

Date and Time: Friday, May 3, 2024 3:54:00PM EEST

Job Number: 223444284

Documents (100)

1. <u>Deadline given to Israelis passes Prisoners weren't freed, so Hamas-linked group says it won't release</u> anything about soldier.

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

2. No bargaining with captors, Israeli prime minister says: Groups linked to Hamas says it wants women and children released in exchange for information

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

3. Hamas leader's three sisters live secretly in Israel as full citizens

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

4. Israeli forces arrest Hamas leaders: Jewish settler executed as tanks, troops sweep into southern Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

5. <u>Middle East: Israel promises revenge for soldier deaths: Hamas warned after two killed in pre-dawn raid:</u>
Abbas ordered to secure seized corporal's release

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

6. Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Israel must reach out: If the Israelis won't halt the Palestinian crisis and deal with Hamas, they might end up facing a more radical opponent

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

7. Timor leaders must play their part, too Hamas responsible for latest escalation Socceroos grand in uncharted territory

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

8. <u>Updating its nukes not good for the US Hamas reaches out toward peace Mademoiselles want to become</u> madames

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

9. <u>Climbdown as Hamas agrees to Israeli state: Negotiator says group recognises right to exist: Hope for end to crippling sanctions on Palestinians</u>

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

10. <u>Comment & Debate: Punishment of Palestinians will create a crucible of trouble for the world: George</u>

Bush's policies helped build Hamas; now a dangerous linkage with Iran and Iraq threatens a mega-crisis

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

11. <u>Hamas sanctions squeeze the life out of West Bank Families sell heirlooms and children go unfed as shortages of food and medicine become critical</u>

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

12. Comment & Debate: Israel must halt the crisis among the Palestinians - for its own sake: If Israelis won't deal with Hamas, they could end up facing a more radical alternative: Islamic Jihad or even al-Qaida

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

13. Whither Hamas, and With It the Israeli - Palestinian Conflict? Vote Reaffirms Need for America To Invest in Democracy

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

14. Israeli hostage dilemma: negotiate with Hamas?

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

15. Making Demands On Israel and Hamas

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

16. <u>Hamas vows revenge for killings: Israel orders halt to all artillery fire after Palestinian family on a picnic die</u> on beach holiday in Gaza Strip

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

17. Hamas gives Israel 24-hour deadline: Terrorists vow to kill soldier hostage if demands aren't met

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

18. The regretful Fatah voters who took poll 'game' too far Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

19. <u>Suicide bomber claims three victims in West Bank attack: Attack comes as election victors draft their plans:</u> US rules out talks with Hamas government

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

20. The future: A harder line on Israel, or a more moderate path?

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

21. Hard men to deal with

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

22. Palestinians cast historic vote

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

23. Israel threatens to strike Gaza after raid

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

24. Islamic Jihad has brooked no cease-fire

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

25. GREENTIDERISING

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

26. US opposing coalition govt in Palestine: Shyam

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

27. Even winners surprised: Caught off guard: 'I am not angry or sad; it is too early for that'

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

28. Two Israeli soldiers killed, a third kidnapped

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

29. Gunning for Israel

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

30. Israeli Troops Push Farther Into Gaza to Halt Rockets

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

31. Israelis warn of terror on doorstep

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

32. Palestinians Seek To Detach From Hezbollah

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

33. Palestinian political divide becomes a family affair

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

34. Fatah supporters stage violent protests: MIDEAST I Militants threaten their own party

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

35. Fear mingles with jubilation



Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

36. Brothers, and rivals, for the Palestinian cause Siblings compete for seats in Hebron

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

37. Palestinian officials watching their backs

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

38. Jews rally to save captive soldier

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

39. Israeli Army presses into Gaza Palestinians launch 2nd rocket in 2 days against Jewish city

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

40. MILITANTS' RAID ON ISRAEL RAISES TENSION IN GAZA

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

41. Palestinians start election campaign: But balloting could be postponed if Israel bars residents of Jerusalem

from voting

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

42. Political Sibling Rivalry: Hebron Parliamentary Race Pits Brother Against Brother

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

43. Israel rolls out tanks near Gaza: Olmert not prepared to negotiate

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

44. Race for votes begins in Palestinian election

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

45. Syria the spoiler in push to defuse Gaza hostilities

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

46. SAVING CORPORAL SHALIT TROOPS STORM INTO GAZA TO FREE HOSTAGE SQUADDIE

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

47. Olmert ready to cede parts of West Bank: Jerusalem not included: Israeli PM makes offer on eve of

<u>Palestinian vote</u>
Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

48. Women out in force: In the first Palestinian parliamentary elections in a decade, women played a big part,

but not necessarily for their future advancement

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

49. Legions of women turn out for Palestinian vote: Candidates, campaigners, voters, some in full veil, weigh

ramifications of fundamentalist contingent in government

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

50. Israel says Palestinians in Jerusalem can vote in parliamentary elections

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

51. Pullout offer on eve of election

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

52. Israelis fire at office of Palestinian PM

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

53. Free 408 Palestinians, Israeli 's captors urge They said they would then give information on the soldier's condition. Olmert rejected any negotiations.

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

54. THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE - Peace or war could follow the Palestinian poll

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

55. So, what's with these hijabs?

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

56. Guardian Weekly: International News: Gaza stalemate over captured Israeli

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

57. Factional enemies unite for Gaza defence

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

58. Settling for an Image

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

59. Militants disagree on Gaza ceasefire

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

60. Feminists ready to die in fight against israelv

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

61. Palestinian Leader Orders Force to Find Seized Israeli

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

News

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

62. Poll shock has region reeling

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

63. Hope? Sorry it's just a mug's game

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

64. Women of Gaza fear for their freedoms under new religious regime

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

65. Bombing kills 9 in Tel Aviv

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

66._III-Timed Excuses

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

67. Prospects for peace falter amid Palestinian disarray

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

68. Peace prospects falter amid Palestinian chaos

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

69. Abbas orders Israeli soldier found Kidnappers demand release of prisoners

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

70. Adams' Mideast visit 'a PR stunt'

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

71. Israel readies to retaliate in Gaza: 'No immunity,' for soldier's captors, Olmert vows

Client/Matter: -None-



Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

72. Mideast Violence: Who Is to Blame?

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

73. Palestine 's terror vote

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

74. Shells hit Gaza beach, killing 8 Palestinians Israeli Army checking to see if it fired

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

75. Israel given ultimatum by militants

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Sep 30, 2006

76. Militants kill two Israeli soldiers and kidnap third

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

77. Focus: 'Diceman' Olmert on the spot over new Israeli crisis

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

78. Israel warns of 'ongoing' Gaza offensive

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

79. Palestinians Campaign for an Election That May Not Be Held

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

80. SAVING CORPORAL GILAD TROOPS STORM INTO GAZA TO FREE SNATCH SQUADDIE

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

81. Leave Gaza, militants demand: Palestinian hostage-takers tell Israel to halt offensive, free 1,000 prisoners

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Content Type Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

82. <u>Middle East: Israeli troops gather at Gaza borders as Palestinians try to find hostage: Olmert readies army</u> for retaliatory strikes: Abbas urged to secure corporal's release

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

News

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

83. Palestinian Intelligence Chief Is Badly Wounded in Bombing

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

84. Israel considering deal on prisoners

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

85. Palestinians struggle to live under sanctions

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

86. Voting day finally arrives for Palestinians

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

87. War of nerves in Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

88. Militants dig in for Israeli invasion - CRISIS IN GAZA

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

89. Militants give Israel an ultimatum They imply they will kill abducted Israeli soldier if demands aren't met;

Olmert says no to talks.

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

90. Israel rejects militants' ultimatum: Deadline to release prisoners passes with no word on captive soldier

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

91. 'Don't disgrace faith while all eyes are on us'

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

92. We won't negotiate, Israel says: Palestinians threaten to 'close file' on soldier if prisoners not released

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

93. Girl killed as Israel tightens grip on Gaza

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type Narrowed by

News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

94. Militants dig in for Israeli invasion

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

95. Gaza factions chase peace away: Last year, more Palestinians were killed by internal feuds than by Israeli strikes, writes Stephen Farrell in Gaza. They know the world is wondering if they are ready for statehood after all.

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Sep 30, 2006

96. Israeli army expands Gaza front

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

97. <u>Palestine 'ready to trade' captured Israeli soldier: Negotiators 'near deal' in secret talks as Israel launches</u> helicopter strike on Palestinian leader's HQ

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

98. Israel rejects prisoner swap demand

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

99. Feuding militants unite against Israel

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

100. Captured soldier's letter gives hope

Client/Matter: -None-Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to



<u>Deadline given to Israelis passes Prisoners weren't freed, so Hamas-linked</u> group says it won't release anything about soldier.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

July 4, 2006 Tuesday

THIRD EDITION

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Length: 416 words

Byline: By Ravi Nessman THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dateline: GAZA CITY, GAZA STRIP

Body

The spokesman for one of the *Hamas*-linked groups holding an Israeli soldier said today that because Israel ignored a deadline to release Palestinian prisoners, the militants won't release any information about the soldier.

The spokesman, Abu Muthana, would not say whether the soldier is dead or alive.

"We will not give any information that will give the occupation good news or reassurance," he told The Associated Press.

The militants had set a 6 a.m. deadline (10 p.m. Monday St. Louis time) for Israel to begin freeing the prisoners, implying they would kill him if their demands were not met.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert rejected any negotiations with the militants, and the army pressed ahead with its Gaza offensive. Privately, though, some officials said the government had not ruled out any options to win Cpl. Gilad Shalit's freedom.

Israel has pounded Gaza with airstrikes and artillery shells for nearly a week in an unsuccessful effort to force the *Hamas*-linked militants to release Shalit. It has been building up troops across from northern Gaza, preparing for an invasion. Tanks and troops moved in and out throughout the day and the military said it was carrying out "limited" operations to uncover explosives and tunnels.

A <u>Hamas</u> militant was killed and four were wounded in an Israeli airstrike in Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza just after midnight, Palestinians said. Israel said its air force targeted Palestinians planting a bomb near soldiers.

Early today, Israeli aircraft hit the student council building at the Islamic University in Gaza City, witnesses said, badly damaging it. No one was hurt. The university is a *Hamas* stronghold. The military said it hit a "compound used by terror groups for instructing and directing terrorists."

In the West Bank city of Ramallah, Israeli forces surrounded a building early today. The military said militants who abducted and killed an 18-year-old Israeli settler earlier this week were holed up inside, and the goal was to arrest them.

Deadline given to Israelis passes Prisoners weren't freed, so Hamas-linked group says it won't release anything about soldier.

After Shalit was seized in a June 25 raid on an army post that left two comrades dead, his captors demanded that Israel free all imprisoned Palestinian <u>women</u> and minors in exchange for information about him. They later increased their demand to include the release of 1,000 more prisoners.

Early Monday, <u>Hamas'</u> military wing -- one of the three groups holding Shalit -- issued a statement giving Israel until 6 a.m. today to start freeing the prisoners. The other two groups are also <u>Hamas</u>-linked.

Notes

World

Graphic

PHOTO

PHOTO - A firefighter works at the scene of an Israeli missile strike on a building allegedly used by the militant Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Gaza City, Gaza, early Monday. The Associated Press

Load-Date: July 4, 2006

End of Document



No bargaining with captors, Israeli prime minister says: Groups linked to Hamas says it wants women and children released in exchange for information

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

June 27, 2006 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A9

Length: 639 words

Byline: Josef Federman, Associated Press

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM -- With troops poised to invade Gaza, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on Monday ruled out bargaining with the captors of an Israeli soldier and promised a "broad and ongoing" military offensive.

But large-scale army action appeared unlikely. Officials said they were pursuing a diplomatic solution and conceded that a broad attack would threaten the life of the 19-year-old hostage captured Sunday.

After more than 24 hours of silence, the Palestinians claiming to hold Cpl. Gilad Shalit issued their first demands Monday. The groups, linked to the <u>Hamas</u>-led Palestinian government, said Israel should release all imprisoned Palestinian <u>women</u> and children under 18 in return for information about Shalit.

Olmert rejected the demand. Addressing Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, he charged that the Palestinian attack on an army post at a Gaza crossing and the abduction of the soldier were part of a "murderous, hateful, fanatical Islamic extremist desire to destroy the state of Israel."

"This is not a matter of negotiations, this is not a matter of bargaining," he declared. "Release of prisoners is absolutely not on the agenda of the Israeli government."

Shalit was seized at a military post near the Gaza border by militants who infiltrated Israel through a tunnel. The attack was the first successful infiltration by militants since Israel withdrew from Gaza in September, and immediately threatened to plunge the region into a major flare-up of violence.

Speaking earlier to a tourism conference in Jerusalem, Olmert said he held the entire Palestinian leadership responsible for Shalit's safety and warned that his patience was wearing thin.

"I gave the orders to our military commanders to prepare the army for a broad and ongoing military operation to strike the terrorist leaders and all those involved," he said.

Military officials said elite brigades and armoured forces, backed by tanks, were sent to the frontier, where thousands of soldiers already are deployed.

No bargaining with captors, Israeli prime minister says: Groups linked to Hamas says it wants women and children released in exchange for information

With Israeli intelligence showing that Shalit was not seriously wounded, defence officials said there were no immediate plans for a massive ground incursion. Although Israel frequently carries out air raids in Gaza, ground troops have entered the area only three times -- all briefly -- since last year's pullout.

However, the officials said a limited operation could begin in the coming days. Such operations could include a rescue attempt or a limited mission meant to pressure *Hamas* to free the soldier.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, a moderate who has clashed with <u>Hamas</u>, was working with Egyptian mediators and Arab and western leaders to find the soldier. <u>Hamas</u> government spokesman Ghazi Hamad said he had information Shalit was alive and urged the captors to keep him safe. "I think we are interested in avoiding any confrontation or bloodshed," he told The Associated Press.

The abduction delivered a blow to Abbas's efforts to coax <u>Hamas</u> into accepting a plan implicitly recognizing Israel. Abbas, elected separately last year, has endorsed the plan in hopes of lifting economic sanctions against <u>Hamas</u> and opening the way for new peace talks.

The crisis also exposed divisions within *Hamas* ranks. The group maintains separate political and military wings, and political leaders based in Syria are more extreme than many leaders in the West Bank and Gaza.

In a briefing to legislators, Brig.-Gen. Yossi Beidatz, a top Israeli intelligence official, said <u>Hamas</u>'s leaders were divided about what to do with the soldier, participants said. He said the more moderate elements, including Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, consider the soldier a "hot potato" they should get rid of quickly.

Hamad said talk of a split in <u>Hamas</u> was "a big lie." However, he said the political leadership in Gaza, including Haniyeh, was not warned of the assault plans beforehand.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Ariel Schalit, Associated Press; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on Monday said he has authorized a 'broad and ongoing' operation against Palestinian militants following the abduction of an Israeli soldier.

Load-Date: June 27, 2006

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Hamas leader's three sisters live secretly in Israel as full citizens

The Daily Telegraph (LONDON)

June 2, 2006 Friday

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Section: NEWS; International; Pg. 17

Length: 605 words

Byline: Tim Butcher in Tel Sheva

Body

ISRAEL regards Ismail Haniyeh, Palestine's <u>Hamas</u> prime minister, as an enemy of state. But three of his sisters enjoy full Israeli citizenship, having moved 30 years ago to the desert town of Tel Sheva.

Some of their offspring have even served in the Israeli army, the force responsible for decades of Israeli occupation in Gaza and the West Bank, an occupation that the Islamist movement, *Hamas*, was founded to fight.

The Daily Telegraph tracked down the Haniyeh sisters, Kholidia, Laila and Sabah, to a town in southern Israel. That they live in Israel is a closely guarded secret and nowhere is it guarded more fiercely than Tel Sheva, a town inhabited mainly by Israeli Bedouin on the edge of the Negev desert.

"There is no reason to speak to my wife," said Salameh Abu Rukayek, 53, who married Kholidia. "It is private business and you are not welcome asking questions about my wife."

Blind since birth, Mr Abu Rukayek sat on a thin floor cushion and said he was happy living in Israel. "Our life is normal here and we want it to continue," he said.

Perhaps he felt discussion of his wife's family links might jeopardise his relatively comfortable lifestyle.

Bedouins form a small and poor minority in modern Israel, descendants of desert nomads who roamed the Holy Land in ancient times, living in tents and travelling by camel train. Some Bedouin have settled down in towns such as Tel Sheva and many make a good living, often running transport firms across Israel.

Although they regard themselves as separate from Palestinians, links between the two communities are nevertheless close. Both share the same Muslim faith.

Another member of the clan, Yousef Abu Ruqia, 50, who works as secretary in the municipal council, explained how the Haniyeh sisters came to Tel Sheva.

"In a small community like ours there were not enough <u>women</u> to go round, so some of the men would go and look for wives elsewhere," he said.

"The Haniyeh sisters were Palestinians living in Gaza. Back then it was possible for people to visit Gaza easily, so Kholidia was the first to be married and move to Tel Sheva, and then Laila and then Sabah."

He said he remembered the time, 25 years ago, when their younger brother, Ismail, would come to visit his sisters.

Hamas leader's three sisters live secretly in Israel as full citizens

"There was another brother, Khaled, who came here to work laying tiles and each year, at the holiday after Ramadan, Ismail would come and visit his brother and sisters."

The issue of Palestinian-Israeli links recently received close scrutiny from the Israeli supreme court, which was asked to consider the legality of a new law banning Palestinians from joining their Israeli spouses. The court accepted the state's argument that security concerns justified keeping couples apart if they married across the divide.

While the law is intended to address current political problems, the presence of a <u>Hamas</u> leader's own family in Israel reveals the extent and strength of links in spite of decades of mutual hostility.

Mr Abu Ruqia said the law banning Palestinian <u>women</u> over 25 and men over 35 from applying to join their spouses in Israel would have stopped the Haniyeh sisters' move to Israel had it applied 30 years ago.

"This is a racist law that makes problems for some people in Israel like the Bedouin who often marry into Palestinian families," he said. "It is unfair against us and not against other Israelis."

Laila and Sabah are both widows but remain in Tel Sheva, apparently reluctant to give up their Israeli citizenship. It is not known when the Haniyeh sisters last had contact with their brother. As he is a *Hamas* prime minister, contact with him could, under Israeli law, be illegal.

Load-Date: June 2, 2006

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<u>Israeli forces arrest Hamas leaders: Jewish settler executed as tanks, troops</u> sweep into southern Gaza

Ottawa Citizen

June 29, 2006 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A1

Length: 1074 words

Byline: Scott Wilson, The Washington Post

Dateline: GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Palestinian gunmen holding an 18-year-old Israeli settler announced before dawn this morning that they had carried out their threat to kill him. Israeli military officials later said soldiers had found a body matching the description of Eliyahu Asheri near the West Bank city of Ramallah, although officials had yet to make a definitive identification.

During a news conference here yesterday, members of the Popular Resistance Committees pledged to execute Mr. Asheri, from the northern West Bank settlement of Itamar, unless Israel stopped a military operation in Gaza that officials say is underway to free Cpl. Gilad Shalit, a 19-year-old Israeli soldier captured by Palestinian gunmen this week. It was unclear, however, when the body believed to be Mr. Asheri's had been killed.

At about the time the group announced Mr. Asheri's execution, Israeli troops swept through the West Bank and arrested more than a dozen political officials from <u>Hamas</u>, the radical Islamic movement responsible for the operation of the Palestinian government.

Among those arrested during a raid on a compound near Ramallah were Deputy Prime Minister Nasser Shaer, two other cabinet ministers and four lawmakers. Israeli soldiers had arrested Labor Minister Mohammed Barghouti earlier in the operation, which in all swept up more than 30 *Hamas* officials across the West Bank.

<u>Hamas</u> officials gave those estimates. Israeli military officials said they could not comment on an ongoing operation.

Mr. Asheri's apparent death and the <u>Hamas</u> arrests were certain to inflame the confrontation surrounding Cpl. Shalit's capture, which broadened early this morning to include airstrikes on what military officials described as a weapons storage site in Khan Younis, roads in southern Gaza and an open area in Gaza City.

The Popular Resistance Committees is one of three armed groups, including <u>Hamas</u>'s military wing, that are holding Cpl. Shalit. It was not clear, however, how the <u>Hamas</u> arrests were related to either the Asheri or Shalit cases.

Israeli forces arrest Hamas leaders: Jewish settler executed as tanks, troops sweep into southern Gaza

But the arrest operation followed a call from the <u>Hamas</u>-run government yesterday to exchange Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails for Cpl. Shalit, bringing the movement's elected political leadership directly into the dispute.

The statement, issued by the Palestinian Information Ministry, came after Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert warned that Israel "will not hesitate to take extreme steps" to free Cpl. Shalit, who was captured by Palestinian gunmen during an attack Sunday on an army post that left two soldiers dead.

Near midnight, Israeli aircraft dropped leaflets over towns in northern Gaza warning residents not to interfere with military operations, suggesting that the start of one could be imminent. Israeli artillery batteries, quiet for nearly three weeks, had begun firing into open areas in the northern strip a few hours earlier.

"The full responsibility for the situation we are in belongs to the Palestinian-<u>Hamas</u> government and elements that are connected to it in Syria," said Mr. Olmert, referring to the movement's political leadership in exile that Israeli officials believe ordered the Sunday attack. Israeli military jets later buzzed the Syrian coastal city of Latakia, shaking President Bashar Assad's summer residence with a sonic boom.

"Any deterioration in the situation, and any worsening in the situation of the population, will be in their direct responsibility," Mr. Olmert said.

The two positions illustrated the gulf between Israel and the Palestinians over Cpl. Shalit's fate, which appears increasingly likely to be determined by an Israeli military campaign here that began before dawn yesterday.

An Israel airstrike on a main power station left roughly 700,000 people in Gaza -- about half the population -- without electricity. Engineers estimated that it could take three months to repair.

Meanwhile, Gaza residents gathered at two crumpled bridges struck by Israeli missiles that left two key north-south highways impassable. Children scavenged broken guardrails and steel bars from the sites, piling them on the back of donkey carts as traffic backed up.

Israeli military officials said the targets, including the roads struck early this morning, were chosen to limit the ability of Cpl. Shalit's captors to move him around the densely populated strip or across its southern border into Egypt where a rescue operation would be more difficult to carry out.

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas condemned the Israeli operation and called on the rest of the world to exert pressure on Israel to stop the campaign, which has yet to result in any deaths.

"The president considers the aggression that targeted civilian infrastructure as collective punishment and crimes against humanity," read a statement from Mr. Abbas's office.

Along the strip's southern edge in Rafah, Israeli troops and armour remained on the mothballed international airport after entering Gaza hours earlier. The modest incursion was the first by a significant number of Israeli ground forces since Israel completed the evacuation of its settlements and military bases in the strip last September.

Tanks appeared dug in behind dirt berms at the edge of the airport compound, as Palestinian gunmen made preparations in the event Israeli forces move into the city.

"We will sacrifice whatever we have," said Atif Zanoun, 28, who gathered with others on the final day of a mourning period here for one of the two gunmen killed in Sunday's raid on the Israeli post. "We have nothing to lose."

Also, the armed wing of Mr. Abbas' Fatah movement, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, asserted yesterday that it had kidnapped a 62-year-old Israeli man. Israeli police said Noah Moskowitz of the central Israeli city of Rishon Lezion has been missing since Monday.

Israeli forces arrest Hamas leaders: Jewish settler executed as tanks, troops sweep into southern Gaza

Mr. Olmert has ruled out negotiating for Cpl. Shalit's release, rejecting a demand issued by his captors that the 421 Palestinian <u>women</u> and minors in Israeli jails be freed in return for information about the soldier's welfare. In its statement, however, the Palestinian Information Ministry noted that the Israeli government had done so in the past.

"The Israeli military escalation can't be the appropriate mechanism for releasing the Israeli prisoner," the ministry's statement said. "The Israeli leadership is going down the wrong path in trying to use the Israeli prisoner issue for political goals and to confuse the Palestinian internal situation."

Load-Date: June 29, 2006

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<u>Middle East: Israel promises revenge for soldier deaths: Hamas warned after</u> <u>two killed in pre-dawn raid: Abbas ordered to secure seized corporal's</u> <u>release</u>

The Guardian - Final Edition
June 26, 2006 Monday

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Section: GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 13

Length: 842 words

Byline: Conal Urquhart, Tel Aviv

Body

Israel has warned <u>Hamas</u> that it will pay a "deadly price" for a daring raid on Israeli positions yesterday in which militants killed two soldiers and kidnapped a third.

Members of <u>Hamas</u> played a leading role in the pre-dawn attack, in which gunmen took Israeli forces by surprise and raised the prospect of a major escalation of violence.

Israeli officials also told Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, that they held him responsible and expected him to remain in Gaza until he secured the release of the kidnapped Israeli soldier.

The attack, which was carried out by <u>Hamas</u> with the Popular Resistance Committees and a little known group called the Islamic Army, overshadowed attempts yesterday by Mr Abbas to come to an agreement with Ismail Haniyeh, the *Hamas* prime minister.

They were due to meet to discuss a joint platform, commonly known as the "prisoners' document". This would entail implicit recognition of Israel and end Palestinian infighting and the isolation of the Palestinian Authority.

The dawn raid seemed likely to undermine the credibility of <u>Hamas</u> as a political player and forced Mr Haniyeh to postpone the meeting to avoid potential assassination by Israel.

It was the first attack by Palestinian mil itants in Gaza against the Israeli army since it withdrew from the strip last year. In a series of statements, the militants said that the attack was in response to Israeli assassinations and attacks on civilians in recent weeks.

The kidnapped soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit, 19, is said to have been injured in the stomach but is receiving treatment in Gaza from his captors.

Ehud Olmert, the Israeli prime minister, said that he held the Palestinian Authority responsible for the attack, including the president and the <u>Hamas</u>-led government, "with all that implies".

Israeli ministers met last night to discuss a response to the attack. Options include a full-scale invasion of Gaza or the targeting of <u>Hamas</u>'s political wing, its leaders and ministers. Israel may feel that any action it takes could endanger the life of Cpl Shalit.

Middle East: Israel promises revenge for soldier deaths: Hamas warned after two killed in pre-dawn raid: Abbas ordered to secure seized corporal's release

Last night, the Palestinian deputy prime minister, Nasser Shaer, called on the kidnappers to release Cpl Shalit.

<u>Hamas</u> ministers began taking security precautions yesterday while Mark Regev, a spokesman for the Israeli foreign min istry, said the ministry expected Mr Abbas to secure the release of the soldier. "Mr Abbas has all the necessary resources, including military resources, to ensure the release of the Israeli soldier. He must prove the seriousness of his intentions. We call on him to remain in Gaza and act immediately to resolve this crisis," he said.

Aides of Mr Abbas said they believed the Israeli statement carried a veiled threat that he would not be allowed to leave Gaza. Israeli officials denied that the Palestinian president had been told he could not leave.

Kidnapping an Israeli soldier has been a key aim of Palestinian militants for years. They believe it is the only way to force Israel to release Palestinian prisoners.

The Israeli army said that at around 5.30am eight gunmen from <u>Hamas</u> and the Popular Resistance Committees entered Israel using a tunnel dug under the security fence. The tunnel extended 300 metres (985ft) past the fence guards.

The gunmen split into three groups and approached their targets from behind. One group attacked an empty armoured personnel carrier and another group threw grenades at the tank, which exploded inside, killing two soldiers and severely injuring a third. The last group attacked a 23-metre high observation post.

While the three groups attacked, others fired anti-tank weapons from inside Gaza.

The spokesman said at least two of the gunmen were killed but the rest managed to escape to Gaza through holes in the perimeter fence.

The two dead Israeli soldiers were named as Hanan Barak, 20, who was buried yesterday, and Pavel Slutsker, 20.

Dan Halutz, the Israeli chief of staff, warned that a major invasion of Gaza was possible. Amir Peretz, the defence minister, said the militants would pay a "deadly price" for the attack.

Some Palestinians reacted with jubilation to the success of the attack while others condemned it and tried to distance themselves from it.

Sami Abu Zuhri, a <u>Hamas</u> spokesman, said: "This is a natural response to the Israeli crimes of killing <u>women</u> and children and the assassination of two leaders."

Members of *Hamas* in government took a different tone. Ghazi Hamed, the government spokesman, told reporters in Gaza City that it had learned of the kidnapping from the Israeli media.

"We are calling on the resistance groups, if they do have the missing soldier . . . to protect his life and treat him well," he said.

In a statement, Mr Abbas said that the raid, near the Kerem Shalom crossing, "violated the national consensus". He called on the international community "to prevent Israel from exploiting the attack to carry out large-scale aggression in the Gaza Strip".

He said that the attack contradicted all assurances he had been given by militant groups in recent negotiations.

guardian.co.uk/israel >

Load-Date: June 26, 2006



Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Israel must reach out: If the Israelis won't halt the Palestinian crisis and deal with Hamas, they might end up facing a more radical opponent

Guardian Weekly

June 2, 2006 Friday

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*The*GuardianWeekly

Section: Pg. 5

Length: 1250 words

Byline: Jonathan Freedland

Body

From this distance, the Palestinians look to be in dire straits - even by their wretched standards. A people who have plumbed the depths of misery seem set to sink even lower. Denied financial aid by an international community that turned off the cash after <u>Hamas</u> won its unexpected majority in January, the Palestinians are collectively going broke. Gaza is especially badly hit. <u>Women</u> are selling off their jewellery just to feed their children.

A gang of men were caught digging up the ground: they wanted to pull out municipal water pipes and sell them for scrap. According to B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights group, Gaza's medical system is in "crisis" thanks to "grave shortages" of supplies.

Nor can Palestinians trade their way out of poverty. The main crossing out of Gaza, at Karni, is closed more than it's open - preventing farmers from getting their perishable produce to market: their strawberries just lie rotting, denying the growers their livelihood. The nights bring no respite. Gazans are living with round-the-clock artillery shelling, which Israel says is retaliation for the Qassam rockets fired by Palestinians over the border. The West Bank has experienced multiple Israeli raids, leaving civilians, including children, dead.

And now Palestinians are turning on each other, with street fights and shoot-outs between <u>Hamas</u> and groups aligned with the old rulers of Fatah. Last week Fatah said it had defused a bomb intended to kill the head of the Palestinian security services, a man loyal to Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president and leader of Fatah. Last Saturday the head of Palestinian intelligence, another Fatah loyalist, was injured when a blast tore through a lift. Fatah blames *Hamas* for both attacks.

It all smacks of a society turning on itself, destroying its infrastructure, killing its own leaders. But those closest to the reality plead for caution, counselling that things might look worse than they are. There is no humanitarian disaster yet, they say, though there could be one. B'Tselem notes that, while Gazan hospitals are short of medical supplies, West Bank clinics are getting by. The group says that movement has become more restricted between the various regional blocks of the West Bank, but easier within them. And Israel's new defence minister, the Labour leader and long-time anti-occupation activist Amir Peretz, has promised more openings at Karni.

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Israel must reach out: If the Israelis won't halt the Palestinian crisis and deal with Hamas, they might end up facing a mo....

Meanwhile Middle East analyst Hussein Agha urges scepticism about talk of civil war. The Fatah-<u>Hamas</u> clashes owe more to economic, familial and personal rivalries than they do to a political clash. "This is rivalry over fiefdoms, turf wars," he says.

It's right to be rigorous in these matters. But even the coolest heads worry where things are heading. There's only so long a people dependent on foreign help can be starved of cash. Up to one in four of the Palestinian population are employees of the Palestinian Authority, and yet it has no money to pay anyone - even the prime minister, *Hamas*'s Ismail Haniyeh, has not received a penny since taking office.

There are glimmers of hope. Last week Israel released about \$9m of Palestinian tax revenues it had collected but had refused to hand over. Meanwhile the EU was reported to have found a way to funnel cash to Palestinian teachers, doctors and pensioners while bypassing *Hamas* - an approach backed earlier this month by the Quartet of the EU, the US, the UN and Russia. Yet last week the US House of Representatives approved the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act, a set of sanctions condemned by Americans for Peace Now, an avowedly Zionist organisation, as draconian and sweeping.

The moral objections to this latest US move, and the whole international policy of denying aid to the Palestinians, are obvious: it punishes Palestinians for their democratic choice of <u>Hamas</u> in free and fair elections; and it's hard to explain a world where sanctions are imposed not on the occupier but the occupied: this is the politics of Lewis Carroll.

The counter-argument is clear enough. It says it is unreasonable for anyone to expect normal relations with a movement still committed to terrorism. Until two years ago, <u>Hamas</u> was in the business of staging regular July 7 style attacks - suicide bombings of buses and the like. Would we ever urge Tony Blair to hand over hefty cash payments to the planners of 7/7, however many votes they had won? (A clue to the British response can be found in Northern Ireland, where Sinn Fein is still deemed unfit for government despite its democratic mandate and its complete abandonment of terrorism.)

This argument may be logical, but it should not be good enough for Israel. Put simply, even if Israel is not persuaded of the moral case for abandoning its current stance, it should do so for its own self-interest.

First, if it allows a humanitarian crisis to engulf the Palestinian territories, the rest of the world will be forced to act and will end up dealing with <u>Hamas</u> after all. Israel wants <u>Hamas</u> to remain persona non grata, which means it has to avoid a dramatic deterioration.

Second, the error behind a sanctions policy is its assumption that the victims of sanctions turn on their own government. But the evidence already points the other way, to Palestinians rallying around the new leadership. "It becomes an issue of pride," says a Tel Aviv University analyst, Gary Sussman. "When people fight sanctions it becomes a national project." Palestinians are not blaming *Hamas* for their suffering, but the US and Israel.

Third, and related, is the assumption that if <u>Hamas</u> can be starved into defeat, if sanctions can somehow trigger "regime failure", then a more amenable leadership will take its place. The flaw here is historical. Time after time Israel has sought to bypass Palestinians' chosen representatives, deeming them too extreme. Eventually, it has had little choice but to deal with the official leadership - only to find it has been overtaken by a more radical alternative. Israel ignored and undermined Fatah, so it got <u>Hamas</u>. Now, Palestinians warn, if Israel won't deal with <u>Hamas</u> it will eventually face Islamic Jihad or even al-Qaida, which is already making inroads in Gaza. When that day comes, Israel will regret missing its chance to deal with the relative moderates of <u>Hamas</u>.

There is one last, self-interested reason why Israel should want <u>Hamas</u> to get its hands on the money it needs. "It will keep them busy," says Agha. With a society to run, there will be less appetite for a return to violence. As things stand, Agha warns, some within <u>Hamas</u> are already wondering what reward 17 months of ceasefire have brought: they are talking of breaking away, perhaps to align themselves with al-Qaida and its methods.

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Israel must reach out: If the Israelis won't halt the Palestinian crisis and deal with Hamas, they might end up facing a mo....

So Israel should take the lead, urging the US, Britain and the rest of the world to allow this money through. That's not a call for negotiations between <u>Hamas</u> and Israel: few believe the time is ripe for that. Instead, Ehud Olmert should get on with the next phase of Israeli withdrawals from occupied territory while <u>Hamas</u> starts state-building. Meanwhile the two sides can engage in day-to-day, practical cooperation - without either having to take the unpalatable step of recognising the other. It will be parallel unilateralism, the two sides moving alone - but in sync.

None of this offers much heroism. It does not speak the language of moral, noble purpose. It speaks of self-interest. Israel must prevent disaster befalling the Palestinians - for Israel's own sake.

Load-Date: June 19, 2006

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Timor leaders must play their part, too; Hamas responsible for latest escalation; Socceroos grand in uncharted territory

The Dominion Post (Wellington, New Zealand) July 1, 2006 Saturday

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Section: FEATURES; OPINION; Pg. 5; WORLD VIEW
Length: 746 words
Body
Timor leaders must play their part, too
The Guardian
LONDON
EAST TIMOR has travelled a painful road to nationhood since being decolonised out of existence by Indonesia shortly after the centuries-long Portuguese presence ended in 1975. Now the three-year drama of its life as an independent state has reached a denouement with the resignation of the prime minister, Mari Alkatiri, blamed for mishandling a dispute in the army that spiralled into serious violence. Order was restored only by an Australian-led intervention force, a sharp reminder of the country's continuing reliance on foreign help. President Xanana Gusmao leader of the liberation struggle, remains hugely popular at home and has solid credentials abroad, but the future looks daunting. This time East Timor's enemy is not the Indonesian army or pro-Jakarta militias, but mismanagement, misjudgment and a failure to build a sustainable economy.
Australia deserves credit for helping restore order with New Zealand and Malaysia in an effective regiona "coalition of the willing". But there is more than altruism at work. Canberra and Dili are to develop potentially lucrative oil and gas reserves in the Timor Gap, with the prospect of welcome billions filling government coffers. Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta insists that, despite its travails, East Timor is not a "failed state". It is up to the country's elected leaders, with the firm backing of the international community, to ensure that it does not become one.

<u>Hamas</u> responsible for latest escalation
The New York Times

THE Palestinians who futilely threw up sand berms on Gaza's main roads to deflect Israeli troop movements were building their defences in the wrong direction. The responsibility for this latest escalation rests squarely with Hamas, whose military wing tunnelled into Israel, killed two Israeli soldiers and kidnapped another. An Israeli Timor leaders must play their part, too Hamas responsible for latest escalation Socceroos grand in uncharted territory

military response was inevitable. It should also be as restrained as possible. Israel does not seem to want to reoccupy Gaza, but its reported detention of several cabinet ministers in the West Bank is unsettling. Bitterness and distrust on both sides are sure to increase, and the already dim prospects for a return to peace negotiations will diminish even further. Ironically, *Hamas* has chosen this bleak moment to finally endorse a document that implicitly recognises Israel within its pre-1967 borders. In a different context, that would represent progress. But in a week in which *Hamas*'s military wing has crossed those very borders, it is hard to draw much encouragement. If things go on like this, Palestinians can look forward to endless rounds of reckless *Hamas* provocations and inexorable Israeli responses. That is why things must not be allowed to go on like this. It is not just Israel that needs to be delivering that message to *Hamas*.

Socceroos grand in uncharted territory

The Age

MELBOURNE

THE dream is over. The Australian soccer team was woken to defeat in the most heartbreaking of ways: a penalty, duly converted, in the dying seconds of the game. The players will be feeling the hurt with a depth of anguish that only sportsmen and <u>women</u> who have come so far, and so close to their next goal, can feel. But in the longer term, as the final minutes of the game start to recede in the memory, the players should take solace in knowing that they did themselves and their country proud. Australia has shown that it is no longer a soccer curiosity on the world stage. It has taken the game up to two of the giants of the World Cup, Brazil (five titles) and Italy (three); it has beaten Japan and it held Croatia to a draw. Surely, our ranking 42 at the start must now improve. It would only be fair. Yet soccer has shown that fairness is the sport of the gods. Nothing can be taken for granted when the whistle blows and a game begins. There is always a referee's interpretation of a rule, a missed chance, a lapse in concentration. Games can turn on the smallest things, and nations be plunged into mourning. Australians, while suffering the grief of missing out on the quarter-finals, should not mourn. The Socceroos have gone into uncharted territory. Now that they have a taste for it and, with the change in qualifications for the next cup in South Africa in 2010, it might be that we no longer have to wait another 32 years to savour the euphoria of playing against the best.

Load-Date: July 4, 2006

End of Document



<u>Updating its nukes not good for the US; Hamas reaches out toward peace;</u> <u>Mademoiselles want to become madames</u>

The Dominion Post (Wellington, New Zealand)

April 15, 2006 Saturday

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Section: FEATURES; OPINION; Pg. 5; WORLD VIEW

Length: 731 words

Body

Updating its nukes not good for the US		
THE AGE		
MELBOURNE		

THE Bush administration last week revealed its plans for the nation's aging stockpile of weapons of mass destruction. The fearsome nuclear arsenal that was developed at such great expense during the Cold War is now several decades old. The administration wants the capability to turn out 125 new nuclear bombs a year by 2022 as older bombs deemed unreliable or unsafe are retired. Critics are concerned that the move will spark a new arms race. In reply, the United States says it plans to reduce its overall inventory of weapons. The most disappointing aspect of the administration's blueprint is that it strays so far from the intent of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The treaty sought to wind back the terrifying threat posed by the global store of nuclear weapons by calling on participant nations to cease their production. Plans to build a new generation of weapons appear to be a significant departure from the treaty's aims of limiting nuclear arms production. Superpowers are not easily dissuaded from setting the rules that best suit their own ends. It can be argued, however, that reinvestment in nuclear arms development is not in the best interests of the US. At a time when we are facing massive environmental challenges -- fossil fuel depletion, climate change and the threat of mass extinctions -- does the world need more bombs?

Hamas reaches out toward peace

THE DAILY STAR

BEIRUT

<u>HAMAS</u> has extended an unexpected olive branch to the Israelis and the international community. Palestinian Foreign Minister Mahmoud al-Zahhar, a leading <u>Hamas</u> member, sent a letter to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, hinting that the party would be willing to accept a "two-state solution" to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Though the letter stopped short of outright recognition of Israel, it said that Palestinians "look forward to living in

Updating its nukes not good for the US Hamas reaches out toward peace Mademoiselles want to become madames

peace and security . . . side-by-side with all our neighbours". And while it failed to fully renounce violence, it did appeal to the international community to stop "resorting to the language of threats", and "to initiate serious and constructive dialogue" to promote "peace and stability in our region". The letter can be seen as nothing short of a breakthrough in an otherwise moribund peace process. An elected Palestinian official, and a prominent member of *Hamas*, is telling the UN that his people are ready to achieve peace and security. The distance travelled by *Hamas* is not very far, compared with the lengths the international community would like them to go, but it is nonetheless significant. *Hamas* has taken a first step away from the cycle of violence. All that is needed now is an Israeli partner who can follow in their timid footsteps toward peace.

.....

Mademoiselles want to become madames

THE TIMES

LONDON

NO SOONER have the barricades in Paris come down in triumph at the French Government's capitulation on labour market reforms than they are going up again. This time it is not to protect the stultifying status quo but instead to challenge one of the cultural centrepieces of everyday French life. The country's students may feel insufficiently brave about the real world to refuse to leave college without the promise of a job for life. But young women are now also demanding an honorific for life. They no longer want to be belittled as Mademoiselle till exchanging marriage vows. They want a fast-track straight to Madamehood. Other countries have produced their own solutions. Germany consciously dropped the use of Fraulein in deference to young women's sensibilities. Britain added Ms to its bureaucratic vocabulary a generation ago. But we have also avoided much resulting awkwardness by becoming a country largely at ease with first-name terms. America has long had the most comfortable form of dialogue in which all men, whether in the boardroom or selling hot dogs on the street corner below, are Sir, and all women, regardless of marital status, are Ma'am. Formal France may have a tougher time on its hands. Mademoiselle as a term of address dates from medieval times and is written into French culture. Besides, there are plenty of Parisiennes d'un certain age who, as time takes its toll, would love nothing more than to be mistaken for a Miss.

Load-Date: May 1, 2006



Climbdown as Hamas agrees to Israeli state: Negotiator says group recognises right to exist: Hope for end to crippling sanctions on Palestinians

The Guardian - Final Edition
June 22, 2006 Thursday

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Section: GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 16

Length: 709 words

Byline: Chris McGreal, Jerusalem

Body

<u>Hamas</u> has made a major political climbdown by agreeing to sections of a document that recognise Israel's right to exist and a negotiated two-state solution, according to Palestinian leaders.

In a bitter struggle for power, <u>Hamas</u> is bowing to an ultimatum from the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, to endorse the document drawn up by Palestinian security prisoners in Israeli jails, or face a national referendum on the issue that could see the Islamist group stripped of power if it loses.

But final agreement on the paper, designed to end international sanctions against the <u>Hamas</u> government that have crippled the Palestinian economy, has been slowed by wrangling over a national unity administration and the question of who speaks for the Palestinians.

Yasser Abed Rabbo, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's executive committee and a lead negotiator on the prisoners' document, said <u>Hamas</u> had agreed to sections which call for a negotiated and final agreement with Israel to establish a Palestinian state on the territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem.

"<u>Hamas</u> is prepared to accept those parts of the document because they think it is a way to get rid of a lot of its problems with the international community. That's why it will accept all the document eventually," he said.

<u>Hamas</u>, facing a deep internal split over recognition of the Jewish state, declined to discuss the negotiations in detail.

If it formally approves the entire document, it will represent a significant shift from its founding goal of replacing Israel with an Islamic state and its more recent position of agreeing a long-term ceasefire, over a generation or more, if a Palestinian state is formed on the occupied territories but without formally recognising the Jewish state.

Mr Abed Rabbo said he expected an agreement in the coming days, but that important differences still had to be settled, particularly over the document's call for the formation of a national unity government.

He described that as "the major issue that will determine the fate of two nations for decades" because a unity administration, built around a common policy of negotiations with Israel, would be the only way to combat its plans to unilaterally impose its final borders and annex parts of the occupied territories.

Climbdown as Hamas agrees to Israeli state: Negotiator says group recognises right to exist: Hope for end to crippling sanctions on Palestinians

More immediately, this was also the only way to restore foreign aid. But Mr Abed Rabbo added it would be a mistake to see the approval of the prisoners' document as sufficient, in itself, to end international sanctions against the Palestinian Authority. "The document calls for the foundation of a national unity government as the basis of a new programme that will approach the world," he said.

"But the document is part of a package. It should be accompanied by an agreement on policies for a new government. The document won't change conditions and relations on its own."

Mr Abed Rabbo said the July 26 referendum would be called off if there was agreement on the document, but that a ballot could be held later if <u>Hamas</u> blocked the formation of a new government or failed to agree on a negotiations policy.

Abdullah Abdullah, a Fatah MP and chairman of the parliamentary political committee, said other differences remained over the document, including Fatah's insistence that the PLO continues to be recognised as the sole representative of the Palestinian people in negotiations with Israel, and that all existing agreements between the PLO and Israel be recognised.

Israel has dismissed the prisoners' document as changing little because, among other things, it advocates continued resistance. But a complete renunciation of violence is unlikely to come while Israeli attacks continue to claim the lives of innocent Palestinians.

Yesterday, a <u>women</u> was killed and six children injured in an Israeli missile attack in Gaza. On Tuesday, an Israeli air force rocket killed three children, two boys aged five and 16, and a seven-year-old girl. In both cases, Israel said it was targeting militants who escaped injury.

Israel has killed 13 civilians, most of them children, in four air strikes this month. It is also probably responsible for the killing of a family of seven during a shell barrage against a Gaza beach two weeks ago.

guardian.co.uk/palestinians >

Load-Date: June 22, 2006



Comment & Debate: Punishment of Palestinians will create a crucible of trouble for the world: George Bush's policies helped build Hamas; now a dangerous linkage with Iran and Iraq threatens a mega-crisis

The Guardian - Final Edition May 29, 2006 Monday

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Section: GUARDIAN COMMENT AND DEBATE PAGES; Pg. 25

Length: 1206 words **Byline:** David Hirst

Body

Patients with chronic kidney disease dying for lack of their routine dialysis; 165,000 employees of the Palestine Authority unpaid for two and a half months; <u>women</u> selling jewellery for fuel or food . . . the "humanitarian crisis" of the West Bank and Gaza is not a Darfur. And what most shocks Arabs and Muslims is that it stems from a conscious political decision by the world's only superpower. First, they say, you give us Iraq, now on the brink of civil war. Then this: the starving of a whole people.

The psychological and strategic linkage between Iraq and Palestine is far from new. But its latest, most intense phase began with the US invasion of Iraq - conceived by the Bush administration's pro-Israeli neoconservatives as the first great step in their region-wide scheme for "regime change" and "democratisation", whose consummation was to be an Arab-Israeli settlement. Indeed, professors Mearsheimer and Walt argue in their study, The Israel Lobby, that there very likely wouldn't have been an invasion at all but for Israel and, above all, its partisans inside the US.

But it had always been crystal clear that the more authentic any democracy Arabs or Palestinians did come to enjoy, US-inspired or not, the more their conception of a settlement would collide with the US-Israeli one. The point was swiftly proved, in the wake of <u>Hamas</u>'s assumption of power, when President Bush declared: "We support democracy, but that doesn't mean we have to support governments elected as a result of democracy." And his administration set about engineering Palestinian "regime change" in reverse.

Its strategy found more or less willing accomplices - Europeans, Arab governments, the Palestinians themselves. But it was always going to be a perilous one; the more vigorously it was pursued in the face of the opposition that it was bound to encounter, the more likely it was to make of Palestine a crucible of trouble for its own people, the region and the world - very much like the one that other quasi-colonial western intervention had already made of Iraq.

The idea was to get the Palestinians, through collective punishment, to repudiate the very people they had just elected. Some do blame <u>Hamas</u>. But most of those blame America much more. If anything, sanctions have had the opposite effect from that intended, encouraging people to rally round the new government. Buoyed by its own popularity, on top of its electoral legitimacy, <u>Hamas</u> won't easily relinquish power - "not without a war", said lyyad Sarrai, a Gaza psychologist.

Comment & Debate: Punishment of Palestinians will create a crucible of trouble for the world: George Bush's policies helped build Hamas; now a dangerous linkage....

Even if the US did succeed in bringing <u>Hamas</u> down, it would, like the overthrow of Saddam, be a catastrophic kind of success - plunging Palestine, too, into the chaos and internecine strife that is the antithesis of the modern, democratic, pro-western Middle East order the US is trying to build. It is clear that, with President Mahmoud Abbas's bombshell proposal for a referendum on the nature of a final peace raising the political stakes and with skirmishes in Gaza raising the military ones, war between <u>Hamas</u> and Fatah is eminently possible. It is far from clear that America's "side" could win. "If Fatah couldn't fight <u>Hamas</u> while it was still in power," said General Ilan Paz, the former head of Israel's civil administration in the territories, "how could it gain control with <u>Hamas</u> in power and itself disintegrated?"

Furthermore, chaos in the territories would open the way to militants, jihadists and suicide bombers from the rest of the world, just as it did in Iraq. Iran, the non-Arab country that is now the main state patron of Arab radicalism, was quicker than any Arab government to offer money to the new <u>Hamas</u> regime. An intrinsic part of its wider strategic and nuclear ambitions, Palestine now ranks among Iran's top foreign-policy priorities. Abbas says that Hizbullah and al-Qaida are already active in Gaza. From where, if not from such outsiders, have come the long-range Katyusha missiles that have begun to target southern Israel from Gaza? And if <u>Hamas</u> were driven from office, it would go underground again, resuming with a vengeance the resistance it has suspended.

As for the Arabs, they would be at least as subject to the fallout from Palestine as they are from Iraq's. Their discredited regimes hardly know what to fear more: the example of a <u>Hamas</u> democratically installed or undemocratically ousted. The first would encourage the ascension of their own Islamists. The civil war liable to result from the second would arouse even more dangerous passions among them. Broadly speaking, <u>Hamas</u> has Arab, especially Islamist, public opinion on its side, and the more the regimes defer to the US in its anti-<u>Hamas</u> campaign, the greater discredit they will fall into.

For Rami Khouri, a leading Beirut columnist, the Palestine cause risks being transformed from a "national" into a "civilisational" one, with "potentially dangerous linkages between events in Palestine-Israel and the rest of the Middle East".

"Hundreds of thousands of young people will feel duped and betrayed. The wellspring of support for <u>Hamas</u>- and Muslim Brotherhood-style democratic engagement will slowly dry up in favour of more intense armed struggle. They will stop wasting time trying to redress grievances through peaceful, democratic politics or diplomacy . . . Bringing down the <u>Hamas</u>-led Palestinian government will bring further radicalisation, resistance and terrorism across the region." Well aware of this resonance, the Palestinian finance minister, Omar Abdul Razeq, warned: "The entire region will catch fire if the Palestinian people are pushed to a situation where they have nothing to lose."

Suddenly this month the Bush administration seemed to grasp something of the perils it is courting. And those US-engineered privations of Gaza were too scandalous to ignore. At a meeting of the Quartet (the EU, the US, the UN and Russia), it offered \$10m in emergency medical aid. The largesse was paltry and grudging, but at least it seemed to indicate that Washington had given up hope of bringing about immediate "regime change" via economic ruin. Gideon Levy, a pro-Palestinian Israeli commentator, was even moved to say: "Hamas is winning."

Hardly. For the only substantive way in which it could be said to be doing that would be if the US started drawing the right conclusions from this spectacularly unwelcome result of Arab democratisation - the most important of which is that, were it not for US policies, *Hamas* would never have won the elections.

But that would require a fundamental, revolutionary change of heart. In the opinion of Mearsheimer and Walt, the extraordinary US attachment to Israel - that moral and strategic "burden" - makes such a change impossible any time soon. So the fear must now be that, long before this could happen, the Middle East's "dangerous linkages" will assert themselves even more dangerously than before, and that those two ongoing crises - Palestine and Iraq, which the attachment did so much to engender - will be joined, and fused into a single mega-crisis, by a third: when, on its protege's behalf, the Bush administration goes to war against Iran.

David Hirst reported from the Middle East for the Guardian from 1963 to 2001 <u>dhirst@beirut.com</u>

Comment & Debate: Punishment of Palestinians will create a crucible of trouble for the world: George Bush's policies helped build Hamas; now a dangerous linkage....

Load-Date: May 29, 2006



Hamas sanctions squeeze the life out of West Bank Families sell heirlooms and children go unfed as shortages of food and medicine become critical

The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON)

May 7, 2006 Sunday

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Section: NEWS; International; Pg. 25

Length: 946 words

Byline: JANE FLANAGAN in Nablus

Body

AFRAH JOWDAD, 32, toyed forlornly with her four prized bracelets for the last time before handing them over to the merchant in the ancient West Bank gold market of Nablus yesterday.

"They were given to me by my husband as a dowry on my wedding day, so to lose them is to lose my best-loved memories," she said. "But I have six children and no other way to pay for food, so I have no option other than selling my bracelets."

Outside the Star Display jewellery emporium, a line of Palestinian <u>women</u>, in traditional hijab dress, queued patiently to sell rings, necklaces and other finery. To sell one's dowry brings shame on Palestinian families but these are such desperate days in Gaza and the West Bank that basic needs prevail over social mores.

"I have never seen anything like this: I am averaging 400,000 shekels [pounds 50,000] of gold purchases every day," said the merchant, Abdel Hakim Hawari, 40.

The rush to sell family heirlooms in the occupied territories is the starkest proof yet of the imminent economic meltdown faced by 3.5 million Palestinians, as sanctions against the new *Hamas* government begin to bite.

Even before <u>Hamas</u> was elected, the economy was faltering and heavily dependent on financial support from Europe and America. But the decision by Brussels and Washington to withdraw funding until <u>Hamas</u> moderates its militant anti-Israel stance has pushed the fragile economy to collapse.

Overnight the money has dried up as 167,000 public-sector employees, the economy's largest body of earners, no longer receive wages from the <u>Hamas</u>-controlled Palestinian Authority (PA). Meanwhile, Israel's clampdown on the territories has stopped thousands of Palestinians from crossing into Israel to earn a living.

With <u>Hamas</u> refusing to condemn a recent suicide attack, aid workers fear that the isolated Palestinian government - and the limited services available to its people - may soon collapse. Aid agencies would be overwhelmed if expected to pick up the pieces.

"All the international aid agencies put together will not be able to replace the services that the Palestinian Authority provides," said David Shearer, the head of the United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs.

Hamas sanctions squeeze the life out of West Bank Families sell heirlooms and children go unfed as shortages of food and medicine become critical

As government coffers empty and the flow of trade and goods into the Palestinian territories dries up, medical supplies in hospitals are running dangerously low and basic food supplies are unaffordable for most families. Yesterday, hundreds of people took to the streets for the first time in protest at unpaid salaries.

Last week a group of 36 aid agencies working with Palestinians, including the British groups Merlin and Save the Children UK, wrote a joint letter to Israel urging it to fulfil last November's agreement to allow trade in and out of Gaza. Israel has remained insistent on keeping tight checks on traffic to prevent terrorist attacks.

