Anonymous
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An analysis
July 15th 2024

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should approach national liberation struggles and Islamic anti-colonial movements will become even more pressing than it is today. To avoid catastrophe and achieve liberation for all, it will be crucial that we develop a strong anti-racist and anti-islamophobic culture in our ranks, that we mature a complex understanding of Islamic anti-colonialism, and that we are ready to employ our best pragmatism and dynamism.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of all members of the collective

challenges, we can offer to contribute to the common ideological growth of the movement: we can encourage constructive internal discussions on the contradictions of the Palestinian struggle – for instance, the Iranian support to the Palestinian guerrilla – while at the same time accepting to walk with those contradictions.

Our perspective can be even more long-term and far-reaching. Since October 7th, the Palestinian fight against colonialism has changed the course of the struggle in our countries. For millions of people, the level of awareness and the motivation to act has surged. Anti-imperialist consciousness has become widespread. US hegemony is no longer seen as inevitable, while the so-called Western civilization has once again revealed what it really stands for, for everyone to witness: *"the enslavement, exploitation and genocide of large groups of the oppressed people of color and indigenous people of the world"*[72]. The inextricable links between gobal capitalism and Israeli colonialism have been exposed like never before. Countless people in the West have developed an unprecedented consciousness of the legitimacy of resistance.

It is crucial that anarchist organizations work on consolidating these milestones, organizing the momentum, and establishing ourselves as a natural ally to everyone fighting against oppression. In the next years, as Western influence is challenged worlwide and the contradictions are heigthened, the ruling class will likely intensify (neo-)colonial violence abroad and openly embrace fascism domestically. National and religious lines are likely to become central to the conflict between states and their populations, and all signs point towards an ever-increasing weaponization of Islamophobia by the elites to 'divide and rule' the working class. Not so far in the future, the issue of how Western anarchists

[72] Ervin, Lorenzo Kom'boa. *Anarchism and the Black revolution* - The definitive edition. Pluto Press (2021)

In the West, it is practically impossible to speak publicly about Hamas in any way that isn't an outright and total condemnation. Behind such remarkable limitation of the spectrum of public debate lies the idea that Hamas represents an "evil" so deep that it lacks any complexity. In parliaments, universities and newspapers, Hamas is never discussed, simply because – it is assumed – there is nothing to discuss. The idea that Hamas is simply a "terrorist" group that wants nothing but death and destruction has become public and common knowledge among the social and political elites, a fact so well-established that it doesn't even need to be argued for.

Western radical leftists have unfortunately not been immune from this logic of misrepresentation and thought censorship. Whether through internalization of state propaganda, anti-arab racism and islamophobia, or due to ideological dogmatism, before and after October 7th many leftists have dismissed Hamas with little-to-no argumentation. Hamas gets brushed off as "reactionary" and "anti-semitic", and is characterized as an obstacle in the way of Palestinian liberation. This dismissal is often accompanied by baseless statements repeated over and over again, such as the notion that Hamas has no real support among Palestinians, or that the group was created and funded by Israel to undermine the Palestinian struggle, or again that Hamas has no regard for Palestinian lives and Palestinian liberation, and all it wanted to achieve with its October 7th attack was to provoke Israel into killing as many Palestinian civilians as possible.

In some cases, leftists will even go further and completely mirror the most inane islamophobic tropes and talking points of state propaganda. One such example is represented by the article "Capitalism's Death World", published on "Internationalist Perspective" last October. The article begins by equating Hamas to Al-Qaeda, stating that *"Both [...] are guided by an Islamist ideology, based on myths of a glorious past and an even better future in heaven"*. It continues, stating that Hamas has

"utter contempt for human life, including sometimes their own. They are a clear expression of the death culture that capitalism in this epoch produces." Again, these ready-made phrases are given as "established facts" that everyone accepts, and hence they do not need to be supported with arguments. The fact that they belong to the collective imagination of the worst islamophobic right, and that they are repeated almost word-by-word by the supporters of Israeli colonial violence should alarm us all.

This piece has two aims. The first aim is to present some elements to help leftists in the West better understand Hamas. At this point, a disclaimer is in order: I have no scholarly expertise on Hamas. My limited knowledge comes from the literature on the movement that I have been reading, publicly available primary sources (official statements and interviews) and conversations with Palestinian and Arab comrades. The elements I will present here are by no means an exhaustive account of the history, politics and philosophy of the movement. They are just meant to highlight some important aspects which are often ignored. The conclusion that I hope will come out from this part of the article is clear: Hamas is a movement of national liberation. Its stated aims are to fight the settler-colonial project that is Zionism and to achieve national self-determination for Palestinians. Hamas is a movement-party; it uses a variety of methods – from mass mobilization, to participation in liberal democracy, to armed struggle – to achieve its goals. Its political leadership has demonstrated to be both pragmatic and resolute. As every national liberation movement in history, Hamas is a complex phenomenon with no shortage of oppressive tendencies and contradictions.

The reader will notice that in the article I don't reference many important topics. For instance, this article says almost nothing about Hamas's role in reproducing patriarchal oppression in Palestine, or Hamas's relations with repressive and authoritarian regional actors, such as the Iranian regime.

Islam is an integral part of the Palestinian resistance. As K., a non-religious Palestinian comrade, once told me, Islamic faith and practices are part of the Palestinian identity that Israel has been trying to annihilate, and upholding them is a way for Palestinians to resist genocide. "If I had a son, I would force him to go pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque and defend it from Israeli invasions", she concluded.

As pointed out by my comrade A., without appealing to Islam's principles and teachings, we would hardly be able to understand the dignity of Sumud (steadfastness) that emanates from the Jordan Valley and the South Hebron Hills, the celebration of the Shuhada' (martyrs) that empowers Palestinian freedom fighters in the refugee camps, the patience and the surrender to God that gives strength to thousands resisting in the occupation's jails.

Let us finally try to honestly approach the complex phenomenon that is Islam in the context of national liberation struggles. Let us abandon our fear of religion and our internalised islamophobia, and let us welcome the role that the Islamic faith plays in the lives and resistance of our brothers and sisters around the world.

2.3 Conclusion

> *"We are not liberating Palestine. Palestine is liberating us."*
>
> - Slogan of the Palestine solidarity movement.

When anarchists manage to overcome these difficulties, they have much to offer to the Palestine solidarity movement. Anarchist groups can show the merits of democratic organizing, act as a bridge with the labour and the environmentalist movement, and strengthen the anti-capitalist tendency of the solidarity movement. Finally, once we recognize theoretical

zational dualism still apply. Anarchists must be determinedly active members of the movement, focusing on practical contributions aimed at genuinely supporting the Palestinian struggle. This entails walking with the contradictions, including the role of Hamas in the resistance, and avoid engaging in public ideological arguments hoping that these might convince someone of our rightousness – which they hardly ever do. In fact, as I argued in the previous subsection, anarchists must recognize that when it comes to Palestine, it is us who desperately need ideological contamination from anti-colonial solidarity struggles.

Going back to the example of France, as I said participation from diaspora communities is built around shared experience of anti-colonial resistance. Slogans such as "L'Algérie a vaincu, le Vietnam a vaincu, Palestine vaincra" (Algeria has won, Vietnam has won, Palestine will win) and "De Nouméa a Gaza, résistance!" (From Nouméa to Gaza, resistance!) mobilize thousands of people because they evoke sentiments of national pride and the interconnectedness between anti-colonial struggles. Anarchists must learn to support and celebrate these sentiments, rather than dismiss or ignore them.

The same goes for the role of religious identity, which remains another Achilles' heel for anarchists. I have talked to muslim comrades who have confided that they feel alienated by the anarchists' attitude towards Islam in the Palestinian struggle. Let's be clear. Proclaiming our support or preference for a "secular Palestine" and a "secular Palestinian resistance" is yet again a demonstration of our lack of groundedness in the Palestinian struggle, and simply exposes our uneasiness with the role of Hamas in the anti-colonial front. In contexts of widespread islamophobia, such stances isolate our organizations from the communities at the forefront of the struggle and, more importantly, they contribute to the narrative of the oppressor.

These are terribly important topics, but they are secondary for the purpose of this piece. I am not trying to give good and bad marks to Hamas, whatever that might mean. What I am trying to do is much more basic: to show that Hamas's way of functioning and operating, its tactics and strategies, are those that we would find in any other national liberation movement. Therefore leftists should understand it and address it as such. Hamas does not warrant the exceptionalism, the over-simplification and the misconstruction with which it is often approached.

This brings me to the second aim of this article, which is to sketch a response for the question: What does this mean for anarchists / libertarian communists in the West? Clearly, none of us are likely to ever need to answer the question of how to materially respond to Hamas in our own geographies. This is a question that our Palestinian comrades have to navigate[1]. However, a rigorous understanding of Hamas is extremely important for us, I argue, for the following reasons: 1. to move us forward in our work of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle; 2. to help us better understand national liberation struggles, particularly those fought against settler-colonial projects, and our role in (solidarity with) them; 3. To prepare ourselves, theoretically and practically, for a present-future in which national and religious lines will become even more central to the struggle between states and their populations.

