

American “Conventional Wisdom” versus Reality: What do you really know about Hamas?

The American public, being generally ignorant of the Middle East and fed a constant stream of propaganda portrayed as “news,” has formed a whole series of misunderstandings commonly referred to as “conventional wisdom.” One element of “conventional wisdom” in respect to the Israel/Palestine conflict relates to American misperceptions of Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, that won the 2006 Palestine Legislative Council elections in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The American “conventional wisdom” – fuelled by brazen misrepresentations of reality throughout most mainstream American media – with respect to Hamas is that it is a movement that has absolutely no tolerance for non-Muslims, for secularists, for women in positions of influence, for Westerners, and so on. That is, essentially, that Hamas is in essence no different than the Wahabi extremism of al-Qa’eda. Of course this “conventional wisdom” has no basis in reality whatsoever, simply being the product of *Hasbara* (Israeli propaganda). So how much do you really know about Hamas? Below are ten questions, see how many you get correct. The answers follow.

- 1) Which of the following represent an official statement by Hamas:
 - a) *“The Christian missions are a cancer in the body of the nation and are trying to carry forward the aim of physical liquidation which had been furthered by the Catholic Church since it was established.”¹*
 - b) *“The government also undertakes to protect the rights of every citizen and to firmly establish the principle of citizenship without any discrimination on the basis of creed, belief or religion, or political affiliation.”²*
 - c) *“We are driven by the belief that people of faith have a right and a responsibility to be involved in the world around them. That involvement includes community, social and political action. Effective citizen activism begins with knowledge - and the [organization’s] ability to break down the complexities of politics and convey those issues clearly is what makes us different.”³*

¹ Israeli Supreme Court Judge Binyamin Halevy, Jerusalem Post. 12 December 1977. Cited in L. Humphrey Walz, “The New Israeli Law: Will It Doom the Christian Mission in the Holy Land?”, *The Link*, Vol.11, Issue 2, May-June 1978 <http://www.ameu.org/page.asp?iid=206&aid=250&pg=1>

² Excerpt of the Hamas cabinet platform as presented by Prime Minister-elect Ismail Haniyeh on 27 March 2006. Cited in Khaled Hroub, “A ‘New Hamas’ Through Its New Documents”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.XXXV, No.4, Summer 2006, p.23, <http://www.palestine-studies.org/>

³ Excerpt from the “What We Believe” section of the Christian Coalition “About Us” page as of 30 September 2006. <http://www.cc.org/about.cfm> Excised portion: “Christian Coalition”

- 2) How many members of the current (as of 30 September '06) Hamas-dominated cabinet of the Palestine Authority were educated, at least in part, in the United States of America?
- 1-3
 - 4-15
 - 15-25
- 3) Which of the following statements represents a factual statement by members of the Hamas leadership in respect to al-Qa'eda?
- "You say they're terrorists, I say they're freedom fighters. And I want to instill the same jihadic feeling in our peoples' heart, in the [excised], that they have for their father, who they call Allah."*⁴
 - "Osama bin Laden is a good man. I wish him a long life. He is a good Muslim and he is against the Bush administration, ... Abu Musab al-Zarqawi became a martyr. His death is bad news but I am not sad because he went to paradise, ... They [the Anglo-American forces occupying Iraq] try to destroy my country, its civilization, its culture, its language, its economy, everything, just like the Nazis did in Europe until 1945 and like the Russians did in Afghanistan, ..."*⁵
 - "...we didn't wage war on the US, even verbally. We have never expressed a link with Osama bin Laden and we don't support him." - "There is a fear that is based on historical baggage that Hamas will be the next Taliban. We are not. We have always insisted that our people should be allowed to make choices - not just on who to vote for, but on how to live. We do not recruiting forcibly, but by persuasion. For us, Islam is the answer, but that is not true for everyone."*⁶
- 4) How many women were elected on the "Change and Reform" (Hamas) ticket to office as legislators in the 2006 Palestine Legislative Council elections?
- 1-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-15

⁴ August Kreis, leader of the U.S. white supremacist organization "Aryan Nations." Henry Shuster, "An Unholy Alliance: Aryan Nation leader reached out to al Qaeda" *CNN*, 29 March 2005, <http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/03/29/schuster.column/> Excised portion: "Aryan race"

⁵ Mullah Krekar, former leader of the Kurdish Ansar al-Islam movement in U.S. protected northern Iraq. Quotes from "Muslim leader Mullah Krekar hails Bin Laden and Zarqawi" *United Kurdish Voice*, 23 June 2006, <http://www.kurdmedia.com/articles.asp?id=12705>

⁶ First portion, unnamed Hamas leader and second portion Usamah Hamdan, both cited in Mark Perry and Alastair Crooke, "How to Lose the War on Terror - Part I: Talking with the 'terrorists'", *Asia Times Online*, 31 March 2006 http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HC31Ak02.html