The economy of the Palestinian territories has been propped up by outside support since the early 1990s, when the PA was created as the future government of a nascent Palestinian state. In spite of the continued fighting that stalled progress towards creating a Palestinian state, the international community kept faith with the PA, ploughing in billions of pounds.

The World Bank estimates that only 12 per cent of the PA's economic activity was ever internally generated. The rest came from outside, either through Palestinians earning wages in Israel or foreign donor support. When Yasser Arafat, then the Palestinian leader, launched the armed intifada in late 2000, Israel closed the checkpoints to the occupied territories, reducing the income from foreign earnings to a trickle. By the time <u>Hamas</u> won power in January's general election, the PA was in debt to the tune of pounds 451 million.

When aid was suspended by Brussels and Washington, <u>Hamas</u> asked Muslim nations for funding and won promises of tens of millions of pounds from friendly Arab nations - only to run into another problem. International banks have refused to transfer these Arab funds to the PA, for fear of being proscribed by the United States banking authorities for helping <u>Hamas</u>, which is on Washington's list of terrorist organisations.

They have reason to be cautious. Five years ago, when al-Aqsa Islamic Bank in the West Bank city of Ramallah was described by President George W Bush as "a financial arm of <u>Hamas</u>", its global business vanished overnight. Both America and Europe agree that economic sanctions should hurt the <u>Hamas</u> administration, not the Palestinian people. But so far, it is people such as the Jowdads of Nablus, selling family heirlooms, who are making the painful sacrifices.

"I don't know what is going to happen when people run out of gold to sell," said Mr Hawari, as he raked in the profits from today's high international gold prices. "This cannot go on for ever and, when it finishes, there will be trouble."

Inside the cash crisis

The monthly income of the Palestinian Authority is effectively zero, following Israel's decision not to pay pounds 30 million it owes monthly to the PA in tax, and the withdrawal of pounds 45 million monthly support for the PA from the European Union and America. Its debts run to pounds 451 million.

The PA spends pounds 75 million each month, 60 per cent on public sector wages, 40 per cent on operating costs. About 685,000 Palestinians depend on public sector salaries.

The PA's GDP for 2004 was pounds 2 billion. By comparison, Israel's GDP was pounds 63 billion.

Total foreign aid to the Palestinians in the past financial year was pounds 630 million.

Since 1999, the economy has shrunk by roughly a third, caused mainly by the collapse of economic migration of Palestinian workers to Israel.

Load-Date: May 7, 2006



Comment & Debate: Israel must halt the crisis among the Palestinians - for its own sake: If Israelis won't deal with Hamas, they could end up facing a more radical alternative: Islamic Jihad or even al-Qaida

The Guardian - Final Edition
May 24, 2006 Wednesday

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Section: GUARDIAN COMMENT AND DEBATE PAGES; Pg. 27

Length: 1249 words

Byline: Jonathan Freedland

Body

From this distance, the Palestinians look to be in dire straits - even by their wretched standards. A people who have plunged the depths of misery seem set to sink even lower. Denied financial aid by an international community that turned off the cash after *Hamas* won its unexpected majority in January, the Palestinians are collectively going broke. Gaza is especially badly hit. *Women* are selling off their jewellery just to feed their children. A gang of men were caught digging up the ground: they wanted to pull out municipal water pipes and sell them for scrap. According to B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights group, Gaza's medical system is in "crisis" thanks to "grave shortages" of supplies.

Nor can Palestinians trade their way out of poverty. The main crossing out of Gaza, at Karni, is closed more than it's open - preventing farmers from getting their perishable produce to market: their strawberries just lie rotting, denying the growers their livelihood. The nights bring no respite. Gazans are living with round-the-clock artillery shelling, which Israel says is retaliation for the Qassam rockets fired by Palestinians over the border. The West Bank has experienced multiple Israeli raids, leaving civilians, including children, dead.

And now, Palestinians are turning on each other, with street fights and shoot-outs between <u>Hamas</u> and groups aligned with the old rulers of Fatah. This week, Fatah said it had defused a bomb intended to kill the head of the Palestinian security services, a man loyal to Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president and leader of Fatah. On Saturday, the head of Palestinian intelligence, another Fatah loyalist, was injured when a blast tore through a lift. Fatah blames <u>Hamas</u> for both attacks.

It all smacks of a society turning on itself, destroying its infrastructure, killing its own leaders. But those closest to the reality plead for caution, counselling that things might look worse than they are. There is no humanitarian disaster yet, they say, though there could be one. B'Tselem notes that while Gazan hospitals are short of medical supplies, West Bank clinics are getting by. The group says that movement has become more restricted between the various regional blocs of the West Bank, but easier within them. And Israel's new defence minister, the Labour leader and long-time anti-occupation activist Amir Peretz, has promised more openings at Karni. Meanwhile, Middle East analyst Hussein Agha urges scepticism about talk of civil war. The Fatah-<u>Hamas</u> clashes owe more to economic, familial and personal rivalries than they do to a political clash. "This is rivalry over fiefdoms, turf wars," he says.

Comment & Debate: Israel must halt the crisis among the Palestinians - for its own sake: If Israelis won't deal with Hamas, they could end up facing a more radi....

It's right to be rigorous in these matters. But even the coolest heads worry where things are heading. There's only so long a people dependent on foreign help can be starved of cash. Up to one in four of the Palestinian population are employees of the Palestinian Authority, and yet it has no money to pay anyone - even the prime minister, *Hamas*'s Ismail Haniyeh, has not received a penny since taking office.

There are glimmers of hope. This week, Israel released about £5m of Palestinian tax revenues it had collected but had refused to hand over. Meanwhile, the EU was reported to have found a way to funnel cash to Palestinian teachers, doctors and pensioners while bypassing *Hamas* - an approach backed earlier this month by the Quartet of the EU, the US, the UN and Russia. Yet just yesterday the US House of Representatives approved the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act, a set of sanctions condemned by Americans for Peace Now, an avowedly Zionist organisation, as draconian and sweeping.

The moral objections to this latest US move, and the whole international policy of denying aid to the Palestinians, are obvious: it punishes Palestinians for their democratic choice of <u>Hamas</u> in free and fair elections; and it's hard to explain a world where sanctions are imposed not on the occupier but the occupied: this is the politics of Lewis Carroll.

The counter-argument is clear enough. It says it is unreasonable for anyone to expect normal relations with a movement still committed to terrorism. Until two years ago, <u>Hamas</u> was in the business of staging regular July 7 style attacks - suicide bombings of buses and the like. Would we ever urge Tony Blair to hand over hefty cash payments to the planners of 7/7, however many votes they had won? (A clue to our response can be found in Northern Ireland, where Sinn Fein is still deemed unfit for government despite its democratic mandate and complete abandonment of terrorism.)

This argument may be logical, but it should not be good enough for Israel. Put simply, even if Israel is not persuaded of the moral case for abandoning its current stance, it should do so for its own self-interest.

First, if it allows a humanitarian crisis to engulf the Palestinian territories, the rest of the world will be forced to act and will end up dealing with <u>Hamas</u> after all. Israel wants <u>Hamas</u> to remain persona non grata, which means it has to avoid a dramatic deterioration.

Second, the error behind a sanctions policy is its assumption that the victims of sanctions turn on their own government. But the evidence already points the other way, to Palestinians rallying around the new leadership. "It becomes an issue of pride," says Tel Aviv University analyst Gary Sussman. "When people fight sanctions it becomes a national project." Palestinians are not blaming <u>Hamas</u> for their suffering, but the US and Israel.

Third, and related, is the assumption that if <u>Hamas</u> can be starved into defeat, if sanctions can somehow trigger "regime failure", then a more amenable leadership will take its place. The flaw here is historical. Time after time Israel has sought to bypass Palestinians' chosen representatives, deeming them too extreme. Eventually, it has had little choice but to deal with the official leadership - only to find it has been overtaken by a more radical alternative. Israel ignored and undermined Fatah, so it got <u>Hamas</u>. Now, Palestinians warn, if Israel won't deal with <u>Hamas</u> it will eventually face Islamic Jihad or even al-Qaida, which is already making inroads in Gaza. When that day comes, Israel will regret missing its chance to deal with the relative moderates of <u>Hamas</u>.

There's one last, self-interested reason why Israel should want <u>Hamas</u> to get its hands on the money it needs. "It will keep them busy," says Agha. With a society to run, there will be less appetite for a return to violence. As things stand, warns Agha, some within <u>Hamas</u> are already wondering what reward 17 months of ceasefire have brought: they are talking of breaking away, perhaps to align themselves with al-Qaida and its methods.

So Israel should take the lead, urging the US, Britain and the rest of the world to allow this money through. That's not a call for negotiations between <u>Hamas</u> and Israel: few believe the time is ripe for that. Instead, Ehud Olmert should get on with the next phase of Israeli withdrawals from occupied territory while <u>Hamas</u> starts state-building. Meanwhile, the two sides can engage in day-to-day, practical cooperation - without either having to take the unpalatable step of recognising the other. It will be parallel unilateralism, the two sides moving alone - but in sync.

Comment & Debate: Israel must halt the crisis among the Palestinians - for its own sake: If Israelis won't deal with Hamas, they could end up facing a more radi....

None of this offers much heroism. It does not speak the language of moral, noble purpose. It speaks of self-interest. Israel must prevent disaster befalling the Palestinians - for Israel's own sake.

Load-Date: May 24, 2006



Whither Hamas, and With It the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?; Vote Reaffirms Need for America To Invest in Democracy

The Forward February 3, 2006

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Section: Forward Forum; Pg. 13

Length: 822 words

Byline: Mara Rudman

Body

The day after <u>Hamas</u>'s "Reform and Change" list swept last week's Palestinian Legislative Council elections, two 20-something Palestinian <u>women</u> staffing our international observer delegation from the National Democratic Institute started peppering me with questions.

How quickly could the United States pull the plug on the democracy assistance provided by the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute and IFES? What about the jobs and other opportunities provided by the American infrastructure-building economic development programs?

Would Israel's "iron fist" campaign of the late 1980s look mild in comparison to what Palestinians would face as a consequence of their electoral choice? Would <u>Hamas</u> realize that most Palestinians voted in protest against Fatah, not because they wanted to live under Islamic religious rule?

We Americans would do well to ask ourselves the same questions.

We should consider what this election was really about, and how the United States might most effectively handle the outcome. This election was not about a political battle between those who support negotiated peace with Israel and those who would seek its destruction. In fact, it was not really about Israel or the United States.

This election was about law and order, security, good governance, and the despair Palestinian people feel about the lack of tangible benefits from their leaders' efforts to build a state.

<u>Hamas</u> ran a disciplined non-violent campaign. "Reform and Change" appealed to the outcry among Palestinians to address extensive corruption within the ruling Fatah party. It selected candidates known for community leadership, service and credibility.

Fatah party elders, most of whom returned to the West Bank and Gaza from Tunis following the signing of the Oslo Accords, resisted for years repeated pleas by successive younger generations for power-sharing, internal reforms, greater transparency and broader participation. Many of these younger Fatah activists, growing up in Gaza and the West Bank, witnessed Israel's vibrant democracy up close. That was their model.

Fatah's disregard for internal reform - for airing out the party by allowing fresh voices and ideas to emerge, and thereby showing younger generations that they had a route to future leadership and change from within the party structure - was too often reflected in their candidates. The electorate registered their protest, and then some.

Whither Hamas, and With It the Israeli - Palestinian Conflict? Vote Reaffirms Need for America To Invest in Democracy

Many candidates who might have otherwise been affiliated with Fatah ran as independents. They, too, believe in a negotiated two-state solution with Israel that results in a viable Palestinian state, and in good governance, and in a greater semblance of rule of law. But for the most part they were pushed to the side by Fatah's politically tone deaf, and now politically decimated, older ranks. This further splintered the Fatah vote, particularly as juxtaposed against the extraordinarily disciplined <u>Hamas</u> party-line voting.

We should not interpret the resounding protest vote against Fatah as one against a two-state solution. Instead, we should focus on how to keep the Palestinian Authority functioning with the new legislative configuration and how to help develop transformative leadership that can rebuild the trust of the Palestinian people and achieve a viable Palestinian state.

Will <u>Hamas</u> recognize the opportunity to represent more than a protest vote - to truly become "Reform and Change" - by developing a genuine political party, renouncing violence and finding a way to work with secular partners both within and without the P.A. to bring about a viable Palestinian state? Can it use the political smarts it employed throughout the campaign to recognize that its majority support will last only if it is able to remake itself to deliver what the Palestinian people so desperately seek: a government that offers hope that children can aspire to a better future than their parents in a society that respects the rule of law and rewards those who respect it?

Despite many in this region who claim a direct line to the answer on such difficult questions, we cannot know the degree of transformation ahead for <u>Hamas</u>, or Fatah's ability to rebuild. We can, however, start listening more intently to the voices of future Palestinian leaders. Some are committed to building a state with structures of governance, opportunity and rule of law. Others would rule by less savory means. This election should teach us that we cannot always divide these individuals into neat categories of party allegiance.

The United States needs to make sure we continue to invest in the young <u>women</u> who asked such good questions the day after the elections, regardless of who is running the P.A. We need to help them toward better answers. Their future, and ours, may depend on it.

Mara Rudman, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, was a deputy national security advisor to President Clinton.

Load-Date: June 14, 2006



Israeli hostage dilemma: negotiate with Hamas?

Christian Science Monitor June 27, 2006, Tuesday

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 7

Length: 974 words

Byline: Ilene R. PrusherStaff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Highlight: Palestinian militants linked to the organization are holding an Israeli soldier captured Sunday.

Body

With one of their soldiers in captivity for the first time in more than a decade, Israeli officials are facing one of the greatest dilemmas in a time of conflict: whether or not to negotiate with a group who has taken someone hostage.

The predicament arose Sunday when Palestinian militants kidnapped Cpl. Gilad Shalit and then dragged him away to a kilometer-long tunnel infiltrating Israel from Gaza.

Three <u>Hamas</u>-linked militant groups demanded Monday that Israel release all Palestinian <u>women</u> and minors in exchange for the soldier. A spokesman for one of the groups said the message was authentic.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and other government ministers have been quick to reiterate the official policy of Israel as well as a plethora of Western nations, including the US: no negotiations with terrorists, including an exchange of prisoners.

But Israel's history with its regional foes shows that the country's line on negotiating over hostages and prisoners of war is fuzzy and complex. And the hard-to-swallow reality, some observers here argue, is that negotiations may be the only route to ensuring the captive gets out alive.

"We can come to terms with Israeli soldiers being killed, but we can't come to terms with Israelis being taken as prisoners of war," explains Anshel Pfeffer, a senior analyst for the Jerusalem Post. The last time an Israeli soldier was kidnapped, in 1994, the army launched a rescue operation that ended in the death of both the kidnapped soldier, Nahshon Wachsman, and an officer involved in the failed rescue attempt.

"The popular feeling is that an Israeli citizen or soldier must not be in the hands of the enemy, so some impossible mission has to be done," says Mr. Pfeffer. "The reality is, grin and bear it, and deal with terrorists."

That raises ethical questions, he acknowledges, that many here are afraid to touch. But they are issues that have come up in the past, when Western hostages were held in Iran and in Lebanon, and are being raised with increasing frequency vis-à-vis Iraq, presenting governments, employers, and families with the conundrum of how to deal with hostage-takers.

Israel's message on this is mixed. While Mr. Olmert says that he isn't interested in exchanging Cpl. Shalit for Palestinian prisoners, other sources here suggest that his very statement of refusing to negotiate can be read as an

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opening to the people holding the kidnapped soldier. Moreover, Israel has a long history of negotiating with groups it considers to be terrorist organizations, even making lopsided exchanges to bring soldiers and other citizens home.

In 2004, the Lebanon-based Hizbullah won the release of several dozen of its militants held by Israel in exchange for one Israeli citizen, Elhanan Tannenbaum, who was lured to Lebanon as part of a drug deal gone awry. The exchange also included the remains of three Israeli soldiers. Israeli experts of prisoner exchanges also point to the Jibril Deal of 1985, in which Israeli won the release of three of its soldiers in return for setting free more than 1,100 Palestinian and other prisoners.

Some Israeli critics say this has set a worrying precedent, while others say that it shows the lengths to which Israel is willing to go bring its boys home. Moreover, cultural norms have shaped past exchanges.

In Judaism, if a married man goes missing in action, his wife is unable to remarry. Even if it is highly likely that he died in the field, the family is forbidden to hold the traditional week of mourning unless they have buried him. Meanwhile, many religious Jews hold that it is unethical to placate kidnappers, citing a Talmudic discussion on the matter, because this will only encourage more kidnapping.

Indeed, this has been the logic behind the reluctance of many nations to negotiate with hostage takers. Still, it is a door that Israel has left open before, and that might be left open now.

"In this case, because it's <u>Hamas</u>, the prime minister has already declared that he is not going to release prisoners, and I personally feel that it is better not to say anything," says Zeev Schiff, a military commentator with the Haaretz newspaper. "He drew a line ... but from a tactical point of view, experts will usually tell you, don't say no, but don't promise."

This will make life much more difficult for Olmert. Israel has threatened a major military operation in retaliation for the kidnapping, during which two other soldiers were killed, and there has been a significant buildup of forces around the Gaza Strip.

The territory, from which Israel withdrew last August, has seen increasingly deadly clashes, with at least 14 Palestinian civilian casualties over the past two weeks. More than 150 rockets have been fired by Palestinians on southern Israeli towns in the past month.

Israel has accepted Egypt's offer to intercede in an attempt to win the soldier's release. And according to Hebrew University political scientist Shlomo Aronson, Israel will wait out the diplomatic efforts, both because of failed rescued operations in the past, and because it currently has time on its side.

"Since the legitimacy of the <u>Hamas</u> government is at stake, Israel can afford to wait a little bit, to find out where the soldier is being held, and to let international pressure be brought to bear on them," says Prof. Aronson. "And there is a lot of internal Palestinian pressure as to whether it was a wise decision to do this, even on the eve of the agreement on the prisoners' document," referring to a proposal drawn up by prisoners from all Palestinian factions in support of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has called for a referendum July 26 on the document, which implies support for a two-state solution.

Material from wire services was used in this report.

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Load-Date: June 26, 2006



Making Demands On Israel and Hamas

The New York Times

June 21, 2006 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 6; Editorial Desk; Pg. 16

Length: 777 words

Body

To the Editor:

In "A Problem That Can't Be Ignored" (editorial, June 17), you make the proposal that as a precondition for peace in the Middle East, <u>Hamas</u> needs to renounce terrorism, acknowledge Israel's existence as a sovereign nation and abide by formal agreements previously signed by lawful Palestinian negotiators.

These are fair requests that regrettably are not followed by similar requests of the government of Israel.

To be truly balanced, your proposal should include that the Israeli government needs to stop the killing of Palestinian civilians, including <u>women</u> and children, recognize a viable Palestinian state, and stop the unlawful seizure of Palestinian land.

Cesar Chelala New York, June 18, 2006

To the Editor:

You write (editorial, June 17), "Already, rockets are raining down again on innocent Israeli and Palestinian civilians, inflaming passions on both sides."

It's one thing to take an evenhanded approach to the "problem"; it's another thing, however, to fail to distinguish between the rockets the Palestinian militants-terrorists routinely launch on innocent Israeli civilians -- which are specifically intended to inflict as many civilian casualties as possible -- and the rockets that Israel's military allegedly "rained down" on innocent Palestinian civilians (still a matter of dispute with respect to the Gaza beach incident), which are specifically designed to avoid civilian casualties.

There is a fundamental -- and moral -- difference between inflicting civilian casualties as an unfortunate byproduct of defending against terrorists as opposed to inflicting civilian casualties as a modus operandi.

While both may "inflame passions," they are hardly equivalent.

Ari M. Berman New York, June 18, 2006 To the Editor:

Your call for the Arab countries to get involved and the United States to stay involved in the continuing and deteriorating conflict in the Middle East is timely and important. It is surely, as you imply, one more piece of fodder for the cause of international terrorism.

But your editorial does ignore one extremely important truth, and that is that the Israeli-Palestinian issue is not a quid-pro-quo peace settlement awaiting an implementation.

The "battlefield/playing field" is uneven and tilted powerfully against the Palestinian people. The death and casualty numbers for each of the parties to this conflict tragically illustrate this imbalance.

The Palestinians are an oppressed people in dire need of social, economic, health and security assistance. What security forces they do have are ill equipped and often undisciplined and are pitted not only against internal warring factions but also against one of the largest militaries in the world, backed by the world's leading military power.

Before there can be any just and therefore lasting peace settlement in the Middle East, this gross imbalance must be acknowledged and addressed by the United States, Israel's chief international sponsor and the only nation on the planet Israel will, perhaps, obey.

Frederick W. Nairn Minnetonka, Minn., June 17, 2006

To the Editor:

Re "4 Months Into Aid Cutoff, Gazans Barely Scrape By" (news article, June 18):

Your article about the inability of Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank to obtain sufficient food because of a lack of funds was more poignant than usual.

But over the last several months the various Palestinian groups have continued to bombard Israel with rockets. How do they get enough money to support their continued bombing and terrorist activities?

It seems to me that a better use for this money would be to help local residents with food and other living expenses.

There is something incongruous about the Palestinians' complaining to the world that they need financial help while continuing to spend on military activities.

Jerrold P. Katz Auburndale, Mass., June 18, 2006

To the Editor:

As I read your article detailing the suffering of many Palestinians, one thought kept gnawing away at me.

The Palestinian people voted <u>Hamas</u> into power in the recent election. In doing so, the Palestinians officially committed their government to a policy calling for the destruction of Israel through the use of terror, which targets civilians to be maimed and murdered.

While human suffering is always sad, sometimes it can be educational and beneficial. How else will a people learn from its mistakes unless it sees its evil designs boomerang back into its own face?

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I pray for the day when the Palestinian people will force their government to seek genuine peace rather than the destruction of another people.

Yaacov Lerner Great Neck, N.Y., June 19, 2006

http://www.nytimes.com

Load-Date: June 21, 2006



Hamas vows revenge for killings: Israel orders halt to all artillery fire after Palestinian family on a picnic die on beach holiday in Gaza Strip

Ottawa Citizen June 10, 2006 Saturday Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A12

Length: 623 words

Byline: Stephen Farrell, The Times, London; with files from The Associated Press

Dateline: BEIT LAHIYA, Gaza Strip

Body

BEIT LAHIYA, Gaza Strip - <u>Hamas</u> militants vowed revenge yesterday, after Israeli artillery fire killed seven Palestinians who were picnicking on a beach in northern Gaza packed with people on a Muslim holiday.

The declaration raised the prospect of a new wave of bloodshed. <u>Hamas</u> militants suspended a campaign of deadly suicide attacks on Israelis with a February 2005 ceasefire, and have largely stuck to the truce. The Islamic group now leads the Palestinian government.

"The earthquake in the Zionist towns will start again and the aggressors will have no choice but to prepare their coffins or their luggage," the <u>Hamas</u> militants said in a leaflet. "The resistance groups ... will choose the proper place and time for the tough, strong and unique response."

The Israeli artillery attack was part of a wider aerial and artillery bombardment of suspected Palestinian rocket-launching sites that killed a total of 10 people yesterday.

The violence fuelled tensions already high over an Israeli airstrike that killed a militant commander in the <u>Hamas</u>-led government on Thursday.

Body parts, bloodstained baby carriages and shredded tents were left strewn on the sand at Beit Lahiya, after the late afternoon strike that killed at least seven people.

Hardest hit was the Ghalia family, which lost six members, among them the father, one of his two wives, an infant boy and an 18-month-old girl.

"This was his first day at the beach this summer. He was taking his kids to play. It's destiny," said Nasreen Ghalia, a sister-in-law of the dead father.

The Israeli military immediately expressed regret for civilian deaths and ordered a halt to all artillery, naval and other shellfire into the sealed-off Gaza Strip.

"We regret any harm caused to innocent civilians," an Israeli Defence Forces spokesman said last night.

Hamas vows revenge for killings: Israel orders halt to all artillery fire after Palestinian family on a picnic die on beach holiday in Gaza Strip

Palestinian television carried live reports showing children with wounds to their heads, necks and torsos, and one child running around hysterically. One man wept as he held the limp body of what appeared to be a girl or young woman, shouting, "Muslims, look at this."

Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority president, reacted angrily, calling the killings inexcusable. "Men, women, children and elderly people are being massacred in front of the world's eyes," he said. "We call upon the world to intervene immediately to stop all these aggressions."

It is believed the Israelis were targeting militants who launched rockets into the Jewish state in revenge for Israel's killing of Jamal Abu Samadhana, a senior militant figure, who died in an aerial strike the night before.

Mr. Samadhana was the head of the Popular Resistance Committee and a prominent ally of the ruling <u>Hamas</u> government. Tens of thousands of Palestinians, some firing weapons into the air and calling for revenge, packed a Gaza stadium to bury the most senior militant commander that Israel has killed in recent years.

More than 3,920 Palestinians have been killed by Israel since the intifada broke out in September 2000; 1,113 Israelis have been killed in the same period.

Israel pulled its soldiers and settlers out of Gaza last fall, but retained control of most of the commercial and passenger gateways to the outside world.

Since September, Palestinian militants have fired dozens of the Qassam rockets each month into Israeli border towns, peaking at 94 launches in March. Israel has hit back with artillery batteries that have pounded Gaza with more than 5,000 shells in recent months.

Some Palestinians defend the militant groups for continuing to strike at Israel since its withdrawal from Gaza last year, claiming a "right to resistance." Others voice fury at the militants for risking their lives and livelihoods by prolonging the Israeli counter-strikes.

Load-Date: June 10, 2006



Hamas gives Israel 24-hour deadline: Terrorists vow to kill soldier hostage if demands aren't met

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

July 4, 2006 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A9

Length: 455 words

Byline: Ravi Nessman, Associated Press

Dateline: GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip -- Gunmen gave Israel 24 hours starting Monday to begin releasing hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, implying they would kill an abducted Israeli soldier if their demands were not met.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert rejected any negotiations with the Palestinians, and the army pressed ahead with its Gaza offensive. Privately, though, some Israeli officials said the government had not ruled out any options to win Cpl. Gilad Shalit's freedom.

Early Tuesday, Palestinian residents said several Israeli tanks and a bulldozer entered the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun. The military said they were still outside. Israel has been building up troops across from northern Gaza, preparing for an invasion.

Tanks and troops have been entering and exiting in small numbers through the day. The military said it was carrying out "limited" operations to uncover explosives and tunnels.

Israel has pounded Gaza with air strikes and artillery shells for nearly a week in an unsuccessful effort to force the abductors to release Shalit. Israel sent a small force of tanks into northern Gaza on Monday, raising fears it was gearing up for a large invasion.

A <u>Hamas</u> fighter was killed and four wounded in an Israeli air strike in Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza just after midnight, Palestinians said. Israel said its air force targeted Palestinians planting a bomb near soldiers' positions.

Early Tuesday, Israeli forces surrounded a building in the West Bank city of Ramallah. The military said the men who abducted and killed an 18-year-old Israeli settler last week were holed up inside, and the goal was to arrest them.

After Shalit was seized in a June 25 raid on an army post, his captors demanded Israel free all imprisoned Palestinian <u>women</u> and minors in exchange for information about him. They later increased their demand to include the release of a further 1,000 prisoners.

Hamas gives Israel 24-hour deadline: Terrorists vow to kill soldier hostage if demands aren't met

Early Monday, <u>Hamas'</u> military wing -- one of the three groups holding him -- issued a statement giving Israel until 6 a.m. Tuesday (11 p.m. EDT Monday) to "start" freeing the prisoners.

If Israel doesn't comply, "we will consider the soldier's case to be closed," the statement said, "and then the enemy must bear all the consequences of the future results."

Abu Obeida, spokesman for the military wing of the terrorist group, later said that Israel must at least begin freeing the **women** and minors.

"Israel must understand that the resistance factions are serious in this matter. They will close this case if [Israel] doesn't deal with the demands," he said, adding that the militants would not compromise.

Abu Obeida refused to specify what the Palestinians would do. Killing Shalit, however, would remove their only leverage against Israel.

Load-Date: July 4, 2006



The regretful Fatah voters who took poll 'game' too far Gaza

The Daily Telegraph (LONDON)

January 27, 2006 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; International; Pg. 5

Length: 489 words

Byline: Harry de Quetteville in Gaza City

Body

LIKE many others, a young Fatah activist wished yesterday he could go back in time and replay the Palestinian elections all over again.

"I voted <u>Hamas</u> so that my own Fatah Party would be shocked and change its ways," he said, giving his name only as Mohamed, in the Palmeira cafe in Gaza City. "I thought <u>Hamas</u> would come second.

"But this is a game that went too far. Nobody thought <u>Hamas</u> would win - even them. I know lots of people who voted **Hamas**, who regret it now. If I could vote again, I would vote for Fatah."

It was too late for that last night, however. As the official results were announced, a small crowd of <u>Hamas</u> supporters gathered around Gaza's electoral commission offices, clapping and shouting "Allah akbar. Forward to power".

But there was no <u>Hamas</u> version of Wednesday night's mass celebrations, launched prematurely by Fatah activists after early exit polls wrongly credited them with victory.

Instead, <u>Hamas</u> pledged its victory would be marked by yet more of the discipline that has characterised its campaign - and won it many votes when compared with Fatah's complacency and corruption.

But it is precisely the rigour of <u>Hamas</u>'s conservative brand of Islam that made some <u>women</u> in Gaza fear for their future.

"I didn't vote yesterday, now I wish I had," said Basila Nassar, out shopping with her hair clearly visible, a freedom <u>Hamas</u> could soon deny her. "But we will not give <u>Hamas</u> the chance to restrict us. We will be strong. I will never accept to wear full covering from head to toe. We will create a <u>women</u>'s revolution if they try."

But many <u>women</u> here are already fully covered. And there is no denying the deep vein of support that <u>Hamas</u> tapped into in the Gaza Strip.

"I am a student in microbiology at the Islamic University in Gaza," said one veiled <u>women</u>, Shireen. "We will become more conservative as a society here. We will refuse foreign films and media. We will not force <u>women</u> to wear the headscarf but we will try and convince them."

The regretful Fatah voters who took poll 'game' too far Gaza

The leader of <u>Hamas</u>, Mahmoud Zahar, was said to be "very excited" as he digested the election results at his Gaza home between visits to the mosque to pray. "It is a triumph for Muslims, God is on the side of the righteous," an aide quoted him as saying.

But huge doubts remain about <u>Hamas</u>'s future policies. Both Fatah and <u>Hamas</u> campaigners were long on rhetoric and short on detail in the run up to the election. Now <u>Hamas</u> will be forced to deal in specifics.

"Talks with Israel are not on our agenda, and our military wing will not lay down its arms," said Sheikh Said Syam, one of *Hamas*'s leading strategists in Gaza. "Nor will our fighters become part of the Palestinian security forces. They will remain separate."

He insisted that <u>Hamas</u> would not be shunned by international powers. "We already have a dialogue with European powers," he said. "<u>Hamas</u> is the result of democracy, the choice of the people. Europe and America have to deal with it."

Load-Date: January 27, 2006



Suicide bomber claims three victims in West Bank attack: Attack comes as election victors draft their plans: US rules out talks with Hamas government

The Guardian - Final Edition

March 31, 2006 Friday

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Section: GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 19

Length: 564 words

Byline: Chris McGreal, Jerusalem

Body

A Palestinian suicide bomber killed three Israelis last night in the first such attack in the West Bank this year. The bombing, which destroyed a car at the entrance to the Jewish settlement of Kedumim, comes at a sensitive time, as negotiations to form a new coalition government are under way in Israel and the new <u>Hamas</u> administration in the occupied territories seeks international recognition, under pressure to renounce violence.

The Israeli military said the bomber appeared to have disguised himself as an ultra-orthodox Jew and may have been given a lift by Israelis in a car, who he then blew up. The victims were said to be two <u>women</u> and a man, although the police said their bodies were so badly burned they would take time to identify.

Responsibility for the attack, at a petrol station outside Kedumim, was claimed by the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade faction in nearby Nablus. It identified the bomber as coming from Hebron.

The suicide bombing was the first in the West Bank since December. Israel's acting prime minister, Ehud Olmert, has made no secret of his intent to draw Israel's final borders within four years, using the fortified West Bank barrier as a frontier.

The US secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, yesterday said Washington would prefer Israel to negotiate with the Palestinians under the auspices of the "road map" peace plan, but talks were not possible while <u>Hamas</u> was in power and refused to recognise Israel or renounce violence. "I wouldn't on the face of it just say absolutely we don't think there's any value in what the Israelis are talking about," said Ms Rice. "But we can't sup port it because we don't know. We haven't had a chance to talk to them about what they have in mind."

Mr Olmert plans to remove about 70,000 Jewish settlers who live east of the barrier, but to annex the three major settlement blocks to the west as Israeli territory. The blocks are home to about 80% of the settlers.

Officials close to Mr Olmert said they interpreted Ms Rice's statement as support for continued unilateral moves. Two years ago President George Bush wrote to the then prime minister, Ariel Sharon, endorsing Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza without negotiation with the Palestinians, and agreeing that Israel would annex the main settlement blocks. Mr Bush has invited Mr Olmert to Washington to discuss policy, once the Israeli leader has formed a coalition.

Ms Rice also praised the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, as a man of peace. "I think that he still is someone who stands for the aspirations of the Palestinian people for a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli

Suicide bomber claims three victims in West Bank attack: Attack comes as election victors draft their plans: US rules out talks with Hamas government

conflict." But she said there was little prospect for talks with the <u>Hamas</u> government installed this week. "If you are going to have a negotiation you have to have partners and the Palestinian government does not accept the concept of a negotiated solution," she said.

As the major parties in the new Israeli parliament manoeuvred for advantage ahead of coalition negotiations, Mr Olmert's Kadima and the Labour party, which have 29 and 20 seats respectively, both laid down markers for control of the powerful finance ministry.

Mr Olmert said his party would not relinquish the post, but was prepared to offer Labour ministries such as education and an expanded industry, trade and labour portfolio - issues close to the heart of the Labour leader, Amir Peretz.

Load-Date: March 31, 2006



The future: A harder line on Israel, or a more moderate path?

The Philadelphia Inquirer January 27, 2006 Friday

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The Philadelphia Inquirer

Found on Philly . com

Section: NATIONAL; Pg. A01

Length: 847 words

Byline: Michael Matza, Inquirer Staff Writer

Body

The earthquake that swept *Hamas* to power in yesterday's parliamentary election had been rumbling for decades.

Founded in the crowded Gaza Strip in 1987 as an outgrowth of the Egyptian fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood, <u>Hamas</u> takes its name from an Arabic acronym for "Islamic Resistance Movement." Its birth coincided with the start of the first Palestinian uprising against Israel.

A year later, <u>Hamas</u>, under the spiritual leadership of the paraplegic Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, published its "covenant," proclaiming a "holy war" whenever "enemies usurp Islamic lands." It launched suicide bombings and other attacks against Israel, killing civilians and soldiers alike.

As <u>Hamas</u> faces the demands and responsibilities of governing, is it the same organization it was at birth, or does its desire to participate politically mean it will steer a more moderate course?

"<u>Hamas</u> faces the difficult task of adjusting from a resistance movement to a political party in the system," said Ziad Abu Amr, an independent Palestinian lawmaker who ran for office with **Hamas**' backing.

"What is it going to do with militants who made resistance a career?" Abu Amr said. "How is it going to deal with issues that matter to its voters: corruption, internal order, the peace process? It is much easier to be in the opposition and criticize mistakes."

Palestinian analyst Khaled Duzdar said he believed *Hamas* would move forward carefully.

"<u>Hamas</u> is not going to make concessions on their bedrock beliefs," he said. "But at the same time, they want to prove to the world that they are not the devils they are perceived to be."

To its critics, this is a needle that can't be threaded: Either <u>Hamas</u> renounces violence and the goal of destroying Israel, or it keeps to its covenant.

From its earliest days, the group's fundamentalist ideology clearly spoke to a growing segment of disenfranchised Palestinians seeking salvation. Spreading its ideology through mosques and social-service programs, *Hamas*

The future: A harder line on Israel, or a more moderate path?

provided medical-care and free-food programs, pressured <u>women</u> to dress modestly, attacked stores selling liquor, and killed those suspected of cooperating with "the Zionist entity."

In 1989, <u>Hamas</u> took responsibility for six attacks against Israelis, including kidnappings, stabbings and shootings, while its efforts to delegitimize Yasir Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization grew bolder. Over the next 16 years, it would go on to kill hundreds of Israelis in scores of suicide attacks, and come to be regarded by the United States and many other countries as a terrorist group.

At first, Israel did not try to wipe out <u>Hamas</u>, as the group's rivalry to the hated Arafat served Israel's purposes. But Israel eventually outlawed <u>Hamas</u> because of its relentless anti-Israel campaign. In a string of air strikes in recent years, the Israeli air force killed many of <u>Hamas</u>' leaders, including Yassin. All the while, it kept Arafat pinned down in his Ramallah headquarters.

But the effort to isolate Arafat, physically and diplomatically, to force the cleanup of the Palestinian leadership, may have taken an unintended turn.

"Who would have imagined that the process that began in 2002 with the aim of producing a Palestinian leadership untainted by terror would, in 2006, lead to a Palestinian parliament... only tainted by terror?" Middle East analyst Robert Satloff, executive director of the Washington Institute, asked last week at a conference in Israel.

Indeed, the targeted killings of <u>Hamas</u> leaders by Israel seemed only to fuel the group's popularity among many Palestinians. And when <u>Hamas</u> combined its reputation for fighting Israel with calls to reform the decades-old Fatah movement that many Palestinians had come to see as corrupt, the amalgam proved politically potent.

Before the election, <u>Hamas</u> had hinted that it would be content to be a strong force in the opposition rather than enter the government. Indeed, it appeared almost to prefer that role. That position allowed it to dodge the question of whether it would recognize Israel if bilateral negotiations were ever revived.

Throughout the campaign, <u>Hamas</u> leaders sent mixed signals, suggesting they could be open to talks through a third party. Now, the group's landslide victory will force it to take clearer positions on key issues, including whether to renounce violence or revise its charter.

For now, that seems unlikely. Peace with Israel "is not on our agenda," Mushir al-Mari, a <u>Hamas</u> lawmaker-elect from the northern Gaza town of Beit Hanoun, said yesterday.

Mazen Sinokrot, departing economy minister in the cabinet that resigned yesterday, told the BBC that <u>Hamas</u> "now has to look deeply into itself to figure out how to become an accepted player in the international arena." For Israel, the United States and the European Union, that begins with the demand that the group disarm.

"What <u>Hamas</u> was achieving in the past in terms of neighborhood improvements was small-scale," Duzdar, the political analyst, said. "Now, in the government, they need to think bigger."

Contact staff writer Michael Matza at 215-854-2405 or foreign @phillynews.com.

Load-Date: January 27, 2006



Hard men to deal with

Guardian.com January 26, 2006

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theguardian

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Highlight: <u>Hamas</u>'s apparent election success brings problems, but raises the prospect of a more binding peace

agreement, writes Ewen MacAskill.

Body

The election success of <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamist organisation responsible for most of the suicide bombings in Israel, complicates even more the already tangled Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Will the <u>Hamas</u> surge increase internal Palestinian tensions, with the possibility of even more violence between factions? Will Israel, the US and Washington deal with a <u>Hamas</u>-led Palestinian Authority? And will the Islamisation of Palestinian culture, squeezing the secular, nationalist tradition, bring longer-term problems? The answer to all these is yes.

But the <u>Hamas</u> success also has a huge plus attached to it. The organisation, the most violent of the Palestinian factions, a decade ago showed no interest in politics, shunning the first election after Oslo. That it took part in this week's election represents a remarkable shift: a move towards politicisation of a hardline violent organisation. A **Hamas**-led administration could speed that process.

Israeli ministers, officials and soldiers regularly dismiss comparisons with other peace processes, particularly comparisons with Northern Ireland. But few such conflicts are ever ended by military means alone. At some point, the men of violence have to be brought into the political process, and this is what could happen with *Hamas*.

Election means it has to change, and change fast. The organisation has been running its own parallel social security services in Gaza and has won elections that have left it in charge of university boards, unions and other non-governmental organisations. This gave it power at grassroots level, while leaving it free to criticise the Palestinian Authority run by the rival Fatah organisation, founded by Yasser Arafat.

It is relatively easy to be in opposition, carping from the sidelines. <u>Hamas</u> will find it harder as part of the government. It will have to make decisions and compromises and many of these will be unpopular. <u>Hamas</u>'s preference would probably have been to remain in opposition.

George Bush has already said Washington will not deal with <u>Hamas</u> until it renounces violence and its avowed aim of the destruction of Israel. But Bush cannot call for democracy in the Middle East and then ignore the results.

A peace deal with <u>Hamas</u>, though seemingly distant at present, is possible. The organisation has for years had a compromise on offer, one espoused by its founder and leader, Sheikh Yassin, before his assassination by Israel.

Hard men to deal with

<u>Hamas</u> says it will not give up its aim of winning back Israel but it also says that will commit itself to an indefinite ceasefire, the effect of which is de facto recognition of Israel.

Israel adopts the same position as Washington. But the Israelis have always been more pragmatic than the Bush administration, with unofficial Israeli contacts at all possible levels in the West Bank and Gaza, formal or informal. The chances of real peace being reached are greater dealing directly with the men with the most guns and bombs, rather than doing a deal with Fatah alone, with *Hamas* left on the sidelines.

All this is dependent on *Hamas* stopping sending suicide bombers into Israel.

This result will play into the upcoming Israeli election. Voters there will decide whether the election of <u>Hamas</u> offers an opportunity or a threat: if the latter, voters might be inclined to opt for Binyamin Netanyahu, whose rhetoric suggests taking a tough line with the Palestinians, though when in power in the past he has shown an unexpected willingness to negotiate, rather than Ariel Sharon's deputy Ehud Olmert, who is more willing to negotiate with the Palestinians, though he has said he will not deal with <u>Hamas</u>.

<u>Hamas</u>, in spite of its public relations makeover to try to make its representatives seem less menacing to western audiences, has championed Islamist values in Gaza but has had less success so far in the West Bank. The difference between the two is evident in the appearance of <u>women</u> in the West Bank, free to dress as they please - up to a point - in comparison with their veiled, and often completely covered, counterparts in Gaza.

The <u>Hamas</u> success does not mean that the Palestinians, one of the most secular populations in the Arab world, are heading headlong towards Islamisation. In many places, the vote was not for the <u>Hamas</u> agenda but against Fatah, stemming from disillusionment with the years of corruption.

Ewen MacAskill is the Guardian's diplomatic editor

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Palestinians cast historic vote

Christian Science Monitor January 26, 2006, Thursday

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 6

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Byline: Ilene R. Prusher and Joshua Mitnick

Dateline: BETHLEHEM AND RAMALLAH, WEST BANK; KHAN YOUNIS, GAZA STRIP **Highlight:** Turnout was high for Wednesday's parliamentary vote, the first in a decade.

Body

Palestinians streamed into more than 1,000 polling stations Wednesday in the first parliamentary election in a decade, one that will determine the shape of future prospects for returning to peace talks with Israel.

The ballot itself is largely viewed as a reality check over who Palestinians want steering them into that future: secular Fatah Party, the ruling faction that brought the Palestinian Authority (PA) into being through its willingness to negotiate with Israel, or Islamic <u>Hamas</u>, which stands by suicide bombings and other attacks as its way of facing off with the Jewish state.

Three hours after the polls closed, different organizations released varying figures. Al Arabiyeh, the Arab satellite channel, estimated that of the 132 seats, Fatah won 65 and <u>Hamas</u> won 48. But Al Jazeera, quoting an exit poll carried out by Bir Zeit University near Ramallah, showed Fatah winning 63 seats and **Hamas** winning 58.

Exit polls suggest that small parties and independent candidates attracted more supporters than expected, and many of these would be natural coalition partners of Fatah.

These potential allies of Fatah include the Third Way Party, led by former finance minister Salaam Fayyad and Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi, as well as a liberal, progressive party led by Dr. Mustafa Barghouti.

Official results were expected to be released Thursday.

Divided between militant, moderate

Given recent unrest in the West Bank and Gaza, the elections were carried out without any major incidents of violence or disruptions at polling stations.

Still, many campaign activists bent the rules, ignoring a prohibition on any electioneering outside the voting places. Hadija Jadour and Samah Jarah passed out campaign cards to voters who made their way up the dirt road into a girls' school in Obediyeh, a West Bank municipality east of Bethlehem.

The <u>women</u> describe themselves as friends, but the black-and-white keffiyeh-style sash that Ms. Jadour wears stands in contrast to the green one around Ms. Jarah's veil. That seems to say it all: Palestinians are deeply divided over who should lead and how.

Palestinians cast historic vote

The keffiyah marks Jadour's support for Fatah, while Jarah's green ribbon shows the world, as she puts it, "I love *Hamas*."

Explains Jarah: "*Hamas* has always been the center of the resistance, and they are working on giving assistance to people and developing our society."

"It's not true," argues Jadour, smiling wryly at her friend's comment. "Fatah is the one who established the Palestinian Authority in the first place. Fatah wants to solve things in a diplomatic way, not by violence."

Asked if they discuss these issues often, the <u>women</u> grin and look in different directions. "We don't go into politics," says Jarah, "or it might ruin the good relationship we have."

That dynamic, pitting friend against friend, and even brother against brother, was repeated throughout the Palestinian territories. Among the more famed divisions, one of the senior-most members of the Fatah, Jibril Rajoub, who long served as the West Bank security czar for the PA, was running against his own brother, Naif Rajoub, an Islamic religious figure who is high on the list of candidates for *Hamas*.

"Let's remember that the decision to hold new elections was made by us in Fatah, to reestablish the legitimacy of the regime. But I'm sure both of us will win," Jibril Rajoub says, speaking of his brother. "There's nothing wrong with having him, as part of *Hamas*, in the government. I'm proud of that."

But <u>Hamas</u> isn't sure that it's actually prepared to be part of a government led by Fatah - particularly one with plans to carve out peace with Israel.

One top candidate in <u>Hamas</u>, interviewed in Ramallah, says that <u>Hamas</u> is keeping its options open. It may decide to join Fatah and be a partner in the PA, or it may decide to instead play the role of a feisty opposition party, blocking attempts to make concessions in negotiations with Israel. Equally interesting, however, may be what <u>Hamas</u> plans to do domestically with its bolstered muscle and putative legitimacy.

"We want to clean the internal Palestinian house, to put an end to corruption in the Palestinian Authority, and to bring to justice those who have stolen from the people," says Ahmad Abdel-Aziz Mubarek, a Ramallah candidate for *Hamas*. "The Authority sometimes banned *Hamas* people from getting jobs and harassed them. We will put an end to that."

The Gaza situation

Driving much of the dissatisfaction with the PA is the lawlessness that has gripped Gaza since Israeli disengagement last year. At a polling station there, a spurt of machine-gun fire rang out. Voters and election workers barely flinched as sporadic gunfire has become all too common in the coastal strip.

There was plenty else to fuel the anxiety. <u>Hamas</u> leader Mahmoud az-Zahar predicted there would be voter fraud, and last month a Fatah primary in Gaza was cancelled because of attacks on voting booths. But voting Wednesday was festive nonetheless. Banners of Fatah yellow and <u>Hamas</u> green fluttered from taxis and minivans ferrying groups of voters to the polls.

"Congratulations, Palestine for the day of democracy, the day of freedom," crooned a singer on a radio station.

In the southern Gaza town of Rafah, voters cast ballots at a school surrounded by bullet-ravaged buildings, a grim reminder of the five-year Israeli war against the Palestinians.

Atidal Hafagah says the outer wall of her house was once destroyed by the Israelis, but life has improved since the September withdrawal of Israeli settlers from Gaza. A black hijab covering her face, Hafagah says she voted for *Hamas*, which she thought would rid the PA of corruption and institute Islamic rule.

Hamas to promote Islamic law

Palestinians cast historic vote

Indeed, Mr. Mubarek says that <u>Hamas</u> gradually will change Palestinian society so that it conforms with Islamic law, or sharia. For example, he says, <u>Hamas</u> will see to it that the casino in Jericho will be closed down, since gambling is forbidden in Islam.

He says that it should be mandatory that people give zakkat, or charity, which is one of a Muslim's five major religious duties. "Christians will pay a different kind of tax," he adds, "and we will consider Christians as full citizens. We will deal with the minorities in Palestine according to Islamic rules."

Campaign pledges like these may have attracted some voters, but they quickly turn others off - including other Muslims.

At the Deheishe Refugee Camp in Bethlehem, secular Palestinians were trying to round up support for a leftist party, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, one of 11 lists in the race.

"<u>Hamas</u> wants an Islamic state, not a Palestinian state," says Mohammed Ramadan, a schoolteacher who was dismayed by growing support for <u>Hamas</u>. "We believe we need to build our state with a political and social program, without imposing Islam on people."

US, Israel refuse to deal with *Hamas*

Outside the polling station in Dar Salah, a large village southeast of Jerusalem, *Hamas* certainly seemed the most palpable presence.

Although members of Fatah were elected last year to lead the local council, posters of <u>Hamas</u> carpeted the ramshackle town overlooking the desert. Most of the posters featured Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Abdul Aziz Rantissi, two top *Hamas* leaders assassinated by Israel in 2004.

A white four-wheel drive vehicle, festooned with <u>Hamas</u> flags, sat parked at the entrance to the school where voters entered.

"We will cooperate with anyone who has clean hands, who safeguards the Palestinian people, and who opposes the occupation," says Nidal Huzeibi, the man with the keys. "But I totally reject recognition of Israel because they don't give us our rights," he says. "I'm 100 percent sure that *Hamas* will soon be the largest force on the Palestinian street."

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, whose seat is not up for reelection, said Wednesday that the PA will renew negotiations with Israel even if <u>Hamas</u> is a partner in the government. But the US and Israel have made clear that they will not deal with *Hamas*, which they consider a terrorist group.

Former President Jimmy Carter, heading a 900-member observer mission to the elections, told reporters Wednesday that the US would distinguish being <u>Hamas</u> in the legislative branch and <u>Hamas</u> at the helm: "The US government is prepared to continue to deal with the Palestinian Authority with <u>Hamas</u> members in the government. But if <u>Hamas</u> members become part of the executive branch, US law would preclude dealing with them."

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Israel threatens to strike Gaza after raid

The International Herald Tribune
June 26, 2006 Monday

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Byline: Steven Erlanger **Dateline:** JERUSALEM

Body

Israel on Sunday threatened a strong military response after Palestinian militants, including some belonging to the governing faction <u>Hamas</u>, emerged from a long tunnel dug into Israel, killed two soldiers, wounded four and kidnapped another at an outpost near the Egyptian border.

Two of the eight Palestinians were killed. The rest escaped back into Gaza with the Israeli soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit, 19, who is believed to have been wounded and whom they may want to try to exchange for jailed militants. He was the first Israeli soldier to have been kidnapped in more than a decade.

Israeli tanks moved a short distance into Gaza, the first tank incursion since Israel pulled its settlers and soldiers out of the territory last summer. Israeli officials talked of serious retaliation for the raid, for which <u>Hamas</u> took partial responsibility, along with the Popular Resistance Committees and a new group, the Army of Islam.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel said at a cabinet meeting that he held the Palestinian Authority, its <u>Hamas</u> government and its president, Mahmoud Abbas, known as Abu Mazen, "responsible for this event, with all this implies." Mark Regev, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, said: "This is a crisis." Olmert urged Abbas to act to free the soldier.

Abbas condemned the raid, saying it was against "the national consensus." In a statement, he said: "We have always warned against the danger of certain groups or factions leaving the national consensus and carrying out operations for which the Palestinian people will always have to pay the price."

Abbas, who has been trying to get <u>Hamas</u> to at least implicitly recognize Israel's right to exist, was embarrassed by the raid. He called off meetings with <u>Hamas</u> leaders scheduled for Sunday.

Israel asked Egypt, which has influence in Gaza, to help free the soldier, and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni called Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to inform her and seek U.S. support.

The Israeli chief of staff, Lieutenant General Dan Halutz, said: "The Palestinians are responsible for the fate of the kidnapped soldier, and we will do everything in our power to retrieve him."

When asked about Defense Minister Amir Peretz's warning to <u>Hamas</u> leaders two weeks ago that they would be held responsible for continuing attacks against Israeli targets, Halutz said: "<u>Hamas</u> is involved in this from head to foot, and double-entendre intended. The soldier is alive and therefore they are responsible for his fate."

Israel threatens to strike Gaza after raid

Israeli's security cabinet met Sunday night to authorize a military response to the raid, but it decided to wait to see if Shalit was released, an Israeli official said. Some military response was expected no matter what happened, but the officials did not want to damage the chances of Shalit's safe return to Israel.

The last Israeli soldier known to have been kidnapped was Corporal Nachson Waxman, 19, who was seized by *Hamas* in 1994 and died in a rescue operation.

Ghazi Hamad, the spokesman for the <u>Hamas</u> government in Gaza, urged those said to be holding the soldier "to protect his life and treat him well" and he urged Israel "not to escalate the situation." There were suggestions that <u>Hamas</u>'s military wing carried out the attack on orders of its leadership abroad, in particular Khaled Meshal, the head of <u>Hamas</u>'s political bureau, while the <u>Hamas</u> prime minister, Ismail Haniya, was kept in the dark.

But Israeli officials asserted that <u>Hamas</u> had endorsed the raid. A spokesman for <u>Hamas</u>, Sami Abu Zuhri, defended the attack in an interview on Al Jazeera television, saying: "The operation is a natural response to the occupation's crimes and massacres against the Palestinian people. <u>Hamas</u> will continue to resist as long as there is occupation."

Regev, the Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman, said: "What part of <u>Hamas</u> is responsible is irrelevant. <u>Hamas</u> as an organization has endorsed it. And maybe for those in the international community who are talking about whether there is a new, pragmatic **Hamas**, this is a wake-up call."

Livni, the foreign minister, urged Abbas to remain in Gaza and act quickly to release the soldier. "This is an opportunity for Abu Mazen to prove how serious his intentions are," she said. "He has all the necessary resources, including military means, to secure the release of the soldier."

In his statement, Hamad, the <u>Hamas</u> spokesman, said: "The government is following this issue and there are many contacts between many sides, and the Egyptians and the president are trying to reach a solution for this problem. We call upon the Israeli government not to escalate the situation."

But another <u>Hamas</u> spokesman, Mushir al-Masri, now a member of Parliament, welcomed the attack. "We consider this operation a part of the natural response to Zionist crimes, especially after the series of killings of children, <u>women</u>, old men and whole families in Gaza. It is the right of our people to defend themselves with all the means available."

The spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committees, Abu Mujahid, said the attack had been carried out to avenge Israel's assassination of the group's leader, Jamal Abu Samahdana, on June 8. Samahdana had also been serving the <u>Hamas</u> government as the commander of a new "executive force," a mostly <u>Hamas</u> militia that has engaged in clashes with Fatah-dominated forces.

No Palestinian would admit to holding the Israeli soldier.

Israeli officials said Sunday that the tunnel, which extended from Gaza at least 550 meters, or 1,800 feet, and emerged behind Israeli lines, had taken many weeks, if not months, to dig.

Israel clearly had warnings of an attack and closed the Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel and Gaza for several days last week. On Sunday, Israel quickly shut all crossings into Gaza and kept them shut all day, even to journalists.

The attack took place on an Israeli army outpost near the Kerem Shalom kibbutz. According to reports, about eight Palestinian fighters came out of the tunnel near the spot where Gaza, Israel and Egypt meet at about 5:15 a.m., and then split into small teams. One group blew up an armored personnel carrier, which was empty, and another threw grenades into an Israeli Merkava tank, killing a captain and a sergeant.

Another soldier who was seriously wounded and the missing soldier, Shalit, were also in the tank, the army said. Three other Israeli soldiers were wounded as well.