Some quick notes and definitions before starting. In the text I frequently use the expression "political pragmatism/dynamism": what I mean by this is the ability of an organization to adapt to difficult circumnstances and focus on the best path to achieve its objectives. Throughout the text I use the terms "libertarian communist" and "anarchist" interchangeably: who I mean to address with these terms are essentially

[1] Fauda and Black Rose - Rosa Negra: *Voices from the frontline against the occupation: Interview with Palestinian Anarchists*

anarchist-communist revolutionaries that are favourable to organizations. In the context of Palestine, I also use the terms ”national” and ”(anti-)colonial” somewhat loosely, essentially equating ”national liberation struggle” and ”anti-colonial struggle”, or ”national oppression” and ”colonial oppression”. Given that the Palestinian national oppression is colonial in character, I don’t see this equivalence as problematic for the purpose of this article. All emphases in the quotes were added by me.

1 Reading Hamas as an anti-colonial movement

> *”The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) is a Palestinian national liberation movement that struggles for the liberation of the Palestinian occupied lands and for the recognition of Palestinian legitimate rights.”*
>
> - From the document *”This is what we struggle for”* (late 1990s), Hamas’s response to a request by a European diplomatic mission in Amman for an explanation of Hamas’s objectives, values, and ideals.[2]

1.1 Hamas: a movement

Whether we like it or not, we can’t deny the fact that Hamas is a political and social movement. It has developed its own political philosophy, largely drawn from that of the Muslim Brotherhood, grounded in ideas of political and socio-economic emancipation of the disenfranchised masses and of moral and spiritual regeneration based on a particular reading of the Muslim holy texts. Since the public announcement of

[2] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within.* New York (2007).

to contribute constructively to that material reality, it will continue to be valued as an anti-colonial force, both by Palestinians and people standing in solidarity. And if anarchists use the Palestinian struggle as an opportunity to proclaim and measure what ideological principles distinguish them from everyone else, they will hardly be regarded as comrades.

My suggestion is that anarchist organizations reconceive their role in the solidarity movement through the lense of **organizational dualism**, a concept developed in the theory of anarchist strategy known as Especifismo [29, 30]. Organizational dualism is the idea that the terrain of struggle can be broadly separated into two levels: **the popular level** is represented by mass movements such as labour and rent unions, student movements and community centers. These movements do not unite people based on ideological convergence, but rather based on a shared practical objective – usually, satisfying a need. In the case of labour unions, for example, the shared objective is to defend and improve the workers’ wages and working conditions. As long as this objective is achieved, workers might be less concerned about how it is achieved: through a revolutionary anarcho-syndicalist union or through a reformist and bureaucratic one. **The political level**, on the other hand, is represented by the work of a specific anarchist organisation (SAO), which is focused on the broader project of bringing down capitalism and the state and building a revolutionary society. The SAO has the objective of supporting the mass movements in their struggles, strengthening their revolutionary and democratic tendency and repelling attempts by reformists and authoritarians to co-opt these movements. The SAO militants understand that the best way to carry out this work is not through ideological discussions, but rather through genuine participation in the struggle of the movement, and hence showing by example the merits of anarchist practices.

The Palestine solidarity movement is of course different from a labour union, but some of the main lessons of organi-

- there is good reason to believe that at least some formulas and slogans that anarchists have proposed for Palestine are either based on a misunderstanding of settler-colonialism, or not materially applicable at the present time to the Palestinian struggle.

- When Western anarchists highlight their opposition to Hamas, they do so not out of practical concern for the chances of success of the Palestinian struggle, but out of necessity to maintain ideological consistency. Anti-colonial struggles are ugly affairs. Many anarchists have fallen into the pitfall of expecting Palestinians to be either ”perfect victims” or ”perfect revolutionaries”[71]. Ultimately, many of us are simply unwilling to deal with the discomfort of substantial contradictions. Therefore, we try to resolve the cognitive dissonance by misrepresenting Hamas, attempting to deny that it is a legitimate force that fights for Palestinian liberation, by qualifying our solidarity (we support the Palestinians, but…), or yet again by asserting that the entire Palestinian national liberation struggle is misguided because of its inconsistency with anarchist ideology.

To these we must add another crucial consideration: anarchist organizations are unlikely to have a significant and positive impact in the Palestine solidarity movement if they insist on points of ideological divergence. In France, where I live, the Palestine solidarity movement is participated and led largely by diaspora communities. Their support for Palestine is strongly motivated by anti-colonial and anti-racist consciousness, as well as by religious and national identity. The movement is rightly concerned first and foremost with the material reality of the Palestinian struggle for liberation, not with a contest of ideologies. As long as Hamas is perceived

[71] Goner, Ozlem. *Internationalism Beyond the Geopolitics of States and Principled Solidarity in ”Complex” Situations: Kurdish and Palestinian Solidarity*. Jadaliyya, 24 October 2023

its foundation in 1987, Hamas has used a wide spectrum of tactics and strategies to pursue its objectives. It has a mass popular base, which it mobilizes through strikes and mass demonstrations. This popular base has been been built through Hamas’s decade-long dual power strategy, which included the establishment of a system of movement-linked institutions that serve the poor: schools, hospitals, clinics, community outreach programs, women’s centers, youth centers, homes for the elderly, centers for vocational training, Islamic committees in Gaza’s refugee camps. Sara Roy, author of the book *”Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza”*, categorizes these institutions as either traditional/nonactivist or developmental/activist: *”the former tended to focus on addressing the basic needs of individuals and families—where institutional initiatives were defined by need, not vision—while the latter emphasized civic empowerment through community participation and were inspired by a longer, more articulated view.”*[3]

Hamas is also characterized by a nuanced understanding of the role of political violence in the resistance against Israeli colonialism. Since its electoral turn in the early 2000s, Hamas has also engaged in elections as a tool of struggle. Both these aspects will be outlined in the following sections.

The movement is structured into 4 constituencies: West Bank, Gaza, the prisoners in the occupation’s jails, and the refugee camps in the diaspora. Each constituency is represented by a Shoura – a consultative body whose members’ identities are kept secret – and each Shoura elects a 15-member executive politburo. All 4 Shouras have to be consulted before the movement takes any major decision. The Shouras also elect a national Shoura Council, an organ with representatives from the 4 constituencies, which periodically elects a national Politburo.

[3] Roy, Sara. *Hamas and civil society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist social sector*. Princeton University Press (2014).

In her book *"Hamas: from resistance to government"*[4], Paola Caridi reports that Hamas's famous organizational resilience to Israel's relentless campaigns of arrests and assassinations is due to a considerable extent to the contribution of one man: Musa Abu Marzouq. Born in Rafah refugee camp in 1951, Abu Marzouq was president of the national Politburo when, in 1990, he was charged with the task of rebuilding the movement's structure following a massive wave of arrests which brought the newly-born Hamas to its knees during the First Intifada. Since then, Hamas's ability to withstand repression seems to boil down to two elements: First, a strong link between the leadership in Palestine and the leadership abroad – originally based in Jordan, Kuwait and Syria but now largely located in Lebanon and Qatar following the deterioration of relationships between Hamas and the Syrian regime during the Arab Spring. The leadership abroad could therefore manage the movement in Palestine during periods of harsh domestic repression. Secondly, a strong focus on Hamas's grassroot support in Gaza – the movement's stronghold since its inception – which has guaranteed a continuous influx of militants and leaders.

1.2 The myth of Hamas as a "creation" of Israel

A common myth about Hamas is that the movement is a "creation" of Israel, and that it has been maintained by the occupation to undermine the secular Palestinian resistance. This narrative has become popular in some left-wing groups, with some comparisons being drawn with the United States's support for the Mujahedden in Afghanistan, and the consequent "blowback" following the Taliban's challenge to US power. I see this narrative as an attempt by leftists to resolve a certain cognitive dissonance: "I support Palestinians, but not Hamas. Therefore, it must be the case that Hamas is not a genuine Pales-

[4] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government.* Seven Stories Press, 2012.

ing projects of annexation and ethnic cleansing of the West Bank have marked an escalation in the colonial conflict. Such escalation has drastically reduced the hopes that peaceful resistance and mass strikes will be central to Palestinian liberation. When workers strike, they rely on two factors: 1. their ability to paralyze (parts of) the capitalist economy, 2. the fact that the ruling class will generally be unable/unwilling to respond with outright murderous violence. Both these elements have been increasingly absent in Palestine. Similarly, solidarity from anti-zionist Israelis is extremely marginal, and likely to become even more so.

This does not mean that the Palestinian struggle is bound to become merely a bloody war between a guerrilla force and a nuclear power governed by religious fanatics. Hopefully, mass mobilizations and democratic popular power will win significant victories for the Palestinians. Equally, we hope that more and more Israelis will abandon Zionism and hence actively undermine the colonial project. But if anything, what this means for us anarchists in the West, is that we should stop engaging the Palestine solidarity movement as if we had solutions that Palestinians are responsible for not having implemented, and as if they were in any way liable for the lack solidarity from Israeli workers and the level of violence in the conflict. Engaging in conversations with Palestinians and the communities at the forefront of the solidarity movement in the West, without preconditions and without paternalistic attitudes, is the only way we can go forward in our understanding of the Palestinian struggle and the relevance of anarchist formulas to it.

