

Stein, Kenneth W. " Hamas," January 18, 2007.

Kenneth W. Stein, Emory professor of Middle Eastern history and political science and director of Emory's Institute for the Study of Modern Israel, responds to the inaccuracies in former President Jimmy Carter's *Palestine: Peace not Apartheid* each week

**This week's issue:** Carter seeks to make Hamas a moderate and reasonable negotiating partner ready to talk peace with Israel. He cleanses its reputation with deftly chosen quotations, carefully placed words, verbal acrobatics and a multitude of omissions. He exaggerates its willingness to make compromises with Israel. While he acknowledges that Hamas is an "Islamic militant group that *opposed* recognition of Israel, perpetrated acts of violence, ... I [Carter] urged them ... to forgo violence" (Page 144). Notice Carter's use of the past tense. Carter omits that Hamas believes all of Palestine belongs to the Muslims, and a Jewish state has no right to exist in any part of it. He says nothing about the enormous contribution of Yasser Arafat's cronyism or corruption in creating Palestinian economic destitution, nor does he mention the population explosion in Gaza that has contributed to driving down per capita income. Instead, Carter blames Israel (Page 176). Israel's intransigence is a dominant theme of Carter's book.

Carter lies by telling the reader that Hamas is not responsible for any terrorist acts since August 2004 (Page 184). Does Carter believe that the more than 350 Israelis killed at the hands of Hamas before that date don't count? Who remains responsible for firing Qassam rockets into Israel? Who kidnapped Gilad Shalit and killed two other Israeli soldiers in June?

Carter does not inform the reader that the United States, its Western allies, and Palestinian and other Arab writers condemn Hamas for not renouncing terrorism, for not accepting a two-state solution and for not recognizing previous Palestinian agreements with Israel. He claims that Hamas is a supporter of a 2002 Arab negotiating initiative, which is false; Hamas cannot accept it because it calls for a two-state solution. Carter pleads the case for Hamas because its candidates won a Palestinian election he monitored in January 2006. In meetings with Middle Eastern politicians, I have heard Carter ask that terrorism and violence be ended, but simply asking does not change their reputations or policies.

**What Carter has said:** Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said his government was "ready for a dialogue with members of the Quartet, ... supports peace talks between Israel and Abbas, ... accepts the Road Map in its entirety" (Page 159). "Hamas would [notice the tense] modify its rejection of Israel if there is a negotiated agreement that the Palestinian people can approve (as specified in the Camp David Accords)" (Pages 186 and 213).

An agreement that the Palestinians can approve? Does that include the right of return to present-day Israel? What does Carter think is acceptable to Hamas? And for the record, the Camp David Accords never specified that the Palestinians could approve any negotiated agreement — another blatant falsehood.

**Implications of Carter's view:** Carter intimates that Hamas is “ready for a dialogue” with everyone except Israel. It is ready to talk to the Quartet and is prepared to support talks between Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israel. Those are Carter inventions. The quotations from Hamas leaders and Arab commentators show that the Hamas answer is not negotiations with or recognition of Israel. Carter, the once and want-to-be mediator, desperately needs to show Hamas is “adequately flexible”; otherwise, negotiations will never restart.

- For the origins and ideology of Hamas, which rejects Israel and a Jewish state, see my Hamas entry in Microsoft's *Encarta Encyclopedia*.
- Boycott of Hamas by Western governments — Hamas must renounce violence and terrorism, accept Israel's right to exist, and disarm its militias. As a reaction to the Hamas legislative victory in the January 2006 elections, the U.S. State Department and the Quartet insisted that those preconditions be met before foreign aid would flow to the Palestinian Authority. Carter says those are U.S. prerequisites but omits that they are required by the international community as well (Page 186).
- Hamas' belief that Israel is vile — At a Hamas convention in Khan Yunis, Palestinian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Al-Zahar said: “Israel is a vile entity that has been planted in our soil and has no historical, religious or cultural legitimacy. We cannot normalize our relations with this entity. The history of this region has proven that occupation is temporary. Thousands of years ago, the Romans occupied this land and left. The Persians, crusaders and English came and went. The Zionists have come, and they too will leave. [We say] no to recognizing Israel, regardless of the price we may have to pay.” (*al-Ayyam*, Oct. 21, 2006)
- Hamas will never negotiate with Israel — Haniyeh said in Tehran on Dec. 8, according to the BBC monitoring service, “We will never recognize the usurper Zionist government and will continue our jihadist movement until Bayt al-Maqdis [Jerusalem] and the Al-Aqsa Mosque are liberated.” When Carter was asked by a Denver radio host on KHOW on Dec. 14, 2006, whether that is what Haniyeh said, Carter replied: “No, he didn't. No, he did not do that. I did not hear that” — a falsehood on Carter's part.
- The Palestinian contribution to the Palestinian economic problems — Dr. Ahmad Salih, Haniyeh's political adviser, said: “Acts of systematic looting [by Arafat's regime] have led to a high deficit in the Palestinian economy and have entangled the PA in debts amounting to about \$2 billion at a time when the money coming to the PA from abroad covered all the requirements needed for current expenses or the construction and development of infrastructure installations or building a strong national economy.” Salih added that the Hamas government “has inherited a heavy burden as a result of the rampant corruption.” (*al-Ayyam*, April 20, 2006)
- Hamas rejects a two-state solution — Says a Palestinian writer: “The problem with Hamas' political platform is its rejection of the principle of the two states on the historical land of Palestine and the proposal of the principle of a long-term truce if Israel

withdraws to the lines that existed prior to the June [1967] war. Consequently, Hamas is openly announcing to the world that the Israeli withdrawal, if it takes place, does not constitute an end to the conflict but rather postponing it. This position cannot be accepted internationally, and certainly Israel cannot accept it. On the contrary, this position gives the international community the justifications to turn its back to us and gives Israel enough pretexts to refuse withdrawal and continue its attacks and unilateral solutions. Hamas' political platform is political suicide and cannot constitute the basis for any political agreement among all the national work factions." (Muhammad Yaghi, "The Dispute Over the Two-State Principle Will Be Settled by a Referendum," *al-Ayyam*, June 4, 2006)

- Hamas' attitude toward a truce with either the PA or Israel — Hamas leader Muhammad al-Zahhar said: "If Hamas enters the government, it is ready to accept a long-term truce and keep the conflict open. The issue does not necessarily have to be settled by this generation. There are countries that remained under occupation for long years. Therefore, if our generation cannot act, it must not make concessions." (al-Jazeera satellite television, March 20, 2005)

- Hamas is negative toward the Arab 2002 initiative —

- (a) Hamas political bureau head Musa Abu Marzouq said: "Hamas has serious reservations about the initiative since it involves acceptance of two states, Palestine and Israel. Hamas rejects this because it means recognition of Israel." (*al-Ayyam*, Sept. 18, 2006)

- (b) "Hamas leaders are holding on to their ideological agenda. Anything but the liberation of the whole of Palestine is suspicious to them. They don't accept the Arab initiative, declared in Beirut in 2002, which offers Israel full normalisation in return for its full withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories. Hamas is not listening to Arab mediators. President Mahmoud Abbas has endorsed the Arab initiative. But Hamas is refusing a two-state solution, and Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh keeps speaking of a 'truce.' One wonders what Hamas wants exactly. Is Hamas calling for new military campaigns to liberate the rest of the land? Seemingly, Hamas is still acting as a resistance movement with undying ideals, not as a government that responds pragmatically to matters of policy." (Ibrahim Nafie, *al-Ahram Weekly*, Oct. 19-25, 2006, Issue No. 817)