Israel threatens to strike Gaza after raid

Afterward, Israeli tanks supported by a helicopter crossed into Gaza to search the area and to investigate the tunnel

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Islamic Jihad has brooked no cease-fire

The Philadelphia Inquirer April 18, 2006 Tuesday

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The Philadelphia Inquirer

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Byline: Dion Nissenbaum, Inquirer Foreign Staff

Body

Islamic Jihad is one of the Middle East's smaller extremist groups, but it has been one of the more tenacious and troublesome forces affecting events in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.

Unlike the larger Islamist group <u>Hamas</u>, which declared a temporary halt to suicide bombings last year, Islamic Jihad has pressed on, claiming responsibility for most of the nine suicide bombings that have struck Israel in the last 15 months. Thirty-six people have died in those attacks.

Islamic Jihad has been behind some of Israel's deadliest suicide bombings, including the October 2003 attack on Maxim's restaurant in Haifa, which killed 21 people. The attacker was one of the first Palestinian <u>women</u> to become a suicide bomber.

A year later, Israel bombed what it said was an Islamic Jihad training base in Syria, where one of the group's leaders, Ramadan Shallah, lives.

Islamic Jihad was founded by three Palestinians studying in Egypt who were expelled to Gaza after the assassination of President Anwar el-Sadat in 1981. In Gaza, they found fertile soil, and Islamic Jihad grew into a potent force during the first Palestinian uprising.

Like <u>Hamas</u>, Islamic Jihad has been a prime target for Israeli assassinations. The group's founder, Fathi Shakaki, was assassinated in Malta in 1995 in a hit that Islamic Jihad accused Israel of launching.

While <u>Hamas</u> has successfully moved into the political arena, Islamic Jihad has refused to follow suit. That is creating a dangerous situation for the new <u>Hamas</u>-led Palestinian government. Israel is warning that it will hold **Hamas** responsible for suicide bombings such as yesterday's attack.

"<u>Hamas</u> is behind every terror attack when they are part of the Palestinian Authority," Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Gideon Meir said after yesterday's suicide bombing. "It may be Islamic Jihad... but the hands are the hands of *Hamas*."

Hamas vs. Israel

Islamic Jihad has brooked no cease-fire

Shahar Shelef, Israel's deputy consul in Philadelphia, spoke to The Inquirer after yesterday's suicide attack in Tel Aviv. While Islamic Jihad took responsibility for the bombing, Israeli leaders said they held <u>Hamas</u>, the leaders of the new Palestinian government, responsible.

An excerpt from the interview:

The Inquirer: With the new leadership role for <u>Hamas</u> among Palestinians, where does the Middle East peace process go now?

Shelef: Apparently, I'm afraid it's going to be a dead end, since <u>Hamas</u> doesn't recognize the right of Israel to exist. We did show some progress before <u>Hamas</u> took the leadership. We did see some agreements that were fulfilled by Israel and the Palestinian Authority. <u>Hamas</u> says loud and clear to the public and to the media that Israel has no right to exist. We cannot negotiate with someone who doesn't recognize our right to exist. So currently we cannot negotiate with any kind of organization or authority being led by such an organization.

To hear the complete interview, go to

http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/14363278.htm

Contact reporter Dion Nissenbaum at <u>dnissenbaum@krwashington.com</u>.

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The Toronto Star January 22, 2006 Sunday

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Body

If the plan was simply to wet its toes in the churning waters of Palestinian democracy, <u>Hamas</u> must brace for a shock. Ready or not, the militant Islamic group now finds itself plunging head first into the deep end.

Quite possibly, it will form the government.

According to a succession of startling public opinion polls, the race for Wednesday's first truly competitive election the Palestinians have ever known is now a coin toss, with a surging <u>Hamas</u> in a statistical dead heat with the fragmented and corruption-riddled Fatah party founded by the late Yasser Arafat.

The most sobering numbers came Friday, in a survey of 1001 voters in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre, showing support for Fatah sliding to 32.3 per cent, with *Hamas* at 30.2 per cent. The balance of the electorate was either undecided or siding in small numbers with nine other fledgling Palestinian parties.

Any way it breaks down, Palestinians are about to open their 132-seat legislature for the first time to the hard fist of political Islam.

"It is an incredible turn of events," says Nader Izzat Said, a political analyst at Ramallah's Birzeit University.

"Running for the first time, *Hamas* did not even ponder such an outcome. They wanted to do well, but not this well.

"Their idea was to sit in opposition, where <u>Hamas</u> can play the role of God-given saints that do no wrong. But the momentum is now carrying them beyond, and it is driven by impossibly high expectations. They will have to ask themselves how they can possibly deliver."

Initial Israeli reaction to the turning of the Palestinian political tide to <u>Hamas</u> green has been ambivalent at best. Many Israeli commentators scoff at the notion that the sharpest tip of the Palestinian uprising - the very group responsible for delivering the deadliest suicide attacks of the past five years - is now about to unstrap its bomb belts and don the business suits of political discourse.

Indeed, the arrival of politics, <u>Hamas</u>-style, only confirms what a great many Israelis already knew - that the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority, under the fragile leadership of moderate President Mahmoud Abbas, is altogether too weak to be trusted as a partner for negotiation.

But many Palestinians argue the opposite, saying the long-awaited journey of <u>Hamas</u> to politics marks a dramatic shift away from the interminable cycles of violence that has brought neither side anything but growing body counts.

"As we watch the campaign unfold, <u>Hamas</u> has chosen vagueness as the best policy," notes Said. "They don't want to be seen as making great changes, so they are sending mixed messages about what happens the day after, in terms of their stand on Israel.

"But objectively, the <u>Hamas</u> change is huge. For the first time, they are willing to ponder working in a pluralistic council, of co-operating with secular and even leftist parties.

"It is easy to see that they have no choice now but to negotiate with Israel. The talk of destroying Israel is gone now because that is not reality. The talk of creating an Islamist state is gone because the people aren't ready for it. Now, they are ready to deal with it as they find it, and that means pragmatic, responsible, moderate leadership."

Shimon Peres, the elder statesman of Israeli politics, has delicately broached the possibility of talking to an eventual *Hamas*-led government. Now a leading candidate with Kadima, the new centrist party founded by ailing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Peres said that, after Israel goes to the polls on March 28, the issue will be the disarmament of Palestinian militias rather than the name across the table.

"We will not sit with anybody who comes to negotiations with a gun or a bomb," Peres told Israel Radio.

"We are not fighting against a name. We are fighting against a situation. If the situation changes, then what difference does a name make?"

<u>Hamas</u> officials acknowledge that a substantial part of their support amounts to victory-by-default, in that the overwhelming impulse of Palestinian voters is to smite Fatah, an organization widely seen as corrupt almost beyond reclamation.

After a generation of self-enrichment under the authoritarian rule of Arafat, the movement that landed in the West Bank and Gaza on the high hopes of the Oslo peace process in the 1990s is about to taste payback. Fatah's crumbling fortunes, and its evident inability to stem the often-violent clashes among its own factions, have hastened the trend.

"There a feeling of vengeance toward Fatah that is almost a mob mentality," says Birzeit University's Said.

"Even long-time Fatah supports are so disgusted, their attitude seems to be, 'My head is hurting, so I'm going to shoot myself in the head."

For a first-time run at politics, <u>Hamas</u> has demonstrated astonishing savvy in harvesting disaffected Palestinian voters. It has painted the West Bank and Gaza green with banners and posters vowing war on corruption and chaos.

The official <u>Hamas</u> ticket, running under the name Change and Reform, reminds voters they need only look at the organization's network of indisputably well-managed charities, which for the past five years have provided more onthe-ground relief than the Palestinian Authority itself, to know whether it can deliver.

"We intend to set an example, not just for Palestinians but for the entire Arab world," Fadel Saleh, 53, a *Hamas* candidate in the governorate of Ramallah, told the Star. "We will serve society properly. No more nepotism, no more favours. If we are there, we can ensure the ship will go straight forward."

For international consumption, <u>Hamas</u> has engaged an outside media consultant, Ramallah-based Nashat Aqtash, who has been busy massaging foreign journalists with a message that says, in essence: <u>Hamas</u>, Not As Scary As You Think We Are.

"The world has the wrong image of <u>Hamas</u>," says Aqtash, acknowledging that many Westerners equate the group's name with indiscriminate attacks against Israeli civilians. Aqtash takes pains to stress a mantra most <u>Hamas</u> candidates have embraced on the campaign trail: We don't hate the Jewish religion; we hate the occupation.

"The facts are the facts," he says. "If a thousand Israelis died in the last five years, open your eyes and see that four times that many Palestinians died, and a thousand of them children."

Palestinian analysts say <u>Hamas</u> has also exploited people's antipathy over the highly centralized nature of the Palestinian Authority, which has exacerbated Fatah's isolation from the electorate.

With most institutions of the state-in-waiting located in the West Bank city of Ramallah, the PA and its Fatah bureaucrats are separated from most everyday Palestinians, an annoyance that sometimes makes routine bureaucratic chores a multi-day ordeal. Fatah, in Palestinian eyes, bears the brunt of the blame. *Hamas*, by contrast, is nothing if not a grassroots entity, with a support network extending throughout the territories.

Uri Dromi, director of International Outreach at the Israel Democracy Institute and a former adviser to the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, stands out among Israel analysts as one who welcomes the politicization of *Hamas*.

"Power mellows, so I actually prefer <u>Hamas</u> takes over, because then at least Israel will be dealing with the true Palestinians," Dromi told the Star.

"On one hand, Palestinians under <u>Hamas</u> are going to have to choose - to decide what it is they really want. If <u>Hamas</u> ultimately stands by its old charter of eliminating Israel, they will declare themselves to the world as being unworthy of negotiations. And that would be better at least than the present situation, which is where we have a Palestinian partner (Fatah, under Abbas) who has good intentions but is really incapable of delivering."

The day after elections, Israel's paramount demand will remain disarmament before discussions. <u>Hamas</u>, conversely, has yet to show its hand on whether it is willing to disarm its militant wing. If the movement intends to push forward on both tracks, political and military, in a manner similar to the Lebanon-based Hezbollah movement, it will risk becoming isolated.

"There will be a new kind of leverage now, a bigger carrot-and-stick dynamic," suggests Dromi. "If <u>Hamas</u> tries both approaches, to lead politically and to continue with terror, I wonder if donations and support will still be there for the Palestinians. I'm sure they are asking themselves this question."

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice went on the record last week with Washington's concerns about the politicization of <u>Hamas</u>. But she stood by Palestinian President Abbas' decision to welcome the organization into politics.

"I don't think (Abbas's) program is really consistent with that of <u>Hamas</u>, but I think he is trying to be someone who allows these elections to take place in a free and fair way and I think that is totally appropriate," Rice told reporters.

But America's blunt bottom line, said Rice, is that *Hamas* must compromise.

"In order to negotiate with a party, you have to believe in its right to exist. In order to have freedom of movement and access and peaceful development ... you have to believe that violence is not acceptable."

Several <u>Hamas</u> leaders have spoken on the campaign trail of weaning Palestinians off Western aid, saying the movement intends to redouble efforts to attract support and investment from the Muslim world, particularly the Arab Gulf states awash in oil revenues.

Birzeit University's Said suggests all options for *Hamas* lead to moderation.

"If <u>Hamas</u> wants to change its mandate with the Arab regimes to attract investment for Palestinians, this still requires that they change their relationship with the world," he says.

"The clearance will still have to come from the United States. That's why there is no going back. You will see <u>Hamas</u> become more and more moderate in their rhetoric, because that is the only option."

On at least some levels, the Palestinian political angst mirrors that of Canada: Here and there, a majority's contempt for its ruling elite is tempered by a creeping suspicion that the alternative comes with a social agenda only a minority could love.

In the case of <u>Hamas</u>, many Palestinians wonder how religious conservatism is likely to filter into the business of government, schools and social services.

"Education and the social ministries are the likely destinations for <u>Hamas</u> politicians in any government. There is no question that secular Palestinians are concerned," says Said.

"But I also think some people are coming around to the fact that <u>Hamas</u> will find there are limits to power. They need the people with them, and they know that deep down, they can count on less than one-third of Palestinians as true supporters."

The final moderating factor for <u>Hamas</u> could be the smaller Palestinian political parties, which could carry a combined heft representing 15 per cent of the vote.

All these parties are centre or left-of-centre movements, some represented by relatively high-profile seculars such as Palestinian human rights activist Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, Christian Palestinian politician Hanan Ashrawi and internationally respected former finance minister Salaam Fayad.

"We have 11 lists running for office and 10 of them are secular," says Said. "They don't have great strength individually, but put them together and these parties could be the tiebreaker, the cushion, between <u>Hamas</u> and Fatah."

Observers will be paying close attention to how Israel's reluctant acceptance to allow voting in Arab East Jerusalem plays out on the ground.

And they'll keep an eye on Gaza, where it is feared that armed Fatah gangs could disrupt voting.

Whatever the outcome, no one doubts the political landscape is about to be redrawn: win, lose or draw, the arrival of *Hamas* places Palestinian politics at the very forefront of the Arab democratic experiment.

With hundreds of international election monitors, including a Canadian contingent of 40, now taking up positions throughout the territories, many hope Wednesday's vote will set a new standard in transparency.

"This is going to be the truest democracy the Arab world has seen," boasts *Hamas* candidate Fadel Saleh.

Birzeit's Said is more restrained: "If we can just get through this process in one piece, I think we're going to have the real thing - a real parliament, a real democracy, not just in name but in practice.

"We just pray something good will come of it."

Graphic

AMMAR AWAD REUTERS AMMAR AWAD reuters Palestinian <u>women</u> talk politics in the West Bank town of Ramallah. Palestinian parliamentary elections, the first to be contested by candidates from the militant group <u>Hamas</u>, are set for Wednesday.ABED OMAR QUSINI reuters Tens of thousands of <u>Hamas</u> supporters, including these Palestinian men in the West Bank village of Qosra, poured into the streets of the occupied territories on Friday in a pre-election show of strength. Initial Israeli reaction to the turning of the Palestinian political tide to <u>Hamas</u> green has been ambivalent at best. Many Israeli commentators scoff at the notion that the group responsible for delivering the deadliest suicide attacks of the past five years is about to unstrap its bomb belts and

don the business suits of political discourse. PATRICK BAZ afp getty A campaign worker distributes <u>Hamas</u> leaflets during a Thursday rally at al-Fawar refugee camp near the West Bank town of Hebron, where the militant Islamic party is fielding a full slate of candidates.AWAD AWAD afp getty images A <u>Hamas</u> poster advising "Islam is the solution" competes with a portrait of Yasser Arafat, whose Fatah party is in decline.PATRICK BAZ afp getty A campaign worker distributes <u>Hamas</u> leaflets during a Thursday rally at al-Fawar refugee camp near the West Bank town of Hebron, where the militant Islamic party is fielding a full slate of candidates.ABED OMAR QUSINI reuters Tens of thousands of <u>Hamas</u> supporters, including these Palestinian men in the West Bank village of Qosra, poured into the streets of the occupied territories on Friday in a pre-election show of strength.AMMAR AWAD reuters Palestinian <u>women</u> talk politics in the West Bank town of Ramallah. Palestinian parliamentary elections, the first to be contested by candidates from the militant group <u>Hamas</u>, are set for Wednesday.AWAD AWAD afp getty images A <u>Hamas</u> poster advising "Islam is the solution" competes with a portrait of Yasser Arafat, whose Fatah party is in decline.

Load-Date: January 22, 2006



US opposing coalition govt in Palestine: Shyam

The Nation (AsiaNet)

March 28, 2006 Tuesday

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Section: NATIONWIDE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Length: 470 words

Dateline: LAHORE March 28

Body

Former Imam of Al Aqsa mosque, vice chancellor of Gaza University and central leader of Islamic Resistance Movement (<u>Hamas</u>) Shaikh Ahmad Mehmood Shyam has said that <u>Hamas</u> was least concerned with the elections in Israel as the parties in Israel whether from right or left wing are unanimous on Palestinians enmity.

He was delivering a special lecture organised by Jamat-e-Islami Lahore at Mansoora on Tuesday.

He said that Israel could only be forgiven if she follows the principle of co-existence and if it vacated the occupied areas of Palestine. However, it does not tantamount to acknowledge Israel.

Shyam further said that <u>Hamas</u> tried its best to form a coalition government despite winning majority in the Palestinian Authority legislative assembly elections because they wanted to follow the experiment of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal of Pakistan in order to gain wide support from political and social circles in Palestine.

He said America and Israel put intense pressure on former ruling party Al-Fatah and other parties for not making coalition government with <u>Hamas</u> in order to isolate it on the national and international political front. He said, in fact, Israel and America opened the door of Arab world for <u>Hamas</u> by making a siege of the party.

He paid tribute to the courage and political vision of the Palestinians and said they voted for <u>Hamas</u> because of its public welfare projects and courageous political stand. Shaikh Shyam said the visit of <u>Hamas</u> leadership of Moscow on the invitation of Russian leadership did not in any way meant to support atrocities on Chechen Muslim brothers. He said the Holy Prophet (PBUH) held talks with leaders of non-believers like Abu Jehal in the larger interests of the Umma, besides Hazrat Haroon (AS) and Hazrat Moosa (AS) negotiated with the infidel king Pharoah.

He said <u>Hamas</u> has not given up its stance based on justice and equity for establishing relations and seeking cooperation of the world community. He said <u>Hamas</u> expressed concern over India-Israel and India-US nuclear cooperation while seeking support of Indian Muslim community and condemned Indian atrocities against Kashmiri Muslims. He said the mutual disputes of the countries in world community do not prevent <u>Hamas</u> from conveying its stance to them because we feel that the world community could force Israel to realise about the usurped rights and lands of Palestinians.

Shaikh Shyam said the wonderful electoral and Jihadi success of <u>Hamas</u> could have been incomplete without the bold and courageous support of Palestinian <u>women</u>. He said no other nation could bring such precedents of bravery of <u>women</u>. He said the presence of <u>women</u> minister in <u>Hamas</u> cabinet and 17 <u>women</u> in the parliament is a testimony to the fact that Palestinian <u>women</u> are playing a comprehensive role in political and national life.

Load-Date: March 30, 2006



Even winners surprised: Caught off guard: 'I am not angry or sad; it is too early for that'

The Gazette (Montreal)

January 27, 2006 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A4

Length: 425 words

Byline: MATTHEW FISHER, CanWest News Service

Dateline: RAMALLAH, West Bank

Body

Chanting "<u>Hamas</u> is shaking the land," young men wearing the green colours of Islam swarmed into the centre of the provisional Palestinian capital yesterday to celebrate their victory as those who had voted for decades for the late Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement looked on in silent disbelief.

"We got clobbered. We are in a daze. Even the <u>Hamas</u> people are startled by what has happened," said Abdullah Erekat, a member of one of Fatah's leading families in the West Bank. "Should we have seen this coming? Why weren't we prepared to head this off? That is something that we will study for a long time."

What happened during voting in Ramallah, which had been regarded as a Fatah stronghold until Wednesday, was typical. <u>Hamas</u> had no political presence in the city until recent municipal elections, yet it won the city in a landslide. <u>Hamas</u> would have swept all five of the Ramallah seats if the fifth seat had not been reserved by law for a Christian candidate.

"Arafat sleeps. Fatah sleeps. <u>Hamas</u> is with God. Israel is in trouble," shopkeeper Walid Norman said before launching into a popular song about <u>Hamas</u>'s strong attachment to Islam.

"Nobody predicted this," said his neighbour, Yosef Abdullah Tawafsha, "but it is the natural result of a decade of corruption and bad government. It doesn't really have that much to do with Israel."

Issam Issis shook his head as he watched hundreds of *Hamas* supporters stream by his travel agency.

"I am not angry or sad. It is too early for that," said Issis, who described himself as an independent. "We have to give <u>Hamas</u> time to see how they will use their power. Israel must give them a chance, too. The bottom line for everyone is that this is what the people have chosen. Everyone has to wake up."

Some of the issues that lie ahead are specific to the Palestinian situation. For example, it is unlikely Israel will allow *Hamas* deputies from Gaza to travel to the provisional capital of Ramallah or for *Hamas* deputies in the West Bank to go to Gaza. The likely solution is that the legislative council will meet in both places at the same time via video conference, as it sometimes has in the past.

Even winners surprised: Caught off guard: 'I am not angry or sad; it is too early for that'

There were already dark jokes in Ramallah yesterday about the last drinks being hastily consumed and <u>women</u> retreating behind the veil and the walls of their homes. The joke arose from fears that <u>Hamas</u>, which is the Arabic acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement, would impose its conservative ideas in the West Bank about <u>women</u> and alcohol, as it has done in much of Gaza since winning municipal elections there.

Graphic

Photo: DAMIR SAGOLJ, REUTERS; Palestinian supporters of <u>Hamas</u> celebrate in the streets of Ramallah yesterday.

Load-Date: January 27, 2006



Two Israeli soldiers killed, a third kidnapped

The Star Phoenix (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)

June 26, 2006 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: NATIONAL; Pg. B7

Length: 486 words

Byline: Associated Press

Dateline: KIBBUTZ KEREM SHALOM, ISRAEL

Body

KIBBUTZ KEREM SHALOM, Israel (AP) -- Palestinian guerrillas tunnelled into Israel underneath a Gaza border crossing Sunday, killed two Israeli soldiers and captured another in an assault that raised the threat of an all-out conflict in Gaza just a year after Israel's pullout.

Israel, which sent ground troops into Gaza after the assault, blamed the <u>Hamas</u>-led government and warned that Palestinian militants and their leaders will be killed if the abducted soldier is harmed. The political wing of <u>Hamas</u> appealed for restraint.

Three Palestinian attackers were killed in the battle with Israeli forces at the crossing point where the borders of Israel, Egypt and Gaza converge.

A spokesperson for the Gaza militant group believed to be holding the soldier rejected calls from Palestinian political leaders for his release.

The assault spiked tensions that already are high because of Israeli air strikes against Palestinian militants and Palestinian rocket barrages from Gaza.

The military wing of <u>Hamas</u> played a leading role in the long-planned attack, and the operation cast a shadow over talks between the political wing of <u>Hamas</u> and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah movement. The two sides have been trying to hammer out a common front that would, for the fi rst time, include an implicit recognition of Israel by <u>Hamas</u>.

<u>Hamas</u> played a leading role in the long-planned attack, and the operation cast a shadow over talks between <u>Hamas</u> and moderate Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah over a joint program that includes implicit recognition of Israel, as well as **Hamas** efforts to counter its image as a terror group and ease Western sanctions.

After Sunday's attack, Israel closed the vital border crossings into Gaza, the only way people and goods can enter or exit the territory. Previous closings have created widespread hardships.

<u>Hamas</u> militants, who recently resumed open involvement in rocket fi re on Israel, confi rmed its participation in the attack. The small Popular Resistance Committees and a previously unknown group, the Islamic army, also said they participated.

Two Israeli soldiers killed, a third kidnapped

"This operation is a natural response to the Israeli crimes of killing <u>women</u> and children, and the assassination of two (militant) leaders," <u>Hamas</u> spokesperson Sami Abu Zuhri said.

One of those leaders, PRC leader Jamal Abu Samhadana, was killed in an Israeli air strike two weeks ago, shortly after accepting a senior security position in the <u>Hamas</u>-led government. Abbas was in touch with world leaders, including the U.S.

secretary of state and the British foreign secretary, to discuss the latest crisis, said aide Nabil Abu Rdeneh.

Sunday's pre-dawn attack was the first ground assault by Palestinian militants since Israel pulled out of Gaza last summer and the first abduction of an Israeli soldier since 1994.

Palestinians spent months digging an 800-metre tunnel starting in Gaza and stretching 300 metres into Israel.

Load-Date: June 26, 2006



The Sunday Times (London)
January 29, 2006

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Section: FEATURES; News; Pg. 19

Length: 2750 words

Byline: Mathew Campbell in Ramallah and Uzi Mahnaimi in Jerusalem

Body

Have the Palestinians lost the plot? Or does the election of terrorists make sense? Mathew Campbell in Ramallah and Uzi Mahnaimi in Jerusalem report

Farhat Asaad is a 44-year-old school teacher with a pleasant smile and a friendly manner. He is also one of the stars of *Hamas*, the militant Islamic party that is historically committed to the destruction of Israel.

"We are a caring organisation," he said after <u>Hamas</u> shocked western governments last week by winning the Palestinian election.

Yet on his computer screen he keeps an image of gunmen in black hoods, and on his office wall posters pay homage to a "caravan of martyrs" who have "shaken the citadel of our enemies" -a reference to the <u>Hamas</u> suicide bombers who have bathed Israel's streets in blood.

When Asaad emerged from the mosque in the West Bank town of Al-Bireh on Friday, well-wishers fought to congratulate him on the victory and he grinned contentedly, looking harmless enough with his dark, intelligent eyes and black beard tinged with grey.

So is this affable, newly elected MP for Ramallah a terrorist accomplice hiding behind a political mask -a man cast from the same mould as Iran's virulently anti- semitic new president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, one of <u>Hamas</u>'s sponsors?

Or is he a new breed of democratic Islamic politician who, far from pushing Israel into the sea, only wants to reduce unemployment and raise the Palestinian standard of living after decades of neglect and misgovernment?

More momentous questions are raised by the <u>Hamas</u> victory. Is this the moment when the Middle East peace process crumbled into the dust? By electing bombers to run their affairs after decades of debilitating struggle, have the Palestinians finally lost the plot?

Or is it an opportunity for all the players caught in the world's most intractable political impasse -from the bombmakers of Ramallah to the policymakers in Washington -to face reality and start working towards an historic compromise?

Sitting in a small, chilly office overlooking Ramallah's rooftops, Asaad said Israel and the West should try not to worry. "Everything in the future will be much better," he promised. "You will see. Both sides must try to change their speech. Then things will get better."

It is extremely difficult to imagine how -especially when, asked if <u>Hamas</u> would be prepared to make permanent its present informal truce and halt suicide bombings, Asaad replies: "Our aim is to live not to die ... But we want to recapture our freedom. Not to be under occupation."

Nor when, asked if <u>Hamas</u> will disband its 5,000-strong militia and decommission its weapons, he says politely but firmly: "All the states of Europe have big armies but these are for defence, not attacking neighbours. So why can we not have weapons? The violence will stop as soon as Israel stops forcing us to defend our lives."

But while pessimists point to the lessons of history -and Israel, America, Britain and other key European governments refuse to deal with <u>Hamas</u> so long as it remains committed to violence -there are glimmers of hope that this political earthquake will indeed prove to be the beneficial catharsis that the region has needed for so long.

Politics is a dynamic process, as one optimistic former participant in the peace process pointed out yesterday, and behind the intransigent rhetoric it seems that political dynamism is already at work, secretly exploring potential paths to peace.

PEOPLE laughed when Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who founded <u>Hamas</u> in 1987, predicted that it would control the Palestinian territories by the year 2027.

Yassin was assassinated by the Israelis two years ago in retaliation for <u>Hamas</u> mass murders, yet his prediction has already come to pass. His organisation, dedicated to jihad and the demolition of Israel, is in power two decades earlier than even he expected. How has it happened?

The answer lies in a story of failure and success. Yasser Arafat, the veteran Palestinian leader, failed in many ways. He failed to turn Fatah, his movement, into a properly functioning government after it was given a monopoly on power by the Oslo peace accords of 1993.

He failed to grasp a peace deal brokered by President Bill Clinton at Camp David in 2000 which would have given the Palestinians a functioning state, because he had failed to teach his followers the need for compromise. Then he failed to stop a new intifada, and he was helpless in the face of Israeli retaliation.

He furthermore failed to reinvigorate his government with popular figures from Fatah's younger ranks. And he failed to stem the blatant corruption by cronies who siphoned American and European aid that was supposed to build Palestinian civic society.

Arafat was mourned as the father of the Palestinian nation when he died in November 2004; but he bequeathed to his successor, Mahmoud Abbas, an electorate seething with frustration and despair.

Most Palestinians are worse off than they were before the Oslo process began. They live hemmed inside a ring of Israeli military steel, and their economy - particularly in the southern enclave of Gaza -is being gradually suffocated on account of their limited freedom of movement.

A few years ago, Naseef Muallem, a think tank director in Ramallah, was prevented from attending the funeral of a sister who lived in Israel because of travel restrictions imposed on Palestinians by the Israelis. Nothing has changed.

"I haven't seen my other sister, who lives in Haifa, for four years," he said. "It is almost impossible for my wife to visit her parents in Bethlehem." On top of that, one of his daughters, he says, is traumatised after exposure to so much Israeli bombing.

While failing politically and robbing the people blind, Palestinian officials have not provided even basic security. Almost as menacing as the Israeli military gauntlet are the Palestinian gunmen who regularly run wild on the streets, firing into the air.

"People want to see change," said Khader Musleh, a father of two sitting in a tea room in Al-Bireh yesterday. "Change could not be worse than the status quo." Men playing dominoes at a neighbouring table nodded furiously in agreement.

<u>Hamas</u>'s success is the other side of this coin. On the Palestinian streets it is known not only for its Islamic militancy but also for its social work, providing the clinics and welfare that Arafat's secular regime neglected.

As well as winning the respect of the Palestinian masses, it has wooed Fatah's angry younger wing, exploiting their frustration over the venality and incompetence of the Fatah barons. Close observers of Palestinian policies detected a common purpose between <u>Hamas</u> and young Fatah to oust the old guard in the vote.

The other significant success in this story is the fact that the Palestinian election took place at all. Financed and monitored largely by the European Union and vigorously supported by Washington -the election is, after all, the apotheosis of the neo-conservative agenda for the Middle East -it is being hailed as the Arab world's first truly democratic election.

This has given the next Palestinian government a mandate of unassailable legitimacy, provided <u>Hamas</u> does not fritter it away.

But what sort of government is <u>Hamas</u> going to create? And how will it deal with the challenge that, unless it renounces terror, America and Europe -source of a big chunk of Palestine's annual \$1.1 billion (£ 620m) annual foreign aid - will not speak to it or go on funding it?

Palestinian political analysts such as Muallem expect <u>Hamas</u> will surprise the world pleasantly, if only because "the expectations are so low".

He believes that <u>Hamas</u> has been quietly preparing its supporters for a change in rhetoric and will soon recognise Israel's right to exist -as it has tacitly in its election campaign by referring to the "rights" of occupying Israelis.

"We've come to a fork in the road," said Muallem. "I just hope <u>Hamas</u> takes the right path and renounces the guns and terrorism. I think they will."

First, Sheikh Ismail Haniyeh, the <u>Hamas</u> leader, needs to talk to Abbas, who was elected president last year and remains in office despite the Fatah debacle.

Getting the two men together is not as easy as it might sound. Haniyeh lives in Gaza, the <u>Hamas</u> stronghold, and in order to travel to Ramallah he would have to pass through Israeli territory. The Israelis, who have assassinated several <u>Hamas</u> leaders, including the crippled Yassin, are unlikely to include him. Which means they might have to content themselves with the telephone -probably with the Israelis not-so-secretly listening in.

The question Haniyeh and Abbas have to address is who to appoint to cabinet posts? In the refugee camps of Gaza last week, gangs of youths were chanting "Mohammed Deef for defence minister", but this would seemimpractical. Deef, leader of the <u>Hamas</u> military wing, is in hiding after at least eight Israeli assassination attempts, the last of which appears to have maimed him.Instead, the <u>Hamas</u> leadership is expected to demonstrate a desire for unity -and an extremely pragmatic streak -by turning to figures outside its own ranks.

Haniyeh, 46, was said to have offered the prime minister ship to Munib Masri, a rich businessman, Fatah member and friend of Abbas. But Masri turned it down and suggested Salam Fayad, the former Palestinian finance minister. Masri also suggested Hanan Ashrawi, a Christian and familiar face of modern Palestinian womanhood, as foreign minister.

Analysts believe Haniyeh -or his agents -will also be in touch with Marwan Barghouti, Fatah's West Bank organiser and leader of its younger factions, who has been in jail in Israel since being captured four years ago and convicted of terrorism.

Israel has allowed Barghouti to remain politically active from his jail cell he even stood successfully in the election - and he is seen as a key figure in drawing <u>Hamas</u> into the political process. Some talk of him as a potential president if Abbas is persuaded to step down.

Alastair Crooke, a former EU special adviser who participated in negotiations with <u>Hamas</u> that led to a truce in 2003, says the talks were frequently interrupted while <u>Hamas</u> delegates sought Barghouti's views from jail.

Crooke sees evidence that <u>Hamas</u> already has evolved in a positive way. First, they have transformed themselves into a vote-winning political machine. "They went in like professionals," said Crooke. "From ground zero they ran a well-run campaign."

Second, they have a de facto truce in operation. "All this year they have observed a ceasefire," he said. "They have said very clearly they are ready to consider further a ceasefire now on the basis of reciprocity from Israel. They are offering a ceasefire as an entry point into the political process that could lead to an end to conflict."

This week Tsipi Livni, Israel's foreign minister, will meet her American counterpart, Condoleezza Rice, in Washington. At the top of their agenda, said an Israeli source, are ways of bringing *Hamas* to the bargaining table.

Nothing is expected to happen until after the Israeli election on March 28 which itself will be taking place in unprecedented circumstances. Ariel Sharon, the prime minister, is still in a coma from the stroke he suffered last month.

Kadima, the new centrist party he set up after his Likud movement disowned his withdrawal from Gaza, will have to fight for votes without him.

Initial calculations had the <u>Hamas</u> victory helping Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, the right-wing Likud challenger who has often singled out <u>Hamas</u> as the root of all evil.

Other Israeli politicians might be encouraged, nevertheless, by a newspaper poll this weekend showing that more than 67% of Israelis would not be opposed to negotiations with *Hamas*.

Despite Israel's announcement it will not negotiate, the first round of scheduled Israeli-Palestinian meetings in the next stage of the peace process could take place soon -and the involvement of *Hamas* is not ruled out.

"<u>Hamas</u> is not an ideal partner and it will have to modify its position, but Israel will not be able to ignore for long the Palestinian group that dominates the Palestinian parliament," said an Israeli source.

Other analysts are sceptical, however. In Washington, Michael Rubin, an expert on the Middle East at the American Enterprise Institute, said that dealing with *Hamas* was not an option.

"If an organisation like Greenpeace started blowing up buses, no matter how good they are on the environment, they're still terrorists," he said.Rubin also argued that the Palestinians' economic position is so dire that it is hard to imagine how anybody, let alone a beleaguered <u>Hamas</u> government, could fulfil its lavish election promises of prosperity and peace.

"I look at it as an opportunity," said Rubin, "to see how unpopular Islamists can be."

<u>Hamas</u> would certainly be unpopular if it tried to impose Islamic policies such as forcing <u>women</u> to wear headscarves. Despite the election result, Palestinian society remains largely secular -and banning alcohol would not go down well in Ramallah, which has several bars and even an Irish pub.

More disturbing to many is the prospect of civil war in the Palestinian camp if <u>Hamas</u> tries to take over the Fatah-controlled security forces.

Fatah supporters clashed with <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza after hearing the election result. And as young Fatah gunmen put on a show of force at Arafat's grave in Ramallah yesteday, Jibril Rajoub, Abbas's security adviser warned: "<u>Hamas</u> has no power meddling with the security forces."

BORN OUT OF CHAOS

December 1987: <u>Hamas</u>, meaning zeal in Arabic, is created amid the chaos of the fi rst Palestinian Intifada. Initially it is encouraged by Israel which saw it as a means of tempering militants within Yasser Arafat's Fatah party

August 1988: <u>Hamas</u> issues a virulently anti-semitic charter which calls on all Muslims to rise up and destroy Israel. Its leaders cite the forged Protocols of the Elders of Zion as legitimate and declare any negotiations with Israel a waste of time

October 1990: <u>Hamas</u> declares every Israeli soldier and settler a legitimate target

December 1992: Israel deports 400 <u>Hamas</u> activists to South Lebanon. Among them is Ismail Haniyeh - <u>Hamas</u>'s leader today. With the help of Iranian funded Hezbollah, the deportees receive extensive terrorist training

1993: *Hamas* conducts its fi rst suicide bombing in opposition to the Oslo accords. Israel starts to target its leaders

September 2000: The second intifada brakes out and <u>Hamas</u> steps up its campaign with hundreds of suicide attempts inside Israel. In more than 300 attacks, it kills more than 400 people. Its popularity swells

January 2006: *Hamas* is voted into power

HAMAS LEADERS

YASSIN Founded <u>Hamas</u> in December 1987 and became the organisation's 'spiritual' leader. Wheelchairbound, he spent years in Israeli jails. Killed two years ago by Israeli helicopter gunships

ISMAIL HANIYEH The current <u>Hamas</u> leader. He served as the secretary of Yassin and is well placed to become the next prime minister.

He is said to be 'moderate'

ABDEL AZIZ RANTISI Credited with developing the organisation's three-pronged political, intelligence and military structure. Killed by Israel not long after Yassin

KHALED MASHAAL The head of the organisation's international wing, based in Damascus. In 1997 Mossad failed to kill him with poison in Amman. He said yesterday that he hopes to return to Gaza soon

SALAH SHEHADEH The first leader of the military wing of *Hamas* and architect of its suicide bombing strategy.

Four years ago Israeli F-16 jets bombed his house in Gaza, killing him, his wife and children

HAMAS CHARTER

Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it

The Liberation of Palestine is an individual duty for every Muslim wherever he may be ... it is compulsory that the banner of jihad be raised

(Peace) initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences are in contradiction to the principles of the *Hamas*... Those conferences are no more than a means to appoint the infidels as arbitrators in the lands of Islam...

The Day of Judgment will not come about until Muslims fight Jews and kill them.

Then, the Jews will hide behind rocks and trees, and the rocks and trees will cry out: O Muslim, there is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him

Zionism scheming has no end, and after Palestine they will covet expansion from the Nile to the Euphrates River. Their scheme has been laid out in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion

Extracts from the *Hamas* charter or "covenant" issued in 1988

Load-Date: January 29, 2006



Israeli Troops Push Farther Into Gaza to Halt Rockets

The New York Times
July 6, 2006 Thursday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 5; Foreign Desk; Pg. 8

Length: 1018 words

Byline: By GREG MYRE and STEVEN ERLANGER; Greg Myre reported from Gaza for this article, and Steven

Erlanger from Jerusalem.

Dateline: GAZA, Thursday, July 6

Body

Large numbers of Israeli tanks and troops moved deeper into northern Gaza early this morning to take up new positions near former Israeli settlements, abandoned and destroyed a year ago.

The deeper incursion, by tanks and armored personnel carriers with their headlights off, began just before 2 a.m., hours after the government ordered the military to expand its operations against <u>Hamas</u> in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The goal is to free a captured Israeli soldier and halt Palestinian rocket fire that has begun to penetrate deeper into Israel.

On Wednesday, two Palestinian rockets fired from Gaza struck Ashkelon; another had landed there the day before. *Hamas* took responsibility for the attacks. No serious injuries were reported.

Israeli officials said the security cabinet, meeting in special session, did not specifically authorize the establishment of a long-term buffer zone within northern Gaza.

But the previous troop position, about half a mile inside the border, did little to prevent more rocket fire into Israel. Plans originally drawn up by the army called for a deeper incursion into northern Gaza, along with the current deployment in southern Gaza near Rafah, where the captured soldier, Cpl. Gilad Shalit, is believed to be held.

On Wednesday night, two Palestinians, a policeman and a <u>Hamas</u> militant, were killed by an Israeli shell near Sudania beach in northern Gaza, according to Palestinian officials. The <u>Hamas</u> militant was laying a mine near a police barracks when Israel fired a shell and a missile at him, also wounding seven Palestinian policemen. Early Thursday, another *Hamas* militant was killed in an airstrike, Reuters reported.

A journalist and a driver from Al Jazeera television were reportedly wounded when their car was fired upon by Palestinian militants in Beit Hanoun who believed they were undercover Israeli agents.

The two-engine Qassam rocket that hit Ashkelon on Tuesday evening was fired from the rubble of former Israeli settlements in northern Gaza and traveled seven and a half miles, according to the Israeli Army. By contrast, the

range of the single-engine rockets fired by militants is less than six miles, although they also possess some industrially manufactured Katyusha rockets, with a range of almost 14 miles.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, speaking at a Fourth of July party at the home of the American ambassador to Israel, Richard H. Jones, called the first <u>Hamas</u> rocket to hit Ashkelon, a city of some 115,000 people and the site of a major power plant, "an escalation without precedent." <u>Hamas</u> warned that its arsenal contained other surprises.

The Israeli cabinet said in its communique, "Against the background of the abduction and the continued firing of rockets and mortars, including the firing of a Qassam rocket at Ashkelon, preparations must be made in order to bring about a change in the rules of the game and in the modus operandi vis-a-vis the Palestinian Authority and *Hamas*." *Hamas* won legislative elections in January.

Isaac Herzog, a Labor Party minister in the security cabinet, said in an interview: "We want to use an iron fist, but cautiously, with a lot of consideration, to meet two parallel objectives: a stop to the missiles and the safe release of Gilad Shalit. We're not trying to change the world or the political structure of the Palestinian Authority, but everyone affiliated with terror will not be let off."

Asked about the <u>Hamas</u> government, Mr. Herzog said: "We see them as participating in terror. There is no difference between the political and military wings of <u>Hamas</u>, as they themselves say."

Itamar Rabinovich, a former Israeli ambassador to Washington and now president of Tel Aviv University, said, "The Qassam in the middle of Ashkelon is a dramatic escalation that requires any Israeli prime minister to respond or escalate in a dramatic way."

In its communique, the cabinet told the army to "continue to section off the Gaza Strip" to reduce the movement of militants, and to continue to hit "infrastructures that serve terrorism," while "avoiding -- as much as possible -- harming the civilian population."

But Prime Minister Olmert is caught between his strong language and his efforts to press the <u>Hamas</u> government, let alone the militants holding the corporal, to do Israel's will without negotiating any quid pro quo, like a release of prisoners.

The <u>Hamas</u> military wing is one of the three groups holding the corporal, but appears to be beyond control of the government. Instead, it seems to be taking instructions from an exiled <u>Hamas</u> leader in Syria, Khaled Meshal. The **Hamas** government has not urged the militants to release Corporal Shalit, only to treat him well.

In the Gaza Strip, at Khan Yunis, a <u>Hamas</u> legislator, Salah Bardawil, said he believed that the crisis could still be resolved if Israel agreed to release Palestinian prisoners. "They wouldn't have to release all the prisoners, but at least the humanitarian cases, such as the **women** and children," he said.

Mr. Bardawil, a spokesman for the <u>Hamas</u> faction in the Legislature, said Israel's actions were increasing the popularity of <u>Hamas</u>. "Israel wants us to raise our hands in surrender," he said. "But the Palestinian people, led by <u>Hamas</u>, have developed a strong psyche. The more pressure we face, the more we will be steadfast and resist."

In the Zeitoun neighborhood in Gaza City, two militants were killed, apparently when an explosive they were preparing went off prematurely, Palestinian security officials said. Israel also closed the crossings between Gaza and Israel, but the Erez crossing, on the northern border, was opened briefly late Wednesday to allow some foreigners, including journalists, to leave.

Asked if <u>Hamas</u> could govern in any meaningful way when faced with this Israeli pressure, Mr. Bardawil said: "Even if the government collapses, we wouldn't lose much. The main thing would be stripping away the deception that the Palestinians have had a real government" since 1994. "A government that receives its budget as charity is not a real state."

Load-Date: July 6, 2006



Israelis warn of terror on doorstep

THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN
January 28, 2006 Saturday
All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD PHOTO TABLE; Pg. 11

Length: 786 words

Byline: Martin Chulov Middle East correspondent

Body

MATP

THE dramatic emergence of militant group <u>Hamas</u> as the dominant West Bank political power has pushed alarmed Israeli MPs towards hardline positions ahead of national elections in two months.

The leaders of all three major Israeli parties yesterday sounded ominous warnings about the rise of the radical Islamic movement on their doorstep, insisting *Hamas* would be sidelined until it renounced terror.

Leader of the hard-right Likud party, Benjamin Netanyahu, claimed the landmark Palestinian poll had created "the state of Hamastan before our eyes".

<u>Hamas</u> won at least 76 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council, crushing the Fatah party of its former chairman Yasser Arafat that dominated the West Bank and Gaza landscape for 40 years.

<u>Hamas</u> cleaned up in the Israeli Arab area of West Jerusalem, winning all four Muslim stronghold seats on the Jewish side of the security barrier. Two other seats were reserved for Christian candidates.

Mr Netanyahu, whose party had been floundering in the polls, said Israelis were now forced to confront "an Iranian satellite state in the image of the Taliban".

"It was created in close proximity to Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion International Airport. We need to do some soul-searching, because the writing was on the wall. A policy of unilateral withdrawal rewarded <u>Hamas</u> terror."

<u>Hamas</u>, which calls for Israel's destruction, has long been feared in Israel as the most menacing of the Palestinian militant groups.

Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who polls suggested was due to lead the centrist Kadima party to victory on March 28, also took a tough position. "If a government led by <u>Hamas</u> or in which <u>Hamas</u> is a coalition partner is established, the Palestinian Authority will be turned into an authority that supports terror. Israel and the world will ignore it and make it irrelevant," he said.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, whose position was not up for election on Wednesday, said he would reactivate the role of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation in a bid to carry out his mandate of finding peace with Israel.

Israelis warn of terror on doorstep

"I am committed to implementing the program on which you elected me a year ago," he said in a nationally televised speech. "It is a program based on negotiations and peaceful settlement with Israel."

Mr Abbas also said the PLO -- a former militant group subsumed by the political legitimisation of the Palestinian Authority -- could also be used to broker talks between Israel and a *Hamas*-led government.

The PLO was considered the umbrella group of Palestinian resistance groups, but its relevance dwindled after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994.

<u>Hamas</u> leader Ismail Haniyeh said he had requested a meeting with Mr Abbas to discuss <u>Hamas</u>'s transition to government, as well as other issues such as whether the deposed Fatah party would join a coalition.

"We want to meet with him to consult about the shape of the political partnership that we can achieve," Mr Haniyeh said in Gaza. "*Hamas* will co-operate with everybody for the benefit of all the people."

"We are convinced we will be partners with the other factions," said another Hamas official.

The leader of Israel's left-leaning Labour Party, Amir Peretz, also sounded a hawkish note, backing Likud and Kadima's insistence that *Hamas* in its current form would be marginalised.

"We will not conduct negotiations with an organisation that does not recognise Israel's right to exist," he said. "If we have to, we will implement unilateral moves. We will not agree to a diplomatic stalemate. The changes in the Palestinian Authority will not hold us hostage."

Israel's regional Arab neighbours were last night still considering their response to the emergence of <u>Hamas</u>, which is not considered a friend of the two states that border the Holy Land, Egypt and Jordan.

Both nations have long claimed radical Islamists posed a subversive threat and have cracked down on their activities. Jordan has rounded up dozens of Iraqis who have crossed its border claiming they are linked to the country's No1 fugitive, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Almost 60 people were killed by Zarqawi-led militants in a triple hotel bombing in the Jordanian capital Amman in November.

<u>Hamas</u> has made no secret of its intention to introduce a form of Islamic sharia law in the Palestinian territories and sees sorting out domestic concerns as more of a priority than finding peace with its mortal enemy.

Gaza <u>Hamas</u> leader Mahmoud Zahar said he supported some aspects of the Taliban's strict Islamic approach, but not its attitude towards **women**.

Inquirer -- Page 20

LANDSLIDE

Palestinian election results

....Seats

Hamas 76

Fatah 43

Smaller parties, independents ... 13

Total 132

Load-Date: January 31, 2006



Palestinians Seek To Detach From Hezbollah

The Forward August 11, 2006

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Section: News; Pg. 5 **Length:** 1266 words

Byline: Ori Nir

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

Despite expressing admiration for Hezbollah's ability to strike Israel, Palestinians are working to distance themselves from the Lebanese militia in an effort to end the six-week Israeli onslaught against Gaza.

Israeli forces have pounded Gaza with more than 200 air strikes and 12,000 artillery shells since June 25, when Palestinian militants with ties to <u>Hamas</u> infiltrated Israel, killed two Israeli soldiers and kidnapped a corporal, Gilad Shalit.

During that time, more than 175 Palestinians were killed, including some 40 children and eight <u>women</u>, and more than 620 were injured in Gaza. In addition, the local economy is ruined. More than three quarters of the population in Gaza subsists on international food aid, with an intermittent supply of electricity and water.

Now, as the international community pushes for a cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, popular pressure is mounting on the <u>Hamas</u>-led Palestinian government to strike a deal with Israel that would put an end to the suffering in Gaza. According to some critics of <u>Hamas</u>, the crisis underscores the degree to which it is beholden to Syria, which currently provides refuge to leaders of the Palestinian terrorist organization.

"It will be a small yet pleasant surprise for Israelis that criticism of <u>Hamas</u>'s military activity and of its policies has grown now, because our casualties have increased and because <u>Hamas</u> is too loyal to Syria," Hasan al-Batal, a leading Palestinian thinker and columnist, told the Forward. Al-Batal, who is a Fatah loyalist and is close to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, added, "There is criticism of <u>Hamas</u>'s political ignorance and mulishness as compared to the political shrewdness of Hezbollah's political leadership."

According to Palestinian observers, Palestinians no longer want their cause hitched to Hezbollah's current military fight, because they realize that Hezbollah and its leadership don't have the ability to stand up to Israel's superior military power.

"At first, following the kidnapping of Shalit, when Hezbollah kidnapped the two Israeli soldiers and put up a fight against Israel, Palestinians talked about piggy-backing on Hezbollah's powerful performance," said Samar Assad, executive director of Washington's Palestine Center. Now, however, "there is a Palestinian realization that Israel's conflict in Lebanon will go on for some time. And this is time the Palestinians don't have. So there is a real sense of urgency to get things done and reach an agreement with Israel [promptly]."

Palestinians Seek To Detach From Hezbollah

This mood in Palestinian public opinion was mainly the result of Israel's use of overwhelming power, according to Israeli, Palestinian and American analysts.

Right after Hezbollah dragged Israel into war in Lebanon on July 12, an adviser to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told the Web site of the daily Yediot Aharonot: "We are acting [in Gaza] in an unprecedented manner. We are firing hundreds of artillery shells, attacking from the air, sea and land - and the world remains silent."

In addition to its artillery and air strikes against Gaza, the Israeli military has introduced a new method for demanding that Palestinians leave their homes to avoid civilian casualties (military commanders like to call it "magical phone," after an old children's show on Israeli television). An Arabic-speaking Israeli officer calls the land line or the cell phone of a Palestinian who is suspected of hiding weapons in his home. Politely, the stunned Palestinian is told that inhabitants of the home must clear the weapons or clear out before the structure is targeted.

These methods, combined with the ongoing shelling and bombing, have a strong psychological impact on Gazans, said Andrew Whitley, spokesman for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, speaking from the agency's New York headquarters. Gazans are terrified, worn out and constantly concerned about providing the very basics - food, water, medicines and electricity - for their families, Whitley said.

While in Lebanon, Israel still seems far from defeating Hezbollah into submission, in Gaza, militants are "on their knees" and under severe pressure from their constituents to put an end to the suffering, a senior Israeli military officer said this week. Palestinian public pressure is mounting to release the kidnapped Israeli soldier in exchange for a fair prisoner-swap, Israeli military sources said.

Such an agreement, according to Israeli, Palestinian and American sources, is expected to determine the terms of a prisoner exchange as well as a long-term cease-fire that would stop rocket launching from Gaza into Israel and suspend Israeli retaliation.

Last week, several senior Palestinians associated with the Fatah movement said that negotiations toward such an agreement are already under way. Nabil Sha'ath, a Palestinian parliament member who in the past was one of the P.A.'s chief interlocutors with Israel, told reporters in Gaza last week that negotiations have reached an "advanced stage." Israel, he said, will release 700 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for Shalit, and agree to a cease-fire in exchange for a cessation of rocket launching into Israel.

Though <u>Hamas</u> officials confirmed that negotiations through a third party were in motion, they were quick to clarify that the kidnappers - members of <u>Hamas</u> and of two unknown Palestinian groups - still insist on the release of about 1,000 Palestinian prisoners, including some 100 who are serving life sentences for murdering Israelis during the past six years. According to Palestinian press reports, negotiations picked up significantly in recent days. Israel and <u>Hamas</u> differ on the number and identity of the prisoners who would be released in exchange for Shalit, <u>Hamas</u> officials were quoted as saying.

Palestinian moderates are putting pressure on <u>Hamas</u> to advance the negotiations by providing Israel with proof that Shalit is alive, but the kidnappers are refusing to do so, Palestinian sources said. Some of <u>Hamas</u>'s local leaders are reportedly eager to make a deal, but divisions between Fatah and <u>Hamas</u>, as well as within <u>Hamas</u>, are hindering any quick action.

"Even if Fatah leaders do reach an understanding with <u>Hamas</u> leaders in the West Bank and Gaza [over a deal with Israel], it is not clear whether <u>Hamas</u> leadership in Damascus or the militants on the ground will abide by it," said Peter Gubser, president of American Near East Refugee Aid. Based in Washington, the group runs programs mainly in the West Bank and Gaza.

<u>Hamas</u> keeps bumping into the limits of its ability to govern effectively while refusing to recognize Israel or to disavow terrorism, said Amjad Atallah, founder and president of the Washington-based consulting firm Strategic Assessments Initiative, which works with Abbas's office.

Palestinians Seek To Detach From Hezbollah

"<u>Hamas</u> may be democratically elected, but unlike Hezbollah, <u>Hamas</u> doesn't have the ability to effectively fight Israel or to address, on its own, the needs of the public," Atallah said. "So <u>Hamas</u> has an incentive to do its utmost to help bring about an agreement, take credit for releasing prisoners, and then go on to enforce a cease-fire."

An agreement may provide <u>Hamas</u> with a short-lived boost. It will not, however, solve the Islamic fundamentalist movement's chief problem: As long as it maintains an adversarial relationship with Israel, it will receive little cooperation from the world's industrialized countries.

"*Hamas* is isolated and therefore has hardly any cash flow. Without cash, its ability to govern is very limited," Gubser said. "And as time goes by, Palestinians are realizing just how limited it is."

Graphic

IMAGE

Load-Date: August 11, 2006



Palestinian political divide becomes a family affair

The International Herald Tribune January 25, 2006 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 620 words **Byline:** Greg Myre

Dateline: HEBRON, West Bank

Body

Nayef Rajoub, a <u>Hamas</u> member and candidate for the Palestinian Parliament, has been arrested five times four by Israel and once by his brother.

For the record, Nayef Rajoub bears no grudge for his 1996 detention during a crackdown on <u>Hamas</u> members by Palestinian Preventive Security, which was then led by his older brother, Jibril Rajoub. The more important point, Nayef Rajoub noted, is that Jibril Rajoub released him from jail after just a day.

The political paths of the brothers diverged years ago, and now both are seeking parliamentary seats in volatile Hebron for the rival Fatah and *Hamas* parties. But it's not personal, it's just politics, they say.

"Our relations have always been excellent," Nayef Rajoub, 47, said in an interview in the modest <u>Hamas</u> campaign office in Hebron, where many workers are veiled <u>women</u>. "If we don't see each other in person, then we are speaking on the phone every day."

Jibril Rajoub, 52, a prominent member of the governing Fatah movement who was a close associate of Yasser Arafat, the late Palestinian leader, is now a security adviser to Arafat's successor, Mahmoud Abbas. He said the political sibling rivalry "is proof of our Palestinian democracy. But it will never affect our relations as brothers."

It does, however, reflect the political divisions within Palestinian society, where the secular, nationalist and long-dominant Fatah is facing a major challenge from the radical, Islamic *Hamas* in parliamentary elections Wednesday.

Several recent opinion polls still give Fatah a lead of 2 to 10 percentage points. But <u>Hamas</u> has been closing fast, with the surveys indicating that Fatah will be hard pressed to win an outright majority and may have to form a coalition with other Palestinian factions.

Fatah and <u>Hamas</u> disagree on fundamental issues and would not be logical partners in a coalition government. Fatah advocates peace negotiations with Israel, while <u>Hamas</u>, which has carried out dozens of suicide bombings, has never recognized Israel and has always rejected negotiations.