2.2 Palestine solidarity and anarchist organizations: some practical points

The picture I have painted so far is the following:

- the Palestinian struggle is rich of contradictions with respect to anarchist practice and ideology.

and the colonized people is as unlikely as solidarity between capitalists and workers:

"In a colonial country, it used to be said, there is a communality of interests between the colonized people and the working class of the colonialist country. ***The history of the wars of liberation waged by colonized peoples is the history of the non-verification of this theory.*** "[68]

Fanon's comment on the historical unattestedness of such solidarity is corroborated once again in the case of Palestine[69].

The nature of settler-colonial conflicts, and the peculiarities of each colonial situation, also determine the tools of the struggle. In the case of Palestine, for example, labour strikes have arguably become less effective since the time of the First Intifada, given the decreasing reliance of the Israeli economy on Palestinian labour. This is remarkably different, for example, from the case of apartheid South Africa, as explained by the NYSJP:

"While the indigenous South Africans were used as a cheap, exploitable labor source [...], Zionism has no need for Palestinian labor [...] While there are many Palestinians from the West Bank who work within israel's borders, israel is facilitating a growing importation of foreign labor from countries from the former Soviet Union, the Philippines, China, Thailand, etc."

The authors, who were writing in 2015, concluded that *"looking at the last massacres in Gaza, and the ever-growing settlement project, it's clear than israel's plan for Palestine is nothing less than expulsion and genocide."*[70]

The shift of Israeli politics to the religious far-right – what Pappe calls the victory of the State of Judea over the State of Israel – the current genocidal assault on Gaza and the ongo-

[68] Fanon, Frantz. Pour la révolution africaine. Paris: Maspero, 1969.

[69] Awad, Sumaya and Thier, Daphna. *In Israel, Zionism Prevents Working-Class Solidarity*. Jacobin, 4 April 2023

[70] New York City Students for Justice in Palestine. *The BDS Ceiling*. nycsjp.wordpress.com, 4 October. 2015.

tinian liberation movement". As far as I can tell, the narrative of Hamas as a creation of Israel is fully rebuked in the scholarly literature on the movement. Every Palestinian I have ever talked to about this issue, including those that do not support Hamas, told me they found such narrative ludicrous.

Just as many misconceptions, this myth is based on a factual basis that has been badly misread. It is true that before the foundation of Hamas, Islamist organizations were tolerated, and often even favoured by the Israeli occupation, which granted them licenses and provided funds to open socioreligious charities and community centers. The Mujamma al-Islami, a charity founded in 1973 by the Palestinian branch of Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza and that is often described as the "precursor" of Hamas, was among these centers. Until the 1980s, Islamist organizations, including those linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, had no aspiration to get involved in the resistance against the occupation: rather, they were entirely concerned with the socio-religious sphere. Their objective was to offer a self-conscious interpretation of Islam as a way to heal the trauma of the Nakba and the occupation in Palestinian communities: to re-center Islamic values within families, the private sphere and society; to rebuild social cohesion and stability with institutions that could aid people in poverty, offer healthcare and childcare, and settle legal disputes. The Israeli occupation responded to this phenomenon with a policy of "non-intervention", drawn up by Moshe Dayan: *"the intention was to be responsive to Palestinian wishes, allowing them freedom to enjoy their nonpolitical institutions as far as these institutions remained consistent with Israeli rule and posed no threat to it"*[5].

At the same time, several members of the Muslim Brotherhood who saw Palestine solely as a religious cause, a land that would be part of a future khalifate, were opposed to Islamic or-

[5] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within*. New York (2007).

ganizations participating in the resistance against the occupation, arguing that true liberation could only come with the religious and moral regeneration of Palestinians in the personal and societal spheres. Israeli authorities looked favourably upon such views. Seeing that the Islamists seemed exclusively concerned with social reform programs rather than fighting the occupation, Israel endorsed some of these organizations hoping that they would undermine the popular support for resistance forces such as Fatah and the PFLP.

However, since 1979 young members of Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine had been driving efforts to shift the organization towards the path of resistance. Following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the discussion became compelling. With the massacres of Sabra and Shatila, the expulsion of the PLO from Beirut, and the creation of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad – an Islamist resistance group inspired by Khomeinism – pressure mounted on the Muslim Brotherhood:

"Having outflanked the nationalist and leftist forces within Palestinian society, the Islamists now faced the criticism that while others had been making sacrifices resisting the occupation, they had restricted themselves to social and educational services. Their detractors went so far as to accuse them of brokering a deal with the occupation authorities."[6]

After extensive consultations and disagreements, particularly from the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, in 1982 a group led by, among others, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Khaled Mishal, Musa Abu Marzouq and Abd Al Aziz Al-Rantisi started working on a secret organization that would become the 'operational' branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, with the explicit goal of resisting the occupation. Hamas – the Islamic Resistance Movement – was created. The organization remained mostly secret – even within the Muslim Brotherhood – until its public announcement in 1987. In this period

[6] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within.* New York (2007).

Settler-colonial oppression is significantly distinct from class oppression, but a parallel between the two can perhaps help in understanding the differences.

In class conflict, the interests of the ruling class – to exploit the labour of others – and those of the working class – to take democratic control over labour – are irreconciliable. This means that generally, solidarity between the oppressor and the oppressed is impossible, if not even non-sensical. The class conflict, which has historically been marked by bloody and ferocious episodes, ends when the system that upholds the interests of the ruling class is destroyed. Members of the oppressing class can then give up on pursuing those interests and accept to become full-fledged members of a free and democratic society in which their interests count as much as those of others, no more and no less.

While the opposing interests in class conflict are over control of labour and means thereof, settler-colonial conflicts are mostly about the very existence of people on the land: the interest of the colonizer is – as Ilan Pappe puts it – to take control over as much of the land as possible with as few indigenous people as possible. This interest is pursued, depending on the level of constraints on violence, through genocide, ethnic cleansing, expulsion, various forms of demographic control, dehumanization, and cultural erasure. The interest of the native is to stop and reverse this process.

Just as the class conflict ends when the system that upholds the interests of ruling class (the state, the capitalist economy) is destroyed, the settler-colonial conflict ends with the destruction of the system of interests that upholds the colonial project (its ideology, its control over the land and the lives of the natives) – or with the elimination of the indigenous population.

From the perspective of colonial interests, the working class of the settler-colonial project and its ruling class are thus structurally aligned. Therefore, solidarity based on commonality of interests between the working class of the colonialist country

colonialism in North America, the colonization of Palestine is driven by an ideology based on ethno-religious supremacy, which holds that the settlers have an exclusive, god-given right to the land, to its wealth and to security, while the very humanity and existence of the indigenous population is vehemently denied. This characteristic makes class lines secondary at best, obsolete at worst, as Fanon eloquently puts it:

"Within a nation, it is classic and banal to identify two antagonistic forces: the working class and bourgeois capitalism. ***In a colonial country, this distinction is totally inadequate.*** *What defines the colonial situation is the indiscriminate character of foreign domination.* ***The colonial situation is first and foremost a continuous military conquest,*** *reinforced by a civil and police administration. In Algeria, as in all colonies,* ***the foreign oppressor is opposed to the native as a limit to his dignity, and is defined as an irreducible challenge to national existence.*** *The status of the foreigner, the conqueror, the Frenchman in Algeria is the status of an oppressor. The Frenchman in Algeria cannot be neutral or innocent. Every Frenchman in Algeria oppresses, despises, dominates."*[67]

For this reason, Fanon argues, calling for class solidarity between the working class of the colonizing country and the colonized is a "paradoxical position". Unsurprisingly, during the Algerian war of independence Fanon chastised French left-wing parties, which created party sections in colonized Algeria and kept "the same slogans, programs and modes of struggle" as in metropolitan France, showing complete unawareness of the fact that the French working class and its purpoted representatives were nonetheless maintaining their role as part of the colonial project.

[67] Fanon, Frantz. Pour la révolution africaine. Paris: Maspero, 1969.

of underground activities, the movement started consistently participating in and organizing acts of "civil resistance, including boycotts and clashes with Israeli soldiers", such as the June 1986 protest, called by the Islamic faction at Birzeit University, which resulted in 22 casualties, including two killed[7]. Hamas's involvement in the popular resistance and its efforts to set up a military wing provoked immediate repression from Israel. By 1984, many Hamas operatives had been arrested while trying to acquire weapons. The Israeli army had also managed to put behind bars Ahmed Yassin, suspecting him of being the mastermind behind the new resistance movement. Following the public announcement of the movement during the First Intifada, thousands of militants were arrested. In 1989, after Ahmed Yassin had been arrested once again, Israeli jailers tortured his son in an adjecent cell for several days, eventually getting Yassin to confess to his role in founding Hamas[8].