- 5) How many women were named to the new Palestinian Cabinet in the government formed by Prime Minister Haniyeh?
- 1-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-25
- 6) Which of the following statements represents an accurate statement by Hamas on the existence of Israel?
- “Oh Allah, liberate our Al-Aqsa Mosque from the defilement of the occupying and brutal Zionists. Oh Allah, make it high and mighty until Judgment Day. Oh Allah, punish the occupying Zionists and their supporters from among the corrupt infidels. Oh Allah, scatter and disperse them, and make an example of them for those who take heed.”*⁷
 - “We have no objection to the Israelis living together with us here as long as they don’t destroy us for their state. And we will not destroy them for our state. ... We believe Palestine is an Islamic land and that no one has the authority to compromise that right. But despite that, Hamas does not want to destroy Israel. When we have our state we will accept the Israelis in our land as a guest and a nationality.”*⁸
 - “Israel has caused more bloodshed than anyone could have possibly imagined. Decades before the state the Zionist desire to rule over the land led to riots, assassinations and endless death and suffering. To this day the death toll mounts. Both hardliners and soft liners have had their hopes dashed. They have both been behind the wheels of government. And both have failed utterly. Friends, there will be no peace in the Middle East until there is no state of Israel.”*⁹
- 7) How many Christians were named to the new Palestinian Cabinet in the government formed by Prime Minister Haniyeh?
- 1-5
 - 6-10
 - 11-25

⁷ Friday, 15 July 2005, Sermon By Leading Saudi Imam Al-Sudayyis in Mecca, as related by MEMRI, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=saudiArabia&ID=SP93905> NOTE: MEMRI is an integral aspect of the U.S. Hasbara (Israeli propaganda) machine and is radically anti-Islamic and anti-Arab. By selectively excerpting sporadic comments throughout the Middle East and putting the harshest possible spin on questionable Arabic terms and phrases completely out of context they work to vilify the Islamic world. Nevertheless, with but a few episodes, most of their verbatim translations are accurate as such.

⁸ Co-founder, leader, and martyr of Hamas, Ismail Abu Shanab: “Interview: Ismail Abu Shanab” *Middle East Policy*, Vol. VI, No. 1, June 1998, p. 118

⁹ Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss speaking before the United Association for Studies and Research Studies. “Zionism and Judaism – Let Us Define Our Terms” 14 March 2002, <http://www.nkusa.org/AboutUs/Zionism/index.cfm>

- 8) Which of the following comments represent the views of actual Palestinian Christians?
- a) *“These are acutely trying times for the Christian remnant residing in areas ‘governed’ by the Palestinian Authority. ... They have faced virtually uninterrupted persecution during the decade since the Oslo peace process began, living amidst a Muslim population that is increasingly xenophobic and restless. ... Their plight is, in part, attributable to the influence of Muslim religious law (Sharia) on the inner workings of the Palestinian Authority. Moreover, the Christians have been abandoned by their religious leaders who, instead of protecting them, have chosen to curry favor with the Palestinian leadership.”*¹⁰
 - b) *“ Hamas is not the real threat to the presence of Christians, the occupation is. The major reason for the emigration of Christians from the Holy Land is the illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories by Israel. There are other subsidiary factors as the need for housing, employment, education of children, and the growing religious fanaticism on both sides. Therefore, Palestinian Christians work and pray for a permanent peace. Peace can be achieved by tearing down the racist wall and ending the Israeli occupation of all the occupied territories. Palestinian Christians would like to see direct negotiations between the two sides rather than the negation of the Palestinian government because it is led by Hamas. After all, peace is negotiated between enemies and not friends.”*¹¹
 - c) *“Whereas the basic human rights of Christians living under Palestinian Authority rule have been repeatedly violated since the Palestinian Authority took control over major population centers in the West Bank and Gaza; ... Whereas Palestinian Christians whose human rights are violated by Muslims cannot go the Palestinian police out of fear that they will be accused, threatened, or detained; ... Whereas, since the Palestinian Authority took control over the Palestinian people, increased violence that is targeted at Palestinian Christians has led to mass emigration from Palestinian territories; ... Whereas many Christians leave out of fear of greater persecution under a future Palestinian state; ...”*¹²

¹⁰ Justus Reid Weiner, a Scholar-in-Residence at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, a radical right-wing Zionist think tank. From “Persecuting the Holy Land’s Christians” *FrontPage Magazine*, 26 December 2005, <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/ReadArticle.asp?ID=20583>

¹¹ Rev. Naim Ateek of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, “Palestinian Elections: A Christian Perspective” *Joint Advocacy Initiative Magazine*, May 2006
<http://www.sabeel.org/etemplate.php?id=24>