Even the Rajoub brothers say it would be difficult for the two parties to work together in the same government.

Palestinian political divide becomes a family affair

"We have nothing to learn from <u>Hamas</u>," Jibril Rajoub said. "<u>Hamas</u> believes armed struggle is the only way to confront Israel. I hope they will adopt a pragmatic, realistic platform. But they should learn from us. We have led the revolution, we have led the Palestinian people for the past 41 years."

Nayef Rajoub and other <u>Hamas</u> candidates believe they can capitalize on voter dissatisfaction with Fatah, which has run the Palestinian Authority since it was established in 1994 but is widely seen as corrupt, fragmented and unable to deliver many basic services.

"The people have been suffering from corruption, mismanagement and chaos," Nayef Rajoub said. "We think they are looking for something very different."

Hebron, in the southern West Bank about 32 kilometers, or 20 miles, from Jerusalem, will be an important election battleground. Both Fatah and <u>Hamas</u> have strong presences in a town marked by chronic tensions between its roughly 150,000 Palestinians and the 500 Jewish settlers who live in tiny enclaves.

In the Palestinian ballot, the top nine vote-getters in the Hebron District will win seats in Parliament, meaning it is quite possible that both Rajoub brothers will make the cut and become legislators.

Still, this is the first time that <u>Hamas</u> is competing in parliamentary elections and uncertainties abound. The Rajoubs are among 13 brothers and sisters who come from Dura, a small town outside Hebron, and Nayef Rajoub said that the family's political loyalties are so mixed he is not sure whether <u>Hamas</u> or Fatah would win in a vote among his siblings.

Load-Date: January 29, 2006



Fatah supporters stage violent protests: MIDEAST I Militants threaten their own party

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

January 28, 2006 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A13

Length: 786 words

Byline: Matthew Fisher, CanWest News Service

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM -- Disgruntled Fatah members took to the streets of Gaza on Friday, burning cars and threatening their own leaders in the wake of this week's stunning parliamentary victory by rival *Hamas*.

Fatah's military wing, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, staged a series of large demonstrations outside the Palestinian parliament building, threatening to "liquidate" any of their own leaders, including Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who joined a *Hamas* government.

Gunmen from both Fatah and <u>Hamas</u> exchanged gunfire in the Gaza town of Khan Younis on Friday that left three wounded. Factional violence was also reported in the the West Bank cities of Nablus and Ramallah.

"We don't want to join the <u>Hamas</u> government. We don't want corrupt leadership. We want reform and we want to fire all the corrupt," one group of protesters chanted.

Abbas, the PA's beleaguered president, who remains committed to peace talks involving Israel and the U.S., is to meet with <u>Hamas</u> leaders today or Sunday in Gaza to discuss how and when <u>Hamas</u>, which does not have a single experienced parliamentary legislator, should formally take over power from Fatah. <u>Hamas</u> took 76 of 132 seats in the Palestinian parliament.

Fatah, which had held power for decades, has so far refused repeated invitations from the victors to join them in a national unity coalition.

The first test of how the world intends to treat a Palestinian Authority dominated by <u>Hamas</u>, which still calls for Israel's destruction, may come as soon as next week.

European nations and the United States, which donate about \$1.5 billion to the PA budget annually but consider <u>Hamas</u> a terrorist organization, are to meet in Europe on Monday to discuss whether aid and political contacts with the PA should continue.

Fatah supporters stage violent protests: MIDEAST I Militants threaten their own party

Even the Arab League said Friday that <u>Hamas</u> should accept what it called its Beirut Initiative, which includes recognizing Israel, but <u>Hamas</u> leaders said again that they had no intention of changing a position that is enshrined in their founding charter.

The U.S. State Department said American aid programs to the Palestinians will be reviewed if *Hamas* takes power.

"To be very clear, we do not provide money to terrorist organizations," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said. "We will take a look at the full spectrum of our aid programs."

In 2005, Washington provided \$225 million in direct aid to the Palestinians and \$88 million to a United Nations fund for Palestinian refugees.

Washington also gave \$70 million in assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

The first to be hit if funding to the PA is cut off or delayed may be 135,000 Palestinian public servants. They are due to receive nearly \$100 million in pay in the next few days.

"If those salaries are not coming, this is a message for violence." the PA's Economy Minister Mazen Sinokrot warned CNN at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

THE FOUNDING BELIEFS OF **HAMAS**

Some of the main points from the 36 articles of the *Hamas* charter dated Aug. 18, 1988:

On *Hamas*:

- -- The group "owes its loyalty to Allah, derives from Islam its way of life and strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine."
- -- "Its ultimate goal is Islam, the Prophet its model, the Qur'an its Constitution."

The destruction of Israel:

- -- "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it."
- -- "There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavours."

The dangers posed by Zionism:

--"After Palestine, the Zionists aspire to expand from the Nile [in Egypt] to the Euphrates [in Iraq]. When they have digested the region they overtook, they will aspire to further expansion and so on."

Zionism's operations:

"[Zionism] does not refrain from resorting to all methods, using all evil and contemptible ways to achieve its end. It relies greatly in its infiltration and espionage operations on the secret organizations it gave rise to, such as the Freemasons, the Rotary and Lions clubs, and other sabotage groups. . . . They aim at undermining societies, destroying values, corrupting consciences, deteriorating character and annihilating Islam. It is behind the drug trade and alcoholism in all its kinds so as to facilitate its control and expansion."

On Women:

- -- "Muslim <u>women</u> have a no lesser role than that of men in the war of liberation; they manufacture men and play a great role in guiding and educating the 'new' generation."
- -- "We must pay attention to the schools and curricula upon which Muslim girls are educated, so as to make them righteous mothers, who are conscious of their duties in the war of liberation."

Graphic

Photo: Hatem Moussa, Associated Press; Protestors burn cars and fire their guns into the air inside the courtyard of the Palestinian parliament in Gaza City on Friday. Thousands of Fatah supporters, whose party lost elections to *Hamas* this week, threatened to kill any members who join a coalition government.;

Photo: Khalil Hamra, Associated Press; Palestinian girls try to look past armed <u>Hamas</u> supporters during a rally celebrating the group's victory in parliamentary elections in the Khan Younis Refugee Camp, Gaza Strip, Friday. <u>Hamas</u> leaders have hinted that despite their hardline ideology, they will not disrupt daily life.

Load-Date: January 28, 2006



Fear mingles with jubilation

Ottawa Citizen

January 27, 2006 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A6

Length: 509 words

Byline: Ian MacKinnon, Stephen Farrell and Richard Beeston, With files from Matthew Fisher, The Times, London

Dateline: RAMALLAH; GAZA; LONDON

Body

Jubilant <u>Hamas</u> supporters descended in their thousands on al-Manara Square in Ramallah yesterday, overwhelming the stunned police force as the new order imposed itself on the old. With the flags of the radical Islamist movement, they planted a forest of bright green.

"It's a great day," Mahmoud Ibrahim, 40, said as he emerged from midday prayers. "It's a great victory. Now, it's up to the other factions and parties to respect the will of the people who elected *Hamas*."

On every corner, men huddled and furtively contemplated the stunning turnaround. Stalwarts of the once dominant Fatah party, who returned from exile a decade ago with the late Yasser Arafat and were the chief beneficiaries of his largesse, consoled each other as if there had been a death in the family.

They joked that police would no longer stop cars to check driver's licences, but to ensure that motorists had performed wodaa, the ritual washing before Muslim prayer.

But across the West Bank and Gaza, many Palestinians were less amused, fearing that the Islamists would stamp their religious code on life by banning alcohol and forcing **women** to wear the hijab.

The only bar in Gaza City selling alcohol was bombed three weeks ago. At Gaza FM, an independent music and talk radio station, one host, Jayyab Abu Safia, 22, said he would leave the country because he feared an escalation of the death threats that he and the station's six other staff have already received from Islamic extremists.

"Since the result, we have switched off the songs and we are going to change all the programs because they have been condemned by *Hamas* and Islamic Jihad," he said.

<u>Hamas</u> leaders were making every effort last night to reassure the world they were ready for responsible government. Mahmoud Zahar, a <u>Hamas</u> leader in Gaza, said the movement was ready to extend its year-old ceasefire if Israel reciprocated.

"Don't be afraid," Ismail Haniyeh, the top <u>Hamas</u> figure in the Palestinian territories, said. "<u>Hamas</u> is a Palestinian movement, one which is politically open in the Palestinian arena and to its Arab and Islamic hinterland, and similarly open to the international arena."

Fear mingles with jubilation

Ramallah, which had been regarded as a Fatah stronghold until Wednesday, was won by *Hamas* in a landslide.

"Arafat sleeps. Fatah sleeps. <u>Hamas</u> is with God. Israel is in trouble," shopkeeper Walid Norman said, before launching into a song about <u>Hamas</u>'s strong attachment to Islam.

"Nobody predicted this," said his neighbour, Yosef Abdullah Tawafsha, "but it is the natural result of a decade of corruption and bad government. It doesn't really have that much to do with Israel."

Issam Issis shook his head as he watched hundreds of <u>Hamas</u> supporters stream by his travel agency. "I am not angry or sad. It is too early for that," said Mr. Issis, who described himself as an independent.

"We have to give <u>Hamas</u> time to see how they will use their power. Israel must give them a chance, too. The bottom line for everyone inside and outside of Palestine is that this is what the people have chosen. Everyone has to wake up."

Load-Date: January 27, 2006



Brothers, and rivals, for the Palestinian cause; Siblings compete for seats in Hebron

The International Herald Tribune January 24, 2006 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 994 words **Byline:** Greg Myre

Dateline: HEBRON, West Bank

Body

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"Our relations have always been excellent," Nayef Rajoub, 47, said in an interview in the modest <u>Hamas</u> campaign office in Hebron, where many workers are veiled <u>women</u>. "If we don't see each other in person, then we are speaking on the phone every day."

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It does, however, reflect the political divisions within Palestinian society, where the secular, nationalist, and long-dominant Fatah is facing a major challenge from the radical, Islamic *Hamas* in parliamentary elections Wednesday.

Several recent opinion polls still give Fatah a lead of 2 to 10 percentage points. But <u>Hamas</u> has been closing fast, with the surveys indicating that Fatah will be hard-pressed to win an outright majority and may have to form a coalition with other Palestinian factions.

Fatah and <u>Hamas</u> disagree on fundamental issues, and would not be logical partners in a coalition government. Fatah advocates peace negotiations with Israel, while <u>Hamas</u>, which has carried out dozens of suicide bombings, has never recognized Israel and has always rejected negotiations.

Even the Rajoub brothers say it would be difficult for the two parties to work together in the same government.

Brothers, and rivals, for the Palestinian cause Siblings compete for seats in Hebron

"We have nothing to learn from <u>Hamas</u>," said Jibril Rajoub. "<u>Hamas</u> believes armed struggle is the only way to confront Israel. I hope they will adopt a pragmatic, realistic platform. But they should learn from us. We have led the revolution, we have led the Palestinian people for the past 41 years."

Nayef Rajoub and other <u>Hamas</u> candidates believe they can capitalize on voter dissatisfaction with Fatah, which has run the Palestinian Authority since it was established in 1994 but is widely seen as corrupt, fragmented and unable to deliver many basic services.

"The people have been suffering from corruption, mismanagement and chaos," said Nayef Rajoub. "We think they are looking for something very different."

<u>Hamas</u> leaders have been intentionally vague about their post-elections plans. They have suggested that if <u>Hamas</u> wins the election, the movement would want to establish the new Palestinian government. But if <u>Hamas</u> does not win, group leaders have not said whether they would seek to join the government and accept government ministries, or if they would prefer to be an opposition party.

Hebron, in the southern West Bank about 32 kilometers, or 20 miles, from Jerusalem, will be an important election battleground. Both Fatah and <u>Hamas</u> have a strong presence in a town marked by chronic tensions between its roughly 150,000 Palestinians and the 500 Jewish settlers who live in tiny enclaves.

In the Palestinian ballot, the top nine vote-getters in the Hebron District will win parliamentary seats, meaning it is quite possible that both Rajoub brothers will make the cut.

Still, this is the first time that <u>Hamas</u> is competing in parliamentary elections, and uncertainties abound. The Rajoubs are among 13 brothers and sisters who come from Dura, a small town outside Hebron, and Nayef Rajoub said that the family's political loyalties are so mixed, he is not sure whether <u>Hamas</u> or Fatah would win a ballot among his siblings.

For Jibril Rajoub, who was one of the most powerful Palestinian figures just a few years ago, the election will test whether he has regained his public standing, which suffered a considerable setback. As a teenager, he was convicted of throwing a grenade at Israeli troops and imprisoned by Israel for 17 years until his release in 1985.

He was deported to Lebanon in 1988, and then joined the exiled Palestinian leadership in Tunis, where he became close to Yasser Arafat. When the Palestinian Authority was established, Arafat made him a security chief in the West Bank. He was cited as a potential future Palestinian leader.

But after the Palestinian uprising broke out in 2000, Israel criticized him for not doing more to crack down on armed Palestinian factions. When Israel launched a major incursion into the West Bank in 2002, its forces stormed a large security compound near Ramallah and seized militants that Jibril Rajoub's forces were holding. Many Palestinians were angry with him, saying he should have freed the prisoners before the Israelis arrived. He left his post, but has since returned as a security adviser.

He campaigns with a large entourage, dresses in dark suits and rented a conference room at Hebron's best hotel for his use. Aides hand out glossy brochures with his biography, and before he appeared at a press conference on Sunday, loud speakers blared his campaign song. "Jibril Rajoub is the lion of the south; he is the strong man," the refrain goes.

The bearded Nayef Rajoub has run a much more austere campaign, typical of <u>Hamas</u> candidates. He meets with small groups and talks to voters outside mosques. He was released from an Israeli prison just four months ago, after being held for eight months without charges.

He is a longtime <u>Hamas</u> member, but says he has not been involved with the armed wing that carries out attacks against Israel. He teaches Islamic law at a Hebron university and keeps bees.

Load-Date: February 2, 2006



Palestinian officials watching their backs

USA TODAY

July 10, 2006 Monday

FINAL EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 5A

Length: 776 words

Byline: Thomas Frank

Body

RAMALLAH, West Bank -- Mahmoud Ramahi hasn't slept at home in 11 days and spends only an hour or two in his office each day.

Ramahi has to be elusive, he says, because he holds a risky job: He's a member of the Palestinian parliament and belongs to *Hamas*, which Israel, the United States and the European Union consider a terrorist organization.

"We have to take precautions," Ramahi says in his fourth-floor office, where his window has two bullet holes. "We don't want to be arrested by the Israelis."

Ramahi and many of his colleagues have been spending much of their time in hiding since Israeli security forces arrested 24 Palestinian lawmakers and eight Cabinet members -- all from <u>Hamas</u> -- on June 29. Israel has said all who were arrested were "members and activists in a terrorist organization."

The arrests are part of a broad offensive Israel has waged since an Israeli soldier, Cpl. Gilad Shalit, was captured by Palestinian militants in a border raid June 25. The offensive is aimed at getting the soldier back and stopping rocket fire into Israel from Palestinian-controlled Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert vowed Sunday to pursue the offensive until both objectives are met.

The offensive has killed 51 Palestinians, mostly militants, according to an Associated Press count. The military said Sunday that the only Israeli soldier killed in the offensive appeared to have been hit accidentally by Israeli fire, AP reported.

The impact of the offensive may also serve to destabilize the <u>Hamas</u>-led Palestinian government, though the Israeli military says that is not the objective.

<u>Hamas</u> won control of the government in January elections and came under international pressure almost immediately. The United States and European Union cut most of the \$1billion in annual foreign aid to the Palestinian government, which left 165,000 government workers without pay.

The government owes contractors roughly \$1 billion, says Hakam Yassin of the Palestinian Finance Ministry, and has no idea how its debts will be paid. Nearly a third of the ministry's employees aren't showing up. "We're hoping the political situation will get much better," Yassin says. "We are hoping."

Palestinian officials watching their backs

Last week, Israeli forces raided West Bank offices of charities linked to <u>Hamas</u>. Troops removed paperwork and computers.

"It's very clear they want to drastically weaken the government by destroying the top leadership and weakening the social services, schools, hospitals and charitable societies," says Mohammad Musleh, an analyst at the Ramallah Center for Human Rights.

The Palestinian parliament has met once in the past two weeks, says Ibrahim Khreisheh, the parliament's secretary. He belongs to Fatah, the faction that controlled the government before <u>Hamas</u> took over. "The lawmaking process has stopped," Khreisheh says. "There is no development, no planning."

Some Palestinian lawmakers talk of disbanding the 12-year-old government and forcing Israel to resume responsibility of governing the West Bank.

"Why is it helpful to have a Palestinian Authority that is doing nothing?" says Khalida Jarrar, a lawmaker from a leftist party.

Ramahi, the <u>Hamas</u> member, acknowledges there are "problems making decisions" and says there "may in the future be chaos in the ministries." The ministries whose leaders were arrested are being run by other Cabinet members.

"Sanctions failed to destroy the government," says Zayed Dayyeh, a <u>Hamas</u> member who sits on a municipal council outside Ramallah. "Now Israel used force to try to destroy the government by arresting members of parliament."

Ramahi, who is the parliament's deputy speaker, says the arrests have failed to weaken <u>Hamas</u> and may have the opposite effect: generating more support for <u>Hamas</u>, an organization whose charter calls for the destruction of Israel. Some analysts agree.

"If you want to make a Palestinian popular, have Israel arrest them," says Musleh, the Ramallah Center analyst.

"With the Palestinians, there's always that counterintuitive tendency that when you strike them, they're less deterred and more intransigent," says Michael Oren, an analyst at the independent Shalem Center in Jerusalem. "Hamas may actually be strengthened by this."

<u>Hamas</u> also hopes to boost its standing by flaunting the capture of the Israeli soldier and pushing Israel to release Palestinian prisoners in an exchange. <u>Hamas</u> scaled back its original demand for 1,000 prisoners and now wants Israel to free 120 *female* prisoners and 380 teenagers, Ramahi says.

Olmert rejects any prisoner exchange for Shalit.

Ramahi says <u>Hamas</u> has already scored a victory by capturing Shalit and showing "we can go inside Israel and challenge the occupier."

Graphic

PHOTO, B/W, Emilio Morenatti, AP

Load-Date: July 10, 2006



Jews rally to save captive soldier

The Star Phoenix (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)

July 10, 2006 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: NATIONAL; Pg. A8; Canada in Brief

Length: 209 words

Byline: CanWest News Service

Dateline: OTTAWA

Body

OTTAWA (CNS) -- Canadian Jewish groups are holding a rally today at the Syrian Embassy to demand the release of an abducted Israeli soldier.

The Canadian Jewish Congress and Jewish organizations from Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal planned the rally in conjunction with groups around the world. The goal is to pressure Syria to influence the leaders of the <u>Hamas</u>-linked militant groups to release Cpl. Gilad Shalit, 19. The congress says the leaders of the <u>Hamas</u> militants live in Syria.

"We would like Syria to do its part along with all the rest of the international community to bring about an end to the conflict," said Ed Morgan, national president of the Canadian Jewish Congress. Morgan will address the gathering this afternoon.

Shalit was kidnapped two weeks ago in a pre-dawn, cross-border raid at an Israeli army outpost along the Gaza Strip. <u>Hamas</u> militants initially demanded the release of <u>female</u> and underage Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails in exchange for information about Shalit's location. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert allowed a deadline set by <u>Hamas</u> to pass without releasing the prisoners. <u>Hamas</u> has since announced it will not kill Shalit, though <u>Hamas</u> officials have walked away from Egyptian-led negotiations on the issue.

Load-Date: July 10, 2006



Israeli Army presses into Gaza; Palestinians launch 2nd rocket in 2 days against Jewish city

The International Herald Tribune
July 6, 2006 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 1154 words

Byline: Greg Myre and Steven Erlanger

Dateline: GAZA

Body

The Israeli government, responding to a longer-range <u>Hamas</u> rocket that hit the center of Ashkelon, ordered the military on Wednesday to expand its operations against <u>Hamas</u> in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in order to stop rocket fire and try to free a captured Israeli soldier.

Israeli officials said the security cabinet, meeting in special session, did not specifically authorize the establishment of a buffer zone farther into northern Gaza, where Israeli troops have taken up positions about one kilometer over the border.

The current Israeli line would do little to prevent more rocket fire into Israel. But plans originally drawn up by the army called for a deeper incursion into northern Gaza to stop rocket fire, as well as the Israeli deployment in southern Gaza, near Rafah, where the captured soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit, is believed to be held.

The two-engine Qassam rocket that hit Ashkelon on Tuesday evening was fired from the rubble of the former Israeli settlements in northern Gaza and traveled about 12 kilometers, or 7.5 miles, according to the Israeli Army. The range of the single-engine rocket was no more than 9 kilometers.

A second rocket hit Ashkelon on Wednesday, landing in an orchard. No one was injured in either strike.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, speaking at a July 4 party at the home of the American ambassador to Israel, Richard Jones, called Tuesday's strike on Ashkelon, a city of about 115,000 people and the site of a major power plant, "an escalation without precedent." *Hamas* took responsibility for the rocket and warned that its arsenal contained other surprises.

The Israeli cabinet, in a communique, said: "Against the background of the abduction and the continued firing of rockets and mortars, including the firing of a Qassam rocket at Ashkelon, preparations must be made in order to bring about a change in the rules of the game and in the modus operandi vis-a-vis the Palestinian Authority and <u>Hamas</u> according to the parameters presented by the security establishment."

Isaac Herzog, a Labor minister and a member of the security cabinet, said in an interview: "We want to use an iron fist, but cautiously, with a lot of consideration, to meet two parallel objectives: a stop to the missiles and the safe release of Galid Shalit. We're not trying to change the world or the political structure of the Palestinian Authority, but everyone affiliated with terror will not be let off."

Israeli Army presses into Gaza Palestinians launch 2nd rocket in 2 days against Jewish city

Asked if the <u>Hamas</u> government was affiliated with terror, Herzog said: "We see them as participating in terror. There is no difference between the political and military wings of <u>Hamas</u>, as they themselves say."

Itamar Rabinovich, a former Israeli ambassador to Washington and now president of Tel Aviv University, said: "The Qassam in the middle of Ashkelon is a dramatic escalation that requires any Israeli prime minister to respond or escalate in a dramatic way."

The Qassams falling on Sederot, a smaller, development town closer to Gaza, were bad enough, Rabinovich said. "But Ashkelon is a major city and hitting a major city is a different matter. It's something a state cannot ignore."

Rabinovich said that Israel had no easy choices, especially with Shalit's life at stake, and that a security zone might not stop the rockets.

The cabinet told the army to "continue to section off the Gaza Strip" to reduce the freedom of movement of militants and to continue to hit "infrastructures that serve terrorism," while "avoiding as much as possible harming the civilian population that is not involved in terrorism" and "responding comprehensively and immediately to all humanitarian needs."

But Olmert is caught between his escalating language and his efforts to pressure the <u>Hamas</u> government, let alone the militants holding the corporal, to do Israel's will without negotiating any quid pro quo, like a reciprocal release of prisoners. The <u>Hamas</u> military wing is among the three groups holding the corporal, but appears to be out of the control of the <u>Hamas</u> government. Instead, it seems to be taking instructions from the exiled <u>Hamas</u> leadership in Damascus led by Khaled Meshal, who is also supported by Iran. But the <u>Hamas</u> government has not urged the militants to release Corporal Shalit, only to treat him well.

In Khan Yunis, a <u>Hamas</u> legislator, Salah Bardawil, said he believed the crisis could still be resolved if Israel agreed to release Palestinian prisoners. "They wouldn't have to release all the prisoners, but at least the humanitarian cases, such as the <u>women</u> and children."

Bardawil said that Israel's actions were increasing the popularity of <u>Hamas</u>. "Israel wants us to raise our hands in surrender," he said at his cinderblock home, a few hundred meters from a former Israeli settlement. "But the Palestinian people, led by <u>Hamas</u>, have developed a strong psyche. The more pressure we face, the more we will be steadfast and resist."

Bardawil, who serves as spokesman for the <u>Hamas</u> faction in the legislature, said: "<u>Hamas</u>'s popularity has increased during this crisis and you must remember this comes at a time when we haven't been able to pay salaries for several months."

In Beit Hanoun, in northern Gaza, there were skirmishes between armed Palestinians and Israeli troops and tanks, but little damage. Overnight, Israel fired missiles at the Palestinian Interior Ministry building in Gaza, triggering a large explosion and wounding three people. It was the second time the building was hit. Another strike hit an empty school in northern Gaza that the Israeli Army said was used by *Hamas* at night.

In Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood, two militants were killed, apparently when an explosive they were preparing went off, Palestinian officials said.

Abu Ahmed Dahdouh, a member of Islamic Jihad, was killed along with an associate. The Dahdouh family has had a number of members involved in militant activity against Israel, including some who have been killed.

Israel also closed the crossings between Gaza and Israel. But the Erez crossing, at the northern end of Gaza, was opened briefly on Wednesday

to allow some foreigners, including journalists, to leave.

Bardawil, the legislator, said that Palestinians registered the difference in the world's sympathy, saying that "the world really does not care about the Palestinians." He noted: "All the pictures of Palestinians being killed did not

Israeli Army presses into Gaza Palestinians launch 2nd rocket in 2 days against Jewish city

move the international community. But when one Israel soldier is abducted, the whole world notices and pays attention to the Palestinian cause."

Asked if <u>Hamas</u> could govern meaningfully under this Israeli pressure, Bardawil said: "Even if the government collapses, we wouldn't lose much. The main thing would be stripping away the deception that the Palestinians have had a real government" since 1994. "A government that receives its budget as charity is not a real state," he said.

Greg Myre reported from Gaza, and Steven Erlanger from Jerusalem.

Load-Date: July 14, 2006



<u>MILITANTS' RAID ON ISRAEL RAISES TENSION IN GAZA - Correction</u> Appended

The New York Times

June 26, 2006 Monday

Late Edition - Final

Correction Appended

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Section: Section A; Column 6; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1580 words

Byline: By STEVEN ERLANGER **Dateline:** JERUSALEM, June 25

Body

In an ominous development, Israel threatened strong military action on Sunday after eight Palestinian militants in Gaza, including members of the governing faction <u>Hamas</u>, emerged from a secret tunnel dug 300 yards into Israel, killed two soldiers, wounded three and kidnapped another.

Two of the Palestinians were killed but the rest escaped into Gaza with the captive Israeli soldier, Cpl. Gilad Shalit, 19, who is believed to have been wounded. He was the first Israeli soldier kidnapped in more than a decade.

Israeli tanks moved a short distance into Gaza on Sunday, the first tank raid since Israel withdrew from the territory last summer.

Israeli officials talked of a harsh response to the raid on an Israeli Army outpost near the Kerem Shalom kibbutz, close to the Egyptian border. The raid was weeks in the planning, and the military wing of <u>Hamas</u> took partial responsibility, as did militant groups like the Popular Resistance Committees and a new formation called the Army of Islam.

But Israel and the <u>Hamas</u> leadership were looking for ways to defuse the tense situation. Israel asked Egypt, which has influence in Gaza, for help in freeing the soldier. The Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, called Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to seek support.

Ghazi Hamad, a spokesman for the <u>Hamas</u> government in Gaza, urged the soldier's captors "to protect his life and treat him well," and urged Israel "not to escalate the situation."

But others who said they spoke for *Hamas* were more militant.

There was a sense that, with some elements of <u>Hamas</u> participating in a deadly armed attack in Israel, the tunnel raid could portend a grimmer phase in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly if further harm came to the kidnapped soldier.

MILITANTS' RAID ON ISRAEL RAISES TENSION IN GAZA

Mark Regev, a spokesman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry, said simply, "This is a crisis."

The Israeli chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, said, "The Palestinians are responsible for the fate of the kidnapped soldier, and we will do everything in our power to retrieve him."

Israel's security cabinet met Sunday night and authorized the military to plan a response to the raid, but decided to postpone any military action to see if Corporal Shalit was released, said an Israeli official. Some response is expected no matter what happens, but the officials do not want to damage the chances of his safe return to Israel.

The Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, told the cabinet that Israel held the Palestinian Authority, its <u>Hamas</u> government and its president, Mahmoud Abbas, known as Abu Mazen, "responsible for this event -- with all this implies."

The Israeli government urged Mr. Abbas to act to free the soldier.

Mr. Abbas condemned the raid, saying it was against "the national consensus." In a statement, he said, "We have always warned against the danger of certain groups or factions leaving the national consensus and carrying out operations for which the Palestinian people will always have to pay the price."

Mr. Abbas, who has been trying to get <u>Hamas</u> to at least implicitly recognize Israel's right to exist, was embarrassed by the raid. He called off meetings with <u>Hamas</u> leaders scheduled for Sunday.

The attack is the latest in a cycle of violence and reprisal as Palestinian guerrillas have fired inaccurate Qassam rockets into Israel to retaliate for Israeli attacks on militants, who Israel has said were either firing rockets or planning attacks.

In an effort to stop the Palestinian rockets, the Israeli military has stepped up its actions, but some have gone wrong, leading to the deaths of at least 14 Palestinian civilians in recent weeks, not including 8 killed on a Gaza beach, for which Israel has denied responsibility. That in turn has led the military wing of <u>Hamas</u> to renounce the truce it declared in February 2005, and helped open the way to the attack on Sunday.

The last Israeli soldier known to have been kidnapped was Cpl. Nachshon Waxman, 19, seized by <u>Hamas</u> in 1994 and killed in a rescue operation.

A former Interior Ministry spokesman, Elias Zananiri, suggested that <u>Hamas</u>'s military wing attacked on orders of its leadership abroad, in particular Khaled Meshal, the leader of the <u>Hamas</u> political bureau, while the <u>Hamas</u> prime minister, Ismail Haniya, was kept in the dark.

But Israeli officials noted that <u>Hamas</u>, if not officially claiming responsibility for the raid, seemed to welcome it. "The operation is a natural response to the occupation's crimes and massacres against the Palestinian people," a spokesman for <u>Hamas</u>, Sami Abu Zuhri, said on Al Jazeera television. "<u>Hamas</u> will continue to resist as long as there is occupation."

Mr. Regev, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, waved away questions about whether the <u>Hamas</u>-led government should be held responsible. "What part of <u>Hamas</u> is responsible is irrelevant," he said. "<u>Hamas</u> as an organization has endorsed it. And maybe for those in the international community who are talking about whether there is a new, pragmatic *Hamas*, this is a wake-up call."

Ms. Livni, the Israeli foreign minister, urged Mr. Abbas to remain in Gaza and act quickly to release the soldier. "This is an opportunity for Abu Mazen to prove how serious his intentions are," she said. "He has all the necessary resources, including military means, to secure the release of the soldier."

Mr. Regev said: "Abu Mazen goes to foreign capitals and says, 'I'm the partner you want. I'm the address.' But if he's not a partner in stopping violence, how can he be a partner for peace?"

If the soldier "isn't returned immediately, then Israel will have to act," Mr. Regev said.

MILITANTS' RAID ON ISRAEL RAISES TENSION IN GAZA

In his statement, Mr. Hamad, the <u>Hamas</u> spokesman, said, "The government is following this issue and there are many contacts between many sides, and the Egyptians and the president are trying to reach a solution for this problem."

But another <u>Hamas</u> spokesman, Mushir al-Masri, a member of parliament, welcomed the attack. "We consider this operation a part of the natural response to Zionist crimes, especially after the series of killings of children, <u>women</u>, old men and whole families in Gaza," he said. "It is the right of our people to defend themselves with all the means available."

The spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committees, Abu Mujahid, said the attack was to avenge Israel's assassination of the group's leader, Jamal Abu Samahdana, on June 8. Mr. Samahdana, who had been wanted by Israel, had also been serving the <u>Hamas</u>-led government as commander of a new "executive force," a mostly <u>Hamas</u> militia that has clashed with Fatah-dominated security forces.

No Palestinian spokesman would admit to holding Corporal Shalit.

Israeli officials said Sunday that the tunnel, which extended from Gaza at least 600 yards and emerged behind Israeli lines, had taken many weeks, if not months, to dig. Israel clearly had warnings of an attack and had closed the Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel and Gaza for several days last week for security reasons. That closing meant that the nearby Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza was also shut, because the European monitors for Rafah get there via Kerem Shalom.

On Sunday, Israel quickly shut all crossings into Gaza and kept them shut, even to journalists, who protested.

The Israeli Army outpost that was attacked is near the Egyptian border, but not at the Kerem Shalom crossing point. According to reports, the eight Palestinian fighters emerged from the tunnel near the spot where Gaza, Israel and Egypt meet, about 5:15 a.m., and splitinto small teams. One blew up an armored personnel carrier, which was empty, and another threw grenades into an Israeli Merkava tank, killing First Lt. Hanan Barak, 20, from Arad, and Sgt. Pavel Slutzker, 20, from Dimona. Antitank missiles were also fired toward the vehicles from Gaza, the Israeli Army said.

Another Israeli soldier who was seriously wounded and the missing soldier, Corporal Shalit, were also in the tank, the army said. A third group moved about a half mile northeast to the outpost near the kibbutz and attacked it. The Palestinians then blew a hole in the fence separating Gaza and returned with Corporal Shalit. The two Palestinians who died in the attack were apparently killed as they tried to climb up the side of the outpost. They were identified as Muhammad Farawneh and Jihad Rantissi.

Afterward, Israeli tanks supported by a helicopter crossed into Gaza to search and to investigate the tunnel.

Mr. Abbas's scheduled meetings with Mr. Haniya and other <u>Hamas</u> officials, which he canceled, had been intended to discuss a united political position, based on a document drafted by prisoners, that calls for a Palestinian state in pre-1967 borders and a focus on "resistance" against Israel in the occupied territories.

Mr. Abbas has expressed hope that agreement would allow Western aid to flow again to the <u>Hamas</u>-run Palestinian Authority and give him a platform for negotiations with Israel.

But the dialogue has been difficult, Palestinian officials have said, and Mr. Abbas's allies say that <u>Hamas</u> has been reluctant to recognize Israel or to agree that attacks should be limited to occupied territory. Israel has said that the document is an internal Palestinian issue and will not affect its view of <u>Hamas</u>.

The attack on Sunday morning was inside pre-1967 Israel. An aide to Mr. Abbas, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, said, "What occurred today brings us back to zero" in the talks.

http://www.nytimes.com

Correction

A front-page article on Monday about the abduction of an Israeli soldier by Palestinian militants referred incorrectly to the hostage. He is the fourth Israeli soldier abducted in the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1994, not the first. (Three Israeli soldiers were captured by Shiite Muslim guerrillas along the Israel-Lebanon border in 2000.)

Correction-Date: June 28, 2006

Graphic

Photo: Israeli soldiers retrieved the body of a comrade killed yesterday in an attack by Palestinian militants in Israel. (Photo by Tsafrir Abayov/Associated Press)(pg. A8)Map of Gaza Strip highlighting site of crossing: Israel shut all crossings into Gaza yesterday, even to journalists. (pg. A8)

Load-Date: June 26, 2006



Palestinians start election campaign: But balloting could be postponed if Israel bars residents of Jerusalem from voting

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

January 4, 2006 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A5

Length: 354 words

Byline: Mohammed Daraghmeh, Associated Press

Dateline: RAMALLAH, West Bank

Body

RAMALLAH, West Bank -- Palestinian parties launched their election campaign with banners, rallies and parades Tuesday amid growing tensions between the Islamic militant group <u>Hamas</u> and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas over his suggestion to postpone the Jan. 25 parliamentary vote.

Abbas said for the first time Monday that the balloting could be put off if Israel bars Palestinians from voting in the sector of Jerusalem claimed by the Palestinians as a future capital.

<u>Hamas</u>, which is expected to make a strong showing in its first general election, insisted Tuesday that the vote take place on schedule. It is unlikely Abbas would postpone the election without *Hamas*' consent.

In Jerusalem, the head of Israel's Shin Bet security service, Yuval Diskin, told a parliamentary committee that a strong *Hamas* showing would spell deep trouble for Israel.

The start of the campaign was overshadowed by anarchy in Gaza and renewed Israeli-Palestinian fighting.

Late Monday, an Israeli air strike killed two members of the militant Islamic Jihad group who Israel said were involved in rocket attacks. The two were in a car when it was struck by a missile. A third occupant of the car was wounded, along with two bystanders. Islamic Jihad threatened revenge.

Across the West Bank and Gaza, parties decorated streets with banners and posters, launching the election campaign. *Hamas* signs read "Islam is the solution" and "One hand resists and one builds."

In the West Bank city of Nablus, <u>Hamas</u> candidates and about 200 supporters marched to a cemetery to pay their respects at the graves of three <u>Hamas</u> leaders killed in fighting with Israel. "We ask all Palestinians to join us to create an Islamic state. The Islamic state is on the rise," said Sheik Hamed Bitawi, a candidate.

In Gaza City, a children's parade for legislator Marwan Kanafani, an independent candidate, was led by actors dressed as cartoon characters, including Mickey Mouse. The top <u>Hamas</u> candidate, Ismail Haniyeh, told reporters in Gaza that the election must not be postponed under any circumstances, despite growing pressure by Abbas's Fatah party to put off the vote.

Palestinians start election campaign: But balloting could be postponed if Israel bars residents of Jerusalem from voting

Graphic

Colour Photo: Nasser Shiyoukhi, Associated Press; <u>Women</u> hold portraits of relatives held in Israeli jails during a campaign rally for the Islamic group <u>Hamas</u> in the upcoming Palestinian legislative elections.

Load-Date: January 4, 2006



<u>Political Sibling Rivalry: Hebron Parliamentary Race Pits Brother Against</u> Brother

The New York Times

January 24, 2006 Tuesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 10; PALESTINIANS AT THE CROSSROADS: FAMILY

Length: 1011 words

Byline: By GREG MYRE

Dateline: HEBRON, West Bank, Jan. 22

Body

Nayef Rajoub, a <u>Hamas</u> candidate for the Palestinian parliament, has been arrested five times -- four by Israel and once by his brother.

For the record, he bears no grudge for his detention in 1996 during a crackdown on <u>Hamas</u> members by the Palestinian Preventive Security, which was then led by his older sibling, Jibril Rajoub. The more important point, Nayef Rajoub noted, is that his brother released him after just one day behind bars.

The brothers' political paths diverged years ago, and now both are seeking parliamentary seats in volatile Hebron for the rival Fatah and *Hamas* parties. But it is not personal, they say, just politics.

"Our relations have always been excellent," Nayef Rajoub, 47, said in an interview in the modest <u>Hamas</u> campaign office in Hebron, where many workers are veiled <u>women</u>. "If we don't see each other in person, then we are speaking on the phone every day."

Jibril Rajoub, 52, a prominent member of the ruling Fatah movement and now a security adviser to Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian leader, said the political sibling rivalry "is proof of our Palestinian democracy, but it will never affect our relations as brothers."

It does, however, reflect the political divisions within Palestinian society, where the secular, nationalist, and long dominant Fatah is facing a major challenge from the militant Islamic <u>Hamas</u> in parliamentary elections on Wednesday.

Several recent opinion polls still give Fatah a lead of 2 to 10 percentage points. But <u>Hamas</u> has been closing fast, with the surveys indicating that Fatah will be hard pressed to win an outright majority, and may therefore have to form a coalition with other Palestinian factions.

Fatah and <u>Hamas</u> disagree on fundamental issues and would not be logical partners in a coalition government. Fatah advocates peace negotiations with Israel, while <u>Hamas</u>, which has carried out dozens of suicide bombings, has never recognized Israel and has always rejected negotiations. Even the Rajoub brothers say it would be difficult for the two parties to work together in the same government.

"We have nothing to learn from <u>Hamas</u>," said Jibril Rajoub, a husky man with a deep voice. "<u>Hamas</u> believes armed struggle is the only way to confront Israel. I hope they will adopt a pragmatic, realistic platform. But they should learn from us. We have led the revolution, we have led the Palestinian people for the past 41 years."

Nayef Rajoub and other <u>Hamas</u> candidates believe they can capitalize on voter dissatisfaction with Fatah, which has run the Palestinian Authority since it was established in 1994, but is widely seen as corrupt, fragmented and unable to deliver many basic services.

"The people have been suffering from corruption, mismanagement and chaos," said the bearded Nayef Rajoub. "We think they are looking for something very different."

<u>Hamas</u> leaders have been vague about their post-election plans. They have suggested that if the movement wins the election, it would want to form the new Palestinian government. But its leaders have not said whether, if <u>Hamas</u> does not win, they would seek to join the government and accept some government ministries, or prefer to be an opposition party.

Hebron, in the southern West Bank about 20 miles from Jerusalem, will be an important election battleground. Both Fatah and <u>Hamas</u> have a strong presence in this town marked by chronic tensions between its roughly 150,000 Palestinians and the 500 Jewish settlers, who live in tiny enclaves.

In the Palestinian balloting process, the top nine vote getters in the Hebron District will win parliamentary seats, meaning it is quite possible that both Rajoub brothers will make the cut.

The brothers are among 13 children in a family from Dura, a small town outside Hebron. Nayef Rajoub said their political loyalties were so mixed that he was not sure whether <u>Hamas</u> or Fatah would win a ballot among his siblings.

For Jibril Rajoub, the election is an opportunity to regain some of the stature he lost in recent years. As a teenager, he was convicted of throwing a grenade at Israeli troops and imprisoned by Israel for 17 years, until 1985. He was deported in 1988 to Lebanon, and then joined the exiled Palestinian leadership in Tunis, where he became close to Yasir Arafat. When the Palestinian Authority was established, he returned home and Mr. Arafat made him the most influential security chief in the West Bank. Jibril Rajoub was sometimes cited as a potential future leader of the Palestinians.

But in 2002, Israeli forces stormed a large security compound near Ramallah and seized militants that his forces were holding. That angered many Palestinians, who said he should have freed the prisoners before the Israelis arrived.

He left his post, but has since returned as a security adviser. He campaigns with a large entourage, dresses in dark suits and rented a conference room at Hebron's best hotel for his use. Aides hand out glossy brochures with his biography, and loudspeakers blared his campaign song before he held a news conference on Sunday.

"Jibril Rajoub is the lion of the south; he is the strong man," goes the refrain.

Nayef Rajoub, who spent eight months in an Israeli prison without charges and was released four months ago, has run a much more austere campaign, typical of <u>Hamas</u> candidates. He meets with small groups and talks to would-be voters outside mosques.

He teaches Islamic law at a university in Hebron, and is a beekeeper. Worried that he could be rearrested by Israel, he said he takes back roads to avoid Israeli military checkpoints even when traveling from one Palestinian village to another. He is a longtime <u>Hamas</u> member, but says he has not been involved with its armed wing, which carries out attacks against Israel.

He doubts he will be able to attend parliamentary sessions in the West Bank city of Ramallah, which would be difficult if not impossible to reach without passing through Israeli checkpoints.

Political Sibling Rivalry: Hebron Parliamentary Race Pits Brother Against Brother

"Israel is constantly harassing *Hamas*, but this is one reason so many people support us," he said.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

Photos: Nayef Rajoub, left, at <u>Hamas</u> campaign headquarters in Hebron, is running against his brother Jibril, a top adviser in the ruling Fatah party. (Photographs by Rina Castelnuovo for The New York Times)

Load-Date: January 24, 2006



Israel rolls out tanks near Gaza: Olmert not prepared to negotiate

The Star Phoenix (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan)

June 27, 2006 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A1

Length: 763 words

Byline: Associated Press

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM (AP) -- With troops poised to invade Gaza, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on Monday ruled out bargaining with the captors of an Israeli soldier and promised a "broad and ongoing" military offensive.

But large-scale army action appeared unlikely. Officials said they were pursuing a diplomatic solution and conceded that a broad attack would threaten the life of the 19-year-old hostage captured Sunday.

After more than 24 hours of silence, the militants claiming to hold Cpl. Gilad Shalit issued their fi rst demands Monday.

The groups, linked to the <u>Hamas</u>-led Palestinian government, said Israel should release all imprisoned Palestinian **women** and children under 18 in return for information about Shalit.

Olmert rejected the demand. Addressing Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, he charged that the Palestinian attack on an army post at a Gaza crossing and the abduction of the soldier were part of a "murderous, hateful, fanatical Islamic extremist desire to destroy the state of Israel." "This is not a matter of negotiations, this not a matter of bargaining," he declared.

Release of prisoners is absolutely not on the agenda of the Israeli government." Shalit was seized at a military post near the Gaza border by militants who infiltrated Israel through a tunnel.

The attack was the first successful infi Itration by militants since Israel withdrew from Gaza in September, and immediately threatened to plunge the region into a major fl are-up of violence.

Speaking earlier to a tourism conference in Jerusalem, Olmert said he held the entire Palestinian leadership responsible for Shalit's safety and warned that his patience was wearing thin.

"I gave the orders to our military commanders to prepare the army for a broad and ongoing military operation to strike the terrorist leaders and all those involved," he said. "There will be immunity for no one." Military officials said elite brigades and armoured forces, backed by tanks, were sent to the frontier, where thousands of soldiers already are deployed.

Israel rolls out tanks near Gaza: Olmert not prepared to negotiate

With Israeli intelligence showing that Shalit was not seriously wounded, defence officials said there were no immediate plans for a massive ground incursion.

Although Israel frequently carries out air raids in Gaza, ground troops have entered the area only three times -- all briefl y -- since last year's pullout.

However, the officials said a limited operation could begin in the coming days. Such operations could include a rescue attempt or a limited mission meant to pressure <u>Hamas</u> to free the soldier. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, a moderate who has repeatedly clashed with <u>Hamas</u>, was working with Egyptian mediators and Arab and western leaders to locate the soldier.

<u>Hamas</u> government spokesperson Ghazi Hamad said he had information Shalit was alive and urged the captors to keep him safe.

"I think we are interested in avoiding any confrontation or bloodshed," he told The Associated Press.

The abduction delivered a blow to Abbas's efforts to coax <u>Hamas</u> into accepting a plan implicitly recognizing Israel. Abbas, elected separately last year, has endorsed the plan in hopes of lifting economic sanctions against <u>Hamas</u> and opening the way for new peace talks.

The crisis also exposed divisions within <u>Hamas</u> ranks. The group maintains separate political and military wings, and political leaders based in Syria are more extreme than many leaders in the West Bank and Gaza.

In a closed briefi ng to legislators, Brig.- Gen. Yossi Beidatz, a top Israeli intelligence offi cial, said *Hamas*'s leaders were divided about what to do with the soldier.

He said the more moderate elements, including Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, consider the soldier a "hot potato" they should get rid of quickly.

Hamad said talk of a split in <u>Hamas</u> was "a big lie." However, he said the political leadership in Gaza, including Haniyeh, was not warned of the assault plans beforehand.

The statement demanding the inmates' release -- about 500 people in all -- was signed by <u>Hamas</u>'s military wing and two offshoots of the small Popular Resistance Committees, which has strong links to <u>Hamas</u>. It offered information about Shalit but no guarantees of his safe return.

Popular Resistance Committees spokesman Abu Mujahid confi rmed the authenticity of the statement from the Saladdin Brigade, the Army of Islam and *Hamas*'s military wing.

Palestinian militants previously have tried to use captured soldiers to win prisoners' releases, although Israel has rarely caved in. Israel now holds an estimated 8,000 Palestinians, many of them <u>Hamas</u> militants.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Associated Press; An Israeli tank manoeuvres Monday at a gathering point near a kibbutz in southern Israel;

Colour Photo: Prime Minister Ehud Olmert

Load-Date: June 27, 2006



Race for votes begins in Palestinian election

The International Herald Tribune
January 4, 2006 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 545 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Campaigning for the Palestinian legislative elections got under way on Tuesday amid doubts about whether the Jan. 25 vote would actually take place.

With the Palestinian leader, Mahmoud Abbas, on a tour of the Gulf, Deputy Prime Minister Nabil Shaath cited Yasser Arafat, who died in November 2004, in kicking off the campaign for a riven Fatah movement.

Speaking by Arafat's tomb in Ramallah and using his nom de guerre, Shaath said, "With your permission, Abu Ammar, we will continue to fly the flag of Fatah and head to victory."

He added: "Fatah has made mistakes and we must work to correct them."

But he also warned that the radical Islamic movement <u>Hamas</u>, taking part in these elections for the first time, could win if Fatah fails to unite.

Sounding a theme of doubt about <u>Hamas</u>'s ability to govern the Palestinians and deal with an Israel that <u>Hamas</u> does not recognize, Shaath asked: "How will negotiations with Israel be managed under <u>Hamas</u>? How will they pay salaries and ensure security? What will they do for **women**?"

Still, Fatah's biggest problem is its own divisions and reputation for cronyism, mismanagement and corruption, coupled with its failure to achieve an independent Palestinian state from Israel through negotiation and compromise.

Fatah is looking for reasons to postpone these elections because of fears that <u>Hamas</u> will win more than 40 percent of the 132 seats at stake and become either the most powerful political force in the legislature or a blocking minority.

Many Fatah veterans would rather have no election than hand over 40 percent or more of their power to *Hamas*.

<u>Hamas</u> opened its campaign with a call to fulfill the hopes of its founder, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, assassinated by Israel in 2004. At a rally outside the sheik's home in Gaza, Ismail Haniya said that <u>Hamas</u> would use the legislature "as a platform to defend the resistance and to confront those who try to tamper with the rights of the Palestinian people, mainly the right to resist the occupation."

Race for votes begins in Palestinian election

<u>Hamas</u> opposes another delay in the vote, having already agreed to Abbas's request to move the election from last July to this January.

Israel has said it opposes <u>Hamas</u>'s taking part in the elections because it remains an armed group that continues to call for Israel's destruction.

A senior Israeli official said Tuesday that Israel had not yet decided whether to allow Palestinians in East Jerusalem to vote by postal ballot, as they have done in previous elections when *Hamas* did not take part.

The official said, however, that Israel would help Palestinians in East Jerusalem who wanted to vote outside the city limits. In the past, he said, only 5,000 of the 120,000 or so Palestinians in Jerusalem eligible to vote were allowed to vote in post offices, and only 1,200 of them did so, with the vast majority voting outside the city.

He acknowledged that the issue was of important symbolic value to both Israel and the Palestinians.

Abbas said on Monday that if voting was not allowed in East Jerusalem, it would be impossible to hold the elections. Israel clearly does not want to be blamed for the election being postponed, but also does not want to sanction it.

"The post offices are there, and if we decide to have them open, then they'll be open," the Israeli official said.

Load-Date: January 4, 2006



Syria the spoiler in push to defuse Gaza hostilities

The Australian (Australia)
July 10, 2006 Monday
All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 11

Length: 549 words **Byline:** Marie Colvin

Body

The Sunday Times

Gaza

ATTEMPTS to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis triggered by the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier were foundering at the weekend because of Syria's ambitions to exploit the confrontation for its own gain.

Egyptian leaders attempting tonegotiate a compromise between Israel and <u>Hamas</u>, the hardline Islamic party, have been frustrated by the intransigent stance taken by Syrian President Bashar Assad.

At the weekend, the Israeli Army showed its strength in this battle of wills, in which Gaza is a pawn, as dozens of tanks moved further into the territory near the Karni crossing point east of Gaza City, supported by helicopter qunships.

The army said it had withdrawn forces that entered the northern Gaza Strip on Thursday as part of its offensive to free its captured soldier, 19-year-old Corporal Gilad Shalit.

Head of Egyptian intelligence General Omar Suleiman was in Damascus at the weekend but his talks appeared to have reached a stalemate.

Syria is crucial to the outcome because it is the home of exiled <u>Hamas</u> leader Khaled Mashaal and other senior <u>Hamas</u> figures who are regarded as beholden to Mr Assad.

According to Palestinian sources, Mashaal plotted the capture of Corporal Shalit, who was seized by Palestinian militants.

It was the fulfilment of many statements that Mashaal has made that the only way to win the release of Palestinian prisoners is to capture an Israeli soldier and bargain with his life.

<u>Hamas</u> has said it will free the soldier only in return for the release of Palestinian <u>women</u> and children in Israeli jails.

Mr Assad has the upper hand over Mashaal because the <u>Hamas</u> leader needs the sanctuary of Damascus for the activities that give him power, such as raising money from sympathetic Islamic states like Iran.

Syria the spoiler in push to defuse Gaza hostilities

Senior Palestinians believe that while Mashaal was "running the show" in the first days after Corporal Shalit was taken hostage, Mr Assad is now the real power to be dealt with, despite his denial of any role.

Mr Assad needs all the cards he can get -- the Syrian President is under pressure because his Government is accused of assassinating Rafik Hariri, Lebanon's former prime minister.

According to a senior Palestinian source, Mashaal bypassed the <u>Hamas</u> leadership -- Ibrahim Haniyeh, elected Prime Minister six months ago, and Mahmoud Zahar, the Foreign Minister and <u>Hamas</u> strongman -- and instead dealt directly with <u>Hamas</u>'s military wing to mount the hostage-taking.

Mashaal, the source said, was worried that the "inside leadership" was about to break with hisrejectionist stance and compromise on *Hamas*'s refusal to recognise Israel or lay downarms.

While diplomatic efforts continued behind the scenes, Israel was demonstrating that it could dominate all parts of Gaza in its hunt for Corporal Shalit.

The Israeli incursions were aimed at stopping militants who had launched rockets at Israel.

Merkava tanks entered the northern village of Beit Lahiya and its suburb al-Atatra on Thursday. Israeli soldiers took over houses in the village, setting up snipers to shoot militants who attacked the tanks.

In Gaza, there is overwhelming support for <u>Hamas</u>'s resistance to the Israelis. Most Palestinians support the demand that Palestinian prisoners, in particular <u>women</u> and youths under 18, be returned in exchange for the captive Israeli soldier.

Load-Date: July 9, 2006



SAVING CORPORAL SHALIT; TROOPS STORM INTO GAZA TO FREE HOSTAGE SQUADDIE

The Mirror

June 29, 2006 Thursday

1 Star Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 20

Length: 317 words

Byline: BY JON CLEMENTS

Body

ISRAELI troops were last night inside Gaza and preparing for a major attack to free kidnapped Cpl Gilad Shalit.

Tanks rolled into the enclave with thousands of troops for the first time in 10 months as <u>Hamas</u> fighters dug in behind barricades and sand banks ready to retaliate.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert warned: "We won't hesitate to carry out extreme action to bring Gilad back to his family."

Airstrikes destroyed Gaza's only power station and three bridges, cutting electricity to 65 per cent of the region.

Tanks took up position near the southern town of Rafah. An Israeli helicopter fired missiles at a weapons factory in the southern Gaza Strip.

Witnesses said three missiles fell in a *Hamas* training field in the town of Khan Younis.

And Israeli war planes also buzzed the home of Syrian President Bashar Assad amid claims he has housed <u>Hamas</u> fighters, believed to be behind the squaddie's kidnap. Shalit, 19, was snatched four days ago during a <u>Hamas</u> raid on an army checkpoint which killed two soldiers. His captors have demanded Israel release all Palestinian <u>women</u> and children in its jails.

The group also claimed it had kidnapped Jewish settler Eliahu Asheri, 18, and a third Israeli.

Hamas leader Nizar Rayan urged armed resistance to any attack.

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas called the airstrikes on civilians a "crime against humanity".

SAVING CORPORAL SHALIT TROOPS STORM INTO GAZA TO FREE HOSTAGE SQUADDIE

Gaza's streets were deserted yesterday as Palestinians feared more airstrikes.

Civilians urged <u>Hamas</u> not to release Shalit until its demands are met. Bassem al Khoudry insisted he is their only bargaining tool.

The 35-year-old, from Gaza city, said: "Even if they slaughter 100,000, this chance can't be lost."

Israel has rejected the demands and threatened to kill *Hamas* leaders based in Syria if Shalit dies.