Hamas has never been the "Taliban" of Israel. The US funded and armed the Mujahedden so that they would fight the Soviets as a US proxy. Israel, on the other hand, never supported Hamas to fight or otherwise undermine the Palestinian resistance. Rather, Israel tolerated and sometimes endorsed Islamic social institutions – which preceded Hamas – hoping that these indigenous religious organizations would push Palestinian society to abandon the path of resistance, which at that time was undertaken by secular organizations largely based outside Palestine. Once the Islamist "galaxy" in Palestine produced Hamas – that is, a resistance movement fully dedicated to the fight against the occupation – Israel striked it as hard as it could.

Indeed, throughout the years Hamas has become predominant in Palestinian politics, while secular and left-wing orga-

[7] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within.* New York (2007).

[8] Chehab, Zaki. *Inside Hamas: The untold story of militants, martyrs and spies.* Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007.

nizations such as Fatah and the PFLP have lost much of their influence. This is due to a range of factors, too complex to discuss here, which includes the fall of the Soviet Union, Fatah's collusion with the Oslo accords and the corrupted Palestinian Authority, and the rising influence of Iran in the region.

In the next section, I reference Hamas's political pragmatism and dynamism, in both objectives, strategies and tactics. I take this to be further evidence that Hamas is a political movement that adopts the framework of national liberation struggles.

1.3 Internal debate, pragmatism, and the *hudnas*

Hamas is known for bitter internal discussions on all issues, including on the role of armed resistance, diplomatic efforts, reconciliation with other Palestinian factions, participation in elections, negotiations with Israel, and the targeting of civilians. These discussions have brought the movement to take different turns throughout the years, from the acceptance of a Two-state solution on the 1967 lines with the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees, to the escalation of armed resistance that forced Israel to evacuate its settlements in the Gaza strip, the several proposals for decade-long truces with Israel (always rejected by the Israeli side), the 2005 decision to stop suicide bombings, and the electoral turn in the early 2000s.

The movement adopts a version of "democratic centralism". Major determinations are made through a process of "collective decision" – that is, after full consultation with the four constituencies. To obviate to the problem of irregular communication, a single constituency may make important determinations that concern the whole movement, but these must then be adopted by the four constituencies as a whole. Once a deliberation

2. Insisting that Palestinians should abandon armed struggle and instead focus solely on non-armed resistance methods, such as labour strikes, and/or building unity with Israeli workers.

3. The notion that the national liberation struggle is a red herring, and that the "real enemy" of the Palestinians is "the Palestinian, Israeli and international burgeoisie" and/or "the Israeli state".

4. The notion that Israelis and Palestinians are victims of a conflict created and orchestrated by imperialist powers for their own interests.

5. The notion that Hamas and Israel both represent burgeois states fighting a war of competing nationalisms of which Israeli and Palestinian civilians/workers are uninvolved victims. That is, equating the struggle between Palestinian resistance factions and Israel to "burgeois wars" such as the First World War.

A real understanding of settler-colonialism is needed to avoid such theoretical shortcomings. In Fanon's seminal work, settler-colonialism is described as a form of primordial oppression that somewhat precedes the imperatives of primary accumulation and class exploitation:

"Colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence."[65]

In an article titled "The BDS Ceiling"[66], New York Students for Justice in Palestine similarly argue that *"the colonization of Palestine is primarily an ideological endeavour, rather than a capitalist-imperialist exploitation of the market."*

Israeli colonialism is not driven by a desire to exploit the Palestinian working class. Just as the in the case of settler-

[65] Fanon, Frantz. Pour la révolution africaine. Paris: Maspero, 1969.

[66] New York City Students for Justice in Palestine. *The BDS Ceiling*. nycsjp.wordpress.com, 4 October. 2015.

of oppression that intersect but do not coincide with class oppression, such as racism, colonialism, patriarchy, homophobia. These advancements have come first and foremost from the contact with movements and revolutionaries at the forefront of these struggles. Personally, I can point out the influence of the indigenous movements in Abya Yala, such as the Mapuche struggle in Chile and the Zapatistas in Mexico, the Kurdish movement, Black anarchist Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin and anti-colonial icon Franz Fanon.

With respect to national liberation and colonialism, I take two major lessons to be fundamental:

1. colonial-national oppression is an "objective reality", as Price puts it, that cannot be reduced to class oppression. If an oppressed people wins the struggle against colonial-national oppression, it will not have achieved total liberation, but it will have achieved *a liberation*. This liberation is a victory of major proportions, usually bringing about substantial improvements in the condition of the oppressed, and undermining the project of domination everywhere – following Kanafani's dictum cited at the beginning of the section. As such, anarchists ought to support anti-colonial national liberation struggles regardless of how likely they are to take a strict libertarian communist character.

2. Anti-colonial national liberation struggles are rich in complexities and contradictions. They also often involve forces that do not share our views of liberation, but that are still central to the struggle for liberation from colonialism. These complexities cannot be approached productively if we maintain ideological rigidity and insist on formulas that hardly apply to national liberation contexts (if at all).

I take the following to be some examples of unsuitable formulas motivated by ideological rigidity and confusion:

1. Calls for class solidarity between Palestinians and Israelis.

tion is made, *"everyone is committed to abiding by it, irrespective of their own positions"*[9].

Azzam Tamimi, author of *"Hamas: a history from within"*[10], reports in detail about some of Hamas' internal discussions. For instance, in December 1995, a Hamas delegation from Palestine met with a group of disapora Hamas leaders in Khartoum to discuss whether the movement should participate in the 1996 Palestinian elections and whether Hamas should abandon armed struggle. This discussion took place in the immediate aftermath of the Oslo accords signed by Israel and the Fatah-dominated PLO. As is well known, Hamas rejected the accords. The movement was facing an Israeli campaign of assassinations and arrests, while the newly established Palestinian Authority (PA), whose responsibility under the agreement was to disarm Palestinian armed factions and quell resistance against Israel, repressed those protesting against the continued Israeli colonization in the Occupied Terrirtories. Regarding the Khartoum meeting, Tamimi describes *"heated discussions"* that lasted for 4 days and 4 nights: *"Some of the delegates from inside Palestine had been strong proponents of both a halt to military activity and participation in the election. They had become convinced that the peace process would bring a solution to their existing problems if given a chance, but that an end to all violence and cooperation with the Palestinian Authority were required [...]. The opponents of participation argued at the time that, according to the Oslo Accords, the Israelis retained the final say on what fell within the remit of the PLC (Palestinian Legislative Council, the PA's parliament)"*.[11]

During the debate, several delegates who had advocated for participation in the elections and an end to armed struggle changed their position, and the participants agreed *"not unan-*

[9] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government*. Seven Stories Press, 2012.

[10] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within*. New York (2007).

[11] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within*. New York (2007).

imously but with a comfortable majority" against the participation in the 1996 elections and that *"the decision whether to intensify, moderate, or qualify the level of resistance should remain the prerogative of the movement, which would assess the situation and take appropriate action."*

At the end of the vote, Tamimi concludes, *"all accepted that the meeting had been conducted in a fully democratic manner."*

Hamas's leadership has, throughout the years, shown a high level of political pragmatism and capacity to adapt to circumstances to achieve its goals. Its willingness to negotiate with Israel on a variety of issues speaks to this pragmatism. Although we are used to hearing news pundits claim that Hamas's "refusal to recognize Israel's right to exist" sabotages all attempts to reach a solution to the conflict, it is Israel who in fact has repeatedly refused to recognize Hamas as an interlocutor. Israel also engages in assassination campaigns that target Hamas's leaders with the clear purpose of sabotaging ceasefire proposals between Hamas and Israel, and national reconciliation agreements between Hamas and its secular rival Fatah.

For instance, Ahmed Al-Ja'bari, a commander of the Qassam brigades (Hamas's military wing), was killed on the November 14th, 2012: up until then, Al-Ja'bari was playing a crucial role in negotiations to agree on a 15 years truce with Israel and the lifting of the Israeli siege on Gaza. This was revealed by Gershon Baskin, an Israeli academic who worked as a backchannel between the Israelis and Hamas. After Al-Ja'bari's assassination, Baskin wrote an article in the New York Times titled *"Israel's shortsighted assassination"*, which stated: *"Mr. Jabari wasn't just interested in a long-term cease-fire; he was also the person responsible for enforcing previous cease-fire understandings brokered by the Egyptian[s]. Mr. Jabari enforced those cease-fires only after confirming that Israel was prepared to stop its attacks on Gaza. On the morning that he was killed, Mr. Jabari received a draft proposal for an extended cease-fire*

oppression; every people [have the right] to be itself... no one is entitled to impose its customs, its languages, and its laws."[61]

Kropotkin recognized the reality of national groups and oppression based on nationality, and put these concepts at the center of anarchist internationalism:

"True internationalism will never be attained except by the independence of each nationality, little or large.... If we say no government of man by man, how can [we] permit the government of conquered nationalities by the conquering nationalities?"[62]

Specifying the distinction between chauvinistic "patriotism" and the just struggle for national self-determination, Malatesta wrote:

"we deplore the strife between peoples and champion the fight against the ruling classes. But if, by some misfortune, the clash were to erupt between one people and another, we stand with the people that are defending their independence".[63]

Malatesta continues, referencing the Italian invasion of Libya and expressing his support for the indigenous struggle against foreign domination:

"Now that today's Italy invades another country [...] it is the Arabs' revolt against the Italian tyrant that is noble and holy. For the sake of Italy's honor, we hope that the Italian people, having come to its senses, will force a withdrawal from Africa upon its government: if not, we hope that the Arabs may succeed in driving it out."[64]

Since the time of classical anarchism, libertarian communists have learned to recognize and fight against forms

[61] Price, Wayne. *National Self-Determination, Internationalism, and Libertarian Socialism.* The Anarchist Library, 8 November, 2017.

