



Written by on January 16, 2009

## Hamas Rejects Israeli Conditions for Gaza Truce

Meshaal has led the Syrian branch of the Hamas from Damascus since the expulsion of the Hamas leadership from Jordan in August 1999. He is closely linked to Hassan Nasrallah, head of the Lebanese-based Hezbollah organization, which is considered a terrorist organization by the United States, Israel, Canada, and the Netherlands. Hamas is also categorized as a terrorist organization by the United States, Canada, the European Union, Israel, and Japan. It has been banned in Jordan.



At the summit, Meshaal listed the demands of Hamas as: "That the aggression stops, that the enemy retreats completely from Gaza, that the blockade is lifted without ever returning to it, and that the border crossing at Rafah is opened." Meshaal also demanded that only Egyptian and Palestinian forces supervise Gaza's borders.

The French Press Agency (AFP) reported Meshaal's presence at the summit, coupled with the absence of the more moderate, West Bank-based Palestinian Authority of President Mahmud Abbas, "highlights the divisions between the Arab countries, with Qatar and Syria backing Hamas and Egypt and Saudi Arabia supporting Abbas." Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and about 10 other Arab nations stayed away from the Doha meeting, preferring to discuss Gaza at an economic summit due to begin in Kuwait on January 18.

While the Doha summit was being held, AP news reported that an Israeli envoy, Amos Gilad, was holding talks with Egyptian officials to discuss a cease-fire proposal advanced by Egypt. An Egyptian security official, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the talks, told AP: "Signs are encouraging for a breakthrough" in negotiations being held in Cairo to work out a truce.

The Egyptian proposal calls for an immediately 10-day cease-fire, with Israeli forces to remain in place in Gaza and the border crossings closed until sufficient security can be put in place at the crossings to ensure that Hamas does not smuggle weapons into the territory. Israel has demanded a halt to Hamas rocket attacks into Southern Israel. Israel also wants internationally backed guarantees that Hamas will not continue to smuggle weapons into Gaza.

But Meshaal has rejected the proposal and insisted that Hamas will not stop fighting until the border crossings into Gaza are opened. He asked representatives of the Arab nations gathered at Doha to back Hamas and further called for them to boycott Israel.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Syrian President Bashar Assad presented messages supporting Hamas at the Doha summit and backed Meshaal's plea calling for the nations to cut ties with and boycott Israel.



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Also on January 16, UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon met Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian authority, in the West Bank city of Ramallah. During a joint news conference, Ban urged Israel to consider a unilateral cease-fire.

Ban told members of the press that a "unilateral declaration of a cease-fire would be necessary at this time" in order to end the Gaza crisis. "The fighting must stop. We have no time to lose."

Mark Regev, the spokesman for Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, took issue with Ban's statement, telling the media: "I don't believe that there's a logical expectation in the international community that Israel unilaterally cease fire while Hamas would continue to target cities, trying to kill our people."

The outside observer envies neither Israelis, nor those Palestinian people simply trying to eke out a living under difficult conditions. Unfortunately, radical elements such as Hamas and Hezbollah have continually exploited ethnic differences in the region. Their prime strategy is to engage in attacks against Israel in a deliberate attempt to place the Palestinian people in the path of retribution.

It literally will take the wisdom of Solomon to find a solution that will allow Muslims, Christians, and Jews to share lands sacred to all of them while living in peace.

*Photo: AP Images*



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