Olmert denied he wanted to reoccupy Gaza following its withdrawal last summer. He said: "We do not intend to stay."

j.clements@mirror.co.uk

Graphic

HIT SQUAD: Israelis get their orders' KIDNAP: Corporal Shalit, 19' RAID: Blown-up bridge. Left, tank poised for action and, right, air strike on Rafah

Load-Date: June 29, 2006



Olmert ready to cede parts of West Bank: Jerusalem not included: Israeli PM makes offer on eve of Palestinian vote

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

January 25, 2006 Wednesday

All but Toronto Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A10

Length: 802 words

Byline: Margaret Coker, Cox News Service

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM - Israel must give up some West Bank land to the Palestinians, but it will hold on to major settlement blocks and Jerusalem, Israel's acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said yesterday on the eve of the first Palestinian parliamentary elections in 10 years.

Mr. Olmert's remarks, his first major address since Ariel Sharon was incapacitated by a stroke this month, are not expected to influence the outcome as Palestinians go to the polls today to elect 132 new legislators.

Yet his comments could make it more difficult for Palestinians to form a new coalition government after the votes are counted.

The ruling Palestinian party, Fatah, which negotiated the Oslo peace accords with Israel, is struggling to retain its political supremacy against the Islamic extremist group <u>Hamas</u>, which is popular among Palestinians for its social service work.

Some pre-election polls showed the two parties in a statistical dead heat, and officials from Fatah and <u>Hamas</u> have already spoken about co-operating after the election as a new government is formed.

<u>Hamas</u> is expected to ask for control of the service ministries such as health and education, leaving contacts with Israel to Fatah. Responsible for scores of bombing attacks against Israelis and dedicated to Israel's destruction, <u>Hamas</u> has tempered its rhetoric in recent weeks of campaigning, leaving open the possibility of negotiations.

Mr. Olmert dismissed concerns that <u>Hamas</u> could emerge as a major political force and further complicate Israeli-Palestinian relations.

"I'm not a partner of all the doomsayers who say how difficult it will be in the wake of the elections [if *Hamas* wins]," he said. "Israel will know how to operate and act in any circumstance, faced with any scenario, in order to preserve its security and political horizons."

Olmert ready to cede parts of West Bank: Jerusalem not included: Israeli PM makes offer on eve of Palestinian vote

Thousands of Palestinian security officers took up positions throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to safeguard ballot boxes in today's vote. Hundreds of foreign observers, including former U.S. president Jimmy Carter, are in the region to oversee the voting.

Mr. Olmert's comments that he wants to keep important chunks of land under Israeli control could complicate future negotiations among Palestinian factions over how to achieve independence.

The Palestinians want to create a state in the West Bank and Gaza with some representation in Jerusalem as the capital. Fatah supports non-violence, while some <u>Hamas</u> members want to retain the option of attacks against Israelis.

Fatah, which was founded by the late Yasser Arafat and has controlled the Palestinian Authority for more than a decade, is battling its image as a moribund and corrupt party.

"I'm not a religious man, but I'm voting for them [*Hamas*]," said Waheeb al-Attabeh, 50, an olive oil merchant. "We won't cry if Fatah loses. On the contrary, the people will be happy."

The possibility of <u>Hamas</u> joining the Palestinian government has concerned many U.S. and Israeli officials. Members of the U.S. Congress and European Union officials have warned that they may cut off funding to the Palestinians because <u>Hamas</u> is classified as a terrorist organization.

Mr. Carter, who is leading the international voting observers, cautioned the international community against overreacting to the emergence of *Hamas* as a political force.

"It's not going to adversely affect the peace process," Mr. Carter said yesterday. "That kind of thinking is wrong. There hasn't been a peace process in more than three years."

Leading Palestinian politicians asked international leaders to accept the choice of the Palestinian people as they would an election in other democracies.

"<u>Hamas</u> is part of our society. You can't isolate an organization like <u>Hamas</u>," Mohammed Dahlan, a leading Fatah candidate running in Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip, told the British Broadcasting Corp.

Mr. Olmert said that the emergence of a moderate and independent Palestinian state was in Israel's best interest.

He called Israel's unilateral withdrawal of soldiers and settlers from the Gaza Strip last summer "a turning point for the state of Israel."

But, echoing Mr. Sharon's security policy, Mr. Olmert said Israel would not give up self-defined security zones and settlement blocks in the West Bank and "places important to the Jewish people," specifically Jerusalem.

"We cannot continue to control parts of the territories where most of the Palestinians live. The choice between allowing Jews to live in all parts of the land of Israel and living in a state with a Jewish majority mandates giving up parts of the land of Israel," he said, referring to the Jewish claim that God gave their nation the West Bank and Gaza Strip to live on.

However, Mr. Olmert said there would be no partition of Jerusalem. "There can be no Jewish state," he said, "without Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty."

Graphic

Olmert ready to cede parts of West Bank: Jerusalem not included: Israeli PM makes offer on eve of Palestinian vote

Photo: Patrick Baz, AFP, Getty Images; Palestinian <u>women</u> walk past <u>Hamas</u> graffiti in Gaza yesterday. <u>Hamas</u> is challenging the ruling Fatah party in today's Palestinian elections.; Black & White

Photo: Ehud Olmert, acting Prime Minister.

Load-Date: January 25, 2006



Women out in force: In the first Palestinian parliamentary elections in a decade, women played a big part, but not necessarily for their future advancement

The Gazette (Montreal)

January 26, 2006 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A4

Length: 671 words

Byline: SARAH EL DEEB, AP

Dateline: RAMALLAH, West Bank

Body

<u>Female</u> candidates and campaigners, many in full veil, turned out in unprecedented force for yesterday's Palestinian elections, talking to voters and handing out fliers, the bright yellow and green sashes of the two main parties slung across their chests.

But the remarkable presence of legions of <u>women</u> on the political scene did not necessarily augur a breakthrough for <u>women</u>'s rights. The new government they were helping to usher in is likely to have a strong Islamic fundamentalist contingent more inclined to limit <u>women</u> than empower them.

Ahead of the vote, the Islamic group <u>Hamas</u> said it wanted such cabinet posts as health, education and welfare, meaning <u>Hamas</u> would have a formidable impact on <u>women</u>'s lives.

That prospect worried Ahlam Abu Samaan, 21, a student at Al Azhar University in Gaza City.

"I am afraid and many of my friends in the university are afraid that <u>Hamas</u> is going to practise the Iranian model of an Islamic state," Abu Samaan said. "People are looking to us as a modern society, but I am afraid that this vision is going to be changed. I respect <u>Hamas female</u> candidates, I respect their ideology, but I don't want them to dictate things to me."

<u>Women</u> accounted for 85 of the 728 candidates on national and district lists in yesterday's election. <u>Hamas</u> fielded 13 <u>women</u> on its 59-member national ticket, including a university professor and a woman who lost two sons involved in suicide operations against Israelis. Fatah <u>women</u> held 12 of the party's 45 national slots.

At polling stations in Gaza, <u>Hamas women</u> dressed in long robes, their heads covered and faces veiled, were far more visible than Fatah <u>women</u> in their headscarves and yellow sashes. The <u>Hamas women</u> stood outside polling centres alongside men stumping for candidates, many wearing green <u>Hamas</u> scarves around their shoulders.

In Gaza City, voter Zahira Abdel Nasser, 42, said she would welcome Islamic restrictions in day-to-day life.

Women out in force: In the first Palestinian parliamentary elections in a decade, women played a big part, but not necessarily for their future advancement

"We are dreaming of an Islamic country," said Abdel Nasser, the mother of a son and two teenage girls. "An Islamic country is the best and the safest place to live in.

"It is not necessary to cover my face, but it is necessary to protect my girls, to avoid moral crimes, to put an end to this moral corruption that many in the (Palestinian) Authority had contributed to."

Abdel Nasser, who wore a headscarf, said the <u>women</u> tapped by <u>Hamas</u> to run on its list "are going to fulfill all the **women**'s demands."

<u>Female</u> officials dominated the main polling station in the West Bank city of Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian government.

At the station, Heba Yassin, 24, who trains *female* politicians at the Ministry of *Women*'s Affairs, cast her vote for a left-wing bloc on the national level and for a woman at the district level.

Yassin said she was not afraid <u>Hamas</u> would restrict <u>women</u>'s rights, saying the group has moderated its positions as evidenced by its participation in elections.

"When they get into the legislature, they won't have time for **women**," Yassin said. "I'm not afraid of **Hamas**. It will be just like Fatah."

Mariam Saleh, a professor of Islamic law, or sharia, and the No. 8 candidate on <u>Hamas</u>'s national list, said she was proof that people have the wrong impression about <u>women</u> and Islam. Working and studying since she was 19, she has made a prestigious career for herself while raising seven children.

"Palestinian <u>women</u> in particular, and <u>women</u> in any country under occupation and repression, must stand side by side with men," Saleh said in Ramallah.

In parliament, she plans to fight for legislation to guarantee the rights of working <u>women</u>, including better working opportunities and employment based on merit, not patronage.

Asked about *Hamas* seeking restrictions on dress once in parliament, she replied:

"We will not force anyone. But we will fortify our youth with Islamic education. We will let them know their rights and their duties. And we will let the woman choose" whether to veil herself, she said, quickly adding: "God willing, in two to three years, she will choose to do so."

Graphic

Photo: KHALIL HAMRA, AP; Palestinian <u>women</u> wearing caps of the ruling Fatah movement wait their turn to vote in the Palestinian parliamentary elections at a polling station in the southern Gaza Strip town of Khan Younis yesterday.

Load-Date: January 26, 2006



<u>Legions of women turn out for Palestinian vote: Candidates, campaigners, voters, some in full veil, weigh ramifications of fundamentalist contingent in government</u>

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

January 26, 2006 Thursday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A13

Length: 450 words

Byline: Sarah El Deeb, Associated Press

Dateline: RAMALLAH, West Bank

Body

RAMALLAH, West Bank -- **Female** candidates and campaigners, many in full veil, turned out in unprecedented force for Wednesday's Palestinian elections, talking to voters and handing out flyers, the bright yellow and green sashes of the two main parties slung across their chests.

But the remarkable presence of legions of <u>women</u> on the political scene did not necessarily augur a breakthrough for <u>women</u>'s rights. The new government they were helping to usher in is likely to have a strong Islamic fundamentalist contingent inclined to limit <u>women</u>.

Ahead of the vote, the Islamic group <u>Hamas</u> said it wanted cabinet posts such as health, education and welfare, meaning <u>Hamas</u> would have a formidable impact on <u>women</u>'s lives.

That prospect worried Ahlam Abu Samaan, 21, a student at Al Azhar University in Gaza City.

"I am afraid and many of my friends in the university are afraid that <u>Hamas</u> is going to practise the Iranian model of an Islamic state," said Abu Samaan. "People are looking to us as a modern society, but I am afraid that this vision is going to be changed. I respect <u>Hamas</u> <u>women</u> candidates, I respect their ideology, but I don't want them to dictate things to me."

<u>Women</u> accounted for 85 of the 728 candidates on national and district lists in Wednesday's election. <u>Hamas</u> fielded 13 <u>women</u> on its 59-member national ticket, including a university professor and a woman who lost two sons involved in suicide operations against Israelis. Fatah <u>women</u> held 12 of the party's 45 national slots.

At polling stations in Gaza, <u>Hamas women</u> dressed in long robes, their heads covered and faces veiled, were far more visible than Fatah <u>women</u> in their head scarves and yellow sashes. The <u>Hamas women</u> stood outside polling centres alongside men stumping for candidates, many wearing green <u>Hamas</u> scarves.

In Gaza City, voter Zahira Abdel Nasser, 42, said she would welcome Islamic restrictions in day-to-day life.

Legions of women turn out for Palestinian vote: Candidates, campaigners, voters, some in full veil, weigh ramifications of fundamentalist contingent in governme....

"We are dreaming of an Islamic country," said Abdel Nasser, the mother of a son and two teenage girls. "An Islamic country is the best and the safest place to live in.

"It is not necessary to cover my face, but it is necessary to protect my girls, to avoid moral crimes, to put an end to this moral corruption that many in the [Palestinian] Authority had contributed to."

Abdel Naser, who wore a head scarf, said the <u>women</u> tapped by <u>Hamas</u> to run on its list "are going to fulfil all the <u>women</u>'s demands."

<u>Women</u> officials dominated the main polling station in the West Bank city of Ramallah, where Heba Yassin, 24, who trains <u>women</u> politicians at the Ministry of <u>Women</u>'s Affairs, said <u>Hamas</u> has moderated its positions. "When they get into the legislature, they won't have time for <u>women</u>," Yassin said.

Graphic

Photo: Awad Awad, AFP, Getty Images; A Palestinian woman casts her ballot at a polling station in the West Bank village of Hizmah in the population's first parliamentary election in a decade.

Load-Date: January 26, 2006



Israel says Palestinians in Jerusalem can vote in parliamentary elections

USA TODAY

January 16, 2006 Monday

FINAL EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6A

Length: 574 words

Byline: Matthew Gutman

Body

JERUSALEM -- Israel's Cabinet on Sunday cleared the way for Palestinians in Jerusalem to vote Jan. 25 in parliamentary elections, the first for the Palestinians since 1996.

At the same time, doctors performed a tracheotomy on Ariel Sharon, the Israeli leader who has been unconscious since suffering a massive stroke Jan. 4.

Sharon has not awakened from a medically induced coma. The tracheotomy, which required doctors to cut a small hole in Sharon's neck and insert a tube into his windpipe, is intended to help him breathe without a respirator.

Sunday, acting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who has assumed Sharon's powers, convened the Cabinet, which unanimously approved the move to allow voting by Palestinians in Jerusalem.

The Bush administration has been pressing Israel to permit the elections to proceed there, despite participation by <u>Hamas</u>. The armed Palestinian group is listed by the State Department as a terrorist organization. <u>Hamas</u>' charter calls for the destruction of Israel.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had threatened to cancel the Jan. 25 elections if Israel barred balloting in Jerusalem, which both Israelis and Palestinians claim as their capital.

Any new Palestinian government will face daunting problems. Among them: setting a course for relations with Israel; moving toward statehood; restoring law and order by ending fighting among Palestinian factions; and improving a slumping economy.

Olmert said <u>Hamas</u> candidates would not be allowed to campaign in Jerusalem, but he said Israel would not keep them from appearing on the ballot. In Jerusalem, Israeli authorities will take "strict care to remove all signs and symbols regarding <u>Hamas</u>, both before the elections and on Election Day," he said.

"We could not have had elections without Jerusalem. This is an important step," Jihad Abu Zneid, a <u>female</u> candidate for the ruling Fatah Party, said from her home in the Shuafat refugee neighborhood on the city's outskirts.

The United States has urged Israel not to block the elections from taking place in Jerusalem. Friday, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch and deputy national security adviser Elliot Abrams met to discuss the issue with Olmert.

Israel says Palestinians in Jerusalem can vote in parliamentary elections

Although the United States lists <u>Hamas</u> as a foreign terrorist organization, its "participation in the elections and the modalities of how voting will go ahead is for the Palestinians and the Israelis to work out themselves," said Stewart Tuttle, spokesman at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv.

The move to allow Palestinian voting in Jerusalem was criticized by members of the right-wing Likud Party, including some who were part of Sharon's Cabinet until resigning recently. Silvan Shalom, a Likud member who is the outgoing foreign minister, said the decision to allow elections in which <u>Hamas</u> is on the ballot "sets a dangerous precedent."

Hours after the Cabinet decision, Israeli police arrested eight Jerusalem-based <u>Hamas</u> members who were campaigning outside the city's Al-Aqsa Mosque.

One of those arrested was <u>Hamas'</u> No. 2 man on the ballot, Sheik Mohammed Abu Teir. Police also arrested two men working in <u>Hamas'</u> campaign headquarters in the city, according to a statement from the Jerusalem police department.

In an interview Friday outside the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Abu Teir insisted <u>Hamas</u> has the right to seek votes in Jerusalem.

"We will campaign but will not seek permission from Israel, a state which we do not recognize," he said.

Graphic

PHOTO, B/W, Oleg Popov, Reuters

Load-Date: January 16, 2006



Pullout offer on eve of election

The Times (London)

January 25, 2006, Wednesday

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; Pg. 37

Length: 404 words

Byline: Stephen Farrell in Gaza City

Body

As Palestinian voters prepared to cast their ballots in today's parliamentary elections, Israel's acting Prime Minister sought to sway the vote by offering further withdrawals from the West Bank.

In a clear message to the Palestinian electorate, Ehud Olmert implored them not to "choose again the extremists who have led them from tragedy to tragedy and to sorrowful lives". Extending an olive branch in his first major policy speech since Ariel Sharon, the Prime Minister, suffered a stroke, he declared that Israel "cannot continue to control parts of the territories where most of the Palestinians live".

The intervention reflects Israeli unease at the strong showing of <u>Hamas</u> in the polls. The Islamist group is deemed a terrorist organisation by Israel, the United States and the European Union, and although it has softened its campaign rhetoric, its charter still calls for the destruction of Israel.

Condoleezza Rice, the US Secretary of State, warned Palestinian voters last night that the US "won't change its policies toward *Hamas*" if it refused to renounce violence.

The stark choice facing Palestinians -between the ruling Fatah, which flaunts its credentials as a peace partner, and *Hamas*, which wants to cut relations with Israel -appeared to have benefited Fatah in recent days. One poll showed it widening its lead over *Hamas*, with 40 points to 29.

<u>Hamas</u>, which boycotted the 1996 election, has no seats in the Palestinian parliament, but has run a well-organised campaign, capitalising on anger at Fatah's corruption, inefficiency and inability to control growing chaos on the streets. Mahmoud Zahar, the leader of <u>Hamas</u> in Gaza, insists it will not talk directly to Israel, although he leaves room for third-party contacts.

"We have to separate our relationship on all levels with Israel for our national interest," Dr Zahar said. He also accused the US, Israel's closest ally, of "international crimes" against Arab countries.

Fatah argues that such hostility to Israel and the US would damage the Palestinian cause. Nabil Shaath, the Deputy Prime Minister, said that <u>Hamas</u> could not be trusted with the peace process.

www.timesonline.co.uk/mideast Palestinian elections: latest news

POLL LINE-UP

Voters 1,332,449

Pullout offer on eve of election

Candidates 714

Polling stations West Bank and Gaza 2,721

Seats 132

Party lists 11

Main parties Fatah National list, 44 candidates, including 12 \underline{women} ; \underline{Hamas} National list, 59 candidates, 13 of them are \underline{women}

Load-Date: January 25, 2006



Israelis fire at office of Palestinian PM

The Gazette (Montreal)
July 2, 2006 Sunday
Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A1

Length: 626 words

Byline: RAVI NESSMAN, AP

Dateline: GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip

Body

Israeli aircraft fired missiles at the Palestinian prime minister's office early today, just hours after a Palestinian official said the soldier whose abduction sent Israeli troops into Gaza is alive and in stable condition.

A *Hamas* militant was killed in another Israeli air strike.

Palestinian witnesses said two missiles fired by attack helicopters hit the Gaza City office of Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh of *Hamas* early today.

The missiles slightly injured a bystander and set the empty building on fire.

Inspecting his burning office, Haniyeh called the attack senseless.

"They have targeted a symbol for the Palestinian people," he said.

The Israeli military confirmed the attack and said it would "employ all means at its disposal ... to secure the safe return" of 19-year-old soldier Cpl. Gilad Shalit, who was abducted by Palestinian militants one week ago.

The strike, at about 1:45 a.m., came shortly after moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas warned yesterday that the coming hours would be "critical, sensitive and serious" for trying to calm the crisis.

In other air strikes after midnight, Israeli aircraft hit a school in Gaza City and <u>Hamas</u> facilities in northern Gaza, where a <u>Hamas</u> militant was killed and another wounded, Palestinian officials said. The military said they were "planning terror attacks against Israel." The 34-year-old <u>Hamas</u> gunman was the second militant killed in the five-day Israeli operation to force the release of Shalit.

Ziad Abu Aen, a Palestinian deputy minister and <u>Hamas</u> official, said yesterday that Shalit was wounded but in stable condition.

Another <u>Hamas</u> official, however, cast doubt on the credibility of the statement. Osama Muzami said only the military wing of the Islamic militant group knows the soldier's condition.

Israelis fire at office of Palestinian PM

There had been no sign of Shalit since he was abducted during a militant raid on an Israeli army post just outside the Gaza Strip that killed two soldiers and two of the attackers.

Abu Aen said "mediators" told him Shalit had received medical treatment for wounds he suffered in the raid and was in stable condition.

"He has three wounds," Abu Aen said in the West Bank city of Ramallah. "I guess shrapnel wounds."

Israeli soldiers and Palestinian militants exchanged fire for several hours yesterday when Israeli tanks and bulldozers crossed into the Gaza Strip and began razing farmland east of Khan Younis. No serious injuries were reported.

The fighting took place north of the position Israeli troops occupied when they entered Gaza on Wednesday. The army said it was carrying out a limited operation in the Khan Younis area and the soldiers were expected to leave soon.

The <u>Hamas</u>-affiliated militants holding Shalit initially said they would trade information about him for all Palestinian <u>women</u> and underage prisoners in Israeli jails. The militants raised the stakes yesterday, calling for an end to the Israeli offensive and the release of 1,000 other prisoners in Israel, including some who are not Palestinian.

The new demand appeared aimed at rallying support in the Arab world.

Israel has ruled out any compromise, saying it would only encourage more abductions.

Israel continued to hold 64 <u>Hamas</u> leaders rounded up in the West Bank Thursday night. They include eight cabinet ministers.

Israel has also blamed Syria for the kidnapping, noting it gives haven to *Hamas*'s top leaders.

Defence Minister Amir Peretz met with senior security officials last night and then called U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to urge the Bush administration to step up pressure on Syria to work for Shalit's release, officials said on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to make a statement. Egypt and other foreign mediators have been working to try to resolve the crisis.

Load-Date: July 2, 2006



<u>Free 408 Palestinians, Israeli's captors urge; They said they would then give</u> information on the soldier's condition. Olmert rejected any negotiations.

The Philadelphia Inquirer
June 27, 2006 Tuesday

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The Philadelphia Inquirer

Found on Philly . com

Section: NATIONAL; Pg. A02

Length: 703 words

Byline: Michael Matza, Inquirer Staff Writer

Body

Making the initial move in a delicate and dangerous dance, Palestinian extremists holding an Israeli soldier in the Gaza Strip issued their first demands since his abduction Sunday in a cross-border raid.

In exchange for information on the condition of Gilad Shalit, 19, the captors demanded the release of all *female* Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, along with all Palestinian detainees under 18 - a total of about 408 individuals. Israel rejected the demands, and Prime Minister Ehud Olmert ruled out bargaining with the abductors.

Shalit was believed wounded in the attack but his condition is not thought to be serious. Two other Israelis were killed in the raid.

Even among ordinary Palestinians, for whom the prisoners issue is paramount, there is an uneasy sense that the gunmen holding Shalit are playing with fire this time because Israeli-Palestinian relations have been deteriorating for weeks.

Palestinian Hana Hirzala, 40, a school principal near the West Bank city of Jenin, said the abduction, while almost predictable in the context of rising violence, is an "obstacle" to peace that only puts Palestinians "on the road to something worse."

"People under occupation, facing economic and political siege," might be expected to lash out, she said, "but this will make things more complicated."

<u>Hamas'</u> military wing claimed joint responsibility for Sunday's raid, along with the Popular Resistance Committees and a largely unknown group called the Army of Islam.

Meeting in emergency session, Israel's political-security cabinet instructed the army to begin preparing for a "harsh military response" to secure Shalit's release.

An Israeli naval destroyer along with a large force of infantry backed by dozens of tanks continued to ring the Gaza Strip yesterday.

Free 408 Palestinians, Israeli 's captors urge They said they would then give information on the soldier's condition. Olmert rejected any negotiations.

Israeli intelligence sources said the focus is on preventing the gunmen from smuggling Shalit out of the Gaza Strip, possibly to Lebanon or Syria, where his fate could become even more uncertain.

The Sunday raid also points up an apparent rift inside <u>Hamas</u> between those who refuse to recognize Israel in any manner and more pragmatic members.

A senior Israeli military intelligence officer, who was not named by the Israeli daily Haaretz, told the parliament's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee: "At the moment, there are differences between <u>Hamas</u>' military wing and Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh [of <u>Hamas</u>] over how to confront the Shalit matter."

Palestinian analyst Hisham Ahmed, an expert on <u>Hamas</u> and a political science professor at Birzeit University near Ramallah, concurred.

He said "a more radical splinter group" within <u>Hamas</u> or the other factions appears to be punishing Haniyeh for negotiating a potential national-unity political program with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

Ghazi Hamad, a spokesman for the *Hamas*-led government in Gaza, denied reports of a split inside *Hamas*, calling them a "big lie," according to the Associated Press.

But he said the government had no prior knowledge of Sunday's raid, and struggled to explain how that could happen in the absence of a rift.

Abbas' Fatah faction supports a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. <u>Hamas'</u> charter calls for Israel's destruction.

"Haniyeh is trying hard to arrive at a halfway house" between the <u>Hamas</u> and Fatah positions, "and certain elements within the factions did not like that," Ahmed said.

Against the backdrop of intense international diplomatic efforts to free the soldier, including intervention by French and Egyptian officials, Olmert has held off on green-lighting a major military incursion.

At least publicly, Israeli officials maintain they will not bargain for the release of Palestinian prisoners.

"We won't turn ourselves into an object of extortion for the <u>Hamas</u>," Olmert said in a speech last night to an international Jewish organization.

But in a statement on Israeli Army radio, Shalit's father, Noam Shalit, appealed to the gunmen for a sign that his son is alive.

Addressing his son through the national radio broadcast he said: "Try to survive the difficult moments. We love you, and are waiting for you to come back home."

Contact staff writer Michael Matza at 215-854-2405 or foreign@phillynews.com.

Load-Date: June 27, 2006



THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE - Peace or war could follow the Palestinian poll

THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN January 28, 2006 Saturday All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Leader; Pg. 16

Length: 645 words

Body

MATP

THE Palestinian people have made their choice in free and fair parliamentary elections. And they have overwhelmingly chosen members of the terrorist militia <u>Hamas</u>, which is committed to the destruction of Israel and the establishment of Islamic religious rule, with all that this implies for the rights of <u>women</u>. Certainly, <u>Hamas</u> campaigned on domestic issues, comparing its performance in local government with the corruption and incompetence of the outgoing Fatah regime. But there is no avoiding the obvious: this is a vote for people who are as keen to kill as they are to negotiate political problems.

The election ensures enormous challenges for all the players in the Middle East peace process. The US, and European nations who provide aid and attempt to arbitrate in the region, say they will not deal with <u>Hamas</u> unless it renounces terror. Unsurprisingly, neither will the Israelis. Yet while the Palestinian Authority President, Fatah's Mahmoud Abbas, remains in office after being elected just over a year ago, he has no choice but to work with <u>Hamas</u>. And for the Americans and Europeans to have absolutely no contact with the new government would send a very dangerous signal around the region -- that Western nations only accept election outcomes when they like the winners. Somehow, Mr Abbas has to convince <u>Hamas</u> leaders they are in politics now and because they cannot beat Israel militarily, they will have to find a way forward that preserves their pride while assuaging the Israelis and their allies. This is certainly not impossible. Under longtime leader Yasser Arafat, Fatah never renounced violence against Israel but found ways, at least intermittently, to negotiate.

The arrival of <u>Hamas</u> as a legitimately elected presence in Palestinian politics poses equally demanding dilemmas for the Israelis. The easy response is to refuse to have anything to do with a <u>Hamas</u> government and wait to see what happens. Israel has the military might to do this. The new security wall being constructed along the length of Israel's frontier also makes it harder for suicide bombers to attack in its cities. But Israelis want peace. While it annoyed conservatives, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's unilateral evacuation of Gaza last year was politically popular. As is the peace platform of Kadima, the political party he created before being struck down by his present illness. Earlier this week, Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel would ultimately have to abandon much of the West Bank, if only to ensure Jews continued to account for a majority of the country's population. It would be preferable, he added, if the withdrawal was arranged in co-operation with the Palestinians. And that now means talking to a government made up of <u>Hamas</u> ministers.

On <u>Hamas</u>'s record to date, a permanent peace seems a forlorn hope. Only the most adamant of optimists will assume the organisation will now abandon terror and talk to Israel. There is a real chance this election may have sabotaged any chance of a settlement for years. And yet, electoral success has a way of changing even the most

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE - Peace or war could follow the Palestinian poll

obdurate of activists. Having been elected once, <u>Hamas</u> will likely want to stay in power, if only to hang onto the perks of political office. To do so will mean fulfilling the promises of honest government and better services that won them the election. And accomplishing this will require international aid -- and the co-operation of the Israelis, who have sway over the fragile economies of Gaza and the West Bank. Certainly, <u>Hamas</u> can continue to denounce Israel and refuse to negotiate. But not if it wants to go to the next election as a government that has improved life for ordinary people. What effect this election will have on the cause of peace in the Middle East will depend on whether <u>Hamas</u> wants to remain a terrorist organisation or become a political party.

Load-Date: January 31, 2006



So, what's with these hijabs?

The Gazette (Montreal)

January 30, 2006 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A3

Length: 332 words

Byline: SARAH EL DEEB, AP

Dateline: RAMALLAH, West Bank

Body

A slew of jokes circulating among Palestinians following <u>Hamas</u>'s landslide election victory reflects concerns that the group will impose Islamic law and social codes across the West Bank and Gaza.

As one goes, all police stations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been ordered shut because all complaints must now be filed directly to God.

Invoking God and Islamic tradition is the mainstay of all the quips that have been spreading in the past few days.

Hamas officials rushed to deny that they will force their beliefs on Palestinians.

"Rest assured we don't impose our thoughts on anyone," <u>Hamas</u> leader Khaled Maashal said on Saturday in the Syrian capital, Damascus. "We will present our thoughts to our people and they have the right to choose."

Many Palestinians were not reassured.

One newly elected legislator has said she plans to submit a bill requiring girls and <u>women</u> to wear the hijab, a headdress covering the hair.

At a <u>Hamas</u> rally in Ramallah this week, an organizer tried contain his members from clashing with Fatah supporters by shouting: "Sons, it is time to pray. To the mosque." They all dispersed.

Cellphones are abuzz with text messaged jokes prophesying a new police uniform mirroring the short dress and baggy pants worn by the former hard-line Taliban rulers of Afghanistan, and a discount on taxes for Christians who convert to Islam within a week.

Speeding ticket? Pay for it with extra prayers.

The jokes in the West Bank reflect the rawest nerves because Palestinians there tend to be less traditional than in Gaza, where *Hamas* is strongest.

In Gaza in the early 1990s, after the first Palestinian uprising in Israel, <u>Hamas</u> used a quasi-police force to shut down restaurants serving alcohol and to impose a conservative dress code.

So, what's with these hijabs?

While an overwhelming majority of people chose <u>Hamas</u> on election day, the wide circulation of the jokes reflects how conflicted people are over their choice, said Nadia Najjab, a social psychology professor in the West Bank Birzeit University.

Load-Date: January 30, 2006



Guardian Weekly: International News: Gaza stalemate over captured Israeli

Guardian Weekly July 7, 2006 Friday

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*The*GuardianWeekly

Section: Pg. 11

Length: 555 words

Byline: Conal Urquhart, Beit Hanoun

Body

Palestinians holding an Israeli soldier said on Tuesday that they had ended negotiations on his fate after Israel ignored an ultimatum to begin releasing prisoners.

The <u>Hamas</u>-led militants holding Corporal Gilad Shalit had said that if Israel had not begun releasing some of the 1,500 prisoners by 6am it would "bear the consequences". The Army of Islam, one of Cpl Shalit's abductors, said it had "decided to freeze all contacts and close the files of this soldier" but added: "We will not kill the soldier, if he is still alive." Israeli and Palestinian officials believed he was alive and negotiations were taking place all over the Middle East to secure his release.

Israel maintained its military pressure on Gaza by bombing buildings at the Islamic University in Gaza City and hitting other targets in northern Gaza. Its troops and tanks remain in enclaves outside Rafah in southern Gaza and Beit Hanoun in the north. Palestinian militants also fired Qassam rockets at Israel.

The Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, said he held the Palestinian Authority fully responsible for the welfare of CpI Shilat, who was captured during a raid on June 25. "Israel will not give in to extortion by the Palestinian Authority and the <u>Hamas</u> government," he said. The groups holding CpI Shalit demand the release of <u>female</u> and child prisoners and a further 1,000 inmates.

An Israeli airstrike last weekend destroyed the office of the Palestinian prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, without causing injury. Roni Bar-On, an Israeli cabinet minister, said the objective of the attack on Mr Haniyeh's office was to "compromise the *Hamas* government's ability to rule".

Mr Haniyeh went to ground last Thursday after eight <u>Hamas</u> ministers and 20 MPs were detained by the Israeli army. The arrest of a third of his cabinet would not bring down his administration, he said.

Last week Israel bombed the Gaza City power station, cutting about 60% of the Gaza Strip's supplies. The UN estimates that 130,000 Gazans have been left without regular fresh water and that many more receive it only in sufficient quantities for drinking and cooking. Israel also destroyed three key bridges in Gaza City with airstrikes.

oPart of the reason for Israel's rela tive restraint in attacking Gaza is that it hopes international diplomacy will secure the release of Cpl Shalit. A spokesman for the foreign ministry said Israel preferred a peaceful solution to

Guardian Weekly: International News: Gaza stalemate over captured Israeli

the crisis. "The diplomatic process is important because it will create greater international understanding if we are forced to carry out a larger incursion," he said.

Palestinian diplomats and negotiators say the fate of Cpl Shalit has become entwined with Palestinian power struggles and international rivalry in the Middle East. Aides of Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, believe that the destiny of the soldier is in the hands of the <u>Hamas</u> leader Khaled Meshaal, who is based in Damascus and sponsored by Iran and Syria. Mr Meshaal, whom Israel tried to assassinate in 1997, is using the crisis to assert his leadership of <u>Hamas</u> and promote his candidacy for the leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, of which <u>Hamas</u> is not yet a member.

Both Israel and the office of Mr Abbas accept that the <u>Hamas</u> government has virtually no influence over the <u>Hamas</u> military wing.

guardian.co.uk/israel

Load-Date: July 13, 2006



Factional enemies unite for Gaza defence

The Australian (Australia)
July 3, 2006 Monday
All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 11

Length: 999 words **Byline:** Marie Colvin

Body

The Sunday Times

Rafah

ABU Khaled and Hamed were shooting at one another two weeks ago, sworn enemies in the struggle between rival factions of Fatah and *Hamas* for control of the strife-torn and overcrowded Gaza Strip.

But the two men, in their early 20s, met last week in a shrapnel-peppered building in Rafah to plot together. Fear of an Israeli attack has made them staunch allies, united by the threat of a common enemy.

If Israel launches an assault on Gaza to rescue Gilad Shalit, the 19-year-old corporal kidnapped last Sunday, the southern town of Rafah is likely to be first in the firing line. And its young men are preparing for battle.

"We have reactivated the operations room," said Abu Khaled, 24, with a Kalashnikov slung over his shoulder.

This grandiose claim belies the absence of wall maps or computer screens in the operation to co-ordinate Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and Izzedine al-Qassam, the military wing of <u>Hamas</u>. Fear of Israeli attacks forces them to meet at night in cars that pull over on potholed streets or in abandoned buildings scarred by Israeli tank and artillery fire.

When <u>Hamas</u> won a spectacular victory in the Palestinian elections six months ago, the opposing groups tore at each other for influence, jobs and revenge. But the militants have now combined forces to produce home-made pipe bombs, prepare booby traps and organise themselves into fighting units.

"Our spirits are high," one fighter said. "We will not permit Israeli tanks to pass in the streets of Rafah. The Israelis should think 1000 times before they come back here."

The signs of people getting ready for battle are everywhere. Omar Tawil, director of funerals for the Fatah division, has even asked a businessman to rent out his garage-sized vegetable refrigerator as a makeshift morgue to bury fallen fighters.

It would be a deeply uneven struggle. The Israeli troops are well dug in and well equipped with armour, helicopters and artillery. Just a 15-minute drive down Airport Road, big, grey Israeli Merkava tanks lie in wait.

Factional enemies unite for Gaza defence

Shalit's abduction has plunged both sides into a confrontation as unpredictable as it was unexpected.

For Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, the stakes could not be higher.

When a soldier is taken hostage, it touches an exceptionally raw nerve in Israel, because almost every man and woman serves in the armed forces at some point. They expect resolve and leadership.

Olmert, who has little military experience, responded to the kidnapping by warning that Israel would not negotiate and that *Hamas* leaders would be held personally accountable for the soldier's fate.

The <u>Hamas</u> Government is under even greater pressure on the Palestinian side. Its refusal to disarm, recognise Israel and abide by past agreements has prompted the international community to slash its funding.

Now it is caught in a standoff with Israel it appears incapable of resolving -- and life for the Palestinian people is getting steadily worse.

The Izzedine al-Qassam group at first insisted it would release Shalit only if Israel freed all Palestinian <u>women</u> and youths under 18 held in its prisons. Next came a demand -- swiftly dismissed by Israel -- for the release of 1000 Palestinian prisoners.

Deep divisions emerged between Khaled Meshaal, the hardline <u>Hamas</u> leader exiled in Damascus, who insisted <u>Hamas</u> would not compromise, and the leaders in Gaza, who held to that position in public but equivocated behind the scenes.

Release the Israeli prisoner, the Gaza leaders calculated, and they would lose political support; keep him and they could lose everything.

Any conflict could spread across the region like wildfire. Israel blames Syria for harbouring <u>Hamas</u>'s exiled leadership and has sent four fighter jets to buzz the summer home of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Islamic organisations across the Middle East could be expected to support their fellow radicals in *Hamas*, which many regard as the model for an elected, militant Islamic government.

One man who knows <u>Hamas</u>'s techniques for guarding and concealing their prisoners is Imad Faluji, who was a senior figure in <u>Hamas</u> when Nachson Waxman, another 19-year-old Israeli corporal, was kidnapped in 1994. "We gave our fighters holding the Israeli soldier the order that if they heard any suspicious movement outside the house, their first step must be to kill the soldier immediately, without hesitation," Faluji said last week.

Israeli troops stormed the house where Waxman was held, but he died in the raid. His fate shows how difficult any Israeli rescue mission for Shalit may be.

Faluji said his former colleagues would not back down. "They think they are the biggest power in the world," he said.

A source close to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said: "The first mistake <u>Hamas</u> made was in kidnapping the soldier in the first place.

"Once they had him, they should have returned him immediately. They didn't understand the basic fact -- Israel will not negotiate for prisoners in the West Bank and Gaza."

Releasing Shalit would further undermine <u>Hamas</u>'s popularity; a poll last week found 77 per cent of Palestinians believe he should only be released in return for Palestinian prisoners.

However, the main obstacle lies in the looming presence of Meshaal who became the dominant figure in <u>Hamas</u> after Israel assassinated Sheik Ahmed Yassin, its founder, in 2004.

Factional enemies unite for Gaza defence

Meshaal, 50, was born near the West Bank city of Ramallah but moved to Kuwait at an early age. Never having lived under Israeli occupation, he has little sense of any need for compromise.

If Shalit is freed, there will be strife among the Palestinians as <u>Hamas</u> struggles to retain power. Should he be killed, the Israeli retaliation would be fierce, with untold casualties, civilian and military.

A glimmer of hope came yesterday when Egypt dispatched Omar Suleiman, a senior security official, to conduct secret negotiations around a deal that would spare Shalit.

Only then, it seems, would the two young fighters, Abu Khaled and Hamed, be able to avoid a bloodbath.

Load-Date: July 2, 2006



Settling for an Image

New York Sun (Archive)
June 21, 2006 Wednesday

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Section: EDITORIAL & OPINION; Pg. 11

Length: 635 words

Byline: Jeffrey Azarva

Body

On June 12, a Palestinian mob loyal to Palestinian Authority leader Mahmud Abbas ransacked the Palestinian parliament and cabinet buildings, touching off a fresh spate of internecine violence between *Hamas* and Fatah.

While the demonstrators' stated goal was payment of salary arrears, the tension goes deeper. Since a January 2006 *Hamas* victory in legislative elections ended Fatah's 12-year monopoly on Palestinian political power, Abbas and Fatah loyalists have fought - often violently - to preserve their political influence. At its core, the dispute involves Palestinian willingness to abide by diplomatic agreements and eschew demands to eradicate Israel.

<u>Hamas</u>'s refusal to recognize Israel or renounce terrorism has led the European Union and United States to cut off aid to the Palestinian Authority. Abbas seeks to bypass <u>Hamas</u> intransigence by taking the matter directly to the Palestinian people with a referendum on the future of the two state solution.

Bush administration officials applaud his move. On June 6, White House spokesman Tony Snow welcomed the proposal, stating, "Abbas has demonstrated that he's somebody who wants to work toward a two state solution." His State Department counter part, Sean McCormack, echoed this sentiment three days later.

Abbas may try to paint himself as a moderate and potential peacemaker in Western eyes, but such a perception is diplomatic smoke and mirrors. He seeks to base his referendum on the "prisoners' document"- an 18-point manifesto calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state within the West Bank and Gaza. But the document espouses a final solution not unlike that proposed by *Hamas*. Not only does it fail to acknowledge Israel's explicit right to exist, but it also endorses organized resistance - a euphemism for terrorism, calls for the release of all Palestinian prisoners including terrorists who murdered *women* and children inside Israel, and insists on refugees' right of return. Middle East scholar Bernard Lewis recently referred to the latter clause as a "polite equivalent for the liquidation of Israel."

The document sidesteps the international community's demands of <u>Hamas</u>, which would require renunciation of violence, recognition of Israel, and adherence to past bilateral agreements.

Abbas's sanctioning of the prisoners' document signals Fatah's radicalization. State Department officials should judge diplomatic progress not by what officials say, but upon what they do. That Abbas speaks of moderation does not make him a moderate. Nor should a favorable juxtaposition to <u>Hamas</u> be enough to suggest that Fatah no longer espouses terrorism.

Settling for an Image

Nor will the referendum, if approved, rein in <u>Hamas</u>. The vote would be not about Palestinian recognition of the Jewish state, but rather about whether the Palestinian public seeks a secular Palestinian state to eradicate Israel or a <u>Hamas</u>-led one that seeks to "raise the banner of Allah over every inch of mandatory Palestine."

Abbas may win the referendum. A June 6 Birzeit University poll found that 77% of Palestinians surveyed support the prisoners' document. Any national consensus that emerges from such a referendum will solidify the Palestinian negotiating position for years to come. In doing so, it will hamstring the efforts of future Palestinian interlocutors seeking flexibility on a host of final-status issues. Using Western and Palestinian dissatisfaction with <u>Hamas</u> to endorse a solution equally rejectionist will provide no solution.

The willingness of U.S. and European negotiators to settle for the image rather than substance of peace process progress has a long history of failure. Until they change course, their support for Abbas's referendum will do more to prevent peace than achieve it.

Mr. Azarva is a research assistant at the American Enterprise Institute.

Load-Date: June 21, 2006



Militants disagree on Gaza ceasefire

The Australian (Australia)
July 24, 2006 Monday
All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 11

Length: 394 words

Byline: Abraham Rabinovich

Body

MATP

SENIOR Fatah sources said at the weekend that <u>Hamas</u> and other militant Palestinian factions had agreed to unilaterally stop firing rockets into Israel as the first stage of a process leading to the release of prisoners by both sides and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip.

The ceasefire was to have gone into effect at midnight on Saturday but three rockets were fired into Israel yesterday morning after several militant factions said they did not accept a ceasefire.

Nevertheless, the initiative, which the <u>Hamas</u> political leadership in Gaza had accepted, could be a significant indication of moderation in the Palestinian camp in the wake of unremitting Israeli pressure on the Gaza Strip.

In addition, Israel's fierce response to the challenge from Hezbollah on the Lebanese border may be strengthening the hand of those Palestinians who want to end the fighting with Israel and dimming the hopes of militants who believed Israel was being worn down.

The latest initiative came from Egypt, which has been playing a major role as an intermediary between Israel and the Palestinians. It calls for the unilateral Palestinian ceasefire to be followed by a halt in Israeli military operations.

Negotiations would then be undertaken for the release of the Israeli corporal, Gilad Shalit, captured last month by Palestinian militants. Israel would pledge to release, at a later date, a number of Palestinian prisoners.

These would be chosen from among prisoners who have been held for 20 years or more as well as <u>female</u> prisoners. In the final stage, Israeli troops would pull back from the Gaza Strip.

It is not clear whether the proposal will be sanctioned by Khaled Meshaal, the political leader of <u>Hamas</u> who operates out of Damascus and takes a harder line than the <u>Hamas</u> leaders in the Gaza Strip.

Without Meshaal's approval, the proposal is unlikely to be implemented. An Israeli official, reacting to the reported initiative, said "what matters are results, not talk".

The head of the <u>Hamas</u> faction in the Palestinian parliament, Salah al-Bardiwil, said yesterday that <u>Hamas</u> had no intention of linking negotiations for the release of Corporal Shalit with the release by Hezbollah of the two Israeli soldiers it is holding.

Militants disagree on Gaza ceasefire

"Hezbollah entered the picture after <u>Hamas</u>," he said. "They want their prisoners (being held by Israel) and we want ours."

Load-Date: July 23, 2006



Feminists ready to die in fight against israelv

The Gazette (Montreal)

January 22, 2006 Sunday

Final Edition

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Section: INSIGHT; Pg. D1

Length: 1132 words

Byline: THANASSIS CAMBANIS, Boston Globe

Dateline: NABLUS, West Bank

Body

With her textured handbag, heavy mascara, and a veil revealing only her eyes, Alaa Awdeh sounds like the ultimate feminist. <u>Women</u>, she believes, should have equal rights in Palestinian society, especially the right to die in the armed struggle against Israel.

"That's what I am looking for, to sacrifice my life," said Awdeh, 18, an Islamic studies major at Al Najah University in Nablus and enthusiastic member of the youth wing of *Hamas*, the radical Islamic group.

Islamic <u>women</u> like Awdeh have redrawn the debate over <u>women</u>'s rights in Palestinian society. In the past, the fight was between secular feminists and men who wanted to protect their monopoly on political and social power. Now, the debate is between Western-style feminists and religious <u>women</u> who want to share political power without changing the traditional role of <u>women</u> in the family.

This month's campaign for the Palestinian legislative election set for Wednesday has thrust that debate into the open.

<u>Hamas</u> has attracted legions of <u>women</u> followers of Islam, giving them control over <u>Hamas</u>-funded educational and job-training programs, and encouraging them to finish school and attend university, but at the same time restricting their legal rights to those laid out in the Koran.

<u>Hamas</u> candidate Muna Mansour, 44, is a former high school physics teacher whose husband, a <u>Hamas</u> founder, died in an Israeli helicopter strike in 2002 against <u>Hamas</u> militants considered responsible for attacks against Israel. She considers herself a modern woman, supporting her family and campaigning for office, but also a devout Muslim for whom the Koran can resolve any policy question.

"We are Muslims," Mansour said. "If others try to pass a law which contradicts Islam, we say Islam is the solution."

For instance, Mansour said the Koran says that girls should go to school and pursue careers, but also that married people who commit adultery should be stoned to death, an incongruous blend of seemingly contrasting values.

Palestinian support for religious factions, in particular <u>Hamas</u>, has exploded over the last 10 years, frustrating secular <u>women</u> who have worked in politics for decades and who now find that many young <u>women</u> are turning to a starkly different Islamic vision of empowerment and equality.

Feminists ready to die in fight against israelv

Secular Palestinian <u>women</u> have fought for legal parity with men, and have also worked with Israeli <u>women</u> to further the peace process. Dozens of <u>women</u> are running for the legislature as candidates for the secular Fatah party and for several independent, secular coalitions.

"We don't want religion to dominate our life," said Hania al-Bitar, director of a secular Palestinian group that helps youths. Bitar, 38, is running for the Palestinian legislature on a secular slate called "The Third Way."

The Islamists' growing popularity is a bitter pill for secular activists like Bitar, who is also committed to a democratic system, even if it brings results she abhors.

"Maybe I won't be happy in a system dominated by <u>Hamas</u>, but I have to accept the results of the election and work within the system to change it," Bitar said.

Khalil Shikaki, a political scientist considered the most reliable pollster of Palestinian public opinion, said the Palestinian struggle against Israel had yielded contradictory effects on Palestinian society. On one hand, he said, Palestinian society evolved to allow <u>women</u> a degree of political equality rare in the Arab world, because everyone was drafted into the political and military struggle against Israel. At the same time, the realities of occupation and violence also encouraged society to revert to traditional networks: the family, the tribe and mosque.

"You need more conservative social values to survive under occupation," Shikaki said. "You don't have a government to protect your rights."

After the 1993 Oslo Accords, Fatah won control of the new Palestinian Authority, presiding over a period of relative calm in the conflict with Israel until violence erupted anew in 2000. Critics charge that instead of strengthening their support base during the Iull, Fatah leaders and other intellectuals disconnected from the public. As a result, the original secular leaders of the Palestinian nationalist movement left the field open for <u>Hamas</u>, with its network of mosques and social-services groups.

"It is your role to fight corruption, make reform, and avenge humiliation, like the <u>women</u> who took revenge on the streets of Tel Aviv, Netanya, and Jerusalem," university professor Mariam Saleh, a <u>Hamas</u> candidate, exhorted an all-<u>women Hamas</u> rally in Nablus in an apparent reference to <u>female</u> suicide bombers in those cities.

About 400 <u>women</u>, most of them professionals, attended the rally. Awdeh, the college student who yearns for a role in <u>Hamas</u>'s military wing, marched through the convention hall with a few dozen members of the <u>women</u>'s youth wing.

"If they ask me to be a martyrdom fighter, I will not hesitate. I will respect the call of God," Awdeh said before a more senior *Hamas* member silenced her.

"Sorry for the misunderstanding," said school administrator Hutam Umm Mohammed Salameh, 41. "Some of our young people do not know how to express themselves, and give a distorted view of what we are about."

Some issues unite <u>women</u> candidates across the secular-religious divide. Every party running in the Palestinian elections has made <u>women</u>'s issues a priority on their platform, promising better education and job opportunities for <u>women</u>.

Election rules require about 20 per cent of the candidates for district seats to be <u>women</u>, and the system is designed to give <u>women</u> at least 10 per cent of the 132 seats in the Palestinian legislature.

But the <u>women</u> from Fatah, Third Way, and other secular parties will have to bridge a major cultural divide to cooperate in government and social services with the religious <u>women</u> from <u>Hamas</u>.

"Islam is the solution for all our problems in life," said Saleh, who teaches religion at Al Quds University in Jerusalem.

Feminists ready to die in fight against israelv

With <u>Hamas</u> poised to take a third or more of the seats in the Palestinian legislature, according to polls, Palestinian politicians will have to address the Islamic agenda for <u>women</u>'s rights.

Independent Islamists like Majda Fadda, a member of the Nablus city council, are likely to serve as the intermediaries between the secular and religious *female* factions in the next Palestinian government.

Fadda, a 45-year-old pharmacist who speaks Arabic, Russian, and some English, never joined <u>Hamas</u>, although she works closely with its members and shares many of their views. Palestinians, Fadda said, need better schools, more jobs, and a reliable water supply for starters - issues that can be resolved only if leaders co-operate across party lines and work with Israelis despite <u>Hamas</u>'s official platform, which calls for the destruction of Israel.

Load-Date: January 22, 2006



Palestinian Leader Orders Force to Find Seized Israeli

The New York Times

June 27, 2006 Tuesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 8

Length: 1148 words

Byline: By STEVEN ERLANGER; Ian Fisher contributed reporting from Gaza for this article.

Dateline: JERUSALEM, June 26

Body

The Palestinian Authority president, Mahmoud Abbas, ordered his security services on Monday to find a kidnapped Israeli soldier in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, warned of "comprehensive and ongoing military action" in Gaza by the Israeli military, which massed troops and armor on the border.

Tensions were building over the fate of the soldier, Cpl. Gilad Shalit, 19, who was captured early Sunday morning in a raid by Palestinians into Israel through a long tunnel from Gaza. The groups holding him said that before any information on him would be disclosed, Israel must release all Palestinian <u>women</u> in its jails and all Palestinian prisoners under the age of 18.

Israel rejected the demand from the groups, which include the Popular Resistance Committees; the Army of Islam, a new grouping; and the military wing of *Hamas*, the group that is running the Palestinian government.

There are 95 Palestinian <u>women</u> and 313 Palestinians under 18 in Israeli jails, of a prison population of about 9,000 Palestinians.

The Israeli call for the release of Corporal Shalit, who also holds French citizenship, was echoed by many nations. Egyptian and French diplomats took a leading role in Gaza in trying to persuade the armed groups to let the corporal go.

As those efforts continued, Mr. Olmert spoke in Jerusalem. "Yesterday, I ordered the heads of the army to deploy our forces in order to be ready for comprehensive and ongoing military action, in order to strike at the terror organizations, their commanders and anyone involved in terror," he said. "Let it be clear. We will find them all, wherever they are, and they know it. Let it be clear that no one will be immune."

He said later: "We will react against each and every terrorist and against each and every terror organization wherever it may be. They know we can reach them even when they believe they are safe. We do not act under pressure and therefore we have weighed our steps with patience. But the time leading towards an extensive, stern and harsh operation is growing shorter."

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Mr. Olmert made it clear on Sunday that Israel holds the Palestinian Authority -- from its president, Mr. Abbas, of the opposition Fatah party, to the <u>Hamas</u> prime minister, Ismail Haniya -- responsible for the attack and the fate of Corporal Shalit.

There is a wide expectation among Israeli officials and analysts that Israel will strike back in Gaza, but how hard, and with what means, is likely to depend on the corporal's fate.

Israeli officials said Monday that the seizure of a soldier seemed to be a prime aim of the Palestinian raid, in which two Israeli soldiers were killed, along with two of the attackers. They said the militant groups, led by <u>Hamas</u>, were following the model of the Hezbollah militia in southern Lebanon and would try to bargain to release prisoners.

Corporal Shalit is being held by senior members of <u>Hamas</u>'s military wing, according to a senior military intelligence officer who spoke to the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of the Israeli Parliament. The soldier's whereabouts are not known but he is believed to be "alive and lightly wounded," one of the legislators quoted the officer as saying.

Still, other officials were puzzled that the groups did not release a video or some other proof that the soldier is alive.

The intelligence official also said that Mr. Haniya, the <u>Hamas</u> prime minister, was at odds with the military wing of <u>Hamas</u>, believed by Palestinians and Israelis to be under the command of the exiled <u>Hamas</u> leader, Khaled Meshal, who lives in Damascus, Syria.

Ghazi Hamad, the spokesman for the <u>Hamas</u> government in Gaza, said in an interview that Mr. Haniya and the government were not a party to the raid. "We are not involved in military action," he said. "We are never involved with this. All the Palestinian factions have military wings and political wings. This is because we are still in a liberation stage and a building stage."

But in an interview with The New York Times 10 days ago, Mr. Hamad insisted that <u>Hamas</u> was one organization with a single leadership, making decisions collectively.

On Monday, Mr. Hamad, reflecting the more anxious and responsible tone of the government, said Mr. Haniya was urging the militants "not to harm" the corporal "and to respect him as a prisoner." But Mr. Hamad stopped short of urging the groups to release him.

On Monday, after a briefing by the Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, the American ambassador to Israel, Richard H. Jones, said, "This is a demonstration of the inability of the *Hamas* government so far to control its own ranks, let alone provide for the needs of the Palestinian people, and I think the world should think very hard about how we deal with an entity that can't even control its own house."

Efraim Halevy, the former head of the Israeli spy agency, Mossad, a senior adviser to three prime ministers and former head of the National Security Council, said the Shalit affair posed a serious test to <u>Hamas</u>, whether it could get its own house in order "and act like a responsible government." If so, he said, "it could be a turning point" in the way the world views **Hamas**.