[62] Price, Wayne. *National Self-Determination, Internationalism, and Libertarian Socialism.* The Anarchist Library, 8 November, 2017.

[63] Malatesta, Errico. The method of freedom: an Errico Malatesta reader. AK Press, 2014.

[64] Malatesta, Errico. The method of freedom: an Errico Malatesta reader. AK Press, 2014.

This speculative approach is probably clichéd and certainly oversimplified, but it is based on the views I have seen expressed by anarchist organizations and comrades.

In the next sections, I attempt to elaborate a position of dissent from this approach, and offer some elements to develop an alternative.

2.1 On National liberation Struggles and settler-colonialism

In this section I would like to focus particularly on the characteristics of settler-colonialism, and the difficulty to understand this phenomenon from the position of Western anarchists.

I take as a starting point the view expressed by Wayne Price's in his article *"National Self-Determination, Internationalism, and Libertarian Socialism"*[60]. The article argues that national oppression is a real form of oppression that does not coincide with class oppression. Libertarian socialists should support the struggles for national liberation as a democratic demand, and our support should not be conditional on the oppressed people accepting our own program, namely a classless and stateless society.

As Price shows, this position follows clearly from the writings of classical anarchists, such as Kropotkin, Malatesta and Bakhunin, who identified national oppression as a despicable form of hierarchy, and indicated that anarchists should participate in struggles for national liberation. Bakunin already highlighted the detestability of cultural oppression, stating his *"strong sympathy for any national uprising against any form of*

[60] Price, Wayne. *National Self-Determination, Internationalism, and Libertarian Socialism*. The Anarchist Library, 8 November, 2017.

with Israel, including mechanisms that would verify intentions and ensure compliance. This draft was agreed upon by me and Hamas's deputy foreign minister, Mr. Hamad, when we met last week in Egypt."[12]

This was only one of the multiple occasions in which Hamas has expressed its willingness to reach a *hudna*, a truce with Israel. Hudna is recognized in Islamic jurisprudence as a legitimate agreement for the cessation of hostilities for an agreed-upon period of time. As a religious-legal concept that finds its origins in the life of Prophet Muhammad himself, the respect of the terms of a hudna is considered a most serious religious duty for all muslims. Hamas leaders have considered the full spectrum of possibilities sanctioned by the hudna: in its most limited form, a hudna could mean a commitment from both sides to spare civilians. In its most comprehensive form, it would mean a complete end to hostilities for a period of decades. Tamimi reports that in Hamas's vision, the concept of a long-term hudna could be at the very base of a permanent resolution to the conflict:

"Another scenario prevalent within the thinking of some Hamas intellectuals is that the world situation will change so much that Israel, as a Zionist entity, may not wish, or may not have the ability, to continue to exist. In principle, there is no reason why Muslims, Christians, and Jews could not live together in the region in future as they lived together before for many centuries. [...] The post-Israel scenario, which has become a subject for debate within Hamas, is one that envisages a Palestine, or a wider united Middle East, with a Jewish population but no political Zionism. This is a vision inspired by the South African model of reconciliation that ended apartheid but allowed all the country's communities to continue to live together. In Hamas's thinking, Zionism is usually equated with

[12] Opinion | Israel's Shortsighted Assassination - The New York Times (nytimes.com)

apartheid, and its removal is seen as the way forward if Muslims, Christians, and Jews are ever to coexist in peace in the region. It would be impossible for such a scenario to translate into reality without ***a long-term hudna****, which for the lifetime of an entire generation would offer communities and peoples in the region the opportunity to restore normality to their lives."*[13]

This perspective is representative of the opinion of leading Hamas officials. In 2006, Sheikh Mohammed Abu Teir, Hamas's number two candidate in the elections, told a Lebanese journalist that Israel and a Palestinian state could live side by side "at least for a generation or two"[14]. Ten years earlier, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin had told the same journalist that Hamas was ready to negotiate a long-term hudna as an intermediate solution to the conflict.

Such long-term hudna would entail the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops and settlers from the 1967 territories and an establishment of a (temporary) Palestinian state within those borders. Hamas has long been ready to accept this interim solution because, contrary to the case of the Oslo accords, the issue of the recognition of Israel would not arise:

"Hamas cannot, as a matter of principle, accept that land seized by Israel from the Palestinians has become Israel's. Hamas has no authority to renounce the right of the Palestinians to return to the lands and the homes from which they were forced out in 1948 or at any later time. It can, however, say that under the present circumstances the best it can do is regain some of the land lost, and secure the release of prisoners, in exchange for a cessation of hostilities.[15]

Hamas has never stopped reiterating its commitment to the full liberation of Palestine, from the river Jordan to the Mediterranean sea. It has, however, maintained a certain level of ambi-

[13] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within.* New York (2007).

[14] Chehab, Zaki. *Inside Hamas: The untold story of militants, martyrs and spies.* Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007.

[15] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within.* New York (2007).

own benefits, and it is not a "pawn" of Israel or the West created to undermine the Palestinian struggle.

At this point, what is needed is a framework to define how anarchists should respond to these facts. More precisely, what I attempt to answer in this section is the following questions: how should anarchists in the West respond to 1., 2., and 3.? How should 1.,2. and 3. shape how we approach the Palestinian struggle for national liberation, and particularly the solidarity movement in our countries?

Some anarchists might react to 1., 2. and 3. with a sound "and so what?". These anarchists might elaborate, claiming that whatever kind of organisation Hamas is, it is incompatible with anarchist principles and methods, and therefore belongs to the camp that we oppose.

Given this consideration, anarchists' strategy of engagement with the Palestine solidarity movement might be summarized as follows: "The front of Palestinian national liberation is currently led by forces that we oppose. Still, it is a struggle against oppression. Additionally, the Palestine solidarity movement in the West mobilizes people fighting against various forms of oppression: diaspora communities, racialised people, politicized workers and students. Therefore, the role of anarchist organizations in the West should be to participate in the solidarity movement to win over people to our ideas. We need to point out the pitfalls of national liberation movements, such as: the lack of focus on class struggle, the prevalence of armed struggle methods at the expense of democratic mass mobilizations, the role of national and religious identity, and the aspiration to achieve a state. We need to offer our alternatives – for example, class unity between Palestinians and Israelis, anti-statism and anti-nationalism – and ensure that the solidarity movement rejects Islamist forces like Hamas and recognizes that such forces undermine the Palestinian strife."

"two-state solution" steps, and possibly abandoning the path to join the PLO and its attempts to get rid of the status of "pariah" for the West. Instead, Hamas might focus on drawing its regional allies into a more direct, long-term confrontation with Israel.

2 How should libertarian communists in the West materially respond to this?

> *"Imperialism has laid its body over the world, the head in Eastern Asia, the heart in the Middle East, its arteries reaching Africa and Latin America. Wherever you strike it, you damage it, and you serve the World Revolution…The Palestinian cause is not a cause for Palestinians only, but a cause for every revolutionary, wherever he is, as a cause of the exploited and oppressed masses in our era."*
>
> - Ghassan Kanafani, Palestinian revolutionary and spokesperson for the PFLP.

The previous section hopefully established that:

1. Hamas is an anti-colonial movement, and a movement of national liberation. It sincerely believes in popular mobilizations, armed struggle, political participation in liberal democracy, and diplomacy. It is also characterized by internal debate and political pragmatism.

2. Hamas currently holds a major role in the Palestinian struggle

3. its significance is unlikely to decrease in the foreseeable future.

Hamas is not a fundamentalist militant group like ISIS or Al-Qaeda. It's also not an opportunistic political elite that betrays and sacrifices the Palestinian people and its aspirations for its

guity on the so-called "Two-state Solution", both in statements and actions. What lays behind this ambiguity seems to be a long-term vision for liberation that passes through an intermediate stage in which Palestinians, relying on the broad international support for a two-state solution, obtain a fully independent and contiguous state on the 1967 lines, while refusing to recognize the legitimacy of the Zionist occupation of the 1948 lands. Hamas's political strategists probably contemplate the fact that, given the current international context and the strong military asymmetry in the conflict, a partial liberation of Palestine might be the only realistic victory in the medium-term. Following the achievement of a state in the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinians could then continue the struggle for total liberation by relying on the advanced tools available to states. After all, the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel would undoubtedly never be able to resolve some of the most pressing issues created by Zionism, notably the Right of Return, economic exploitation and the claim to natural resources such as water basins. In this second stage of the struggle, Palestinians could also trust on time to play against Zionism: demographic shifts within Israel, and a changing international arena in which Western imperialism is increasingly challenged, could in the long-term make the the end of the Zionist project inevitable, ideally with very little bloodshed.