¹² Excerpts from a proposed U.S. House resolution addressing the issue of “Christian persecution” in Palestine based solely on anti-Palestinian sources, devoid of Palestinian Christian input, and generally reflective of the utter ignorance to be found in Congress. “Hotline: Palestinian Christians” *Mennonite Central Committee*, 26 June 2006 <http://www.mcc.org/us/washington/hotlines/Palestinianchristians.htm>

- 9) Would Hamas fighters ever dress up in Santa suits to give presents to Christian orphans suffering under Israeli occupation?
- Yes
 - No
 - Don't Know
- 10) Which of the following is from Hamas?
- "That land which as the Scripture says "floweth with milk and honey," was given by God into the possession of the children of Israel Jerusalem is the navel of the world; the land is fruitful above others, like another paradise of delights. ... This royal city, therefore, situated at the centre of the world, is now held captive by His enemies, and is in subjection to those who do not know God, to the worship of the heathens. She seeks therefore and desires to be liberated, and does not cease to implore you to come to her aid. From you especially she asks succor, because, as we have already said, God has conferred upon you above all nations great glory in arms. Accordingly undertake this journey for the remission of your sins, with the assurance of the imperishable glory of the kingdom of heaven."*¹³
 - "We will also be faithful to Islamic tolerant values. We stress the need to reinforce the spirit of tolerance, cooperation, coexistence among the Muslims, the Christians, and the Samaritans in the framework of citizenship that does not discriminate against any on the basis of religion or creed. At the same time, we emphasize the necessity to work seriously, at the local, Arab, and international levels, and by all means possible, to protect our Islamic and Christian holy places,..."*¹⁴
 - "Scripturally, Jerusalem is the center of the earth. At some point in the future, it will be the ruling capital of the whole world. ... For this reason, Jerusalem has always been the focus of contention among the nations. Today, this observation is more accurate than ever. The battle for Jerusalem is being waged right now. The contestants involve virtually every country on earth, ... To those of faith, the Lord now reigns. ... Until Jesus comes, the world will continue to fight over Jerusalem. Each group has its own delusions about why it should be the entity in control of the ancient city. ... Global authorities may think they can control the ancient spiritual capital, but they have not yet seen the fire of the Lord."*¹⁵

¹³ Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont, in 1095 preaching the First Crusade as reported by Robert the Monk, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2-5vers.html>

¹⁴ Excerpt of the Hamas cabinet platform as presented by Prime Minister-elect Ismail Haniyeh on 27 March 2006. Cited in Khaled Hroub, "A 'New Hamas' Through Its New Documents", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.XXXV, No.4, Summer 2006, p.26, <http://www.palestine-studies.org/>

¹⁵ Gary Stearman "The Battle for Jerusalem Has Begun!" *Prophecy in the News*, November 1996, <http://christianactionforisrael.org/battle.html>

ANSWERS:

Question 1: “b” – see footnotes for sources.

Question 2: “b” – a) “Aziz Dwayk, Speaker of the Palestinian Council, Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania; b) Omar ‘Abd al-Raziq, Minister of Finance, Ph.D. from the University of Ohio; c) ‘Abd al-Rahman Zaydan, Minister of Transportation, Bachelor’s from Alabama State University; d) Wasfi Kabaha, Minister of Prisoner’s Affairs, Bachelor’s from Detroit University. See: “B3. Tenth PA Executive Authority, List of Members and Brief Biographies, Ramallah, 28 March 2006” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.XXXV, No.4, Summer 2006, pp. 164-167

Question 3: “c” – see footnotes for sources.

Question 4: “b” – specifically, six women were elected to office on the Hamas slate. See: “Palestinian Legislative Council Elections: Final Report by the Canadian Observation Mission to West Bank and Gaza - March 2006” <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cidaweb/acdicida.nsf/En/ANN-61412365-MGL?OpenDocument#10>

Question 5: “a” – specifically 1: Maryam Saleh, a refugee from Bayt Nabala (near Lod) born in Dayr ‘Ammar refugee camp. She holds a Ph.D. in Islamic Law and teaches at both al-Quds University and the Open University of Jerusalem. In 1996 she established the Huda Association for women. She was named Minister of Women’s Affairs.

Question 6: “b” – see footnotes for sources

Question 7: “a” – Specifically 1: Judeh Marqus of Bethlehem was named Minister of Tourism and Antiquities.

Question 8: “b” – see footnotes for sources

Question 9: “a” – See: Yasser Al Banna, “In Santa Outfit, Hamas Members Mark Christmas” *Islam Online*, December 2003, <http://www.islamonline.net/English/News/2003-12/25/article01.shtml>

Question 10: “b” – see footnotes for sources

BIO NOTE: John Sigler is an activist with the Colorado-Palestine Solidarity Campaign (<http://colorado-palestine.blogspot.com>) based in Denver, Colorado as well as other related projects such as Jewish Friends of Palestine.