But <u>Hamas</u> officials in power in Gaza, like Mr. Haniya, must show they are in charge of Palestinian affairs, Mr. Halevy said. "If <u>Hamas</u> doesn't control its own forces, it's a problem not only for them but for Israel and all others who deal with them," he said.

The raid and kidnapping were also a deep embarrassment to Mr. Abbas. "If it ends badly, if Abbas is shown to be less and less relevant than before, then he will be the big loser," Mr. Halevy said.

He suggested that Israel felt a deep sense of political urgency. "Israel is prepared to take very serious military action," he said. "The warnings must be taken very seriously. This is not an event to which Israel can turn a blind eye."

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Israeli officials have been confronted with a series of high-profile kidnappings in recent years.

In October 1994, Cpl. Nachshon Wachsman, who held joint American and Israeli citizenship, was kidnapped and held by <u>Hamas</u> gunmen. <u>Hamas</u> demands for the release of its leader, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, and 200 <u>Hamas</u> prisoners were rejected by Yitzhak Rabin, then prime minister. He ordered a rescue attempt, but Corporal Wachsman and the Israeli unit commander were killed.

Israel has at times also made deals and exchanged prisoners. In October 2000, Hezbollah abducted three Israeli soldiers in an effort to free imprisoned leaders. The soldiers were apparently murdered or died during the abduction or soon afterward. The same month, Hezbollah abducted Elhanan Tannenbaum, an Israeli civilian lured to Abu Dhabi by the offer of a lucrative deal.

In exchange for the three dead soldiers and the release of Mr. Tannenbaum, Israel released more than 430 prisoners in January 2004.

http://www.nytimes.com

Graphic

Photos: An undated photograph of Cpl. Gilad Shalit, who was captured Sunday by Palestinian gunmen. (Photo by European Pressphoto Agency)

Israeli tanks and armored personnel carriers near the Israel-Gaza border yesterday. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert warned of military action. (Photo by Yannis Behrakis/Reuters)Map of Gaza Strip and Israel highlighting the approximate site of tunnel: Palestinians who captured Corporal Shalit came through a tunnel.

Load-Date: June 27, 2006



Poll shock has region reeling

THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN

January 28, 2006 Saturday

All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Inquirer; Pg. 20

Length: 1713 words **Byline:** Martin Chulov

Body

MATP

The world waits to see whether electoral success will change <u>Hamas</u>, reports Middle East correspondent Martin Chulov

THE Israeli cabinet wore black armbands on Thursday to mark the darkest period in the modern history of the Jews. It was a salient metaphor for what now looms as a potential runner-up.

Leaders of the Jewish state had gathered at the national Holocaust memorial, Yad Vashem, to reflect on the atrocities of more than 60 years ago. But their closed-door discussions quickly turned to the stunning events of early Thursday when Israel's mortal enemy, the radical <u>Hamas</u> movement, swept to power in a landmark Palestinian poll. As one Israeli minister put it: "This is an unmitigated disaster."

Throughout Gaza and the West Bank, the disappointment of Fatah supporters, whose 40-year haphazard reign as their people's leadership had been crushed, was overwhelmed by the euphoria of <u>Hamas</u> voters. Celebratory pastries were the order of the day. Everyone who stopped at traffic lights, <u>Hamas</u> supporter or otherwise, was offered a custard-filled sweet by a flag-waving functionary.

Not for the first time in the region has the US seriously underestimated the effects of urging democracy on a fragile Arab civilisation. Israel had warned that forcing a poll on an anarchistic Palestine was likely to unleash a revolt. Just as Israelis had done during tough times, the neighbours have also lurched hard to the political margins.

By the time counting was completed late on Thursday, the local Islamic movement Israel fears most had won a stronghold on the footsteps of the state it was set up to destroy. The final divvy-up could see it win as many as 76 of the 132-seat legislature, after cleaning up nearly every one of the 16 constituencies. The landslide victory will give <u>Hamas</u> an absolute majority in the Legislative Council for the next four years.

The peace process yet again seems a pipe dream; the party committed to advancing it has been relegated to the obscurity of opposition. *Hamas* has decided its future lies in ignoring the Jewish state except on the necessities of day-to-day life. Instead, it will look to the Arab world and reach out to Europe. *Hamas* may be a political novice, but its leaders are savvy enough to realise they need the backing of powerful friends to allow them to govern effectively.

Poll shock has region reeling

Gaza <u>Hamas</u> leader Mahmoud Zahar knows he cannot expect support from the US. President GeorgeW. Bush made that clear when he said in the wake of the poll: "You're getting a sense of how I'm going to deal with <u>Hamas</u> if they end up in positions of responsibility. And the answer is: 'Not until you renounce your desire to destroy Israel will we deal with you."

By Friday, Bush appeared to soften his stance, describing the poll as "the power of democracy and a wake-up call to the leadership".

The US had spent close to \$2.6 million in recent weeks to advance the interests of the Palestinian Authority, and by extension Fatah, which it had backed to reactivate the road map for peace sponsored by Washington. Australia too was privately backing Fatah, adopting a "best of a bad lot" approach to the poll. Along with the US, Canberra has listed *Hamas* as a proscribed terrorist organisation and disavows any dealings. Where to from here is a question likely to need years to answer.

If Zahar fears the wrath of the US, he is not showing it. "The F-16 that destroyed my house is American, the Apache helicopter that killed my friends is American and the pressure on Israel to destroy <u>Hamas</u> is largely American too," he says in an interview with Inquirer. "They have to change their policies in the region, not because of <u>Hamas</u> interests, but because of their own interests. They tried to interfere in Egypt, they destroyed the integrity of Lebanon and now they are threatening Syria."

The militant group responsible for a five-year suicide bombing blitz that killed more than 300 Israelis and maimed thousands more has the whip hand in a completely different ballgame -- the internecine world of international politics. If <u>Hamas</u> does decide to come to

the negotiating table, it will bring a reputation for discipline and fiscal restraint, two attributes that will prove handy in the lawless, impoverished territories and which have been acknowledged by the West.

Fatah was turfed out largely because of its inability to deliver on the big picture of peace and the things that matter to ordinary Palestinians; paying workers, protecting families and providing school books and healthcare for their children. It was also an indelible symbol of its founder Yasser Arafat, whose legacy has suffered since his death 18 months ago.

<u>Hamas</u> knows the world wants a peace partner and could be tempted to offer a significant sweetener upfront. Already Zahar has offered to continue a year-long truce if Israel reciprocates -- and has flagged the possibility of an administrative accord to keep the power, water and sewerage working. But when asked whether he would help turn a working relationship into a two-state solution, he curtly replies: "Never."

For now, <u>Hamas</u> appears to have extra short-term priorities in mind -- of the ideological kind. It makes no bones about its determination to introduce Islamic Sharia law into the territories and dispense with the Palestinian rule of law, which was modelled on Western jurisprudence.

The rise of radical Islam in the crucible of the Middle East is unlikely to impress the neighbouring Arab nations of Jordan and Egypt, both of whom regard Islamists as a subversive threat to their statehood. Zahar's support for the Taliban is likely to be just as troubling, although he is at pains to point out that the toppled Afghani militants' persecution of **women** is not an approach he agrees with.

"Who is the bigger danger, the Talibanis or the collaborator [Afghanistan President] Karzai," he asks. "Who is worse, the Talibanis or Bush?"

Inside the territories there is also consternation. Palestinian legislator Hanan Ashrawi, who was re-elected on a moderate platform says: "*Hamas* think they can reformulate Palestinian society. We have to tell them it is not them who gets to reshape society, it is the other way around."

One day before the ballot, Fatah information minister Nabil Sha'ath was confidently predicting voters had swung back his party's way and would return Fatah to government. From his office in downtown Gaza, he warned that to ignore Israel would imperil the welfare of the 1.6 Palestinians. "Every Palestinian knows that every one of these

Poll shock has region reeling

items is entangled completely with Israeli policies. If you are going to have a government which thinks the way forward is to look the other way, then this is a disaster."

His warning has since taken on fresh impetus. "It could seriously deepen the occupation," he said. "They could decide to finish the wall [Israel is building] to ghettoise every settlement and close down Gaza."

A troubled Israel was yesterday still calibrating its response to what many believe is the biggest threat the Jewish state has faced. Mein Indor, chairman of the Bereaved Families Association, which supports dozens of victims of <u>Hamas</u> bombers, said: "How foolish was the decision to give [the Palestinians] self-rule, which is allowing more territories to turn into terror centres. Whoever continues this will eventually bring Hezbollah and al-Qa'ida here as well."

With Ariel Sharon still lying comatose, Israelis have no strongman to look to for comfort. But they have one waiting on the sidelines, in the form of the hard right Likud party leader Benjamin Netanyahu. Until this week, Likud was lagging badly in the polls leading up to the March 28 elections, with the centrist party Kadima set up by Sharon before his incapacitation, set to dominate.

The shifting political sands of Middle Eastern politics could now well move Netanyahu's way as confused Israelis seek refuge behind a figure they know. A Netanyahu-elected administration could very likely move to take unilateral steps to define Israel's final borders.

Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had attempted to warn Palestinians on the eve of the poll not to unleash <u>Hamas</u> and had offered a timely inducement of further withdrawals from the West Bank. But by then voters' minds were made up. <u>Hamas</u> had spent time with them in the mosques, had delivered on the mandates it won in council elections last year and had demonstrated it could act in the domestic interests of its constituents.

There is a clear split among the Israeli leadership and intelligensia about what to take away from the poll. "The Palestinian people should have their own state, but I don't see it happening in my generation," political scientist Avraham Diskin from the Hebrew University says. "I'm pessimistic today. I think we're going to see a lot of bloodshed among the Palestinians and against us."

Other analysts want to judge <u>Hamas</u> by deeds instead of words. For now it remains committed to its 1987 mandate that calls for Israel's destruction and the liberation of all of greater Palestine. But there is a view among some that the risk of forgoing a future will be enough for <u>Hamas</u> to renounce its past.

There is also the unknown of how the two other main Palestinian militant groups will take the emergence of their sometime rival. Disputes in the occupied territories have a history of being sorted out through bloodshed.

In what it says is a sign of goodwill, <u>Hamas</u> points to the fact it has not sent a suicide bomber to Israel since August 2004. That is of little comfort to Israel, where the wounds of a brutal five-year bombing blitz run deep. <u>Hamas</u> officials know the images of slaughtered <u>women</u> and children in civilian buses earned deep ire and distrust from the international community. They now privately suggest the terrifying days of commuter carnage are no longer a means to an end.

<u>Hamas</u> officials have another, broader, policy change they are keeping to themselves, for now. The <u>Hamas</u> leadership has scrutinised the synergy between the Irish Republican Army and its now-legitimised political wing Sinn Fein for parallels with its own conflict. The political emergence of the region's most feared Islamic group may yet take on characteristics of the decades-long Catholic nationalist struggle that ended last year in peace.

Load-Date: January 31, 2006



Hope? Sorry it's just a mug's game

Daily Mail (London)

June 29, 2006 Thursday

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Section: ED 1ST; Pg. 12

Length: 1147 words **Byline:** ANN LESLIE

Body

THE young Israeli mother in her barricaded home was in despair: 'I've watched my five-year-old suddenly, for no apparent reason, collapse onto the pavement, sobbing in panic: "I don't want to be killed!"' Rafi Beigel, a teacher, lives in the Israeli settlement of Efrat and used to both like and trust the Palestinians from nearby villages who came to work there. And then one 'pleasant' fellow blew himself up in Efrat's supermarket.

Nine of her colleagues have also been killed by suicide bombers in nearby Jerusalem.

And now this once-liberal, British-born Israeli, told me: 'I will never, ever trust a Palestinian again.' Dr Rasmiyah Hanoun, a Palestinian professor, used to liaise with Israeli academics at Haifa University and take groups of her Palestinian students with her on visits. She was therefore not 'anti-Israeli'.

But all that is over now. She can no longer commute to her university in Nablus: 'I can't go anywhere because of the new so-called Israeli "security" roads, the barbed wire, the checkpoints, the Army patrols. I am living in a prison.' Moreover, the Israelis have taken over the family's land, which they had farmed for generations, in order to build 'the security fence' snaking into Palestinian territory.

These two Israeli and Palestinian <u>women</u> highly educated, middle- class, well-travelled, sophisticated should have had much in common. But now the only thing they have in common is a loathing and distrust for each other.

I never come back from Israel and the Palestinian areas without feeling utterly depressed.

And that depression returned once again yesterday when watching the television pictures of Israeli fighter planes swooping over Gaza, bombing Palestinian bridges and a major power station, in order to force the Palestinian militants to return a kidnapped Israeli soldier.

I had interviewed these <u>women</u> before the Islamist terror group <u>Hamas</u> was democratically voted into power in January, thus ousting the corrupt, venal and incompetent secular Fatah party which had hitherto run the Palestinian Authority.

But why on earth did the Palestinians who, according to polls, grudgingly support the two-state solution of Israel and a separate Palestinian state existing side-by-side, then vote for a party which rejects the whole idea and wants to destroy Israel in its entirety?

Soon after the election results came in, I rang a Palestinian friend in East Jerusalem.

He admitted he'd voted for <u>Hamas</u> 'just to give Fatah a good kick. They stole the aid money which kept Palestinians afloat, and did nothing for their people but steal from them and oppress them. I never expected this result I just thought a strong showing by <u>Hamas</u> would make Fatah clean up its act.'

And whose aid money kept the Palestinains afloat? Not money from the oil-rich Arab states. The two biggest donors were the Western taxpayers of the EU and the allegedly 'anti-Palestinian' U.S.

Without that money, the Palestinian Authority cannot pay the wages of its doctors, nurses, teachers, security services and what remains of the Palestinian economy would collapse.

But <u>Hamas</u> is considered, rightly, a terrorist organisation by both the EU and the Americans who could not therefore agree to prop up a government which refuses to acknowledge the right of Israel to exist and, above all, refuses to give up violence.

And <u>Hamas</u>, at first, was adamant. It would never recognise Israel, negotiate with it, or renounce violence. It would get its money from their Arab and Iranian 'brothers'. 'But the vast amounts needed to plug the hole left by the withdrawal of EU and American funds were not forthcoming. <u>Hamas</u> officials therefore resorted to bringing in bank notes in suitcases.

As one Arab commentator told me recently in oil-and-gas rich Qatar: 'Arab governments and businesses are wary of financing a " terrorist" organisation because there could be sanctions against their banks. Besides, they want <u>Hamas</u> to recognise the existence of Israel in a two-state solution. It is the only answer.' Only two Middle East states openly support <u>Hamas</u> Syria and Iran (which provides military training and funding for <u>Hamas</u> terrorists). But Palestinians who, on the whole, are moderate Muslims (and include Christians and secularists), do not fancy the idea of having an Iranian-style theocracy established on their territory.

Perhaps the one ray of hope in this whole dismal story is that the new <u>Hamas</u> government has been forced to make a U-turn and accept a peace plan, concocted in Israeli prisons by Palestinian militants from all terrorist factions.

This peace plan does not formally call for the acceptance of a two-state solution but implies as such when it talks of an independent state on all territories occupied by the Israelis in 1967.

If Palestinians honour and respect any group (other than 'martyrs'), it is Palestinian 'freedom fighters' in Israeli jails. If these prisoners, in effect, call for a two-state solution, then they are listened to.

<u>Hamas</u> knows that if the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, went in for his threatened referendum over whether or not his people wanted a two-state solution, <u>Hamas</u> would lose.

The Israelis, of course, do not trust <u>Hamas</u> perhaps rightly. After all, even after Israel vacated Gaza, home-made Qassam rockets continue to be fired into Israel. And the Prisoners' Plan does not give the Israelis what they want.

But <u>Hamas</u>, faced with the reality of government and their own voters' desire for a two-state solution, will gradually be forced to modify their stance.

There are signs already that in Gaza, the most radical Palestinian area, many ordinary people want the young Israeli soldier captured during a Palestinian raid to be released.

According to one, 44-year-old Nafez Abu Raba: 'Things were just beginning to improve slightly. There was a bit more money coming in. Fatah and <u>Hamas</u> were on the verge of agreement. And now this. They will have to give the Israeli back, so they should do it quickly and not harm him.' The enduring tragedy of Israel/Palestine is that as soon as 'things are just beginning to improve slightly', something happens which instantly turns the clock back to murder and mayhem.

Indeed, there are those who suspect that <u>Hamas</u>'s politicians have lost control of their armed wing the wing which wants no compromise whatever with Israel. The terrorists who dug a tunnel into Israeli territory, killed two Israeli soldiers, captured a third and have captured two civilians included people from <u>Hamas</u>.

Hope? Sorry it's just a mug's game

When I once remarked to an Israeli diplomat that I saw hope in one of the myriad peace plans that have come and gone over the years, he sighed: 'I'm afraid, Ann, indulging in hope in this part of the world is a mug's game. You always have your hopes dashed as we have all learned to our cost.' Perhaps it's too soon to hope that the Israeli Mrs Beigel and the Palestinian Dr Hanoun will ever be able to become friends.

Graphic

INVASION FORCE: AN ISRAELI TANK HEADS FOR THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE GAZA STRIP YESTERDAY

Load-Date: June 29, 2006



Women of Gaza fear for their freedoms under new religious regime

The Independent (London)
January 30, 2006 Monday
First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 29

Length: 605 words

Byline: By Donald Macintyre

Body

Naila Ayesh, a secular married woman who frequently goes about Gaza in Western clothes, has already noticed a subtle change since *Hamas*'s election victory last Wednesday.

"You will hear even kids saying to you, 'your head isn't covered now but it will be. You can drive now but you won't be able to later." She relates, too, how a woman friend described telling a neighbour that her child attended Gaza City's American school. "What, you send her to the crusader school?" the shocked neighbour replied. "Why don't you send her to the Sheikh Ahmed Yassin school [named after the late <u>Hamas</u> founder] where she can learn languages as well as the Koran?" Ms Ayesh added: "All this happened before but it's been happening more since the election."

Ms Ayesh is a staunch Palestinian nationalist - both she and her husband have served severe terms in Israeli prisons for their politics. But her worries about the rippling internal effects of *Hamas*'s victory go further than these relatively trivial omens.

For Ms Ayesh runs the <u>Women</u>'s Affairs Centre, a brave oasis of progressive feminism in fiercely conservative Gaza. The Islamic faction and its allies in the mosques do not warm to many of its causes' the centre has campaigned for a shelter for battered <u>women</u> here, but its campaign has been in vain because of fears that a shelter would encourage <u>women</u> to leave their husbands.

Its work ranges from an experimental programme introducing Islamic University <u>women</u> students to the law, human rights and job opportunities, to campaigning for a family law which would protect <u>women</u> from abuse and safeguard their custody rights after divorce. It fears this would not be a priority for <u>Hamas</u>. "I am not worried about the laws already in place because that requires a two-thirds majority, but I am worried about the legislation which has not yet gone through," Ms Ayesh says.

<u>Hamas</u> is far from being the Taliban. It strongly supports <u>women</u>'s education, is generally opposed to "honour killing", and some of its candidates supported <u>women</u>'s shelters. Its spokesmen have also been at pains to stress that it does not intend in the foreseeable future to impose its religious ideology - including its long-term commitment to sharia (Islamic law) - on the parliament.

But Ms Ayesh is concerned that the more congenial public message sometimes conflicts with the deeply held belief of its new PLC members. For example, she notes that Mariam Farhat, the "Mother of Martyrs" whose election video showed her helping her own 17-year-old son to prepare explosives which killed him and five Israelis, said in an interview that her first parliamentary campaign would be for a law requiring all Palestinian <u>women</u> to wear the hejab. To Ms Ayesh, Mrs Farhat's later disavowal of the interview was unconvincing. But, in any case, she expects the change to be cultural and gradual rather than leg-islative. "<u>Hamas</u> will not do this directly butthey will use other respected figures, for example in the mosques."

Ms Ayesh is the first to acknowledge that the huge vote for <u>Hamas</u> reflected a deep desire to "punish" Fatah for its failures over the past decade. And while she has heard accusations that <u>Hamas</u> deployed 200-shekel enticements to more ill-informed voters to back its candidates in what was in fact an admirably secret ballot, she says that there are at least as many reports of Fatah doingthe same. But she also said that <u>women</u> she encountered in her work reported another potent message on the doorsteps from <u>Hamas</u> campaigners, who were often themselves <u>women</u>. "The <u>women</u> said they were told, 'if you do not vote <u>Hamas</u>, God will punish you at the end'."

Graphic

Women in Gaza fear a gradual shift to a less liberal culture

Load-Date: January 30, 2006



Bombing kills 9 in Tel Aviv

The Toronto Star

April 18, 2006 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A06

Length: 689 words

Byline: Laurie Copans, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dateline: TEL AVIV, Israel

Body

A suicide bombing at a crowded restaurant during Passover killed nine people and drew a divided response from the Palestinian Authority - a sharp departure from previous governments' immediate condemnations of such attacks.

The bombing was the first inside Israel since the <u>Hamas</u> cabinet took office 21/2 weeks ago.

<u>Hamas</u> defended yesterday's attack - claimed by a separate Islamic militant group - as a legitimate response to Israeli "aggression."

"We think that this operation ... is a direct result of the policy of the occupation and the brutal aggression and siege committed against our people," said Khaled Abu Helal, spokesman for the *Hamas*-led interior ministry.

But moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, of the rival Fatah party, condemned the bombing and said he ordered Palestinian security forces to prevent future attacks.

Abbas is in a power struggle with *Hamas*, and it remains unclear who is ultimately in charge of the security forces.

Israel said it held <u>Hamas</u> responsible for the attack in Tel Aviv, even though Islamic Jihad, a separate group with close ties to Iran, claimed responsibility.

"<u>Hamas</u>'s constant preaching for the destruction of Israel serves as a catalyst for these attacks," said David Baker, an Israeli government spokesman.

<u>Hamas</u>, responsible for dozens of suicide bombings in recent years, has largely observed a 16-month truce with Israel. But yesterday's bloodshed and the group's hardline stance could set the stage for harsh Israeli reprisals and endanger <u>Hamas</u>'s efforts to raise money for the bankrupt Palestinian treasury.

The U.S., Canada and European Union cut off aid to the Palestinian government because <u>Hamas</u> refused to renounce violence and recognize Israel's right to exist. Israel also stopped transferring tax dollars it collects on the Palestinians' behalf.

<u>Hamas</u>, which is two weeks late paying salaries for 140,000 workers, said it would turn to Muslim countries to make up the shortfall. Iran and Qatar each pledged \$50 million (U.S.) to the Palestinian Authority.

Bombing kills 9 in Tel Aviv

The bomb attack took place just two hours before Israel's newly elected parliament was sworn into office, and Prime Minister-designate Ehud Olmert said Israel would react with appropriate means.

In an initial response, Israeli aircraft attacked an empty metal workshop in Gaza City early today, causing no injuries. The army said the workshop was used by the Popular Resistance Committee's militant group to manufacture homemade rockets to launch at Israel.

The suicide bombing took place about 1: 40 p.m. when the attacker, carrying a bag stuffed with explosives, approached The Mayor's Falafel near Tel Aviv's central bus station. The restaurant, which had been the target of a January bombing, was packed with Israelis on vacation during the weeklong Passover holiday.

A guard outside was checking the bomber's bag when the device exploded, police and witnesses said.

The bomb, laced with nails and other projectiles, shattered car windshields, smashed windows and blew away the restaurant's sign. Blood splattered the ground. Police said the guard's body was torn in half.

Police said nine civilians and the bomber were killed and dozens were wounded. The attack was the deadliest since a double suicide bombing on two buses in the southern city of Beersheba killed 16 on Aug. 31, 2004.

Islamic Jihad identified the bomber as Samer Hammad, 21, from a village outside the West Bank town of Jenin.

In a video released by the group, Hammad said the bombing was dedicated to the thousands of Palestinians in Israeli jails. "There are many other bombers on the way," he said.

The EU, Canada and Russia condemned the bombing. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan told the Palestinian government "to take a clear public stand" against such acts, and the United States warned of grave consequences for the <u>Hamas</u>-led government.

The attack came amid a sharp increase in fighting between Israel and the Palestinians across the Gaza border. Militants have fired homemade rockets at Israel, and Israel has responded with artillery. A 17-year-old Palestinian in northern Gaza was killed yesterday in the shelling, Palestinian officials said.

Graphic

RAANAN COHEN GETTY IMAGESnoam wind reuters Wounded Israelis receive first aid after a suicide attack yesterday at a restaurant near Tel Aviv's central bus station. Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility, but an Israeli spokesman called *Hamas* the "catalyst." REUTERS PHOTO A distraught man, left, cries over the body of a *female* victim moments after yesterday's suicide bombing in Tel Aviv. Islamic Jihad identified the bomber as 21-year-old Samer Hammad, right.REUTERS PHOTO A distraught man, left, cries over the body of a *female* victim moments after yesterday's suicide bombing in Tel Aviv. Islamic Jihad identified the bomber as 21-year-old Samer Hammad, right.

Load-Date: April 18, 2006



III-Timed Excuses

New York Sun (Archive) April 18, 2006 Tuesday

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Section: EDITORIAL & OPINION; Pg. 10

Length: 786 words

Body

Talk about timing. The suicide bombing that killed nine Israelis in an attack on a Tel Aviv felafel restaurant was preceded only a day by a full-page advertisement that was rolled out in the New York Times, claiming "*Hamas* has held a unilateral ceasefire for a year, while Israel has ignored it and continues its attacks." The "ceasefire" must come as news to the families of the nine killed and nearly 70 wounded, as well as to those who read on the Web site of the Jerusalem Post that this particular felafel restaurant "was hit in a similar suicide attack three months ago, injuring 20 people." And the "ceasefire" claim could have been checked by the Times quality control people with a few keystrokes.

According to Israel's Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, seven suicide bombing attacks were made in 2005. They killed 23 persons and injured 160. It reports that another 15 suicide attacks were thwarted in progress. The Israeli foreign ministry says, "*Hamas* was responsible for the suicide bombing at the Beersheba bus station on 28 August 2005 in which two security guards were seriously wounded. In September 2005, *Hamas* terrorists abducted and murdered Jerusalem businessman Sasson Nuriel." Lest it be said that the other suicide bombings took place over the objections of *Hamas*, a spokesman for the *Hamas*-led Palestinian Authority Interior Ministry, Khaled Abu Helal, yesterday blamed Israel for the terrorist attack, saying, "We think that this operation ... is a direct result of the policy of the occupation and the brutal aggression and siege committed against our people."

The suicide bomber was sent by Islamic Jihad, the same terrorist organization that Sami al-Arian just confessed to conspiring to help. Al-Arian's confession was accepted by the federal judge in the case yesterday. The suicide bombing came the same day that the New York Post published Robert Novak sharply criticizing Israel for restricting movement of Arabs into Israel from the West Bank. Not a peep out of Mr. Novak in respect of Egypt's Easter-time oppression of its Christians, known as Copts, which has been frontpage news in The New York Sun.

<u>Hamas</u>'s line, that Israel is to blame for the suicide bombers killing Israeli civilians, is gaining ground in elite intellectual circles. Foreign Affairs, the journal of the Council on Foreign Relations, went so far as to bring in an Israeli leftist, Tom Segev, to argue that Israeli settlements are to blame. Yale University is trying to hire the anti-Israel professor Juan Cole, according to Mitch Webber and Eliana Johnson, writing on the adjacent page. Princeton is poised to bring aboard the most famous of Columbia's anti-Israel professors, Rashid Khalidi, and Harvard's Kennedy School is harboring as its academic dean Stephen Walt, another anti-Israel academic. Mr. Walt and his coauthor are featured on the Web site of the organization that ran the ad in the Times touting the falsities of *Hamas*.

Anyone with doubts about <u>Hamas</u>'s intentions can consult its charter, which contains such gems as "Israel will rise and will remain erect until Islam eliminates it as it had eliminated its predecessors." Or that "enemies... used the money to establish clandestine organizations which are spreading around the world, in order to destroy societies

III-Timed Excuses

and carry out Zionist interests. Such organizations are: the Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, B'nai B'rith and the like. All of them are destructive spying organizations...Their scheme has been laid out in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion." Or they can consult the words of one of <u>Hamas</u>'s financial backers, President Ahmadinejad of Iran, who has repeatedly vowed to wipe Israel off the map. Iran was just voted vice chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, Fox News's Brit Hume reported last night.

The Times ad claims "Many Americans do not understand that <u>Hamas</u> is a typical anti-colonial insurgency responding to an Israeli occupation and what amounts to government terror against Palestinian civilians. It is not at all related to al-Qa'ida or 9/11." In fact <u>Hamas</u> represents colonialism by Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank and Gaza. Its ideology reeks of Al Qaeda and bin Laden. Americans don't need the New York Times and <u>Hamas</u> to tell them what they don't understand. They know that the victims slain yesterday at a felafel restaurant in Tel Aviv are no different from those slain on September 11, 2001, at the World Trade Center. They are casualties in a war being levied by an enemy that aims to reestablish the caliphate and enforce Islamic law worldwide, an enemy that kills civilian <u>women</u> and children while Western sympathizers make ill-timed excuses.

Load-Date: April 18, 2006



Prospects for peace falter amid Palestinian disarray

The International Herald Tribune January 9, 2006 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 963 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

The sudden removal of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon from the political scene has thrown the future of any peace process with the Palestinians into question.

But the Palestinian Authority itself is in such disarray that it may be incapable of negotiating on terms any Israeli leader could accept. There is spreading chaos, a sense of deterioration and growing concern among both Palestinians and Israelis that the Palestinian Authority, which is nearly bankrupt and facing a huge budget deficit, may look like a failed state even before it becomes one.

Life for ordinary Palestinians is becoming harder, with less security and optimism than a year ago. The Israelis pulled out of Gaza a thrilling moment for many Palestinians but the territory has become practically lawless, not a model for a future state, and Palestinian voters seem set to punish their rulers, the divided Fatah movement that monopolizes the Palestinian Authority.

Palestinians are campaigning for legislative elections on Jan. 25 that are expected to bring the radical Islamic group *Hamas*, dedicated to a continuing armed struggle against Israeli occupation, into a significant share of power in the authority.

"All the chaos is coming from inside the Palestinian Authority and Fatah," said Khaled Duzdar, a Palestinian analyst at the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information. "Fatah almost seems to be working on behalf of <u>Hamas</u>. This is the lowest the Palestinian Authority has reached."

The splitting of Fatah, the main Palestinian faction, and the participation of <u>Hamas</u> and its militants in the authority are serious questions that any new Israeli leader will have to confront right away.

By itself, the victory of <u>Hamas</u> or its achievement of a blocking minority within the authority could be enough to put an end to the long-moribund road map to peace drafted and endorsed by the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations, as well as by the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Hamas is committed to keeping its armed wing and its weapons, and it says it is running "to protect the resistance."

One of the road map's first requirements is that the authority disarm all militants, including <u>Hamas</u>, Islamic Jihad and Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades, which is affiliated with Fatah itself.

Prospects for peace falter amid Palestinian disarray

The Palestinian Authority's president, Mahmoud Abbas, has promised Israel and the United States to disarm the militants after the elections, but all the U.S. and Israeli policy makers and intelligence analysts interviewed over the past two months say they believe that Abbas will be unable to do so. Most think he is unlikely even to try.

So, progress toward peace seems unlikely. That can only add to the Israeli inclination to sit tight and manage the current situation while continuing unilateral disengagement from the Palestinians, like the construction of the separation barrier.

"We have never been through such a period of anarchy in the Palestinian Authority," said a senior Israeli intelligence officer, who would not be identified because of the nature of his work. "As far as security is concerned, the authority is nominal anyone in the territories does what they please."

In Gaza City recently, Ahmad el-Balawi, 20, said he had turned to <u>Hamas</u> from Fatah because of the corruption of the authority, the lack of jobs and the deterioration of ordinary life.

"We are Muslims, and we need change," he said at his father's toy shop, which was festooned with plastic guns. "We've had experience with Fatah, unfortunately."

Bashir el-Balawi, 46, his father, said: "The majority of them are <u>Hamas</u> now. It's because of the current situation, with no jobs and no safety and the corruption."

Asked why he sells so many toy rifles, he threw up his hands. "The kids have fallen in love with weapons; it's just weapons they want, no other toys. They think they will fight against Israel."

Does that depress him?

"Not really," he said. "They want to feel powerful and free."

Major General Aharon Zeevi-Farkash, the departing director of Israeli military intelligence, was blunt: "We are facing a real revolution in the Palestinian Authority."

The clash of generations the older group like Abbas, who went into exile with Yasser Arafat; the middle generation like Mahmoud Dahlan and Marwan Barghouti, who grew up under occupation; and the young generation of gunmen empowered by five years of armed conflict is pulling Fatah apart, he said.

Fatah's divisions are accelerated by a reputation for corruption, arrogance and cronyism, and an inability to provide law and order, despite 70,000 men listed as part of the official Palestinian security services.

This has been fertile ground for <u>Hamas</u>, which is running under the slogan "Change and Reform." <u>Hamas</u> has also set forth a list of candidates who are largely well-educated and respected in their communities, and includes at least six <u>women</u>.

Khalil Shikaki, director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, the most respected polling agency in the territories, said, "There is tremendous fragmentation evident in Fatah, with Fatah candidates competing with each other and the Fatah leadership impotent in stopping it."

<u>Hamas</u>, he said, "wants to win and is running like it wants to win," partly to resolve an old battle with the secular Fatah, partly "as a defeat for the accommodationists who want peace with Israel and follow the American lead, and partly as a victory for Islam everywhere."

Hamas wants to respond to demands for reform in the Palestinian Authority, Shikaki said.

"Hamas wants to rise to the challenge; they've built a tremendous constituency and need to deliver," he said.

But on the issue of Israel, neither Shikaki nor Duzdar, the Palestinian analyst, said he thought <u>Hamas</u> would change its spots.

Load-Date: January 9, 2006



Peace prospects falter amid Palestinian chaos

The International Herald Tribune January 9, 2006 Monday

Copyright 2006 International Herald Tribune All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 954 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger **Dateline:** JERUSALEM

Body

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There is spreading chaos, a sense of deterioration and growing concern among both Palestinians and Israelis that the Palestinian Authority, which is nearly bankrupt and facing a huge budget deficit, may look like a failed state even before it becomes one.

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Load-Date: January 9, 2006



Abbas orders Israeli soldier found; Kidnappers demand release of prisoners

The International Herald Tribune
June 27, 2006 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 910 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Ian Fisher contributed reporting for this article from Gaza.

*

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, ordered his security services on Monday to find a kidnapped Israeli soldier in the Gaza Strip as the Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, warned of a "comprehensive and ongoing military action" in Gaza by the Israeli military, which continued to mass troops and armor on the border with the territory.

As tensions built over the fate of the soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit, 19, captured early Sunday morning in a raid by Palestinians into Israel through a long tunnel from Gaza, the groups holding him issued a statement demanding the release of all Palestinian prisoners who are **women** or under the age of 18 before revealing information about him.

Israeli officials immediately rejected the demand from the groups, which include the Popular Resistance Committees; the Army of Islam, a new grouping; and the military wing of <u>Hamas</u>, which is running the Palestinian government.

Olmert said Monday evening: "This is not a matter of negotiations; this is not a matter of bargaining."

The justice minister, Haim Ramon, said: "We have no intention of negotiating with <u>Hamas</u>. We demand that the Palestinian Authority return the kidnapped soldier so we do not have to take very harsh and painful measures."

There are about 95 Palestinian <u>women</u> and 313 Palestinians aged under 18 in Israeli jails, out of a prison population of some 9,000 Palestinians.

As pressure built on Olmert to retaliate, the Israeli call for the release of Shalit, who also holds French citizenship, was echoed by Western nations. Egyptian and French diplomats took a leading role in Gaza trying to convince the armed groups to let the corporal go.

Olmert said in Jerusalem: "Yesterday, I ordered the heads of the army to deploy our forces in order to be ready for comprehensive and ongoing military action, in order to strike at the terror organizations, their commanders and anyone involved in terror," Olmert said. "Let it be clear we will find them all, wherever they are, and they know it. Let it be clear that no one will be immune."

Abbas orders Israeli soldier found Kidnappers demand release of prisoners

Olmert made it clear on Sunday that Israel holds the Palestinian Authority from its president, Abbas, to the <u>Hamas</u> prime minister, Ismail Haniya responsible for the attack and the fate of Shalit. There is a wide expectation among Israeli officials and analysts that Israel will strike back in Gaza but how hard, and with what means, is likely to depend on the fate of Shalit.

Israeli officials said Monday that the seizure of a soldier appeared to be a prime aim of the Palestinian raid, in which two Israeli soldiers and two attackers were killed. They said that the militant groups, led by *Hamas*, were following the model of the Hezbollah militia in southern Lebanon and would try to bargain for the release of prisoners.

Shalit is being held by senior members of <u>Hamas</u>'s military wing, according to a senior military intelligence officer who spoke to the foreign affairs and defense committee of the Israeli Parliament. The officer said that the soldier's whereabouts were not known but that he was believed to be "alive and lightly wounded."

Still, officials were puzzled that the groups did not release a video or some other proof that the soldier was alive.

The intelligence official also said that Haniya is at odds with the military wing of <u>Hamas</u>, which is believed by both Palestinians and Israelis to be under the command of the exiled <u>Hamas</u> leader, Khaled Meshal, who lives in Damascus.

Ghazi Hamad, spokesman for the <u>Hamas</u> government in Gaza, said in an interview that Haniya and the government were not a party to the raid.

"We are not involved in military action," he said. "We are never involved with this. All the Palestinian factions have military wings and political wings. This is because we are still in a liberation stage and a building stage."

But in an interview with The Times 10 days ago, Hamad insisted that <u>Hamas</u> was one organization with a single leadership and made decisions collectively.

On Monday, Hamad, reflecting the more anxious and responsible tone of the government, said Haniya was urging the militants "not to harm" the corporal "and to respect him as a prisoner." But Hamad stopped short of urging the groups to release their prisoner.

On Monday, after a briefing by the Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Richard Jones, said: "This is a demonstration of the inability of the <u>Hamas</u> government so far to control its own ranks, let alone provide for the needs of the Palestinian people, and I think the world should think very hard about how we deal with an entity that can't even control its own house."

Efraim Halevy, former head of the Israeli spy agency, Mossad, a senior adviser to three prime ministers and former head of the National Security Council, said that the Shalit affair posed a serious test to <u>Hamas</u>, whether it could get its own house in order "and act like a responsible government." If so, he said, "it could be a turning point" in the way the world views <u>Hamas</u>.

But <u>Hamas</u> leaders in Gaza, like Haniya, "who appear to have been caught unaware," had to show that they were in charge of Palestinian affairs, not those who are in exile, like Meshal, Halevy said.

The raid and kidnapping were also a deep embarrassment to Abbas. "If it ends badly, if Abbas is shown to be less and less relevant then before, then he will be the big loser," Halevy said.

Load-Date: June 27, 2006



Adams' Mideast visit 'a PR stunt'

Belfast News Letter (Northern Ireland)
September 7, 2006 Thursday
Ulster Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 8 Length: 330 words

Byline: BY SIMON HUNTER, s.hunter@newsletter.co.uk

Body

SINN Fein leader Gerry Adams has come under fire from unionists for meeting Arab terrorists on his visit to the Middle East.

Yesterday, he laid a wreath at the tomb of former Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in the West Bank town of Ram- allah.

But his trip has been called a "cynical PR stunt" by Ulster Unionist MEP Jim Nicholson.

His criticism came on the same day the Israeli government refused to talk to Mr Adams because he met *Hamas*, a group that regularly carries out suicide bomb attacks against Israeli civilians and security forces.

<u>Hamas</u> is banned by the European Union and the USA despite forming the current Palestinian administration, and aid to the area was frozen earlier this year because the organisation refused to renounce violence and recognise Israel.

Mr Adams has said he was invited to the region by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to discuss the ongoing crisis in the Middle East, but Mr Abbas has been called away unexpectedly.

Mr Nicholson said he was "really delighted" the Israeli government refused to meet Mr Adams, adding that the trip was a ploy ahead of the Irish elections next year.

He said: "The reality is that <u>Hamas</u> are a terrorist organisation banned in both the EU and the United States and Mr Adams has once again sought to associate himself with this terrorist organisation and the wider axis of international terrorism.

"Let's not forget that <u>Hamas</u> aren't known primarily for their politics but for their savage suicide bombers who have killed so many innocent Israeli children, **women** and men over the years."

Mr Nicholson has written to Mitchell Reiss, President Bush's special envoy to Northern Ireland, saying Mr Adams' trip to meet *Hamas* should impact on Sinn Fein being allowed to carry out fundraising activities in the US.

"Gerry Adams's visit to meet <u>Hamas</u> should serve as a sobering reminder to the American administration that Sinn Fein should not be allowed to resume their fundraising activities in the United States," he said.

Load-Date: September 11, 2006



Israel readies to retaliate in Gaza: 'No immunity,' for soldier's captors, Olmert vows

Ottawa Citizen

June 27, 2006 Tuesday

EARLY Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A1

Length: 945 words

Byline: Laura King, The Los Angeles Times; with files from Citizen News Services

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM - With troops poised to invade Gaza, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert yesterday vowed a "broad and ongoing" military offensive as he ruled out bargaining with the captors of an Israeli soldier taken a day earlier in a deadly raid by Palestinian militants.

The incident has threatened to ignite a major conflagration between Israel and <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamist group that took power three months ago in the Palestinian territories.

A consortium of <u>Hamas</u>-linked Palestinian groups claiming to hold Cpl. Gilad Shalit, 19, demanded the release of Palestinian <u>female</u> and underage prisoners held in Israeli jails in exchange for information that could lead to his release.

Cpl. Shalit, a tank gunner, was seized in a brazen cross-border raid before dawn Sunday that left two Israeli soldiers dead and seven wounded.

Two Palestinian attackers were also killed in the firefight, which came after militants crossed under the frontier through a tunnel that Israeli officials said probably took months to dig.

Israel ruled out any prisoner swap and demanded Cpl. Shalit's immediate and unconditional release.

Israeli officials again hinted at the possibility of measures, including the assassination of <u>Hamas</u>'s political leaders or a wide-ranging military offensive in Gaza, if any harm comes to the young soldier.

No Israeli soldier has been taken prisoner by Palestinian militants for 12 years, and the drama has captivated Israelis.

Calling the abduction part of a "murderous, hateful, fanatical Islamic extremist desire to destroy the state of Israel," Mr. Olmert reiterated that Israel holds the Palestinian leadership, not only the <u>Hamas</u>-led government but also moderate Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas, responsible for the soldier's safety.

The prime minister's senior security advisers set a deadline of today for Cpl. Shalit's release, and the prime minister said Israel was prepared to launch a crushing strike if the demand is not met.

Israel readies to retaliate in Gaza: 'No immunity,' for soldier's captors, Olmert vows

"I gave the order to our commanders to ready our forces for a broad and ongoing military operation to strike the terrorist leaders and everyone else involved," the Israeli leader told a conference in Jerusalem.

Mr. Olmert also made a thinly veiled threat to strike directly at the elected leaders of the <u>Hamas</u> government, a step that Israeli commentators acknowledged could have far-reaching diplomatic and military repercussions.

"Let it be clear: We will reach anyone and everyone, wherever they are hiding, and they know it," Mr. Olmert said. "There will not be immunity for anyone."

Military officials said elite brigades and armoured forces, backed by tanks, were sent to the frontier, where thousands of soldiers already are deployed.

With Israeli intelligence showing that Cpl. Shalit was not seriously wounded, defence officials said there were no immediate plans for a massive ground incursion. Although Israel frequently carries out air raids in Gaza, ground troops have entered the area only three times -- all briefly -- since last year's pullout.

However, the officials said a limited operation could begin in the coming days. Such operations could include a rescue attempt, or a limited mission meant to pressure <u>Hamas</u> to free the soldier. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Huge photographs of Cpl. Shalit -- gangling, dark-haired and bespectacled -- covered the front pages of Israeli newspapers. Headlines referred to him by his first name only. His family appealed to his captors not to harm him.

"Those who are holding him also have families and children, and they know what we are feeling right now," Cpl. Shalit's father, Noam, told reporters.

"I hope they are treating him reasonably, and remembering that he is a human being."

Then the father had a message for his son. "If he hears us, we are very anxious and love him. We are hoping and waiting for him to come back home," Mr. Shalit said.

"He should be strong; he should try to survive these difficult moments. ... What we have left is hope."

Cpl. Shalit holds dual French and Israeli nationality, and French diplomats, without providing details, confirmed their involvement in efforts to free him.

Mediators from Egypt, which in the past has tried to resolve conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians and among quarrelling Palestinian factions, were also reported to be in contact with the various parties.

The Palestinian attack during which Cpl. Shalit was seized came a day after Israeli commandos carried out the first arrest raid inside Gaza since Israelis withdrew from the seaside strip last summer. The troops seized two <u>Hamas</u> militants.

The Palestinian militant factions claiming responsibility for Sunday's cross-border attack said it was in retaliation for a series of Israeli airstrikes that killed a number of militant leaders in recent weeks.

The demand for the release of Palestinian prisoners who are <u>female</u> or under 18 was signed by three factions: <u>Hamas</u>'s military wing, the Popular Resistance Committees and the previously unknown Army of Islam.

Such prisoners are believed to number several hundred.

The <u>Hamas</u> government insists it had no role in planning the abduction, and did not know where the soldier was being held.

Hamas government spokesman Ghazi Hamad urged Cpl. Shalit's captors to keep him safe.

"I think we are interested in avoiding any confrontation or bloodshed," he told The Associated Press.

Israel readies to retaliate in Gaza: 'No immunity,' for soldier's captors, Olmert vows

The abduction delivered a blow to Mr. Abbas' efforts to coax <u>Hamas</u> into accepting a plan implicitly recognizing Israel. Mr. Abbas, elected separately last year, has endorsed the plan in hopes of lifting economic sanctions against <u>Hamas</u> and opening the way for new peace talks.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Gil Cohen Magen, Reuters; Israeli soldiers prepare their tank for battle on the Israeli-Gaza border. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has vowed a 'broad and ongoing' offensive in response to a deadly *Hamas* raid.;

Photo: Shalit Family; <u>Hamas</u> militants claiming to hold Cpl. Gilad Shalit, above, said Israel should release all imprisoned Palestinian <u>women</u> and children under 18 in return for information about the Israeli soldier.

Load-Date: June 27, 2006



Mideast Violence: Who Is to Blame?

The New York Times
June 30, 2006 Friday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 4; Editorial Desk; Pg. 22

Length: 605 words

Body

To the Editor:

Re "Hamas Provokes a Fight" (editorial, June 29):

Israel's return to Gaza is long overdue.

Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is almost a year old. From the very beginning, Qassam rockets rained down on the innocent civilians of Israeli cities like Sderot and nearby towns from nearby Gaza.

To this day, this hasn't stopped.

No country would sit still for what amounts to two Qassam rockets a day, every day.

Now with <u>Hamas</u> as the duly elected governing body, it appears as if the terror campaign out of Gaza has only increased.

Terrorism, intimidation and indiscriminate acts of violence must never be tolerated by any sovereign state.

Stuart Pilichowski Mevaseret Zion, Israel June 29, 2006

To the Editor:

Hamas knows full well "the reality of the world the Palestinians live in."

The Palestinians are ruled by an occupying power, denied full rights in the occupier's country and in their own lands.

Every meaningful facet of life for them is controlled by Israel.

If our great country were invaded and occupied by the Soviets during the cold war, I highly doubt that the citizens of our great nation would not fight back. Homemade rockets versus missiles isn't a fair fight, but it's all the Palestinians have.

Mideast Violence: Who Is to Blame?

Let's not forget that the West Bank and Gaza aren't nations. This is not one country attacking another. The French resisted the Nazis, the Algerians resisted the French, and the Jews who founded Israel resisted British occupation.

Scott Davis

New York, June 29, 2006

To the Editor:

Your editorial claimed that the document endorsed by <u>Hamas</u> "implicitly recognizes Israel." Unfortunately, <u>Hamas</u>'s leaders and spokesmen have repeatedly made clear that the group still refuses to recognize Israel's legitimacy.

Salah al-Bardawil, a *Hamas* lawmaker, is quoted in your June 28 issue as explaining that "we did not say we accept two states."

Sami Abu Zuhri, a <u>Hamas</u> spokesman, pointed out that "we agreed to all the articles of the document without having to recognize Israel." Others have repeated this unambiguous message.

It seems, then, that <u>Hamas</u> has successfully maneuvered an agreement compatible with its uncompromising rejection of the Jewish state, as enshrined in its founding charter.

That document calls for Israel to be replaced with an Islamic state.

Gilead Ini

Boston, June 29, 2006

The writer is senior research analyst, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America.

To the Editor:

Every time something happens in the Gaza Strip, responsibility for it is laid at the feet of the Palestinians. Nobody ever seems to remember that they are the occupied party.

These 1.3 million people live under a total embargo, subject to daily shelling, sonic booms, military incursions, kidnapping, targeted assassinations, and they are still to blame.

No medicine or wheat can enter the strip, no products can be exported from it, bridges and power plants are blown up, and they are still to blame.

Twenty-three civilians were killed in the last month, including <u>women</u> and seven children, and that is of course their own fault. And they don't even have the right to despair! What a world!

Hichem Gallala

Bonn, June 29, 2006

To the Editor:

You determine that the "latest escalation" is solely <u>Hamas</u>'s responsibility. The reckless disregard of the Israeli military for the lives of Palestinians, resulting in the deaths of several innocent bystanders, including a pregnant woman and numerous children, may not fall under your newspaper's definition of "latest escalation," but it is certainly a provocation for a fight.

Mideast Violence: Who Is to Blame?

Nancy McDonald Washington, June 29, 2006

http://www.nytimes.com

Load-Date: June 30, 2006



Palestine's terror vote

Australian Financial Review
February 3, 2006 Friday
First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Letters; Pg. 111

Length: 244 words

Body

Marco Vincenzo is the latest in a long line of analysts recently who have seen fit to remind us that <u>Hamas</u> is an efficient provider of social services to the Palestinians ("<u>Hamas</u> win was a vote for change", Opinion, January 31).

This is equivalent to praising Italy's Benito Mussolini because it was said that, although his rule was dictatorial, at least the trains ran on time. That might have been so, but, as with *Hamas*, it is hardly relevant.

For one thing, one wonders where <u>Hamas</u>'s funding has been coming from all these years to provide basic services, while at the same time, maintaining an extensive private militia.

But we must never lose sight of the fact that <u>Hamas</u> is a violent organisation, like terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah, the IRA or al-Qaeda. It promotes and encourages terrorism, actively engages in terrorist acts that have killed and maimed hundreds of innocent men, **women** and children, and then boasts about it afterwards.

It is fundamentally racist in nature, because all of its intended victims are Jewish, and have been singled out because of that fact.

Its entire philosophy is the antithesis of all our Western values.

The choice now for the international aid donors, who have propped up the corrupt and criminal Palestinian Authority and its terrorist offshoots for far too long, is clear. Suspend financial assistance immediately.

The Palestinians have voted yes to terrorism. They must wear the consequences.

Arthur Hurwitz,

Randwick, NSW.

Load-Date: April 5, 2012



Shells hit Gaza beach, killing 8 Palestinians; Israeli Army checking to see if it fired

The International Herald Tribune
June 10, 2006 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 805 words

Byline: Steven Erlanger

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Israeli shells hit a crowded beach in northern Gaza on Friday, killing at least eight Palestinians, including a family of five and two <u>women</u>, and wounding more than 30 others, according to Palestinian journalists and medical personnel.

Shelling by Israel has been part of what Tel Aviv describes as its continuing effort to repress the firing of Qassam rockets from Gaza into Israel.

The Ghaliya family Ali, Raisa and three children aged 1, 3 and 10 had been having a picnic on the beach during a hot Friday afternoon when all five members were killed.

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, condemned Israel for what he called "a bloody massacre" in the Gaza Strip, and the Israeli chief of staff, Lieutenant General Dan Halutz, ordered a halt to the shelling until the deaths of the civilians could be investigated.

An Israeli Army spokesman, Captain Jacob Dallal, said that the army was sure that the shells that hit the beach had not come from Israeli gunboats or aircraft, and that the army was checking whether artillery was responsible. He said Israel was prepared to help with medical care for civilians wounded in the incident.

On Friday, Israel also fired missiles at two cars belonging to Palestinians alleged to have fired rockets at Israel, killing three Palestinians two brothers and a cousin who were members of the Popular Resistance Committees and wounding another three, who were members of Islamic Jihad, in the second car.

Palestinians fired at least five Qassam rockets into Israel on Friday, but no Israelis were hurt. The Israeli Army said about 30 Qassams had been fired this week. Some of the rockets were said to be in response to the Israeli Air Force's bombing of a Palestinian training camp around midnight Thursday that killed a senior Palestinian commander and *Hamas* interior ministry official, Jamal Abu Samhadana, along with three others.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians attended the funerals of Samhadana and his colleagues on Friday in Rafah, filling a stadium with a makeshift mosque. They called for revenge against Israel in the ongoing cycle of violence, which comes against the backdrop of a political confrontation between <u>Hamas</u>, which runs the Palestinian Authority, and Fatah's Abbas, who is expected on Saturday to announce a referendum for July 31 on a political program <u>Hamas</u> opposes.

<u>Hamas</u> made another appeal on Friday to Abbas to cancel the proposed referendum, as a senior Qaeda figure, in a videotape, called on Palestinians to vote against Abbas in any such vote.

<u>Hamas</u>'s prime minister, Ismail Haniya, asked Abbas to back down for the sake of Palestinian unity, and to continue political dialogue instead on the basis of a document produced by prisoners that calls for a national-unity government but that is opposed in central elements by <u>Hamas</u>.

Haniya told Abbas in a letter: "The idea of the referendum now on the table carries many dangers. I'm afraid it will cause a historic rift that will hurt the Palestinian cause for decades to come."

The Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri, considered to be Osama Bin Laden's deputy, urged Palestinians to reject a political platform that implicitly recognizes Israel alongside a Palestinian state within pre-1967 borders.

"I call on them to refuse any Palestinian referendum because Palestine belongs to the Muslim world," Zawahri said in a video aired Friday on Al Jazeera television. "Palestine is not for any bargaining or sale."

Haniya repeated <u>Hamas</u>'s assertion that the president had no power to call a referendum that would leave out Palestinians living outside the territories, and said such a vote had "no legal and constitutional basis."

But Abbas seems determined to set a date for the vote, though his aides said that discussions with <u>Hamas</u> would continue in the meantime and could mean that no vote takes place.

Abbas is eager to reassert the primacy of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which he heads, and to commit <u>Hamas</u> to a two-state solution, which implicitly recognizes Israel, in the hope that the West will then resume monetary aid to the Palestinians. Abbas would then have more justification for calling on Israel to reopen peace talks with him.

<u>Hamas</u> reacted angrily on Friday to the Israeli attacks, raising doubts about whether it will continue the tattered cease-fire with Israel. A <u>Hamas</u> spokesman, Ghazi Hamad, said in Gaza, "The ongoing Israeli attacks are an attempt to topple the government, and the strike on the members of the military wing today is a new phase in the Israeli activity and will oblige us to reconsider our steps."

Hamad added: "Israel must pay a price."

Zawahri, an Egyptian, praised Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, as "a hero of Islam" but made no reference to his killing by American forces, indicating that the tape was made before Zarqawi's death.

Load-Date: June 23, 2006



Israel given ultimatum by militants

Birmingham Post
July 4, 2006, Tuesday
First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 9

Length: 566 words **Byline:** Joe Gower

Body

The three Palestinian militant groups that captured an Israeli soldier last night gave Israel until 6am today to start releasing Palestinian prisoners or "pay the full future consequences".

The statement, which was faxed to news agencies, did not expressly say what those consequences would be.

"We give the Zionist enemy until 6am tomorrow," the fax said. "If the enemy does not respond to our humanitarian demands mentioned in previous leaflets on the conditions for dealing with the issue of the missing soldier...we will consider the current file of the soldier to be closed. ... and then the enemy must bear all the consequences of the future results."