Of course, this is likely only one of the paths forward that Hamas leaders are contemplating. But as shown in Section 1.5, this blueprint for the struggle has been somewhat inscribed in the movement's most important document, namely the new charter of 2017.

Let us go back to Hamas's attempts at reaching a long-term hudna. The first such attempts date back to the the early 1990s. In Feburary 1994, Musa Abu Marzuq, then the head of Hamas's Poltiburo, made reference to a hudna with Israel in an article

published in the Jordanian weekly Al-Sabeel[16]. In April of the same year, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, one of Hamas's founding members and spiritual guide of the movement, was visited in his prison cell by by Israeli intelligence officers who hoped to get him to publicly denounce the suicide bombings that were being carried out by the Qassam brigades. The "martyrdom operations" had started in response to the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre of February 25th, 1994, in which American-Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein opened fire on a crowd of Palestinians as they were praying in the Hebroni mosque, killing 29 and wounding 125. Suicide bombings had never been used by a Sunni group like Hamas before, although they had been employed in the 1980s by the Iranians during the war with Iraq and Lebanese Shi'a groups against Western and Israeli troops. In Palestine, they became the deadliest, most shocking tool of retaliation and deterrance in the arsenal of the Qassam brigades, which carried them out usually in response to violence against civilians or targeted assassination of Hamas's leaders.

Sheikh Yassin did not condemn the martyrdom operations, but proposed to his Israeli visitors to start negotiations for a hudna[17]. In her book, Caridi reports that three years later, in September 1997, King Hussein of Jordan personally reported to Israeli high officials that Hamas was ready to offer a thirty-year truce. *"But Israel was not interested in truces"*[18], Caridi concludes. *"There is no evidence to suggest that the Israelis have ever taken the offer of hudna seriously"*[19] echoes Tamimi.

Hamas has also declared shorter unilateral truces – such as a 50-days hudna in July 2003[20]. Israel's refusal to reciprocate

[16] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within.* New York (2007).

[17] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within.* New York (2007).

[18] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government.* Seven Stories Press, 2012.

[19] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within.* New York (2007).

[20] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government.* Seven Stories Press, 2012.

resistance. Time will tell whether such unity will be able to withstand the latest attempts to undermine it. Overall, the resilience of Hamas in Gaza speaks to the fact that for years, the movement has built a level of control over Gazawi society not merely through repression, but through skillful governance and networks of alliances that made it the most reliable actor in the Strip.

This is undoubtedly the beginning of a new phase for Hamas, in which the movement has irrevocably lost control over the only territory it governed, the Gaza strip, but having re-established its role as the major resistance force in Palestine, with approval among Palestinians having soared. It is clear that Hamas's military wing is still able to fight throughout the strip – despite Israeli claims that it has destroyed 20 of Hamas's 24 brigades in Gaza – and military analysts, including US american and Israeli ones, concede that there is no hope for Israel to achieve a real military solution to the conflict, no scenario in which Israel achieves its goal of "destroying Hamas". Even the possibility of eliminating the leadership in Gaza would likely represent only a temporary setback. The political leadership of the movement is relatively safe abroad, and Hamas's history shows that it is capable of promptly replacing martyred leaders.

Hamas might be at a cross-road. On one hand, the political leadership keeps signalling its aspiration to achieve a temporary two-state solution in line with UN resolutions and international law. A proposal that Israel has repeatedly said it will never consider.

The escalation of the colonial project is undoubtedly making the prospect of a intermediate solution involving a Palestinian state more and more unfeasible. It is possible that Hamas, once it is forced to abandon the role of administrator in Gaza and the political pragmatism that comes with it, will become more propense to privilege military pressure as a way to achieve the full liberation of Palestine, without intermediate

Israelis attack and leave, the government comes back the next day an organises the distribution of services."

Hamas faced three major challenges to its governing authority during the war. The first challenge came in January, when Israel tried to strike a deal with individual tribal leaders in Gaza to run their areas, sidelining Hamas. This was clearly rejected in a statement from the Supreme Authority for Palestinian Tribes, which told the Israelis that any deal on post-war Gaza governance would have to go through Hamas. The second attempt to unseat Hamas was designed by Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Shin Bet and Majed Faraj, the PA's intelligence chief. In March 2024, PA intelligence agents entered the Gaza Strip disguised as security for an aid convoy. Some of them arrived to Al-Shifa hospital, and provided intelligence that led to the Israeli invasion of the hospital. Most of the group stayed in Rafah and tried to set up headquarters in the building of the Palestinian Red Crescent, allegedly to build an armed force in the southern Gaza Strip consisting of families that do not support Hamas. The plot was discovered and Hamas arrested 10 PA agents.

Finally, in May the Egyptians have invited delegations of the PFLP and PIJ to Cairo for separate consultations, most likely with the intent of sowing divisions between resistance forces and pressuring Hamas to accept a deal for the release of Israeli captives without a permanent ceasefire. In Gaza, so far fighters from the different factions have been operating together under the so-called "Joint Command". The Joint command was created after Hamas's military leadership was released in the 2011 prisoner exchange and returned to Gaza. Yahya Sinwar then worked to convince the military wings of the other factions in Gaza to operate under the same chain of command, rather than as separate units. The cooperation between the armed resistance wings of Hamas, PFLP, DFLP, Fatah, PIJ and others is not only a major military achievement, but also encourages unity between the political wings of the

these unilateral truces has undoubtedly led many in the movement to lose faith in their usefulness.

Hamas is often depicted as fundamentalist and dogmatic group motivated by nothing but hate and religious fanaticism. In reality, since its inception the group has been characterized by impressive political pragmatism to pursue Palestinian national rights. In her book, Caridi reports a 2007 interview with Mahmoud A-Zahhar, then Foreign minister of Hamas's government in Gaza. A-Zahhar recalls when, in March of 1988, while he was in an Israeli prison, he was forced to meet with Shimon Peres – who was then Israel's Foreign minister. Peres asked A-Zahhar how to "solve" the Intifada, which had been raging for 4 months. A-Zahhar offered Peres a proposal consisting of three points:

"Declare that you Israelis are ready to pull out of the West Bank and Gaza; [secondly] place the Territory under the control of a neutral authority in order to minimize our suffering and end the occupation. Thirdly, the Palestinians would have to choose a representative by means of an election [...] to continue negotiations with the Israelis. We in Hamas, I told him, are not ready to negotiate independently, because what we are talking about concerns the national interest".[21]

A-Zahhar reports that Peres expressed immediate willingness to discuss the Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, but added that discussions on East Jerusalem would have to wait. *"And I told him that it would be very difficult to find anyone among the Palestinians who would accept this [arrangement] – Jerusalem should be first".* In a poorly veiled jab at Fatah, A-Zahhar concludes: *"I made a mistake at the time, because the Israelis did find someone who was not only ready to delay discussions about Jerusalem, but someone who was prepared to abandon it forever".*

[21] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government.* Seven Stories Press, 2012.

Hamas also navigates diplomacy with the pragmatism typical of anti-colonial movements – which are as we know condemned to fight terribly anti-symmetric conflicts where even a small positive change in the international arena can be extremely significant. For instance, in June 2009, Obama held a speech in Cairo University in which he recognized that Hamas could have "a role to play in fulfilling Palestinian inspirations [...]". Following years of complete isolation from the West and staunch Bush-era islamophobic rhetoric, Hamas's leadership sensed the opportunity, and publicly welcomed the *"change in the American tone and rhetoric towards the region and Islamic world"*. The statement, delivered by senior leader Khaled Meshal two weeks after Obama's speech, also warned: *"We evaluate any change in an objective manner. [...] The effect of rhetoric is temporary. We are looking for change in the policies on the ground"*[22].

In the following months, Hamas attempted to open a direct channel of communication with the new US administration on multiple occasions, with very little response from the American side, proving once again that a change of president does not mean a change in policy.

Even in Hamas's social sector, ideological work is paired with much-needed pragmatism. In her book on Hamas and civil society[23], Sara Roy reports of her visit to an Islamic community center in Gaza, where the chair of the center's board, "a well-known Hamas official", asked her whether she had any contacts with USAID, openly showing an interest in applying for a grant from the US government's aid agency. Roy's book goes on to show that this was hardly an isolated case among Hamas-affiliated institutions in Gaza, which does not come as

[22] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government*. Seven Stories Press, 2012.

[23] Roy, Sara. *Hamas and civil society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist social sector*. Princeton University Press (2014).

of someone else, or a mindless act opposed by the wider colonized population:

"Thus, the [Haitian] revolution was "an unfortunate repercussion of planters' miscalculations," the Al-Aqsa Flood was the result of Israel's "yearslong cascade of missteps," "it did not aim at revolutionary change," it did not aim at decolonization, "it was not supported by a majority of the slave population," it was Hamas acting alone and the Palestinians did not support them, "it was due to outside agitators", Iran instigated it, "it was the...consequence of various conspiracies connived by non-slaves [...]"[58]

Going back to the moral level, I personally espouse Norman Finkelstein's perspective as the most basic standpoint to hold: you don't condemn a slave revolt, no matter how gruesome and unbearable. You don't condemn atrocities committed by a people who tried everything, from elections, to mass peaceful demonstrations, to putting trust in diplomatic pressure, and all they have ever received back is more bombs, more starvation, more targeted assassinations, more torture, more siege, more imprisonment, more dehumanization, more complicity. All while a few kilometers away, settlers are living on the ruins of your villages, of your grandparents' childhoods, of your ancestors' graves[59].

