levying high taxes on the use of these tunnels to smuggle everything from food and weapons to women being trafficked illegally. Through this, World Vision became one of the pre-eminent funders of Hamas' terrorism, losing the trust of otherwise-trusting Christian donors.

Haniyeh was one of the proponents of Hamas' revised platform, which attempts to portray it as moderate, but neither he nor Hamas have ever renounced the anti-Semitic principles by which the group was founded, and which remains clear in its charter—refusal to accept the legitimacy of Israel and to fight to destroy it. He threatens Israel in public speeches and rallies, and praises the killing of Israeli civilians in terror attacks. He holds Israelis hostage along with the bodies of dead Israelis. Yet, his kinder and gentler public face to the West is nothing but a whitewashing of their true evil intentions. Haniyeh remains squarely committed to violent “resistance” to Israel until it is “liberated,” terror-speak for a bloody future.

Strangely, Haniyeh does have support throughout the Palestinian Authority. Unfortunately, under his new position, none of these people will benefit. Hamas will continue stealing money and resources meant to help average Palestinians in order to build a bigger terrorist infrastructure. This is highlighted (pun intended) by Hamas claiming it ran out of money to buy fuel to create energy internally. That means an average Gazan is lucky to have four to six hours of electricity per day.

Ironically, in the latest round of internal Palestinian infighting, The PA has said it will stop paying for electricity in Gaza, most of which comes from Israel. Unless more foreign governments step up to pay, under Hamas' Gaza will be left in the dark, literally and figuratively. Despite the PA refusal to pay for the electricity that Israel supplies, the Israeli Energy Minister recently ordered that Israel maintain the same level of export to Gaza. But while they have no light, and cannot operate refrigerators, that doesn't mean there's any slowdown in the digging and arming of terror tunnels or money spent on all efforts to kill Israelis, rather than make their own people better off. And despite Israel stepping up to help on a humanitarian basis, I've got a

strange feeling that somehow Israel will be blamed.

A year after Israel unilaterally withdrew all military, civilians, businesses and even cemeteries from Gaza, in 2007 Hamas launched a bloody coup overthrowing the Palestinian Authority rule under the PLO. Since then, while they have had repeated cycles of unity governments interspersed with renewed infighting, Hamas remains fully in control of Gaza. Its people are their puppets. It is their stronghold, a terrorist outpost of Iran through which Iran has wider influence, and though Hamas has influence in other parts of the world as well.

As long as Hamas is allowed to operate largely unchallenged by its own people, for the Palestinians there will be no light, and no end of the tunnels. {eoa}

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