The fax was posted on the official <u>Hamas</u> military wing website. It had the same letterhead and font as three earlier statements the factions released.

Corporal Gilad Shalit, aged 19, was captured on June 25 in a cross-border raid by militants linked to the Palestinians' ruling *Hamas* party, the Popular Resistance Committees and the Army of Islam.

The group initially demanded the release of about 500 <u>women</u> and children prisoners, then raised its demands to include an additional 1,000 prisoners.

Israel has publicly said it would not negotiate Shalit's release, but privately, political and defence leaders have not ruled out releasing prisoners who were not involved in actual attacks on Israel.

Last week, Israel launched a military campaign in the Gaza Strip to pressure militants to free the soldier. It holds the *Hamas* government responsible for Shalit's capture on Israeli territory.

There has been no sign of evidence of the soldier's condition, though Israeli officials have said they think he is alive.

Earlier, Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert stepped up pressure on the Palestinian government, ordering his military to "do all it can" to free the abducted soldier and hinting Israel may arrest *Hamas* leaders in Gaza.

Olmert's threat, just hours after an Israeli air strike blasted the Palestinian prime minister's office, signalled that the government was losing patience with diplomatic efforts to end the crisis and was planning to escalate its military offensive.

Israel given ultimatum by militants

Israeli forces have pounded the Gaza Strip since Israeli troops and tanks took up positions in southern Gaza on Wednesday in an operation aimed at pressuring Palestinians to free Shalit.

"These are difficult days for Israel, but we have no intention of giving in to any form of blackmailing," Olmert said. "Everyone understands that giving in to terror today means an invitation to the next act of terrorism, and we will not act that way."

Meanwhile, Israel reopened a cargo crossing into Gaza to allow food and fuel shipments into the territory.

Egypt has been working to broker a compromise to free the soldier and end the stand-off, but negotiations were complicated by confusion over who is in charge of Shalit's fate.

Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh's <u>Hamas</u>-led government said it had no contact with the kidnappers. The militants holding Shalit are presumed to answer to <u>Hamas'</u> leader, Khaled Mashaal, who lives in Syria. But <u>Hamas'</u> foreign leadership denied having any authority over the matter.

"We have no contact with those holding the prisoner," said Osama Hamdan, a top leader of the Islamic militant group who is based in Lebanon.

Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak was trying to enlist Syrian president Bashar Assad's help to persuade <u>Hamas</u> leaders to release Shalit.

Graphic

Israeli military bulldozers on the outskirts of the northern Gaza Strip town of Beit Hanoun

Load-Date: July 4, 2006



Militants kill two Israeli soldiers and kidnap third

The Irish Times

June 26, 2006 Monday

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 9

Length: 582 words

Byline: Peter Hirschberg in Jerusalem

Body

MIDDLE EAST: Palestinian militants tunnelled 300m from Gaza into Israel and launched a pre-dawn attack yesterday on an Israeli military post, killing two soldiers and kidnapping a third, who was still being held last night in the Gaza Strip.

The first cross-border attack by militants from Gaza since Israel pulled out of the Strip last year could have farreaching implications, possibly triggering a harsh Israeli military response, hurting efforts by the new <u>Hamas</u>-led government to convince the international community of its legitimacy and raising questions about Israeli plans for further unilateral withdrawals in the West Bank.

Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert and leading ministers decided last night on what officials said would be a harsh military response that would take more than one or two days. The ministers also decided however that more time would be given to diplomatic efforts and international pressure on the Palestinian Authority, before a broad offensive was launched.

Israeli security forces were also engaged in an intensive intelligence-gathering operation in an effort to win the release of the soldier, who was named as Cpl Gilead Shalit (19). Special army units were on alert last night, awaiting orders for a possible rescue operation.

At about 5am yesterday, eight gunmen belonging to <u>Hamas</u> and several other smaller armed groups crawled along a tunnel they had dug under the Gaza-Israel border, opening fire as they emerged. Two of the militants hived off and attacked a nearby watchpost, injuring two soldiers.

Troops there returned fire, killing the two gunmen.

Four of the militants fired rockets and lobbed grenades at a tank, killing two soldiers inside. Military officials said the assailants then seized Cpl Shalit, who was apparently injured in the attack, and blew a hole in the perimeter fence as they headed back into Gaza.

<u>Hamas</u> militants said the raid, which took place at the Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel, Gaza and Egypt, was to avenge the killing of Palestinian civilians and militant leaders in the Strip in recent weeks.

"This operation is a natural response to the Israeli crimes of killing <u>women</u> and children and the assassination of two [militant] leaders," said <u>Hamas</u> spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri. Leading <u>Hamas</u> figures were said to have gone underground for fear of being targeted by Israel.

Militants kill two Israeli soldiers and kidnap third

Israeli leaders blamed Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and the <u>Hamas</u>-led Palestinian Authority for the raid. "We in Israel hold the Palestinian Authority, headed by chairman Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas], and the Palestinian government responsible for this event, with all that implies," said Mr Olmert.

Defence minister Amir Peretz warned: "Anyone who causes the soldier to be harmed should know that the soldier's blood is on his head." He added that Israel would respond to the attack "in a way in which all involved . . . understand that the price will be painful."

Mr Abbas, under intense international pressure to ensure the release of the abducted soldier, condemned the attack and blamed <u>Hamas</u>. He told Palestinian prime minister Ismail Haniyeh that the Islamic movement bore sole responsibility for the soldier's fate and for any Israeli military response. The attack, he said, could spark a "widespread [Israeli] military operation" in Gaza.

The attack will undermine talks between Mr Abbas and <u>Hamas</u> aimed at forging agreement on a plan that calls for the creation of a Palestinian state along 1967 borders - an implicit recognition of Israel.

Load-Date: June 26, 2006



Focus: 'Diceman' Olmert on the spot over new Israeli crisis

The Scotsman

June 30, 2006, Friday

1 Edition

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Section: Pg. 34

Length: 942 words

Byline: George Kerevan

Body

LAST June, a senior Israeli leader got up before a Jewish audience in New York and said the following: "We are tired of fighting, we are tired of being courageous, we are tired of winning, we are tired of defeating our enemies."

It was the use of the word "tired" that indicated this was no macho fundraising speech but a cry from the heart for a peaceful settlement of the Palestine-Israel dispute.

That speaker, Ehud Olmert, is now the prime minister of Israel. With the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit, by the military wing of <u>Hamas</u>, Olmert finds himself in charge during the most dangerous crisis Israel has faced in many years.

Cpl Gilad was kidnapped when Palestinian terrorists used a secret tunnel to enter Israeli territory from Gaza, which Israel evacuated last year. The kidnappers are thought to be members of the independent military wing of <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamic fundamentalist movement which forms the elected government in Palestine.

The kidnappers announced they would return Cpl Shalit if the Israelis agreed to release all **female** Palestinian prisoners and youths under 18 held in Israeli jails.

Israel holds around 10,000 Palestinian prisoners, but prime minister Olmert refused, saying there could be "no negotiations, no bargaining, no agreements" with terrorists.

However, Israel has always negotiated to get back its people - albeit discreetly. In October 2000, three Israeli soldiers were kidnapped by the pro-Iran Hezbollah terror group. Three years later, the then prime minister, Ariel Sharon, announced that "negotiations for the return of our sons began a short time after they were kidnapped, and have been conducted continuously ever since then".

He informed the Israeli public that the soldiers would be exchanged for 400 Palestinian prisoners.

It turned out that Hezbollah had murdered the soldiers shortly after they were abducted, but the Palestinians were still swapped for the bodies of the lost soldiers. Sharon's cabinet voted 12 to 11 to do the deal, with Olmert supporting the exchange.

So why has Olmert changed his tune now and opted to send in tanks, bomb the main power plant in Gaza and keep Palestinians awake by having the Israeli air force make supersonic bangs in the middle of the night?

Focus: 'Diceman' Olmert on the spot over new Israeli crisis

One view is that Olmert fears capitulation to the demands of the kidnappers will only spur on more abductions on the West Bank, where both al-Qaeda and the super-extremist Hezbollah have started to appear.

Another view is that Olmert, unlike Sharon, was not a senior military officer but a lawyer and journalist, and may feel he needs to put on a tough face.

However, Olmert's implacable stance is also part window-dressing. With Israeli blessing, the Egyptian government has been desperately trying to broker a deal with the kidnappers. Egyptian intelligence has good contacts inside Gaza, but they have also been dealing directly with the external leader of <u>Hamas</u> in Syria, Khaled Mashaal, pressuring him to facilitate the release. The Egyptians are desperate to tame <u>Hamas</u> before the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism engulfs their own regime.

While these negotiations have been going on, Olmert has been content to make a display of force by putting tanks a few kilometres into Gaza and dropping a few bombs. But he knows only too well that a full-scale invasion of Gaza would be a nightmare. It would mean house-to-house street fighting that could kill hundreds of civilians, while certainly precipitating the immediate murder of Cpl Shilat (assuming he is still alive).

Unfortunately, the Egyptian negotiations do not seem to be having much success, because <u>Hamas</u> is no great friend of Egypt. Olmert's other option is therefore to get the Palestinian president and leader of Fatah, Mahmoud Abbas, to capture the kidnappers.

A low-level civil war has been taking place between Fatah and <u>Hamas</u>, since the latter was elected as the Palestinian government in January on an anti-corruption ticket. America and Israel have been discreetly supplying the Abbas wing of Fatah with arms in the hope that it can discipline **Hamas**.

With time running out for Cpl Shalit, Israel has increased the pressure on <u>Hamas</u> by arresting more than 60 of its ministers and MPs in the Palestinian parliament. This does two things: it gives Israel hostages to exchange for Shalit, and strengthens the day-to-day political control exercised on the West Bank by Abbas and Fatah.

There are signs that the pressure on <u>Hamas</u> is already beginning to tell, with the people in the Palestinian territories taking a more pragmatic line than the external leadership in Syria.

The Shalit kidnapping was expressly designed to stop the *Hamas* prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, from ratifying the so-called Prisoners' Document with president Abbas. This is an accord drawn up by Marwan Barghouti, of Fatah, and Abdul Khaleq Natshe, of *Hamas*, both of whom are interned in Israeli jails for leading the violent Intifada uprising. The accord - in so many words - recognises Israel. Despite the kidnapping, Abbas and Haniyeh signed it on Tuesday.

In his New York speech last year, Ehud Olmert said peace was possible "if we will be prepared to take the risks". Some on the Israeli left are urging Olmert to take such a risk and exchange Cpl Shalit for the key signatories of the Prisoners' Document, Barghouti and Natshe. The theory is that their release would isolate the <u>Hamas</u> leadership in Syria, which is opposed to any acceptance of an Israeli state, and pave the way for a genuine ceasefire and peace negotiations.

With so many pressure points, the outcome of this crisis is impossible to predict - but the man who must throw the dice is Ehud Olmert.

Load-Date: June 30, 2006



Israel warns of 'ongoing' Gaza offensive

The Toronto Star

June 27, 2006 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A10

Length: 943 words

Byline: Mitch Potter, Toronto Star **Dateline:** RAMALLAH, West Bank

Body

Turning aside ransom demands for the release of Palestinian <u>women</u> and children prisoners, Israeli leaders warned the Gaza Strip faces "a broad and ongoing military offensive" if a kidnapped Israeli soldier is not set free.

The warning came as Israeli checkpoints sprang up last night throughout the West Bank amid unconfirmed Palestinian claims of a second abduction, this time involving an unnamed civilian Jewish settler. Israeli military officials said they were aware of the reports and were investigating.

The deepening kidnap crisis saw a continuing Israel Defence Force build up of heavy armour along the borders of Gaza, where thousands of soldiers massed in preparation for ground invasion, awaiting the outcome of diplomatic efforts to end the standoff.

Israeli military sources acknowledged any sudden strike could potentially jeopardize the life of Cpl. Gilad Shalit, 19, who was snatched early Sunday during an audacious, tunnelborne attack by militants from <u>Hamas</u> and two other Palestinian factions. Two Israeli soldiers and two Palestinian gunmen were killed in the raid on an isolated IDF observation post near Kerem Shalom, just inside the Israeli border.

Shalit, a dual citizen of Israel and France, is believed to be suffering from a broken arm and shoulder injuries, according to unnamed foreign diplomats quoted in the Israel media. The Israeli intelligence branches are working to pinpoint his location, with a focus on the southernmost town of Rafah.

Shalit's captors broke silence yesterday in a joint statement sent to Palestinian media, promising to provide information on their detainee in exchange for the immediate release of all Palestinian <u>women</u> and children under 18 in Israeli custody. <u>Women</u> and children represent as many as 500 of the more than 8,000 Palestinians in Israeli prisons.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, speaking to Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, flatly refused to engage in negotiations.

"This is not a matter of negotiations. This is not a matter of bargaining," Olmert said. "Release of prisoners is absolutely not on the agenda of the Israeli government."

Israel warns of 'ongoing' Gaza offensive

Israel has engaged in prisoner exchanges in the past, but never directly with <u>Hamas</u>, the most potent of the Palestinian Islamic organizations. Shalit is the first Israeli soldier kidnapped since 1994, when Cpl. Nachson Waxman and one of his would-be rescuers died during an Israeli attempt to free him from his <u>Hamas</u> captors.

Apart from the immediate threat of the most serious escalation in violence since last summer's Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, the larger political implications of the kidnapping suggests the ruling <u>Hamas</u> movement is now a house bitterly divided, with hardline militants actively challenging a more conciliatory elected leadership.

"When you view what happened in the context that the elected <u>Hamas</u> leaders are gradually moving toward a more moderate position, this kidnapping begins to look like an assault on the will of (<u>Hamas</u>) Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh," Palestinian political analyst Hisham Ahmed told the Toronto Star.

"Look carefully at the statements made by <u>Hamas</u> and you notice a competition between insiders and outsiders, between the militants and the political side that is showing signs of moderation.

"And in *Hamas*, nobody is more moderate than Haniyeh. He is not belligerent, he is not disrespectful. He is a conciliatory man. And clearly there are elements of *Hamas* that do not like that."

Ahmed, a professor of political science at Bir Zeit University, near Ramallah, said the discord is likely fed by the organization's exiled leadership in Damascus, where <u>Hamas</u> secretary general Khaled Meshaal remains dedicated to Israel's destruction.

"But equally, or even more significant, are the facts on the ground in Gaza," said Ahmed. "The scenes of recent weeks, with so many Palestinian civilians dying in Israeli air strikes, creates an environment where many voices inside are ready to listen to Meshaal's more radical agenda."

Haniyeh and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas met yesterday in an effort to solve the crisis, even as Egyptian intelligence officials were believed to be in direct contact with Gaza's militant factions.

French and U.S. diplomats are also believed to be closely involved.

Among the levers of influence that could potentially defuse the crisis is money, which the cash-starved <u>Hamas</u> leadership needs desperately to assuage a Palestinian Authority workforce of more than 150,000 people entering a fourth month without pay.

"This situation cannot lead to anything good," said Hana Hizallah, 40, a school principal in the West Bank governorate of Jenin, who has not been paid since February.

"Most Palestinian people want there to be two states, Palestine and Israel. And we believe the <u>Hamas</u> leaders are moving toward this answer. We live under siege. And now these kidnappings, this will bring us more misery, I am certain," Hizallah told the Star.

The Popular Resistance Committees, one of the Palestinian factions involved in Sunday's raid, last night posted a statement on its website confirming it had a second Israeli in custody. The statement gave few details.

"One of our cells in the West Bank managed to kidnap a settler as part of a chain of responses against the Zionist aggression, and to avenge the blood of Palestinian martyrs," the statement said. "We have information on the kidnapping, but we will not share it at this point so that the ball remains in the court of the Zionists."

An Israeli military source said the army was investigating the report but it could not be confirmed. Settler organizations told the Hebrew daily Yedioth Ahronoth they had no reports of missing civilians.

Graphic

Israel warns of 'ongoing' Gaza offensive

YANNIS BEHRAKIS Reuters An Israeli soldier walks through clouds of dust and tank fumes on a field in the Mefalsim area on the Israeli-Gaza border yesterday. Israel on Sunday threatened a strong military response after militants killed two soldiers and kidnapped a third.

Load-Date: June 27, 2006



Palestinians Campaign for an Election That May Not Be Held

The New York Times

January 4, 2006 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 3

Length: 674 words

Byline: By STEVEN ERLANGER **Dateline:** JERUSALEM, Jan. 3

Body

Campaigning for Palestinian legislative elections opened Tuesday despite doubts about whether the vote will actually take place on Jan. 25.

With the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, on a tour of the Persian Gulf, Deputy Prime Minister Nabil Shaath cited the late Yasir Arafat, who died in November 2004, in kicking off the campaign for a riven Fatah movement.

Speaking by Mr. Arafat's tomb in Ramallah, on the West Bank, and using his nom de guerre, Mr. Shaath said, "With your permission, Abu Ammar, we will continue to fly the flag of Fatah and head to victory."

In a development that may roil the parallel Israeli political campaign, Israeli Channel 10 reported Tuesday night that the police had evidence that would show that the family of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had received \$3 million from a wealthy Austrian, Martin Schlaff, in connection with his 1999 campaign. The money is thought to be connected to a \$1.5 million loan from a South African businessman that is suspected of being used to refund illegal campaign contributions.

In a separate case, one of Mr. Sharon's sons, Omri, resigned from Parliament on Tuesday before his sentencing later this month for unrelated financing violations and falsification of documents from his father's 1999 campaign.

In opening the campaign, Mr. Shaath admitted that "Fatah has made mistakes and we must work to correct them." But he also warned that the radical Islamic movement <u>Hamas</u>, taking part in the elections for the first time, could win if Fatah failed to unite.

He questioned <u>Hamas</u>'s ability to govern the Palestinians and deal with Israel -- which considers <u>Hamas</u> a terrorist group, and which <u>Hamas</u> does not recognize. "How will negotiations with Israel be managed under <u>Hamas</u>?" Mr. Shaath asked. "How will they pay salaries and ensure security? What will they do for <u>women</u>?"

Still, Fatah's biggest problems are its own divisions and a reputation for cronyism, mismanagement and corruption, coupled with its failure to achieve an independent Palestinian state through negotiation and compromise.

Palestinians Campaign for an Election That May Not Be Held

Fatah is looking for reasons to postpone the elections, because of fears that <u>Hamas</u> will win more than 40 percent of the 132 seats at stake and become either the most powerful political force or a sizable blocking minority in the future legislature. Many Fatah veterans would rather have no election than hand over such power to <u>Hamas</u>.

<u>Hamas</u> opposes another delay in the vote, having already agreed to Mr. Abbas's request to move the election from July to this month.

Israel, which opposes letting <u>Hamas</u> take part in the elections, has not yet decided whether to allow Palestinians in East Jerusalem to vote by postal ballot, as they have done in previous elections, when <u>Hamas</u> did not take part.

A senior Israeli official said, however, that Israel would help Palestinians in East Jerusalem who wanted to vote outside the city. In the past, he said, only 5,000 of the 120,000 or so eligible Palestinian voters in Jerusalem had been allowed to vote in post offices, and only 1,200 of them have done so, with a vast majority voting outside the city.

The issue has important symbolic value. Mr. Abbas said Monday that if voting were not allowed in East Jerusalem, it would be impossible to hold the elections. Israel clearly does not want to be blamed for any postponement, but also does not want to sanction the election.

"The post offices are there, and if we decide to have them open, then they'll be open," the Israeli official said. "We're waiting for the right moment to announce what our position is, and now is not the right moment. We're making assessments on a daily basis."

Mr. Sharon, 77, is to go into the hospital on Thursday for an operation under general anesthesia to plug a small hole in his heart that may have been a factor in the stroke he suffered Dec. 18. He will spend the night in the hospital and will temporarily cede his powers to his deputy, Ehud Olmert, for what is expected to be a three-hour period of operation and recovery.

http://www.nytimes.com

Load-Date: January 4, 2006



SAVING CORPORAL GILAD; TROOPS STORM INTO GAZA TO FREE SNATCH SQUADDIE

The Mirror

June 29, 2006 Thursday

3 Star Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 20

Length: 326 words

Byline: BY JON CLEMENTS

Body

ISRAELI troops were last night inside Gaza and preparing for a major attack to free kidnapped Cpl Gilad Shalit.

Tanks rolled into the enclave with thousands of troops for the first time in 10 months as <u>Hamas</u> fighters dug in behind barricades and sand banks ready to retaliate.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert warned: "We won't hesitate to carry out extreme action to bring Gilad back to his family.

"We have one objective and that is to bring him home."

Airstrikes destroyed Gaza's only power station and three bridges, cutting electricity to 65 per cent of the region. Tanks took up position near the southern town of Rafah under cover of darkness.

And Israeli war planes also buzzed the home of Syrian President Bashar Assad amid claims he has housed *Hamas* fighters, believed to be behind the squaddie's kidnap.

Shalit, 19, was snatched four days ago during a <u>Hamas</u> raid on an army checkpoint which killed two soldiers. His captors have demanded Israel release all Palestinian <u>women</u> and children in its jails.

The group also claimed it had kidnapped Jewish settler Eliahu Asheri, 18, and a third Israeli.

<u>Hamas</u> leader Nizar Rayan urged armed resistance to any attack. He said on radio: "Fight your enemies who come to their deaths grab your rifles and resist."

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas branded the airstrikes on civilian targets a "crime against humanity". Gaza's streets were deserted yesterday as Palestinians feared more airstrikes.

SAVING CORPORAL GILAD TROOPS STORM INTO GAZA TO FREE SNATCH SQUADDIE

Civilians urged <u>Hamas</u> not to release Shalit until its demands are met. Bassem al Khoudry insisted he is their only bargaining tool.

The 35-year-old, from Gaza city, said: "Even if they slaughter 100,000, this chance can't be lost. It's the only way the prisoners can get out."

Israel has rejected the demands and threatened to kill *Hamas* leaders based in Syria if Shalit dies.

Olmert denied he wanted to reoccupy Gaza following its withdrawal last summer. He said: "We do not intend to stay."

j.clements@mirror.co.uk

Graphic

HIT SQUAD: Israelis get their orders' KIDNAP: Corporal Shalit, 19' RAID: Blown-up bridge. Left, tank poised for action and, right, air strike on Rafah

Load-Date: June 29, 2006



Leave Gaza, militants demand: Palestinian hostage-takers tell Israel to halt offensive, free 1,000 prisoners

Ottawa Citizen

July 1, 2006 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A9

Length: 771 words

Byline: Ravi Nessman and Laura King, The Los Angeles Times; with Files From The Associated Press

Dateline: GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Militants holding an Israeli soldier demanded early today the release of 1,000 prisoners and a halt to Israel's Gaza offensive, complicating efforts to resolve a crisis before it boils over into major fighting.

The latest demand came after Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said that Israel's military action was aimed at toppling the *Hamas*-led government, but maintained he is working with mediators toward a resolution.

Israel, meanwhile, kept up the pressure yesterday in Gaza, destroying the interior minister's office and targeting a car carrying militants in an airstrike. Israel also said it attacked a militant cell, killing a Islamic Jihad leader -- the first reported death in the offensive.

The UN Security Council began an emergency debate yesterday. The Palestinians sought for a resolution condemning Israel's actions and demanding a halt to all military operations.

"This total war is proof of a premeditated plan," said Mr. Haniyeh, who is also a senior leader of <u>Hamas</u>, the Islamist group that took power three months ago after winning Palestinian parliamentary elections.

Israel has said Mr. Haniyeh and other <u>Hamas</u> political leaders could be targeted for assassination if an Israeli soldier captured Sunday by <u>Hamas</u>-affiliated militant groups is not freed.

Mr. Haniyeh's sermon at a mosque in the centre of Gaza City was his first public appearance since Israel sent troops and tanks into southern Gaza before dawn Wednesday. In it, he denounced Israel's roundup of more than two dozen Palestinian Cabinet ministers and parliamentarians before dawn Thursday.

"When they kidnapped the ministers, they meant to hijack the government," he said. "We say we will not be hijacked, and the government will not fall."

Listeners responded with calls of "God is great!"

Israeli tanks remained poised on Gaza's northern border, but held off for another day on a push into the coastal strip's northern swath, which has been heavily fortified by Palestinian militants. Egyptian mediators reportedly sought more time to try to free the soldier, Cpl. Gilad Shalit, through diplomacy.

Leave Gaza, militants demand: Palestinian hostage-takers tell Israel to halt offensive, free 1,000 prisoners

The new demands were laid out in a joint statement by the militant wing of the ruling <u>Hamas</u> party, and two smaller militant groups, the Popular Resistance Committees and the Army of Islam. The three groups have claimed responsibility for Sunday's abduction of Cpl. Shalit in a cross-border raid.

The statement also repeated an earlier demand for the release of all Palestinian <u>women</u> and minors held in Israeli prisons in exchange for information about Cpl. Shalit.

As with its earlier demand, yesterday's statement did not promise to release the soldier.

Israel has refused demands for an exchange that would free some of the thousands of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails in return for Cpl. Shalit's freedom. The militant factions holding the 19-year-old tank gunner have provided no proof he is still alive.

A poll published in the Yedioth Aharonoth daily yesterday indicated that more than half of Israelis supported negotiations for Cpl. Shalit's release.

The incursion, Israel's first large-scale ground offensive in the coastal strip since it unilaterally withdrew troops and Jewish settlers last summer, has drawn a mixed international response.

The U.S. and other western nations have urged that the soldier be freed unconditionally, but several human rights organizations have questioned the need for Israel to strike at such installations as the territory's main electrical transformer, bombed from the air in the early hours of the incursion.

The International Committee of the Red Cross yesterday urged Israel to lift its blockade of Gaza to allow shipments of food and medicine. Israel said it was considering reopening the main commercial crossing at Karni in coming days.

No civilians have been reported killed in the incursion, although several have been wounded.

Stepping up the pressure on the <u>Hamas</u>-run government, Israeli officials yesterday revoked the Jerusalem residency permits of four senior <u>Hamas</u> officials. The coveted residency status permits Palestinians not only to live in Jerusalem, but to travel freely within Israel.

Since the standoff over the captured soldier began, Israel has drawn no distinction between elected <u>Hamas</u> officials and the group's military wing.

Mr. Haniyeh and other senior <u>Hamas</u> officials have been taking precautions reminiscent of those during a concerted Israeli campaign of "targeted killings" during 2003 and 2004, when the entire <u>Hamas</u> leadership echelon, including the group's spiritual mentor and founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, were killed in Israeli airstrikes.

Load-Date: July 1, 2006



Middle East: Israeli troops gather at Gaza borders as Palestinians try to find hostage: Olmert readies army for retaliatory strikes: Abbas urged to secure corporal's release

The Guardian - Final Edition
June 27, 2006 Tuesday

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Section: GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 13

Length: 657 words

Byline: Conal Urquhart, Gaza City and Chris McGreal, Jerusalem

Body

Israel continued to mass forces on the borders of Gaza yesterday to reinforce its demand for the immediate release of a captured Israeli soldier while Palestinian security services attempted to track down the kidnappers.

Ehud Olmert, the Israeli prime minister, said he had told the Israeli army "to prepare for a broad and ongoing military operation to strike the terrorist leaders and all those involved".

He said: "It should be clear. There will be immunity for no one."

In Gaza, the militant groups believed to be holding Gilad Shalit, 19, said they would release information about him when Israel frees all its **female** prisoners and those under 18. Israel insists that the release of its hostage should be unconditional.

Abu Mujahid, the spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committees, who attacked the Israeli positions with <u>Hamas</u>, declined to admit that Corporal Shalit was in their custody. "At this time we have no information on a kidnapped Israel soldier," he said, in what appeared to be a deliberate attempt to be ambiguous.

The soldier is believed to be held by the PRC, and its religious splinter group, the Islamic Army, and members of <u>Hamas</u>. Israeli media broadcast pictures of the military buildup but it seemed to be clear that there was little chance of military action while it was possible to secure the release of Cpl Shalit by other means.

Walid Awad, a spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, said that Palestinian forces were making every effort to locate and free the prisoner. "We are trying to calm the atmosphere so negotiations can continue free of tension," he said. "Everything that can be done is being done to ensure this matter ends well."

Israel insists that it holds Mr Abbas personally responsible for the hostage's safety. But Dan Gillerman, the Israeli am bassador to the United Nations, said that if Mr Abbas is able to secure the corporal's release that could help to rebuild Israeli confidence in the Palestinian leadership.

"Mr Abbas is the president of the Palestinian Authority. This soldier was kidnapped by the Palestinian Authority, into the Palestinian Authority. This is the time for the president of the Palestinian Authority to prove that he does indeed have authority and capability that come with the job and the title he holds," he said.

Middle East: Israeli troops gather at Gaza borders as Palestinians try to find hostage: Olmert readies army for retaliatory strikes: Abbas urged to secure corpo....

"If this matter is resolved peacefully maybe this could be the beginning of negotiations and trying to reach an understanding with the Palestinian Authority and Mahmoud Abbas. If it is not, it is just another proof that there is no partner on the other side."

The Israeli army announced on Monday it was holding its own investigation into how eight men tunnelled from Gaza into Israel and were able to kill two men, capture a third and destroy an armoured personnel carrier and a tank.

The militants lost two men before escaping back across the border. The participation of <u>Hamas</u> in Sunday's attack and its involvement in holding the hostage suggest a serious split in the movement, which was renowned for its cohesion and discipline.

Sources close to the <u>Hamas</u> government said they were working to secure the release of the soldier while senior members of <u>Hamas</u> said the movement was becoming disillusioned by their attempt to evolve from a military to a political group.

Yehiyeh Musa, a <u>Hamas</u> member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, was once an enthusiastic advocate of the transformation of <u>Hamas</u> from guerrilla army to political force. Now he feels that the <u>Hamas</u> entry into politics has been destroyed by Europe and the United States.

"The government (<u>Hamas</u>) can go to hell. Europe boycotts us and the United States are against our democracy. The Palestinians are in a big jail and the Israelis have the key," he said. "We have no use for prime ministers or anything like that. The reality is that we are under occupation. We would end the occupation by negotiations but the occupier has no interest in that. The only path is resistance."

Load-Date: June 27, 2006



Palestinian Intelligence Chief Is Badly Wounded in Bombing

The New York Times
May 21, 2006 Sunday
Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2006 The New York Times Company

Section: Section 1; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 6

Length: 862 words

Byline: By STEVEN ERLANGER **Dateline:** JERUSALEM, May 20

Body

The leader of Palestinian intelligence was badly wounded on Saturday in a bombing at his heavily guarded headquarters in Gaza City.

Later, the Israeli military killed a senior commander of the Islamic Jihad militant group and three other Palestinians in Gaza when it fired missiles at his car.

The intelligence chief, Maj. Gen. Tareq Abu Rajab, is a senior member of Fatah and an ally of the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the explosion, which hit as he entered an elevator with his aides and bodyguards. One bodyguard, a nephew of Mr. Rajab, was killed, and Mr. Rajab and five others with him were wounded, as were an additional three employees nearby.

Mr. Rajab, 59, also known as Muhammad Shanyura, underwent surgery at Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza and was transferred to Ichilov Hospital in Tel Aviv to try to save his leg, said Dr. Baker Abu Safia, who runs Al Shifa's emergency room.

The attempt on Mr. Rajab's life occurred amid heightened tension between Fatah and the militant faction <u>Hamas</u>. <u>Hamas</u> runs the Palestinian Authority and has just deployed its own security force to support the police despite the opposition of Mr. Abbas, who ordered security forces loyal to Fatah to deploy as well. On Saturday, some Fatah officials openly blamed <u>Hamas</u> for the attack.

Mr. Abbas, attending an economic forum at an Egyptian resort, condemned the assassination attempt, called it "very unfortunate" and said that it "threatens the Palestinian Authority with grave danger."

Ghazi Hamad, the spokesman for the <u>Hamas</u> prime minister, Ismail Haniya, said the explosion would be investigated. "We are asking not to make early judgments, accusations or responses that might lead to tension in the Palestinian streets," Mr. Hamad said.

Some Palestinians in Gaza suggested that the explosion could be revenge for the killing on March 31 of Abu Youssef al-Quqa, 44, the leader of the Popular Resistance Committees, a Gaza militant group consisting of disaffected fighters from other groups. Mr. Quqa was killed in a car bomb explosion outside a mosque that set off gun battles in which three others were killed and 36 wounded.

Palestinian Intelligence Chief Is Badly Wounded in Bombing

Israel denied responsibility for the car bomb, and others in the Popular Resistance Committees blamed Fatah security forces with close ties to the Israelis and promised vengeance. Abu Abir, a spokesman for the committees, accused Palestinian security officials of collaborating with Israel and singled out several by name, calling them traitors and vowing, "We will behead them." Among those he accused were Mr. Rajab and Muhammad Dahlan, the former head of Preventive Security in Gaza.

At the time, the <u>Hamas</u> interior minister, Said Sayam, said that the government would investigate, but no results have been announced.

Mr. Rajab, who was close to the late Yasir Arafat, survived another attempt on his life in August 2004, when he was hurt in a drive-by shooting. He was hit in the chest and taken to an Israeli hospital in Ashdod.

Mr. Rajab was appointed to his current post by Mr. Abbas in April 2005. Last week, Mr. Abbas sent him to Jordan to look into accusations by its government that <u>Hamas</u> was trying to smuggle explosives into Jordan and carry out attacks there, charges that <u>Hamas</u> has denied.

After the bombing on Saturday, a group calling itself the Fatah Protection Unit demanded that Mr. Abbas dismiss the <u>Hamas</u> government and call new elections. As president, Mr. Abbas has the power to dismiss the prime minister, but not necessarily to call new elections. The group demanded that <u>Hamas</u> disband its new militia within three days and warned against the militia taking action against any member of Fatah.

Armed <u>Hamas</u> and Fatah groups have clashed over the past week in Gaza. As Mr. Rajab and the wounded were driven to the Gaza hospital, agents fired from the windows to clear the streets, and some members of the new <u>Hamas</u> militia fired toward the convoy, apparently believing themselves under attack.

The Israeli airstrike later on Saturday killed Muhammad Dahdouh, 32, a commander of Islamic Jihad who the Israeli Army said was responsible for launching rockets into Israel. The Israelis fired at least two missiles, which also killed two <u>women</u> and a child who were traveling in a car close to Mr. Dahdouh's pickup truck. The child was identified by Palestinians as Fadi Amman, 4, and his mother as Hanan Amman, 29. Five people were wounded.

Yossi Beilin, the leader of the dovish Meretz party, called for the government to stop its policy of assassination strikes that kill innocent people as well. He said on Israeli radio that the killing of Mr. Dahdouh was insufficient justification for the killing of a small boy, his mother and grandmother.

Mr. Abbas, at a meeting of the World Economic Forum in Sharm el Sheik, Egypt, is set to meet Sunday with the Israeli vice prime minister and foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, and with Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres. The Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert, will leave for Washington on Sunday to meet President Bush and speak to a joint meeting of Congress. He is expected to meet Mr. Abbas after the trip.

http://www.nytimes.com

Load-Date: May 21, 2006



Israel considering deal on prisoners

The Toronto Star July 8, 2006 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A16

Length: 486 words

Byline: Sarah El Deeb, Associated Press

Dateline: GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip

Body

Two weeks into Israel's violent standoff with <u>Hamas</u>, Israel sent conflicting signals yesterday on whether it is prepared to swap Palestinian prisoners for a soldier whose capture by Palestinian militants has touched off a harsh military campaign.

Israeli troops killed 31 Palestinians in two days of air strikes and artillery barrages, Palestinian officials said. The campaign is aimed at stopping rocket attacks on Israel and pressuring the ruling <u>Hamas</u> movement to release 19-year-old Cpl. Gilad Shalit.

Israel's Public Security Minister Avi Dichter suggested yesterday that Israel is ready to cut a deal that would fall short of a direct prisoner swap.

Dichter said Israel could free some Palestinian prisoners as a goodwill gesture after Shalit is released and <u>Hamas</u> stops rocket attacks on Israel.

If there is calm, "Israel will need to, after some time, release prisoners as a reciprocal gesture," Dichter said. "Israel knows how to do this. Israel has done this more than once in the past."

He was referring to previous prisoner swaps - usually in deals that freed far more Palestinians than Israelis. Privately, Israeli officials have said they did not rule out talks in Shalit's case, either.

Moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said he has won Israeli assurances that it would reciprocate for Shalit's release by freeing some prisoners, as well as *Hamas* politicians it has rounded up in recent days.

Officials close to Prime Minister Ehud Olmert later said Dichter's statement did not reflect the views of the government and that Israel insists on the soldier's unconditional release. However, the government did not issue a formal statement distancing itself from the minister.

Israel does not want to be seen as cutting a deal with <u>Hamas</u> militants, but also does not seem to have a way to free the soldier by force.

<u>Hamas</u> said yesterday that Shalit, seized June 25, is alive and being treated well. It also urged Israel to negotiate. The Islamic militant group initially demanded the release of hundreds of prisoners, but then scaled back its demands, seeking freedom for some 150 <u>female</u> inmates and several dozen men serving long sentences.

Israel considering deal on prisoners

The internal Israeli debate came as ground troops backed by tanks pursued militants in the streets of crowded Gaza towns, and aircraft struck northern Gaza.

Shalit is believed to be held in southern Gaza, and days after he was seized, Israel launched its biggest military campaign in the coastal strip since ending its 38-year occupation there nine months ago.

Egyptian mediators have proposed a two-stage deal in which <u>Hamas</u> would free Shalit and halt rocket attacks. In exchange, Israel would halt its offensive and promise to free some Palestinian prisoners in the future.

A Palestinian official close to the negotiations said Israel has agreed to the Egyptian formula, but wants the deal to be confidential, to avoid the impression of a direct prisoner exchange.

Graphic

ODED BALILTY AP An Israeli soldier exits an armoured vehicle during a military operation in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday. Troops seized control of a ribbon of land in the territory Thursday to block rocket attacks.

Load-Date: July 8, 2006



Palestinians struggle to live under sanctions

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

May 21, 2006 Sunday

Main Edition

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The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Section: NEWS; Pg. 1B

Length: 890 words

Byline: CRAIG NELSON

Body

Gaza City, Gaza Strip --- Um Mazen pushed the round, palm-sized red velvet box across the glass counter toward a merchant in one of the narrow stalls that make up this ancient city's gold market.

Inside the box were two gold necklaces, four gold bracelets and her gold wedding ring, a simple band delicately adorned with filigree. The velvet was worn and shiny from the cramped places where she hid the box for safekeeping and from the hands that have gripped it during the 40 years she has been married.

It was the last time that Mazen, 60, would see the box and the prized possessions inside. She had decided when she woke that morning she could no longer sidestep the unavoidable: Accompanied by one of her daughters, she had come to sell her dowry.

The rush of <u>women</u> selling their dowries is harsh evidence of the looming economic disaster that faces 3.5 million Palestinians as sanctions against the <u>Hamas</u> government --- elected in January's parliamentary ballot --- take hold.

The global isolation stems from <u>Hamas'</u> long history of suicide bombings and other deadly attacks against Israelis, and the call in its charter for the destruction of the Jewish state.

"I have no choice. There are 35 people in my [extended] family, and they're all unemployed," Mazen said as the merchant weighed the jewelry on a tiny electric scale and counted out \$2,000 in \$100 bills. "My children need to eat. They need medicine and clothes."

Both in the Palestinian territories and the wider Muslim world, marriages often are sealed with the payment of an agreed-upon amount of gold to the bride by the groom and his family. It is the bride's insurance against the vagaries of divorce, her husband's death, a weak local currency, and political and economic upheaval.

By all appearances, such upheaval is under way. Economic distress has touched nearly all facets of life in Gaza. Hospitals report serious shortages of medicine, syringes and tape. Gas shortages have stifled commerce and resulted in a scarcity of food and goods in some shops.

"I've never seen it this bad," said 50-year-old gold merchant Ahmed Rahif.

Even before the militant Islamic group was voted into power, the Palestinian economy was fragile. It was the largest per capita recipient of foreign aid worldwide and, according to the Congressional Research Service in Washington, was "completely dependent on external support to meet basic needs."

Unemployment was running at 23 percent. Corruption and mismanagement --- particularly by the ruling Fatah movement --- were rife. Now the economy is in a deeper morass. After <u>Hamas</u>' victory, the Bush administration and the European Union decided to withhold \$85 million a month until the Palestinian Authority renounced violence and recognized Israel.

In addition, Israel has refused to transfer \$55 million a month in taxes and customs duties it collects on behalf of the Palestinians, although in recent days Israeli officials have said they would be willing to release some of the money to specific hospitals and clinics to ease health care concerns.

The Palestinian Authority's 164,700 employees have not been paid in more than two months. In the Gaza Strip, where unemployment was running at 44 percent before the elections and where nearly 40 percent of those who have jobs work for the authority, conditions are especially dire because public-sector employees are often their family's only breadwinner.

Longtime residents say that some shop owners refuse to extend further credit to their cash-poor customers. Students and those who have jobs cannot afford the 45-cent round-trip transport to their offices and classrooms. Weddings have been postponed or canceled.

However, in an interview with The New York Times on Thursday, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert vehemently denied that a humanitarian crisis was under way in the Palestinian territories, calling it "for the time being, total propaganda" by the Palestinian Authority. Olmert's interview came ahead of his planned trip to Washington this week for talks with President Bush.

<u>Hamas'</u> efforts to surmount some of the shortfall by raising money in the Arab and Islamic world have so far proved unsuccessful. Tens of millions of dollars in aid has been promised, but regional banks have been afraid to transfer the funds out of fear of incurring U.S. sanctions themselves. A European Commission plan to provide humanitarian aid to the Palestinians while bypassing <u>Hamas</u> is weeks, if not months, from being implemented.

The Bush administration has made it known that it opposes any use of international funds to pay the salaries of Palestinian Authority employees because *Hamas* is classified as a terrorist group under American law.

Palestinians point to the election results, saying <u>Hamas</u> is a legitimate political movement whose militant wing has maintained a cease-fire against Israel for the past 16 months. But <u>Hamas</u> has shown no sign of relenting in its refusal to recognize Israel, and no one is certain where the embargo will lead.

Jamal Mohammed, who has been a gold merchant for 25 years, feels betrayed by the sanctions against *Hamas* that the United States is championing.

"The United States says it is fighting for democracy in the Middle East. But you are fighting against democracy, not supporting it," he said.

"Hamas won the election freely and fairly, and this is what we get?"

Graphic

Palestinians struggle to live under sanctions

Photo: CRAIG NELSON / StaffAs Western sanctions against the <u>Hamas</u> government choke off funding, Gaza City's gold markets are crowded with <u>women</u> selling their dowries.

Load-Date: May 21, 2006



Voting day finally arrives for Palestinians

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)
January 25, 2006 Wednesday
0 South Pinellas Edition

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Section: NATIONAL; Pg. 1A

Length: 1514 words

Byline: SUSAN TAYLOR MARTIN

Dateline: GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip

Body

Politics aside, Sahl Kharma has mixed feelings now that Palestinians are finally going to the polls.

On one hand, today is a national holiday and a welcome day off. On the other hand, it could mean a big drop in business.

Working almost nonstop, the printing company that Kharma heads has cranked out 250,000 campaign posters. Some show Fatah Party candidates pictured with late Palestinian President Yasser Arafat; others show rival <u>Hamas</u> candidates with late <u>Hamas</u> leaders Sheik Ahmed Yassin and Abdel Aziz Rantisi.

"And there's one candidate who has pictures of everyone," Kharma said, pulling out the poster of an independent seeking the broadest possible support.

Of the 3.2-million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 1.3-million are expected to vote in one of the few free and fair elections ever held in the Arab world. Hundreds of candidates from all walks of life - including one who is doing life in an Israeli prison - are competing for 132 seats in the Palestinian Parliament. Along with recent elections in Iraq and Afghanistan, a smooth Palestinian vote could bolster the Bush administration's campaign to "democratize" the entire Middle East.

But Israelis - and even many Palestinians - fear that a strong showing by the radical group <u>Hamas</u> could doom any prospects for peace. With <u>Hamas</u> gaining on Fatah in the polls, that fear has been somewhat counterbalanced by the hope that <u>Hamas</u> is becoming more moderate.

A role in the new Palestinian government could lead members of <u>Hamas</u> to "remove their commitment to terrorism and induce them to recognize Israel's right to exist and to exist in peace," said former President Jimmy Carter, who is helping monitor the election.

In a spectacle both chilling and encouraging, dozens of masked members of <u>Hamas</u> and other militant organizations appeared at a news conference Tuesday pledging to protect voters from anyone trying to disrupt the polling.

The group also released a surprisingly eloquent statement that called election day "a festival of democracy."

The campaign has had other surreal aspects.

Marwan Barghouti, a popular and charismatic figure who heads the Fatah slate, has given interviews from inside the Israeli prison where he is serving five life terms for orchestrating terror attacks against Israel. One poster shows him smiling broadly as he holds up his handcuffed arms.

Among the <u>Hamas</u> candidates in Gaza is housewife Miriam Farhet, who has done almost no campaigning because she just returned from Mecca and the once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage known as the hajj.

Farhet, shown on posters in a white robe and head scarf, is well known in Gaza, however, for having lost three sons in the "resistance" against Israel.

In 2002, her 17-year-old son called her from a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip just before he killed several Israeli soldiers and was shot himself. In 2003, Israel assassinated another son while he was making a drone aircraft. And last August, a missile from an Apache helicopter killed her youngest boy, 16, as he moved Qassam rockets intended for an attack against a nearby Israeli city.

On Tuesday, Farhet was preparing for the wedding of a fourth son. He was recently released from prison after serving more than a decade for an attempted suicide bombing.

As of 1 p.m., Farhet's home was already packed with guests. "They have been deprived of happiness for so long," said her son-in-law, Mazen Mansour, an employee of the Palestinian Central Election Commission.

Though it is deemed a terrorist organization by Israel and the United States, <u>Hamas</u> is popular with many Palestinians for helping the poor. Voters fed up with what they view as the corruption, waste and inefficiency of the Palestinian Authority - controlled by the Fatah Party - have elected <u>Hamas</u> mayors in several cities.

But one of the Palestinian Authority's biggest weaknesses - its bloated size - is also its biggest strength. Most of its 160,000 employees are expected to vote for Fatah if only because they want to keep their jobs.

"If <u>Hamas</u> wins, we're finished," says Eteal Alfar, who works for a Palestinian Authority magazine and supports her husband and seven children on a \$200 monthly salary. "Everyone worries about his job."

Alfar is among 60 <u>women</u> volunteers who have been going door to door urging people to vote for Fatah and arranging transportation for those with no way to get to the polls.

Others fear that <u>Hamas</u>, an Islamic movement, will impose its rigid moral code even on secular Palestinians. A United Nations club in Gaza City was firebombed this month, purportedly because it was serving liquor at a New Year's Eve party.

"It's the bin Laden group," said Wagee Handoka Abu Samer, owner of a photo shop in Gaza City. "They would like to return to the Middle Ages."

At a club where young Gazans can "chat" over the Internet with kids in America, several said they, too, feared a <u>Hamas</u> victory.

"They will close a lot of places like this where boys and girls get together," said 16-year-old Leila Najoor. But even though she and others are too young to participate, all were excited about the election.

"Of course," said Khaled Eltalouli. "It's about our future."

Susan Taylor Martin can be contacted at susan@sptimes.com

PALESTINIAN ELECTION

PALESTINIANS IN THE GAZA STRIP, West Bank and East Jerusalem are electing a new Parliament today only the second time they've done this. Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council are elected for four years though

Voting day finally arrives for Palestinians

it has been 10 years since the last parliamentary election. Along with the directly elected president, the PLC controls the Palestinian Authority, which runs the Palestinian territories. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas was elected in January 2005 to a five-year term.

THE VOTING PROCESS

SEATS: 132 available in the new Palestinian Legislative Council.

MAJORITY SYSTEM: 66 seats are filled using a majority system. The Palestinian territories are divided into 16 districts with the number of seats in each based on population. Voters select several candidates, corresponding to the number of seats. Candidates with the most votes win.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM: The other 66 seats are filled using party lists. Votes are cast for parties or groups, each of which submits a list of candidates. The number of candidates elected from a list depends on the percentage of votes that list gets.

BALLOTS: Each voter receives two paper ballots. The first contains the names of candidates competing for the district's seats. The second contains the competing lists from which the voter must choose one list.

ELECTION OBSERVERS: Foreign: 343 Local: 17,268

MINORITIES AND <u>WOMEN</u> The Palestinian Elections Law stipulates that at least one woman should be among the first three names on any party list, at least one woman among the next four names, and at least one woman among each five names after that. Six out of 66 seats are reserved for Christian representatives.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ELECTIONS

- + President Abbas' Palestinian Authority needs to acquire further legitimacy after repeatedly delaying the elections.
- + Violence or electoral fraud will further discredit Abbas and the ruling Fatah Party, which is facing a strong challenge from the militant group *Hamas*.
- + <u>Hamas</u>' participation in the political process and any future government though Israel and the United States may be unhappy about it could lead to a softening of the group's stance against Israel.
- + Both Abbas and acting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert have said they are willing to resume the peace process once results from the poll and the Israeli general election at the end of March are announced.

POLLING STATIONS: 1.008

In Gaza: 254

In the West Bank/Jerusalem: 754

CANDIDATES: 728

Competing in districts: 414

Competing on party slates: 314

Number of female candidates: 85

PARTIES

There are 11 parties running. The five main ones are:

FATAH: Ruling party of Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas.

Voting day finally arrives for Palestinians

REFORM AND CHANGE: Name under which Islamic militant group *Hamas* is running.

THIRD WAY: Headed by outgoing Palestinian Finance Minister Salam Fayyad.

POPULAR FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE: Radical PLO faction headed by Ahmed Saadat, jailed for ordering the assassination of an Israeli Cabinet minister in 2001.

INDEPENDENT PALESTINE: Headed by human rights campaigner Mustafa Barghouti, who has taken part in peace talks with Israel. Campaigned against Israel's separation barrier.

LEADING CANDIDATES

Marwan Barghouti, 46

PARTY: Fatah

BACKGROUND: Currently serving five life terms for attacks; supports establishment of a Palestinian state, but says force is needed to drive Israel from occupied lands.

Ismail Haniyeh, 46

PARTY: Hamas

BACKGROUND: Degree in Arabic literature; Gaza City 3/8s Islamic University dean; liaison between *Hamas* and Palestinian Authority. Mustafa Barghouti, b. 1954

PARTY: Independent Palestine Party

BACKGROUND: Physician who runs health care think tank.

Salam Fayyad, b. 1952

PARTY: The Third Way

BACKGROUND: Minister of finance since 2002; founded party, which favors negotiations with Israel.

Sources: Associated Press, KRT, Palestinian Central Election Commission, BBC

Graphic

PHOTO, JOHN PENDYGRAFT, (2); PHOTO, Getty Images; PHOTO, (4); CHART

Wearing masks, members of Palestinian resistance factions stand side by side during a news conference in Gaza on Tuesday.; Palestinian militants move to secure an intersection in downtown Gaza on Tuesday.; Palestinians carry sealed boxes containing

documents at a polling station Tuesday in the West Bank village of Abu Dis.; Marwan Barghouti; Ismail Haniyeh; Mustafa Barghouti; Salam Fayyad; Chart explaining the Palestinian voting process, the various political parties and the leading

candidates. Includes map of the Middle East locating Israel, the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip and a drawing of the flag representing the Palestinian territories.

Load-Date: January 25, 2006



War of nerves in Gaza

Weekend Australian
July 1, 2006 Saturday
All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; The Big Picture Editor / Weekend Editor; Pg. 30

Length: 673 words

Body

MATP

THE BIG PICTURE

ISRAEL launched its first big incursion into the Gaza Strip since vacating it last year, in the hope of forcing Palestinian militants to release an abducted Israeli corporal, Gilad Shalit. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert then raised the stakes by seizing <u>Hamas</u> ministers, in the worst crisis between Israel and the Palestinians since the radical Islamist movement took office in March.

While the Israelis were bound to react harshly to the corporal's abduction, it was "doubtful whether Israel's standard heavy military reaction to Palestinian violence serves the interests of peace in the longer run", The Economist said. "More to the point, it is becoming clearer that the international boycott of the Palestinians' *Hamas* Government is not helping. A fractious Islamist Government, bankrupt and unable to control its most extreme militants, is plainly illequipped to make peace, even if it wanted to." The weekly said, however, there were signs *Hamas* was groping towards meeting the minimal requirements for Israel and the rest of the world to bring it in from the cold, referring to a document signed this week by *Hamas* and Fatah that implicitly recognised Israel's right to exist.

If that was the case, Bronwen Maddox wrote in The Times, then why "in the middle of this delicate change of course, seize an Israeli soldier?" Maddox concluded: "Many analysts -- including some from Fatah -- have taken this as a sign of the influence within *Hamas* of the hardliner Khaled Mashal, based in Damascus. It may not have been something the 'moderates' planned. The kidnapping also appeals to the longstanding Palestinian conviction that they are the victims of double standards: the seizure of this one soldier invokes protests whereas the Israeli imprisonment of Palestinians does not."

Steven Erlanger said in The New York Times the Israeli attack on Gaza was "designed to put pressure on the rest of the *Hamas* leadership in Gaza, to remind them that they could lose their power and liberty, if not their lives, unless they act to release a captured Israeli soldier". Israeli daily Haaretz cast doubt on the strategy, however: "Israel's decision to escalate its response to the abduction of Gilad Shalit and strike specific Gaza Strip targets still can be considered part of the options of violent diplomacy, and not all-out war. However, experience has taught that such military measures have not been successful, with the possible exception of the Entebbe raid. Therefore, it is best not to rely too much on a broad, sustained military operation, and to give the option of negotiation another look."

War of nerves in Gaza

The Jerusalem Post argued the incursion was justified, especially after the abduction and murder of West Bank settler Eliyahu Asheri, whose body was found on Wednesday. "It is in this context that Israel's long-avoided decision to send the Israel Defence Forces into Gaza, and the arrest of dozens of high-level *Hamas* officials, should be understood. *Hamas* leaders, even if -- and, in fact, because -- they bear such titles as minister or legislator, are not innocent." The daily added: "Israel, obviously, cannot tolerate an ongoing terror campaign against its citizens. With the current IDF operation in Gaza, including attacks against infrastructure targets such as bridges and electricity generators, Israel is trying to maximise the pressure on the Palestinian regime while minimising casualties."

The reaction from the Middle Eastern media was harsh. "Israel's aggression and crimes don't take place out of a vacuum," Jordan's ad-Dustour said, "but are an imminent result of a global public opinion that is biased and gives an official cover for killing and destruction under the pretext of self-defence."

Egypt's al-Ahram said it was ironic for Israel to mass its forces around the Gaza Strip to try to rescue the kidnapped Israeli soldier "while it continuously and systematically kidnaps and assassinates Palestinians and holds thousands of Palestinian prisoners, including hundreds of <u>women</u> and children".

Load-Date: June 30, 2006



Militants dig in for Israeli invasion - CRISIS IN GAZA

The Australian (Australia)
June 30, 2006 Friday
All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD PHOTO TABLE; Pg. 10

Length: 991 words

Byline: Martin Chulov, Middle East correspondent in Gaza

Body

MATP

WAR loomed in the Holy Land last night after militants killed two kidnapped Jewish settlers, while up to 80 <u>Hamas</u> officials -- including eight cabinet ministers -- were arrested in Israeli raids that have decapitated the Palestinian Government.

In a series of dramatic escalations five days after an Israeli soldier was captured, militants have dug into positions in northern Gaza ahead of a likely new invasion, and remaining *Hamas* leaders have gone into hiding.

The body of settler 62-year-old Noach Moskowitz was found next to a cemetery last night, hours after the remains of 18-year-old Eliyahu Asheri were retrieved from a shallow grave close to the West Bank capital of Ramallah.

For a second night, Israeli jet fighters set off repeated sonic booms above Gaza while artillery and navy ships pounded abandoned farmland in the north. Israeli tank columns and troops were on the move in the south of the isolated strip as negotiations to free captured Corporal Gilad Shalit failed to make progress.