1.9 What future for Hamas?

Nine months in this genocide, Hamas has shown a shocking level of resilience. S. points out that even with the destruction, Hamas has been able to retain significant control over local governance: Hamas administrators have managed to keep in check the level of looting and price-jacking. "Every spot the

[58] Alikhan, Zubayr. *The unthinkability of slave revolt*. Mondoweiss, 8 February, 2024

[59] Abu Sitta, Salman. *I could have been one of those who broke through the siege on October 7*. Mondoweiss, 4 January, 2024.

geted public gatherings of French settlers. When motivating the use of the bombings, an FLN directive stated: *"A bomb causing the death of ten people and wounding fifty others is the equivalent on the psychological level to the loss of a French battalion".*[54]

The battle of Algiers became an inspiration for revolutionaries all around the world. The influence of the Algerian revolution resonates in the communiques of movements such as the African National Congress and the Black Panthers. After the assassination of Marthin Luther King, for instance, Black Panther Party leader Eldridge Cleaver proclaimed:

"The war has begun. The violent phase of the black liberation struggle is here, and it will spread. From that shot, from that blood. America will be painted red. Dead bodies will litter the streets and the scenes will be reminiscent of the disgusting, terrifying, and nightmarish news reports coming out of Algeria during the height of the general violence right before the final breakdown of the French colonial regime."[55]

US academic Norman Finkelstein[56] compared the October 7th attack to the 1831 Nat Turner rebellion, a slave revolt led by the self-educated enslaved man Nat Turner, who Finkelstein describes as a "religious zealot". During the rebellion, the insurrectionsts deliberately butchered whole families of white Virginians, including children. In his article titled "*The unthinkability of the slave revolt*"[57], Palestinian writer Zubayr Alikhan draws the parallel between October 7th and the outbreak of the Haitian revolution, not only for what concerns the level of violence, but particularly for the reaction of the colonizer. In Haiti and in Gaza, the colonized were deemed so subhuman that their violence was explained as either a conspiracy

[54] Battle of Algiers (1956–1957) - Wikipedia

[55] *October 7*. AlJazeera, 20 March 2024

[56] Finkelstein, Norman. *NAT TURNER IN GAZA*. normanfinkelstein.com, 26 October 2023:

[57] Alikhan, Zubayr. *The unthinkability of slave revolt*. Mondoweiss, 8 February, 2024

a surprise if one reads about how much of a priority a well-functioning social sector is for the movement.

Clearly, Hamas does not act as a fundamentalist militant group whose purpose is to "destroy Western civilization". It is in fact in direct competition with Salafi Palestinian organisations such as the Jaljalat and Jund Ansar Allah, and often clashed with them militarily.

Caridi's book reports that Hamas senior leaders have privately expressed concern over the the radicalisation of younger cadres with respect to Salafism, which they explain as a result of the occupation transforming the habits of society (in Gaza), and the repression of the Palestinian Authority (in the West Bank), as well as the fact that living underground meant that militants of the "middle" generation were *"forc[ed] [...] into solitude and block[ed] [...] from building social relationships. They were left alone with a computer and what radical information passed in front of them, without any mediation."*[24]

The "middle" generation refers to the militants born in the 1990s, who lived through the extreme Israeli violence of the second Intifada and the disillusionment of electoral politics, which came after Hamas won the majority of votes in the 2006 national elections. The movement's desire for recognition – as a legitimate representative of Palestinians, as part of the PLO and by the international community – was shattered immediately, with a coup attempt and a US-Israel-led campaign of isolation and economic blockade on the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In the context of the "global war on terror", the US and Israel made it clear that no matter what Hamas did, it could never be an interlocutor. This meant extreme disillusionment for the "middle generation" cadres, many of whom turned to armed struggle as the only way to achieve liberation. *"Boys prefer to*

[24] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government*. Seven Stories Press, 2012.

go into the Qassam Brigades rather than engaging in politics", confided a young Hamas MP to Caridi in 2010[25].

1.4 Non-violent resistance, armed resistance and red lines

> *"Hamas's strategy is underpinned by four principles:*
>
> *1. Our homeland has been usurped in its entirety, but we cannot concede one inch of it*
>
> *2. There is an obvious imbalance of power in favour of the Zionist enemy.*
>
> *3. We do not possess the armaments our enemy posses, but we have a faith that generates a will that does not recognize defeat or retreat before our goals are accomplished. This is a faith that demands sacrifice for the sake of religion and homeland.*
>
> *4. The Arab and Islamic Umma is weak, feeble, and divided, and is therefore unable to support the people of Palestine. The international community is hostile to the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people and supports Zionist terrorism.*
>
> *Hamas's strategy therefore has two parallel goals:*
>
> *- to resist occupation and confront Zionist aggression,*
>
> *- to maintain the unity of the Palestinian people and safeguard the Palestinians from internal strife, which hinder resistance to the occupation"*
>
> - Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi, Hamas's political leader in Gaza, 10 days before he was assassinated by an Israeli air attack in April 2004

[25] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government.* Seven Stories Press, 2012.

commited by Hamas fighters, particularly the targeting of civilians, were probably not part of the operational plans. Rather, they can be understood as being the result of multiple factors, particularly, the lack of a clear chain of command, the chaotic nature of the offensive, the unexpected collapse of the Israeli defense around the Strip, and individual initiative of the fighters.

Once we have dealt with the factual level of October 7th, we can then deal with the moral and political level.

An important starting point is, I believe, to recognize that national liberation struggles, particularly those against settler-colonial projects, have always comprised the (intentional) killing of unarmed civilians. This follows directly from the nature of colonial conflicts – where settlers play a pivotal role in the colonial project even when unarmed. Targeting civilians is therefore very often a deliberate tactic of anti-colonial movements. In his article titled *"The false equivalence of the colonized and the colonizer"*[51], Hamza Hamouchene looks at the case of the Algerian FLN:

"The [FLN] leadership had a realistic appraisal of the military balance of power, which tilted heavily in favor of France, […]. The FLN strategy was inspired by the Vietnamese nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh's dictum "For every nine of us killed we will kill one—in the end you will leave." The FLN wanted to create a climate of violence and insecurity that would ultimately prove intolerable for the French, internationalize the conflict, and bring Algeria's struggle to the attention of the world."[52]

The Battle of Algiers began with the order to *"shoot down any European, from 18 to 54. No women, no children, no elder"*.[53] The FLN then used the tactic of terror bombings, which tar-

[51] Hamouchene, Hamza. *The false equivalence of the colonized and colonizer*. Africa is a Country, 21 November 2023

[52] Hamouchene, Hamza. *The false equivalence of the colonized and colonizer*. Africa is a Country, 21 November 2023

[53] Battle of Algiers (1956–1957) - Wikipedia

simply not classifiable as civilians, even when not wearing a uniform, due to their role in the dispossession and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians and their status as army reservists. This argument had already been made by Hamas (and other Palestinian armed resistance organizations) to justify suicide bombings and the killing of settlers in the occupied territories. In official communication, Hamas also often underlines that in the past Israel has ignored Hamas initiatives to reach an all-parties agreement on sparing civilians in the conflict, and that as long as Israel insists on targeting unarmed Palestinians, the death of Israeli non-combatants will be inevitable.

The second approach to explaining civilian deaths of October 7th is exemplified in an official Hamas PR document in English published last autumn:

"Avoiding harm to civilians, especially children, women and elderly people is a religious and moral commitment by all the Al-Qassam Brigades' fighters. We reiterate that the Palestinian resistance was fully disciplined and committed to the Islamic values during the operation and that the Palestinian fighters only targeted the occupation soldiers and those who carried weapons against our people. In the meantime, the Palestinian fighters were keen to avoid harming civilians despite the fact that the resistance does not possess precise weapons. In addition, if there was any case of targeting civilians; it happened accidently and in the course of the confrontation with the occupation forces. […] Maybe some faults happened during Operation Al-Aqsa Flood's implementation due to the rapid collapse of the Israeli security and military system, and the chaos caused along the border areas with Gaza."[50]

If one takes at face value Hamas's communication and past public commitments, as well as its likely goals for the October 7th attacks, it would seem that while the taking of captives was clearly part of the instructions given to militants, the atrocities

[50] Hamas. *Our Narrative: Operation Al-Aqsa Flood*

As an anti-colonial movement, Hamas picks political tools, from mass non-violent mobilisations, to diplomatic pressure, to military operations, based on their understanding of the material conditions, and following bitter internal debate and adoption of a party line. When in 2018 Palestinians from Gaza engaged in mass non-violent protests known as "The March of Return", Hamas endorsed (and, according to some, attempted to co-opt) the grassroot movement. Hamas tried to use this moment to boost its image as a movement of non-violent resistance. During the protests, Ismail Haniyeh, then leader of Hamas in Gaza, held a rally speech under the images of Ghandi, Marthin Luther King and Mandela, advocating for *"a hybrid strategy that combines nonviolent and legal resistance of demonstrators with an armed resistance that remains separate"*[26].