<u>Hamas</u> declared the Israeli moves an "act of war against the Palestinian people" as well as "a grave precedent (and) an international crime", and warned of dire consequences for the dormant peace process.

"This goes against all human moral and democratic values and hurts the will of our people," spokesman Mushir al-Masri said. "The international community must have its say."

Raids across the key West Bank cities of Ramallah, Jenin, Qalqilya and Nablus, as well as the Israeli capital Jerusalem, netted the *Hamas* officials who have been detained as security prisoners.

Most of the detained <u>Hamas</u> politicians were seized after Israeli forces surrounded the Legislative Council building in Ramallah where they were meeting.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry said last night the arrests had been ordered because of alleged links to terror plots.

"Their complicity in the events of recent days and in the soldier's kidnapping, as well as their request for a prisoner exchange, proves that the <u>Hamas</u>'s main concern is not the lives of the Palestinian people, but rather the implementation of a terrorist policy against Israel."

Militants dig in for Israeli invasion - CRISIS IN GAZA

None of the Gaza-based Government has yet been targeted, but Israeli ministers have continually warned that Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and exiled Damascus-based *Hamas* politburo chief Khalid Meshaal are in its sights.

Four Israeli fighter jets caused sonic booms above Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's summer palace late on Wednesday after Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had demanded Damascus hand over Mr Meshaal, *Hamas*'s highest-ranked figure, who has allegedly stalled attempts to free Corporal Shalit in a bid to use him as a bargaining chip. Air force strikes on electricity transformers on Tuesday night have cut power to more than 70per cent of the Gaza Strip and the damage is expected to need three to six months to repair.

The attack on the power plant and repeated sonic booms prompted Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to claim Israel was engaged in "collective punishment" against all Gaza residents.

Israel has prevented Mr Abbas from leaving Gaza while the crisis continues.

Before yesterday's arrests, he was intensively involved with Mr Haniyeh in attempts to free Corporal Shalit, who Palestinian officials last night said remained alive and in good health.

The second Israeli kidnapped on Sunday, Eliyahu Asheri, was believed to have been killed shortly after he was seized by West Bank members of the Popular Resistance Committees. The 18-year-old son of a dual Israeli-Australian citizen, formerly from Adelaide, had been shot once at close range. Mr Asheri's father left Adelaide 20 years ago after converting to Judaism.

The White House last night backed the Israeli moves, insisting that Israel had a right to defend itself. The US and the bulk of the international community have labelled <u>Hamas</u> a terrorist Government and have refused to deal with it until it recognises Israel.

Mr Olmert insisted last night that Israel did not want to re-occupy Gaza and had invaded the strip 10 months after its forces withdrew, primarily to rescue Corporal Shalit.

However, Mr Olmert said the military also had a secondary objective of stopping homemade rocket fire from the north.

MOUNTING TENSION

The Middle East is on the brink of war as Israel demands the return of a kidnapped soldier

SUNDAY

* Palestinian militants kidnap Israeli soldier Corporal Gilad Shalit during an attack on the Gaza border town of Kerem Shalom

MONDAY

- * Kidnappers demand the release of nearly 500 <u>women</u> and children held in Israeli jails in exchange for information on the abducted soldier; Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert rejects any deal
- * Jewish settler Eliyahu Asheri kidnapped

WEDNESDAY

- * Israelis expand a military offensive in an effort to recover the soldier
- * About 750,000 people 65% of the Gaza population go without electricity and running water after an air strike on the territory's only power station
- * In southern Gaza, where the soldier is believed to be held, armed forces move into a disused airport near Rafah and set up an observation post as scores of Palestinians flee

Militants dig in for Israeli invasion - CRISIS IN GAZA

- * Troops and tanks are poised for a thrust into the northern part of the territory, from where militants are firing crude rockets into Israel
- * Israeli warplanes fly low over Gaza as masked militants carrying assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers fan out on streets, preparing mines and taking up positions behind sand embankments in expectation of an Israeli assault
- * In a signal to Syria, home to the exiled leadership of <u>Hamas</u>, Israeli fighter jets fly low over the residence of President Bashar al-Assad near the Mediterranean port of Latakia THURSDAY
- * Israeli forces arrest *Hamas* government officials in the West Bank
- * Thousands of Israeli troops mass near the southern Gaza town of Rafah
- * Militants announce they have killed Asheri, the settler kidnapped on Monday

Source: The Times, agencie

Opinion -- Page 16

Editorial -- Page 17

Load-Date: June 29, 2006



Militants give Israel an ultimatum They imply they will kill abducted Israeli soldier if demands aren't met; Olmert says no to talks.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

July 4, 2006 Tuesday

FIRST EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A10

Length: 432 words

Byline: By Ravi Nessman THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dateline: GAZA CITY, GAZA STRIP

Body

Militants gave Israel 24 hours starting Monday to begin releasing hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, implying they would kill an abducted Israeli soldier if their demands were not met.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert rejected any negotiations with the militants, and the army pressed ahead with its Gaza offensive. Privately, though, some officials said the government had not ruled out any options to win Cpl. Gilad Shalit's freedom.

Israel has pounded Gaza with airstrikes and artillery shells for nearly a week in an unsuccessful effort to force the <u>Hamas</u>-linked militants to release Shalit. It has been building up troops across from northern Gaza, preparing for an invasion. Tanks and troops moved in and out throughout the day and the military said it was carrying out "limited" operations to uncover explosives and tunnels.

A <u>Hamas</u> militant was killed and four were wounded in an Israeli airstrike in Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza just after midnight, Palestinians said. Israel said its air force targeted Palestinians planting a bomb near soldiers.

Early today, Israeli aircraft hit the student council building at the Islamic University in Gaza City, witnesses said, badly damaging it. No one was hurt. The university is a <u>Hamas</u> stronghold. The military said it hit a "compound used by terror groups for instructing and directing terrorists."

In the West Bank city of Ramallah, Israeli forces surrounded a building early today. The military said militants who abducted and killed an 18-year-old Israeli settler earlier this week were holed up inside, and the goal was to arrest them.

After Shalit was seized in a June 25 raid on an army post that left two comrades dead, his captors demanded that Israel free all imprisoned Palestinian <u>women</u> and minors in exchange for information about him. They later increased their demand to include the release of 1,000 more prisoners.

Early Monday, <u>Hamas'</u> military wing -- one of the three groups holding Shalit -- issued a statement giving Israel until 6 a.m. today (10 p.m. Monday St. Louis time) to start freeing the prisoners. The other two groups are also <u>Hamas</u>-linked.

Militants give Israel an ultimatum They imply they will kill abducted Israeli soldier if demands aren't met; Olmert says no to talks.

If Israel does not comply, "we will consider the soldier's case to be closed," the statement said, "and then the enemy must bear all the consequences of the future results."

Abu Obeida, spokesman for the <u>Hamas</u> military wing, later told The Associated Press that Israel must at least begin freeing the <u>women</u> and minors.

"Israel must understand that the resistance factions are serious in this matter. They will close this case if (Israel) doesn't deal with the demands," he said.

Notes

World

Graphic

PHOTO

PHOTO - A firefighter works at the scene of an Israeli missile strike on a building allegedly used by the militant Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Gaza City, Gaza, early Monday. The Associated Press

Load-Date: July 4, 2006



<u>Israel rejects militants' ultimatum: Deadline to release prisoners passes with</u> no word on captive soldier

Ottawa Citizen

July 4, 2006 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A8

Length: 632 words

Byline: The Associated Press; with files from McClatchy Newspapers

Dateline: GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip

Body

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - A deadline by militants holding an Israeli soldier expired early today with no sign that Israel was considering giving in to the demand to release prisoners and no word from the captors.

The <u>Hamas</u>-linked militants set a 6 a.m. deadline for Israel to begin freeing the prisoners, implying they would kill him if their demands were not met.

Calls after the deadline expired to <u>Hamas</u> leaders and to Abu Obeida, spokesman for the <u>Hamas</u> military wing, were not answered.

There was also no word on the condition of the soldier, Cpl. Gilad Shalit, 19.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert rejected any negotiations with the militants, and the army pressed ahead with its Gaza offensive. Privately, though, some officials said the government had not ruled out any options to win Cpl. Shalit's freedom.

Israel has pounded Gaza with airstrikes and artillery shells for nearly a week in an unsuccessful effort to force the militants to release Cpl. Shalit. It has been building up troops across from northern Gaza, preparing for an invasion. Tanks and troops moved in and out throughout the day and the military said it was carrying out "limited" operations to uncover explosives and tunnels.

A <u>Hamas</u> militant was killed and four were wounded in an Israeli airstrike in Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza just after midnight, Palestinians said. Israel said its air force targeted Palestinians planting a bomb near soldiers.

Early today, Israeli aircraft hit the student council building at the Islamic University in Gaza City, witnesses said, badly damaging it. No one was hurt. The university is a *Hamas* stronghold. The military said it hit a "compound used by terror groups for instructing and directing terrorists."

In the West Bank city of Ramallah early today, Israeli forces arrested three militants said to be involved in the abduction and killing of 18-year-old Israeli settler Eliahu Asheri last week. The military said a fourth suspect was

Israel rejects militants' ultimatum: Deadline to release prisoners passes with no word on captive soldier

arrested earlier. The kidnapping and killing compounded the tension over the captured soldier. Mr. Asheri's body was found Thursday near Ramallah.

After Cpl. Shalit was seized in a June 25 raid on an army post that left two comrades dead, his captors demanded Israel free all imprisoned Palestinian <u>women</u> and minors in exchange for information about him. They later increased their demand to include the release of 1,000 more prisoners.

Yesterday, <u>Hamas'</u> military wing -- one of the three groups holding Cpl. Shalit -- issued a statement giving Israel until 6 a.m. today (11 p.m. EDT yesterday) to start freeing the prisoners.

If Israel does not comply, "we will consider the soldier's case to be closed," the statement said, "and then the enemy must bear all the consequences of the future results."

The statement was immediately rejected by Mr. Olmert as extortion.

Within hours of the ultimatum, Mr. Olmert issued a terse statement warning leaders of the <u>Hamas</u>-led Palestinian Authority that Israel would hold them responsible if the Israeli soldier was killed.

"Israel will not give in to the extortion by the Palestinian Authority and the <u>Hamas</u> government, which are led by a murderous terrorist organization," the statement read. "We will not conduct any negotiations on the release of prisoners."

The demand came as diplomatic efforts to secure Cpl. Shalit's release appeared deadlocked, Israeli tanks began rolling into northern Gaza for small-scale operations and the soldier's father urged Israel's military chief of staff to get his son back alive.

Soon after the militants made their demands, Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Dan Halutz met with Cpl. Shalit's family in northern Israel. The soldier's father urged the military to do all it could to ensure that his son comes home safely, according to the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper's website.

Graphic

Photo: Jim Hollander, The Associated Press; Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel will not negotiate with Palestinian militants over the release of Cpl. Gilad Shalit.

Load-Date: July 4, 2006



'Don't disgrace faith while all eyes are on us'

The Times (London)
February 4, 2006, Saturday

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Section: HOME NEWS; Pg. 8

Length: 546 words

Byline: Stephen Farrell in Gaza City

Body

TENS of thousands of Palestinians across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip protested against the cartoons, putting aside their religious, political and factional differences.

The demonstrations were largely peaceful but varied in mood. <u>Hamas</u> preachers urged calm, but others issued dire threats against the offending countries. "We will not accept less than severing the heads of those responsible," a preacher told 9,000 worshippers at al-Omari Mosque in Gaza.

Thousands of men, <u>women</u> and children converged on the Palestinian parliament building in Gaza, waving green <u>Hamas</u> and yellow Fatah banners from the roof as the crowd burnt Danish flags and chanted the credo: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet."

Yet the mood was relatively quiet after days of threats against European Union buildings and churches. Mushir al-Masri, a <u>Hamas</u> spokesman, told the crowd that, no matter how great their anger, Muslims should not disgrace their religion while the eyes of the world were upon it.

"The rule of God is coming again and God is preparing the climate," he said. "What freedom of speech are they talking about when they insult the Prophet Muhammad?"

he said.

"But we will deal with these people with tolerance -the Prophet's message was merciful and we will not return abuse with an abuse."

Khaled Mashal, the Damascus-based head of <u>Hamas</u>, sounded a less conciliatory tone toward Europe itself: "Hurry up and apologise to our (Muslim) nation, because you will regret not doing so. Today you are fighting with the soldiers of God," he said.

The restraint was in contrast to the threats 24 hours before by masked Islamic Jihad and Fatah gunmen that they would attack churches and EU headquarters.

In Nablus, where gunmen briefly kidnapped a German tourist on Thursday, Hassan Sharaf, an imam, told his congregation: "If they want a war of religions, we are ready."

'Don't disgrace faith while all eyes are on us'

Most protesters rejected Western arguments about freedom of speech, echoing a theme voiced by Nafez Azzam, an Islamic Jihad leader in Gaza: that the West was hypocritical by stifling debate on the Holocaust while allowing insults to Muslims.

"I don't want to take a position on the Holocaust, but in Europe whoever speaks against the Holocaust is incriminated," Mr Azzam told The Times. "Why only use the flag of freedom of speech to continue insulting our religion, our holy places and our holy symbols?"

<u>Hamas</u> appeared to have realised the damage to its image were Gaza to slide into chaos during an interregnum between the outgoing Fatah administration and a <u>Hamas</u>-led government. On Thursday Mahmoud al-Zahar, **Hamas**'s senior leader in Gaza, visited a priest to assure him that its 3,000 Christians would be safe.

Father Manuel Musallam said yesterday that he was satisfied, disclosing that Mr Azzam and al-Aqsa Brigade leaders had offered assurances.

Urging Europe not to damage the work of Arab Christians in building bridges, Father Musallam pointed out that all Arabs revered the Prophet. "Even if we don't believe in Muhammad and the Koran...Muhammad is a high Arab personality. He is our leader, the institutor of our civilisation," he said.

"We believe in the faith of Rome and the Occident, but we are Arabs, we are from the Orient, so we have this mission to make dialogue with the world outside."

Load-Date: February 4, 2006



We won't negotiate, Israel says: Palestinians threaten to 'close file' on soldier if prisoners not released

The Gazette (Montreal)
July 4, 2006 Tuesday
Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A1

Length: 804 words

Byline: IAN FISHER, New York Times; Newsday contributed to this report

Dateline: GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip

Body

Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert rejected an ultimatum yesterday set by Palestinian militants who suggested they would kill a captured Israeli soldier unless Israel began to release 1,500 Palestinian prisoners.

And as Israeli forces moved into northern Gaza and with indirect negotiations apparently at a standstill, the weekold crisis threatened to spill over Israel's border into Syria.

"The government of Israel will not yield to the extortion of the Palestinian Authority and the <u>Hamas</u> government, which are led by murderous terrorist organizations," Olmert said in a statement. "We will not conduct any negotiations on a prisoner release."

The Palestinian statement, issued by the three militant groups holding Cpl. Gilad Shalit, 19, gave Israel until this morning local time - 11 last night - to begin releasing prisoners.

Israeli tanks began moving in greater numbers into the Beit Hanoun neighbourhood of northern Gaza today, appearing to broaden smaller-scale military operations. Witnesses said an air strike killed at least one person and wounded several others. Israeli aircraft also bombed an empty building at the Islamic University in downtown Gaza.

After the Palestinian ultimatum was issued, the Israeli defence minister, Amir Peretz, said he would hold to account Syria's president, Bashar Assad, who has allowed <u>Hamas</u>'s political leader, Khaled Meshaal, to live in Syria and is believed to have significant influence over him.

"The <u>Hamas</u>'s terrorist headquarters operates in Syria and is headed by Khaled Meshaal," Peretz told leaders of the Labour Party, which he heads. "I suggest that Bashar al-Assad, who is trying to conduct himself blindly, open his eyes, because he bears the responsibility."

He added: "We will know how to strike those who are involved."

Last week, Israeli warplanes buzzed Assad's summer home in Latakia.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak flew to Saudi Arabia yesterday in a bid to enlist King Abdullah in his efforts to solve the crisis.

We won't negotiate, Israel says: Palestinians threaten to 'close file' on soldier if prisoners not released

Mubarak hopes to persuade Abdullah to push Syria to demand that Meshaal order the Israeli soldier released, according to a senior official from the Palestine Liberation Organization, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

In Damascus yesterday, the Syrian foreign minister, Walid Muallem, said that although Syria had influence with *Hamas*, it did not have any hand in the capture of the soldier, and would be unable to demand his release.

Instead, Muallem said, the only solution would be an end to the Israeli military operation, followed by negotiations between Israel and <u>Hamas</u>. He said Israel would have to be willing to offer a fair deal, like releasing prisoners who are <u>women</u> or under 18.

Meshaal, whom Israel blamed for planning the capture of the soldier, has lived and worked in Damascus for years. And while Muallem said Meshaal did not have any role in the military attack - a fact disputed by at least one Palestinian faction leader in Damascus - he said Syria would never force him to leave.

Meshaal is taking unprecedented security precautions, according to a Palestinian official in Damascus. Meshaal, who survived an Israeli assassination attempt in 1997, already had strict security, travelling in armoured cars and rarely appearing in public.

Other top <u>Hamas</u> leaders who operate out of Syria are living on the run. They change safe houses almost every night, have cancelled all travel outside Syria and stopped using cellphones.

Three militant groups have said they took part in the soldier's capture on June 25: the Popular Resistance Committees; the military wing of *Hamas*, the Islamist group that leads the government; and an apparently new group, the Army of Islam.

Their ultimatum said that if Israel did not begin releasing prisoners, Israel would "bear full responsibility for the future consequences."

"If they don't fulfill our demands, we will close the kidnapped soldier's file," a spokesperson for the Popular Resistance Committees said.

Since his capture, Israeli forces have imposed a slow squeeze on Gaza to try to secure the soldier's release, crossing over the borders in the north and the south, firing about 1,500 artillery rounds from land and sea, and carrying out nightly air raids. They also put pressure on civilians in Gaza, knocking out its only power plant and sharply limiting what goods can pass into Gaza. Exports have been halted entirely.

If the soldier is killed, that campaign is likely to intensify quickly and violently. One Israeli cabinet member was quoted as saying, "Our operations will be far, far worse." In his statement, Olmert said he held the Palestinian Authority fully responsible for the soldier's safety.

Online Extra: The <u>Hamas</u> leadership is limping along on a mix of anxiety, anger and covert tactics after Israeli raids last week jailed more than a third of the cabinet.

montrealgazette.com

Graphic

Photo: KEVIN FRAYER, AP; A Palestinian militant from <u>Hamas</u> makes his way to a position in Beit Hanoun, in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday.

Load-Date: July 4, 2006



Girl killed as Israel tightens grip on Gaza

The Sunday Times (London)
July 9, 2006

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; News; Pg. 25

Length: 783 words

Byline: Marie Colvin Gaza

Body

A SIX-YEAR-OLD Palestinian girl, her mother and elder brother were killed last night in an explosion at their house on the edge of Gaza City that witnesses said was caused by an Israeli tank shell.

The lifeless body of the girl, identified as Rawan Hajaj, was taken to hospital wrapped in blankets, the back of her head shorn open. Her mother Amona, 45, and brother Mohammed, 20, were also killed. Six others were injured, including four members of the Hajaj family.

The Israeli army, initially denying that any shells had been fired in the area, later admitted a missile had strayed off its target in a field and landed in a residential street.

The family were sitting under a tree outside the house in Gaza City's Shajaya district when the blast tore open one of the walls. A neighbour who ran into house after the explosion saw body parts strewn across the courtyard. A pool of blood had collected at the front door.

In three days of fighting more than 40 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier have died. As the death toll in Gaza mounted, efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis triggered by the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier were foundering over Syria's ambitions to exploit the confrontation for its own gain.

Egyptian negotiators attempting to broker a compromise between Israel and <u>Hamas</u>, the hardline Islamic party, have been frustrated by the intransigent stance taken by Bashar Assad, the Syrian president.

General Omar Suleiman, the head of Egyptian intelligence, was in Damascus at the weekend. But his talks appeared to have reached stalemate.

The Israeli army showed its strength in this battle of wills, in which Gaza is a pawn, as dozens of tanks moved further into the territory near the Karni crossing point east of Gaza City, supported by helicopters.

Yesterday morning the Israeli army said it had withdrawn the forces that entered the northern Gaza Strip on Thursday as part of its offensive to free its captured soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit, 19. Later Palestinians said some of the tanks were returning, though this was denied by Israel.

The beleaguered <u>Hamas</u> government called for a ceasefire, the first sign that it might be willing to compromise. Ehud Olmert, the Israeli prime minister, rejected the offer, signalling that he will not agree to a truce until the soldier is freed.

Girl killed as Israel tightens grip on Gaza

Syria is crucial to the outcome because it provides shelter to Khaled Masha'al, the exiled leader of <u>Hamas</u>, and other senior <u>Hamas</u> figures. According to Palestinian sources, Masha'al plotted the capture of Shalit, who was seized by Palestinian militants.

It was the fulfilment of many statements Masha'al has made that the only way to win the release of Palestinian prisoners was to capture an Israeli soldier and bargain with his life.

<u>Hamas</u> has said it will free the soldier only in return for the release of Palestinian <u>women</u> and children in Israeli jails.

Assad has the upper hand over Masha'al because the <u>Hamas</u> leader needs the sanctuary of Damascus for the activities that give him power, such as raising money from sympathetic Islamic states like Iran.

Senior Palestinians believe that while Masha'al was "running the show" when Shalit was abducted, Assad is now the real power to be dealt with, despite his denial of any role.

According to a senior Palestinian source, Masha'al bypassed the <u>Hamas</u> leadership - Ibrahim Haniya, the prime minister, and Mahmoud Zahar, the foreign minister and instead dealt directly with <u>Hamas</u>'s military wing to seize the hostage.

Masha'al, the source said, feared the "inside leadership" was about to break with his rejectionist stance and compromise on *Hamas*'s refusal to recognise Israel or lay down arms.

Most Palestinians in Gaza support the demand that Palestinian prisoners, in particular <u>women</u> and youths under 18, be freed in exchange for the captive Israeli soldier.

The case of 15-year-old Hibah Yaghmour may help to explain why. She was convicted of disobeying a soldier's order and using physical force as she tried to enter a mosque.

According to the girl's family, when the soldier tried to search her she pushed him and ran away. He shot her three times. When Hibah came out of a coma and went on trial, a <u>female</u> Israeli soldier who witnessed the incident agreed the teenager, then 14, had asked for a woman to conduct the search.

"She felt humiliated," said Hibah's father, a middle-class businessman. "She did not want a man to touch her." She is now in Tel Mond prison, serving an 18 month sentence.

Another prisoner, Shereen Sheikh Kalil, was 18 when she was jailed for eight years after being linked to a gang who had kidnapped another Israeli soldier. Now 21, she has written in letters home of how the mice and cockroaches horrify her.

Load-Date: July 9, 2006



Militants dig in for Israeli invasion

The Australian (Australia)

June 30, 2006 Friday

All-round First Edition

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Section: WORLD PHOTO TABLE; Pg. 10

Length: 1008 words

Byline: Martin Chulov, Middle East correspondent in Gaza

Body

MATP

WAR loomed in the Holy Land last night after militants killed two kidnapped Jewish settlers, while up to 80 <u>Hamas</u> officials -- including eight cabinet ministers -- were arrested in Israeli raids that have decapitated the Palestinian Government.

In a series of dramatic escalations five days after an Israeli soldier was captured, militants have dug into positions in northern Gaza ahead of a likely new invasion, and remaining <u>Hamas</u> leaders have gone into hiding.

The body of settler 62-year-old Noach Moskowitz was found next to a cemetery last night, hours after the remains of 18-year-old Eliyahu Asheri were retrieved from a shallow grave close to the West Bank capital of Ramallah.

For a second night, Israeli jet fighters set off repeated sonic booms above Gaza while artillery and navy ships pounded abandoned farmland in the north. Israeli tank columns and troops were on the move in the south of the isolated strip as negotiations to free captured Corporal Gilad Shalit failed to make progress.

<u>Hamas</u> declared the Israeli moves an "act of war against the Palestinian people" as well as "a grave precedent (and) an international crime", and warned of dire consequences for the dormant peace process.

"This goes against all human moral and democratic values and hurts the will of our people," spokesman Mushir al-Masri said. "The international community must have its say."

Raids across the key West Bank cities of Ramallah, Jenin, Qalqilya and Nablus, as well as the Israeli capital Jerusalem, netted the *Hamas* officials who have been detained as security prisoners.

Most of the detained <u>Hamas</u> politicians were seized after Israeli forces surrounded the Legislative Council building in Ramallah where they were meeting.

Palestinian Deputy Prime Minister Nasser Shaer was among the eight ministers arrested. Together they represent a third of the entire cabinet. Twenty-four MPs were also detained. The Israeli Foreign Ministry said the arrests had been ordered because of alleged links to terror plots. "Their complicity in the events of recent days and in the soldier's kidnapping, as well as their request for a prisoner exchange, proves that the *Hamas*'s main concern is not the lives of the Palestinian people, but rather the implementation of a terrorist policy against Israel."

Militants dig in for Israeli invasion

None of the Gaza-based Government has yet been targeted, but Israeli ministers have warned that Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and exiled Damascus-based <u>Hamas</u> politburo chief Khalid Meshaal are in their sights.

Four Israeli fighter jets caused sonic booms above Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's summer palace late on Wednesday after Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had demanded Damascus hand over Mr Meshaal, <u>Hamas</u>'s highest-ranked figure, who has allegedly stalled attempts to free Corporal Shalit in a bid to use him as a bargaining chip. Air force strikes on electricity transformers on Tuesday night cut power to more than 70per cent of the Gaza Strip and the damage is expected to take up to six months to repair.

The attack on the power plant and repeated sonic booms prompted Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to claim Israel was engaged in "collective punishment" against all Gaza residents. Israel has prevented Mr Abbas from leaving Gaza while the crisis continues.

Before yesterday's arrests, he was intensively involved with Mr Haniyeh in attempts to free Corporal Shalit, who Palestinian officials last night said remained alive and in good health.

The second Israeli kidnapped on Sunday, Eliyahu Asheri, was believed to have been killed shortly after he was seized by West Bank members of the Popular Resistance Committees. The 18-year-old son of a dual Israeli-Australian citizen, formerly from Adelaide, had been shot once at close range. Mr Asheri's father left Adelaide 20 years ago after converting to Judaism.

The White House last night backed the Israeli moves, insisting that Israel had a right to defend itself. The US and the bulk of the international community have labelled <u>Hamas</u> a terrorist government and have refused to deal with it until it recognises Israel.

Mr Olmert insisted Israel did not want to re-occupy Gaza and had invaded the strip 10 months after its forces withdrew, primarily to rescue Corporal Shalit. However, he said the military also had a secondary objective of stopping rocket fire.

MOUNTING TENSION

The Middle East is on the brink of war as Israel demands the return of a kidnapped soldier

SUNDAY

* Palestinian militants kidnap Israeli soldier Corporal Gilad Shalit during an attack on the Gaza border town of Kerem Shalom

MONDAY

- * Kidnappers demand the release of nearly 500 <u>women</u> and children held in Israeli jails in exchange for information on the abducted soldier; Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert rejects any deal
- * Jewish settler Eliyahu Asheri kidnapped

WEDNESDAY

- * Israelis expand a military offensive in an effort to recover the soldier
- * About 750,000 people 65% of the Gaza population go without electricity and running water after an air strike on the territory's only power station
- * In southern Gaza, where the soldier is believed to be held, armed forces move into a disused airport near Rafah and set up an observation post as scores of Palestinians flee
- * Troops and tanks are poised for a thrust into the northern part of the territory, from where militants are firing crude rockets into Israel

Militants dig in for Israeli invasion

- * Israeli warplanes fly low over Gaza as masked militants carrying assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers fan out on streets, preparing mines and taking up positions behind sand embankments in expectation of an Israeli assault
- * In a signal to Syria, home to the exiled leadership of <u>Hamas</u>, Israeli fighter jets fly low over the residence of President Bashar al-Assad near the Mediterranean port of Latakia THURSDAY
- * Israeli forces arrest *Hamas* government officials in the West Bank
- * Thousands of Israeli troops mass near the southern Gaza town of Rafah
- * Militants announce they have killed Asheri, the settler kidnapped on Monday

Source: The Times, agencie

Opinion -- Page 16

Editorial -- Page 17

Load-Date: June 30, 2006



Gaza factions chase peace away: Last year, more Palestinians were killed by internal feuds than by Israeli strikes, writes Stephen Farrell in Gaza. They know the world is wondering if they are ready for statehood after all.

Ottawa Citizen

January 14, 2006 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A12

Length: 930 words

Byline: Stephen Farrell, The Times, London

Body

Five seconds inside Gaza and the Kalashnikovs are already into their death rattle. It is Eid al-Adha, the Feast of the Sacrifice, but this is no celebration.

Two of Gaza's most powerful families are settling a petty dispute in the only way they know how, and the hospitals will be busy again tonight.

Six months ago it would have been Israeli raiding parties trading bullets with Palestinian terrorists. No more. Israel has withdrawn behind the razor wire that fences in 1.3 million Gazans, and it is now Palestinian-against-Palestinian violence that keeps ambulances racing along litter-strewn streets.

This is life in the 40-kilometre coastal strip that was meant to nurture the seeds of a Palestinian state after disengagement, the now comatose Ariel Sharon's last major political act.

But peace is a receding dream for most Gazans, amid a law and order crisis leading up to parliamentary elections Jan. 25.

The kidnapping of foreigners has halted investment and forced out most international aid workers. The United Nations has downgraded Gaza from level three to four (of five), ranking it alongside parts of Iraq.

The Palestinian Authority's weakness feeds violence and, as the new order disappears, older power structures reemerge.

In a semi-tribal society, Gaza's powerful clans -- "the families" -- compete with the militant groups Fatah and <u>Hamas</u> to extort their share of patronage, money and guns, or have been subsumed into them.

Death comes quickly, and on the slightest of pretexts. On Jan. 4 in Gaza City, Rami al-Dalo, a 26-year-old member of *Hamas*'s military wing, ran out from celebrations of his wedding to resolve a dispute.

Fatah election workers had put up their flyers inside a <u>Hamas</u> area, and trouble flared when <u>Hamas</u> did the same. Mr. al-Dalo's brother was beaten and guns came out. Even as mediators assembled, gunfire broke out and the young <u>Hamas</u> member fell dead, his hands still in his pockets.

Gaza factions chase peace away: Last year, more Palestinians were killed by internal feuds than by Israeli strikes, writes Stephen Farrell in Gaza. They know th....

The al-Dalos blame a Fatah family. That family denies it. Both have now retreated to armed camps.

"This is blood. We know who did it. He lives 100 yards away," said Mr. al-Dalo's father, Talal, glowering behind a phalanx of AK47s inside the family's Gaza City sewing factory. Outside, the dead man's distraught mother wails: "The Jews were better. At least they didn't shoot us in cold blood."

As the victim's father fulminates, a far more composed figure begins to speak with the remorseless, unhurried rhetoric of the committed Islamist.

"This is not personal, it is <u>Hamas</u> business," says Dr. Jawad al-Dalo, the ghost of Michael Corleone suddenly entering unbidden from Sicily. "Rami is the son of <u>Hamas</u> and Qassam. He was not killed because he stole or harmed anyone from that family. He was killed because he was one of the most active members of <u>Hamas</u>. That is why we consider this an assault from Fatah. <u>Hamas</u> has taken it on itself to gain revenge by killing his killer."

Hamas has spoken. Everyone falls silent.

The accused, his Fatah guards shivering behind logs smouldering in the rain, laments that he has been wrongly vilified and cannot leave his house.

"I am totally innocent," he tells The Times. "I was trying to calm everything down. I don't know how he was killed, and *Hamas* are using this for their election campaign."

Israel, the international community and Gazans themselves look to the Palestinian Authority, dominated by President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah, to solve the crisis.

But Fatah is the crisis, as even its senior officials admit. Fatah militants, fragmenting under the strain of its first serious electoral challenge, have twice raided Gaza's central election commission headquarters, leaving bullet holes in the stonework and windows.

Fatah's primaries in Gaza were halted after masked thugs burned ballot boxes, and its military wing, the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, threatened to target international election observers.

Even attempts to arrest the kidnappers of the British peace activist Kate Burton were thwarted. Police released Alaa al-Hams from jail, Interior Ministry officials told The Times, because Al Aqsa Brigades allies took over municipal buildings and bulldozed the Rafah crossing, killing two Egyptian security officers.

Last year, more Palestinians were killed by internal feuds than by Israeli strikes, confirmed Tawfiq Abu Khoussa, spokesman for the Ministry of Interior.

"Most of the time the problem starts with the factions, not as family disputes," he said. "But the families back the organizations they are loyal to, which means the families fight each other as their proxies."

In Khan Younis and Rafah -- the wilder southern fringes of Gaza rarely visited by outsiders because of kidnappings -- The Times this week saw sandbags and oil drums stacked as barricades outside the driveways of feuding houses.

Here the Tahas, Masris and other clans fight over jobs, <u>women</u>, animals, drugs and other slights, real and imagined, as the rain turns Gaza into a muddy quagmire.

All agree that Mr. Abbas has acted bravely by forcing his own organization to undergo the shock therapy of unaccustomed elections. His supporters also point to the huge difficulties of reconstructing Gaza after decades of Israeli military occupation.

Fatah is likely to suffer electoral punishment, with Palestinians acutely aware of how the world sees them.

Gaza factions chase peace away: Last year, more Palestinians were killed by internal feuds than by Israeli strikes, writes Stephen Farrell in Gaza. They know th....

"If the Authority doesn't get its act together then the Jews will be right in what they say about us, that we don't deserve a state," sighs Abu Sameh, in Rafah.

"Of course, it hurts when we hear them say this. After the election there are no excuses for not working to make things better. They have to."

Graphic

Photo: Patrick Baz, AFP/Getty Images; Paint is splashed on a portrait of Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, left, with a Fatah poster next to it of assassinated Palestine Liberation Organization deputy leader Khalil al-Wazir, also known as Abu Jihad, and the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Family now fights family, depending on whether they back Fatah or *Hamas*.

Load-Date: January 14, 2006



Israeli army expands Gaza front

The Australian (Australia)

July 7, 2006 Friday

All-round Metro Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 10

Length: 611 words

Byline: Martin Chulov, Middle East correspondent

Body

MATP

<u>HAMAS</u> militants have vowed to launch more rockets at the Israeli city of Ashkelon, which they hit for the first time this week, prompting the military to expand a ground operation into northern Gaza to destroy them.

A large advance of Israeli troops, backed by tanks, helicopter gunships and artillery, has laid siege to an area 1km inside Gaza and is expected to occupy the communities of Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun that have been used by militants to launch hundreds of rockets over the past year.

Skirmishes between <u>Hamas</u> and advancing Israeli forces intensified last night, with reports of two militants killed by tank shelling and nine killed in an airstrike.

The Israeli Security Cabinet led by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert ordered the beefed-up operation after a homemade rocket hit a school carpark in Ashkelon, a city of 120,000 residents that houses a power station supplying electricity to much of southern Israel.

Two more rockets reached the city on Wednesday night, sparking fear across the city that had previously been immune to daily rocket warnings.

"One must not rely on the miracle," Defence Minister Amir Peretz said. "The rocket fired last night illustrated all the more forcefully the need to halt the firing of Qassam rockets. In this context, there is no difference between Ashkelon, Sderot or other Gaza vicinity communities. Any rocket fired at Israel is intolerable and Israel won't tolerate and will do everything to restore calm."

<u>Hamas</u>'s military wing said it was targeting the power station after Israel destroyed the main power station in Gaza on the first night of its invasion last week, cutting electricity to more than 70per cent of homes and businesses. Mr Olmert said the hit on Ashkelon "had changed the rules of the game" and pledged to destroy the new militant cells that boasted the improved rockets.

While tanks and troops mounted increasing incursions into southern and northern areas of Gaza, there has been no progress on attempts to locate captured Israeli soldier Corporal Gilad Shalit, whose kidnapping 12 days ago prompted the military operation.

Israeli army expands Gaza front

Intelligence officials have reportedly drawn blanks through a network of sources in Gaza and attempts to free the 19-year-old have also stalled on a diplomatic level, with Turkish and Egyptian envoys both reporting a breakdown in talks.

A Turkish envoy returned to Istanbul from the Syrian capital, Damascus, yesterday after attempting to persuade Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to apply pressure to exiled <u>Hamas</u> politburo chief Khalid Meshaal, whom his regime hosts.

The exiled leader is seen as being the key to Corporal Shalit's freedom and is accused of stonewalling talks between the Gaza-based *Hamas* political leadership and the militants who seized him.

The <u>Hamas</u> chief left Damascus for a trip to Algeria early yesterday as Mr Assad again raised the prospect of a prisoner transfer to end the crisis.

<u>Hamas</u> also revised its demands, insisting that a "quid pro quo" of <u>female</u> and juvenile prisoners would need to be handed over before Corporal Shalit was freed. Israeli troops plan to create a buffer zone in northern Gaza that could lead to the exodus of up to 25,000 residents, who local media said planned to leave their homes for southern areas.

The military says it will not enter the densely populated centre of the strip, where militants claim to be mounting the vanguard of their resistance.

In Khan Younis, the site of Gaza's biggest refugee camp, the militant offshoot of the Fatah political party, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, claims to have recruited up to 20 **women** who wear suicide belts that they would detonate in the event of an Israeli incursion there.

Load-Date: July 7, 2006



Palestine 'ready to trade' captured Israeli soldier: Negotiators 'near deal' in secret talks as Israel launches helicopter strike on Palestinian leader's HQ

The Observer (London)
July 2, 2006

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The Observer

Section: OBSERVER FOREIGN PAGES; Pg. 26

Length: 901 words

Byline: Conal Urquhart, Gaza City

Body

PALESTINIAN MILITANT sources claimed last night that they were close to reaching an agreement in negotiations over the release of an Israeli soldier. They want a guarantee that Israel will free prisoners at a future date in return for the release of Corporal Gilad Shalit. Palestinians say they accept that Israel will not free any prisoners immediately, but insist they will give up the 19-year-old soldier only in return for a commitment for a future release. Because they have no confidence in Israeli assurances, they stipulate that it must make a commitment to a third party such as Egypt. Israel would also be expected to end its attacks on the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian Deputy Minister of Prisoner Affairs said Shalit had minor injuries but was in a stable condition. Speaking at a news conference in Ramallah, Ziad Abu Aen cited 'mediators' as telling him that Shalit, captured during a raid into Israel by militants last Sunday, had three wounds: 'I guess shrapnel wounds.'

The news came as an Israeli helicopter gunship fired a missile at the Gaza City office of Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh.

An Israeli military spokeswoman confirmed the air strike, but the official of the ruling Islamist militant party *Hamas*, was not thought to be in the office at the time.

Yesterday the three groups holding Shalit said they would free him if Israel released 1,000 Palestinian <u>women</u>, children and humanitarian cases from prison. Mark Regev, of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, rejected the demand, saying that Israel would make no deals. There has been energetic diplomacy to prevent the situation descending into a bloodbath. Ghazi Hamed, spokesman for the <u>Hamas</u> government, said Egypt, Turkey and other governments were mediating and making progress. 'Israel says it will not agree to a simultaneous release, but it will agree to release prisoners in the future. We are looking for a third party, possibly Egypt, to accept a guarantee from Israel that it will respect that they will release prisoners at a later date,' he said.

However, Walid Awad, a spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian President, said 'immense Egyptian efforts' to resolve the crisis were being thwarted by Israeli intransigence and the inability of the <u>Hamas</u> government to exercise any influence on its military wing. 'Ismail Haniyeh, the current Prime Minister, appears not to have any

Palestine 'ready to trade' captured Israeli soldier: Negotiators 'near deal' in secret talks as Israel launches helicopter strike on Palestinian leader's HQ

say in what is going on in this regard,' he said. Awad said Israel was threatening to ramp up military action unless the soldier was freed by midnight Saturday.

But there was no relief for Gaza yesterday as the sonic booms of Israeli attacks from sea and air could be heard every hour. An airstrike on an electricity plant left homes and hospitals without essential power while the World Food Programme, which helps feed about 600,000 people in the occupied territo ries, says that many Palestinians are now living on one meal a day, and there has a been a rise in anaemia and kidney problems due to poor nutrition.

Karen Koning AbuZayd, the head of the UN's relief agency, said there was a humanitarian crisis growing for Gaza's 1.4 million people. 'Gaza is an urban environment but urban life is not functioning. Water is not getting to people in apartment buildings and there is very little power. The situation can better be compared to Sarajevo, although it's not that sort of siege,' she said.

After leaving Gaza 10 months ago, Israeli troops are now dug in around southern Gaza and massed in the north. Israel's re-engagement with Gaza began before dawn last Sunday when eight men from <u>Hamas</u>, the Popular Resistance Committees and the hitherto unknown Islamic Army crawled through a tunnel from Gaza to attack Israeli positions from the rear. They destroyed an armoured personnel carrier and a tank, killing two Israelis and abducting Corporal Shilat. Bedouin trackers, who volunteer for the Israeli army, found the footprints and believe that Shilat was wounded but able to walk unaided.

The Islamic Army appears to be a part of the Popular Resistance Committees, but some Gazans believe it is a new group which draws its inspiration from Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda rather than the quest for Palestinian liberation. For years, Fatah splinter groups have operated independently of its mainstream leadership, but this time it was <u>Hamas</u> that was to be embarrassed by its lack of control of its cadres.

Previously <u>Hamas</u> was a disciplined group which kept disputes internal and spoke with one voice. It decided to enter the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council in January after a lengthy period of consultation.

However, six months in office have left many activists disillusioned by the inability of <u>Hamas</u> to take control of events and the perceived hypocrisy of the Western governments in rejecting the democratic choice of the Palestinian electorate. 'People are very angry and frustrated,' said Yehiyeh Musa, a <u>Hamas</u> member of the Palestinian Legislative Council. 'People have been calling us cowards.'For some in the Israeli government, the abduction of Shilat provided an opportunity to settle scores with <u>Hamas</u>. 'There is a school of thought that believes that an armed conflict with <u>Hamas</u> would be inevitable and this would have happened without the abduction,' said Yossi Alpher, an Israeli strategic analyst.

Israeli army Corporal Gilad Shalit, 19, was captured after Palestinian militants killed two of his comrades.

Load-Date: July 4, 2006



Israel rejects prisoner swap demand

The Australian (Australia)
June 28, 2006 Wednesday
All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 10

Length: 637 words

Byline: Martin Chulov, Middle East correspondent

Body

MATP

ISRAEL has rejected Palestinian demands to swap prisoners for a captured soldier and has warned of an imminent, full-scale invasion of Gaza if he is not freed immediately.

As tanks, troops and naval ships enforced a blockade of the restive strip, a second Israeli was kidnapped -- this time a West Bank settler. His fate remained unknown last night.

A home-made rocket was also fired from northern Gaza into Israel late on Monday, lightly injuring four people.

Last night, the US and European Union were urging a diplomatic resolution to the Gaza crisis, which threatens to cripple the current round of Palestinian factional talks aimed at soothing escalating militancy.

Egyptian diplomats are also heavily involved in negotiations.

Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh also received a call on Monday night from the Pope, who urged a quick resolution.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Mr Haniyeh were locked in discussions yesterday with Gaza-based militant leaders of the Popular Resistance Committees and <u>Hamas</u>'s military wing, the Izzedin al-Qassam Brigades, to win the release of Corporal Gilad Shalit, who was seized near a tank on the Israeli side of the border at daybreak on Sunday. The attack killed two soldiers.

He is the first Israeli soldier to have been seized by Palestinian militants in 12 years and is regarded by Palestinian militants as a valuable bargaining chip in the steadily building conflict.

Corporal Shalit's captors have offered his freedom in return for the release of all <u>female</u> and juvenile prisoners held in Israeli jails -- about 410 people.

<u>Hamas</u>, the Popular Resistance Committees and the Army of Islam, the three groups who claimed responsibility for Sunday's abduction, made the offer in a joint statement.

"The Israeli occupation will receive no information about the soldier unless it promises to immediately release all **female** prisoners," the statement said.

Israel rejects prisoner swap demand

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert quickly ruled out the demand and insisted on an unconditional release.

Mr Olmert warned: "The violence and difficult antagonism which took place obligates us to respond. I am saying now that we will retaliate, and we will respond to every terrorist, to every terror organisation, in every location.

"They know we can reach them even when they think they are protected.

"We are operating under pressure, and therefore we weighed our next moves carefully. But very soon we will launch an inclusive, severe and difficult operation.

"We won't wait forever. We won't turn ourselves into an object of extortion for Hamas."

Mr Olmert is directly blaming the <u>Hamas</u> leadership of Mr Haniyeh and Damascus-based political chief Khalid Meshaal, who Palestinian mediators last night said was opposing moves to free Corporal Shalit.

Reports in the Arabic press said Mr Abbas had warned Mr Haniyeh that Israel would harm him if the soldier were not safely released

As <u>Hamas</u>'s most senior figure, Mr Meshaal has previously been a target of an Israeli assassination attempt, when Mossad officers botched a plan to spray him with a bio-toxin in the Jordanian capital Amman in 1997.

The failed plot forced Israel to offer the freedom of then-jailed <u>Hamas</u> spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin to placate the then Jordanian monarch King Hussein, who was furious the attack had been carried out on his soil.

Mr Meshaal's life was spared after an Israeli doctor administered an antidote. Sheikh Yassin was assassinated in Gaza by an unmanned Israeli drone in early 2004 and Israel also targeted Mr Haniyeh and Foreign Minister Mahmoud al-Zahar before they won political office in the new *Hamas* Government.

Israeli officials could shed no light last night on claims by the Popular Resistance Committees in the West Bank that it had abducted an Israeli settler. The group said it would release more information soon.

Load-Date: June 27, 2006



The Sunday Times (London)
July 2, 2006

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; News; Pg. 18

Length: 1603 words

Byline: Marie Colvin, Rafah

Body

TWO weeks ago Abu Khaled and Hamed were shooting at one another, sworn enemies in the struggle between rival factions of Fatah and *Hamas* for control of the miserable strife-torn overcrowded Gaza Strip.

Last week the two men, both in their early twenties, met in a shrapnel peppered building in Rafah to plot together. Fear of an Israeli attack has made them staunch allies, united by the threat of a common enemy.

If Israel launches an assault on Gaza to rescue Gilad Shalit, the 19-year-old corporal who was kidnapped last Sunday -and who was reported yesterday to be wounded but alive -the southern town of Rafah is likely to be first in the firing line. Its young men are preparing for battle.

"We have reactivated the operations room," said Abu Khaled, 24, a Kalashnikov slung over his shoulder.

This grandiose claim belies the absence of wall maps or computer screens in the operation to co-ordinate Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and Izzedine al Qassam, the military wing of <u>Hamas</u>. Fear of Israeli attacks forces them to meet at night in cars that pull over on potholed streets or in abandoned buildings scarred by Israeli tank and artillery fire.

When <u>Hamas</u> won a spectacular victory in parliamentary elections six months ago the opposing groups tore at each other's throats for influence, jobs and revenge. The militants have now combined forces to produce home-made pipe bombs, prepare booby traps and organise themselves into fighting units.

"Our spirits are high," one fighter said. "We will not permit Israeli tanks to pass in the streets of Rafah. The Israelis should think 1,000 times before they come back here."

The signs of people getting ready for battle are everywhere. Omar Tawil, director of funerals for the Fatah division, has even asked a businessman to rent out his garage-sized vegetable refrigerator as a makeshift morgue in which to store fallen fighters.

It would be a deeply uneven struggle. Just a 15-minute drive down Airport Road, grey Israeli Merkava tanks lie in wait behind new berms that have been bulldozed into position to protect them from Palestinian attacks. However nervous they may be, the Israeli soldiers are well dug in and well equipped with armour, helicopters and artillery.

The tension flared yesterday when Israeli troops looking for explosives skirmished with <u>Hamas</u> gunmen. A rocket-propelled grenade was later fired at the Israelis, prompting a second exchange of fire.

Shalit's abduction has plunged both sides into a confrontation as unpredictable as it was unexpected.

It was triggered by men who came out of a tunnel the Palestinians must have been digging for months. Just wide enough to wriggle through, it ran for almost 1,000 yards under the heavily guarded fence that divides southern Gaza from Israel. On the far side of the fence was the militants' target -an armoured Israeli unit.

Seven armed Palestinians crawled through the tunnel and split up into separate units. Two of them attacked the unit's tank with a rocket-propelled grenade from about 200 yards away. An Israeli soldier in the driver's seat was wounded and lost consciousness.

The commander then ordered his men to abandon the tank, thinking they were being attacked from the Gaza side. But as they jumped from the rear, the soldiers were surprised by the other Palestinian unit, which opened fire with automatic weapons.

The tank officer and another man were killed. Shalit was wounded, apparently in the shoulder and abdomen. Within minutes he had been abducted.

Thus began the crisis that would escalate day by day. For Ehud Olmert, the Israeli prime minister, the stakes could not be higher. When a soldier is taken hostage it touches an exceptionally raw nerve in Israel, perhaps because almost every man and woman serves in the armed forces at some point. They expect resolve and leadership.

Olmert, who has little military experience, responded by warning that Israel would not negotiate and that *Hamas* leaders would be held personally accountable for the soldier's fate.

The <u>Hamas</u> government of Ismail Haniya, the prime minister, is under even greater pressure. Its refusal to disarm, recognise Israel and abide by past agreements has already prompted the international community to slash its funding. Now it is caught in a stand-off with Israel that it appears incapable of resolving.

Meanwhile, life for Palestinian civilians is getting steadily worse.

Izzedine al-Qassam at first insisted it would release the hostage only if Israel freed all Palestinian <u>women</u> and youths under 18 held in its prisons. Next came a demand -swiftly dismissed by Israel -for the release of 1,000 Palestinian prisoners.

Deep divisions emerged between Khaled Meshaal, the hardline leader exiled in Damascus, who insisted that <u>Hamas</u> would not compromise, and the leadership in Gaza, which held to that position in public but prevaricated behind the scenes.

Release the Israeli prisoner, the Gaza leaders calculated, and they would lose political support; keep him and they could lose everything.

Any conflict could spread across the region like wildfire. Israel blames Syria for harbouring <u>Hamas</u>'s exiled leadership and has sent four fighter jets to buzz the summer home of Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian president.

Islamic organisations across the Middle East could be expected to support their fellow radicals in *Hamas*, which many regard as the model for an elected, militant Islamic government.

One man who knows <u>Hamas</u>'s techniques for guarding and concealing their prisoner is Imad Faluji, a senior figure in <u>Hamas</u> when Nachson Waxman, another 19-year-old Israeli corporal, was kidnapped in 1994.

"We gave our fighters holding the Israeli soldier the order that if they heard any suspicious movement outside the house, their first step must be to kill the soldier immediately, without hesitation," he recalled last week.

Israeli commandos stormed the safe house where Waxman was held, but he died in the raid. His fate shows how difficult any Israeli rescue mission for Shalit may prove.

Faluji said his former colleagues would not back down. "They think they are the biggest power in the world," he said as the boom of artillery shells reverberated in the background.

It is scant comfort for the family of Shalit, who was said by a Fatah official to be "stable" after being treated by a doctor for his wounds.

Observers believe the corporal is probably being held in the squalid refugee camp of Khan Yunis on the edge of Rafah, a far cry from the idyllic town of Mitzpe Hila where he was brought up.

His parents, Noam and Aviva, published a poignant letter to their son: "Mom and Dad, Yoel and Hadas (his siblings), are all worried about you very much," it read.

"We believe that whoever is holding you has a family as well, and knows what we are going through."

In Rafah, another young man's family kept vigil. Hamed Rantisi, 20, was one of the Palestinian gunmen killed as he laid down covering fire for Shalit's kidnappers.

In a house off a dirt alley, his mother and brothers sat in mourning staring at a ceiling-high portrait of the "martyr" Hamed. Stickers of martyred friends were pasted to his bedroom door.

His mother Miriam, dressed in the black hijab and chador of mourning, said the family had no regrets.

"When I first heard, like all mothers, I was heartbroken. But the Israelis are killing Palestinians every day. My son could not stand this and I know he is in paradise."

Opinion hardened on both sides as the week wore on. In Gaza, Haniya and his foreign minister, Mahmoud Zahar, spent long hours in the office of Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, seeking help.

"First and foremost, the advice we are giving them is the more you delay, the more difficult the decision gets," said a senior Palestinian source close to the talks.

The truth of those words was borne out as Israel ratcheted up its attacks, rolling tanks into southern Gaza while airstrikes destroyed three bridges and an electricity plant that provides 60% of the Strip's power.

Artillery barrages sent families in the north fleeing and sonic booms from fighter jets sounded every few hours.

Early this morning an Israeli helicopter gunship took the conflict to <u>Hamas</u>'s doorstep, firing missiles at the prime minister's office in Gaza City. The building, gutted by fire, was empty at the time.

"The first mistake <u>Hamas</u> made was in kidnapping the soldier in the first place," said the senior Palestinian source. "Once they had him, they should have returned him immediately. "They didn't understand the basic fact -Israel will not negotiate for prisoners in the West Bank and Gaza."

Releasing Shalit would further undermine <u>Hamas</u>'s popularity -one poll found that 77% believe he should only be released in return for Palestinian prisoners.

However, the main obstacle lies in the looming presence of Meshaal, the exiled leader in Damascus, who became the dominant figure in *Hamas* after Israel assassinated Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, its founder, in 2004.

Meshaal, 50, was born near Ramallah, a West Bank city, but moved to Kuwait at an early age. Never having lived under Israeli occupation, he has little sense of any need for compromise.

If Shalit is freed, there will be strife among the Palestinians as <u>Hamas</u> struggles to retain power. Should he be killed, the Israeli retaliation would be fierce, with untold casualties, civilian and military.

There remained a small glimmer of hope last night. Egypt has dispatched Omar Suleiman, a senior security official, to conduct secret negotiations around a deal that would spare Shalit.

Only then, it seems, would the two young fighters, Abu Khaled and Hamed, be able to avoid a bloodbath.

Jim Hollander Hatem Moussa

Load-Date: July 2, 2006



Captured soldier's letter gives hope

Weekend Australian
September 16, 2006 Saturday
All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 17

Length: 296 words

Byline: Abraham Rabinovich

Body

MATP

Jerusalem

A LETTER from an Israeli soldier being held in the Gaza Strip has reportedly been handed to Israel, the first sign of life from him since his capture almost three months ago, and an indication of an imminent prisoner exchange between Israel and the Palestinians.

Corporal Gilad Shalit's letter, written to his father, was handed over this week by a <u>Hamas</u> delegation in Cairo to Egyptian authorities, the Palestinian Authority's Al-Hayam paper said yesterday.

It was passed on to an Israeli intermediary who brought it to the soldier's father, Noam, in Israel.

Mr Shalit would not comment yesterday but official Israeli sources said there was now confirmation that the soldier was alive and well.

Israel has been besieging the strip since the 20-year-old tank corporal was captured on June 25 by Palestinian militants.

About 250 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been killed since Corporal Shalit's capture, including civilians. Much of the strip's electricity supply has been knocked out, which has also affected the water supply, and crossings into and out of the strip have been closed, bringing economic activity to a virtual halt.

According to reports in the Israeli and Arabic press, Israel would hand over between 800 and 1200 Palestinian prisoners in stages after Corporal Shalit's release.

Israel has apparently reconciled itself to releasing **women** prisoners, juveniles and those who have served more than 20 years.

Israel would also release a number of <u>Hamas</u> legislators taken into custody as "members of a terrorist organisation" -- namely <u>Hamas</u> -- after Corporal Shalit's capture.

A major sticking point in the negotiations apparently was demands by <u>Hamas</u> for the release of a number of militant leaders as well.

Captured soldier's letter gives hope

Israel is holding about 8000 Palestinian prisoners.

Load-Date: September 15, 2006