Hamas's history is marked by important episodes of peaceful/non-armed resistance. In 1993, for instance, the Israeli government took 415 Palestinians it was holding in its jails and "released" them at gunpoint in the strip of no-man's land between Israel and Lebanon, attempting to force them into exile. The group of prisoners consisted mostly but not exclusively of Hamas's non-military leadership. The exilees, many of whom were doctors and engineers, immediately started organising: they refused to enter Lebanese territory, instead setting up camp on no-man's land and making sure basic needs were provided. They assigned administrative roles based on individual competence and organised a press center, with spokespeople liaising with the international press. The movement appealed to international institutions and relief agencies, and after one year of mobilisations and intense diplomatic pressure, Israel was forced to reverse its decision and start the repatriation of the deportees.

[26] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government.* Seven Stories Press, 2012.

Hamas's pragmatism is paired with rigidity on red lines, such as the legitimacy of armed struggle, the refusal to recognize Israel's legitimacy, and the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees – a crucial question for all Palestinians, and a particularly central one for a movement whose six out of the seven founding members were refugees of the Nakba. This combination of pragmatism and rigidity of principles has brought to some interesting contradictions. Hamas refuses to publicly criticize or condemn armed resistance operations even if the leadership does not approve of them or if they are considered counterproductive. For example, in June 2014, 3 Israeli teenagers from illegal settlements in the Hebron area were kidnapped, allegedly by members of the Qawasameh, an influential clan within Hamas in Hebron which is known for trying to undermine attempts to reach truce agreements with Israel. Hamas's senior leader Khaled Meshal "congratulated" the "operation", but the kidnapping, which happened without knowledge and approval of the leadership, was disastrous for Hamas. The killing of the three Israeli captives offered the Israeli government the perfect excuse to start the most brutal assault on Gaza until that point, with the clear goal of wrecking one of the most promising attempt of national reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. More than 2,000 Palestinians were murdered in the Israeli attack.

In other occasions, it is the political and the military wings that disagree on the appropriateness of armed resistance. The Qassam brigades, Hamas's military wing, has always acted with a high level of autonomy and has become more and more influential throughout the years, as Israel continues to shatter every prospect of peaceful resistance making a dent in its colonial project, and refuses to recognize even the possibility of sitting with Hamas at the negotiating table. An interesting episode of disagreement between Hamas's political and military wing is represented by the kidnapping of Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier taken prisoner by the Qassam brigades in

According to AlJazeera's investigation, Hamas military strategists had not anticipated that Israeli military installations at the Gaza border would fall so quickly due to complete IDF underpreparedness. Therefore, thousands of Hamas fighters found themselves in settlements, or at the now infamous Nova music festival (whose existence they were not aware of), without a clear chain of command, without clear instructions besides taking as many hostages as possible, after having being trained to shoot and kill.

There is no doubt that at this point, atrocities were committed. Many of them were committed by Hamas and other resistance fighters, others – including some of the most gruesome ones – were probably committed by members of salafist groups and armed Palestinian civilians that poured in the 1948 territories after the first wave of Hamas fighters broke through the barrier – a barrier that had forced millions of men, women and children to live all their lives in what Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling called "the world's largest concentration camp ever". Although there is some evidence of Hamas fighters clearly discriminating between civilians and combatants, and in some cases even reassuring unarmed Israelis, some fighters either took no precautions to ensure the safety of civilians, or clearly targeted them. AlJazeera's documentary shows extensive footage of attacks on non-combatants. During the attack on the Nova festival, for instance, fighters are seen throwing a grenade in a bomb shelter packed with festival attendees, shoot towards an unarmed fugitive, and then take a survivor captive. The final toll of October 7th was of 782 civilians killed – out of which at least 18, according to AlJazeera's investigative unit, were killed by Israeli fire.

Hamas have so far used two different approaches to explain Israeli civilian deaths on October 7th. The first one, which was given in an interview by Hamas senior spokesperson Osama Hamdan in the immediate aftermath of the attack, is to claim that adult settlers, in Hamas's reading of the laws of war, are

***violence will not protect them**, even if they are supported by the United States. **If they want to be protected they have to acknowledge the Palestinian rights and to implement the international resolutions which gave the Palestinian people their rights**, without negotiations. Those are rights, no one can negotiate our rights."*[47]

1.8 Atrocities

Hamas's leadership expected Israel's retaliation to October 7th to be inhumane and indiscriminate, as it is characteristic of settler-colonial projects when they respond to anti-colonial violence. Hamas's military strategists certainly contemplated a ground invasion and heavy bombings, but they did not expect Israel's response to take the fully genocidal character that Palestinians have endured[48]. That is because, significantly, Hamas leadership probably did not expect October 7th to unfold as it did.

As was revealed, among others, by AlJazeera's investigative unit[49], the intentions and the plans of the October 7th attack were kept secret. So secret, in fact, that the political leadership outside of Gaza was kept completely in the dark, and learned of the attack from the news broadcast on the morning of the 7th. Even Palestinian fighters who participated in the attack were informed of the operation only hours before the start of the assault, and received very limited instructions. This was done, according to S., to ensure that the offensive would be a surprise attack, and to avoid that captured fighters could reveal holistic information under interrogation.

[47] *Are Israel and Hamas guilty of war crimes?*, with Osama Hamdan. Al-Jazeera, 13 October 2023

[48] Scahill, Jeremy.*On the Record with Hamas*. Dropsitenews.com, 9 July 2024:

[49] *October 7*. AlJazeera, 20 March 2024

2006. The political wing of the movement disapproved of the operation (but never publicly), as the kidnapping of Shalit and the killing of two Israeli soldiers jeopardised Hamas's attempts to form a national unity government with Fatah. The response of Marwan Isa, a commander of the Qassam brigades, in an interview to Al-Jazeera: *"it was clear that the enemy (Israel), in those political circumnstances (the Hamas-Fatah negotiations), was putting pressure on the ground, and closing in on resistance fighters. Therefore, we took the decision to counterattack and conduct the operation, regardless of the price to pay"*[27].

Eventually, In 2011, Hamas obtained the release of 1027 Palestinian prisoners – among them, militants affiliated to all factions of the resistance – in exchange for the liberation of Shalit.

1.5 Islam, the Charter(s), and anti-semitism

> *"No, we do not fight the Jews because they are Jews. We fight them because they stole our land and displaced our people; they carried out an aggression. We resist this Zionist project which is hostile. […] if a Muslim were to attack me and steal my land, I have every right to fight back. This applies to all others irrespective of their race, identity or religion. This is our philosophy."*
>
> - Khaled Meshal, president of Hamas's Politburo until 2017[28]

> *"I want to proclaim loudly to the world that we are not fighting Jews because they are Jews! We are fighting them because they assaulted us, they killed us, they took our land and our homes; they attacked*

[27] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government*. Seven Stories Press, 2012.

[28] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within*. New York (2007).

our children and our women; they scattered us. All we want is our rights. We don't want more."

—Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, founding member of Hamas, assassinated by an Israeli air attack in 2004, together with two bodyguards and 9 bystanders[29]

Since its foundation, Hamas has called itself an Islamic movement of national liberation, whose goal is *"to liberate Palestine and confront the Zionist project"*[30]. Hamas does not call for a religious war against Israel, "the West", "the infidels" or any religious or ethnic group. In fact, unlike other Palestinian armed resistance movements, Hamas has never conducted military operations outside of Historical Palestine. Hamas claims to be defending the national rights of all Palestinians, including the rights of Christian Palestinians, and has repeatedly called for national unity of Palestinians of all faiths. In national and regional elections, Hamas has run candidates of Christian faith, and it has explicitly condemned Israeli invasions and dessacration of holy Christian grounds, such as the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and the current destruction of Christian heritage in Gaza. When Hamas negotiates with Israel, for instance for the release of prisoners, I know of no episodes suggesting that it conducts such negotiations to favour Palestinians of Muslim faith over any other. Of course, I have no expertise to claim that Hamas does not at all discriminate against non-Muslims, but Hamas's explicit and public acceptance of the principles of religious tolerance present in the Qura'an, and even more importantly its actions on behalf of Palestinians of all faiths and the fact that it does not target Jewish people outside of Israel, cannot be honestly

[29] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within.* New York (2007).

[30] Hamas's 2017 Document, commonly referred to as Hamas's "new charter": Hamas in 2017: The document in full | Middle East Eye

October 7th attack knowing that Israel would surely respond disproportionately and with major atrocities? Hamas senior spokesperson Osama Hamdan was asked precisely this question in an interview on October 13th. His answer is deeply revelatory, not only for what concerns the human cost of the attack (which by the time of the interview had reached approximately 8,000 casualties between killed and wounded), but because the main elements that emerge from the overall narrative: Israel's unwillingness to respect UN resolutions, the inevitability of the colonial violence, the failure of the Oslo accords, and Israel's disinterest in compromises.

"This is a good question. The fact is that the Israelis are killing the Palestinians on all the ways, all the times. For example in West Bank in the last 10 months more than 500 Palestinians were killed, most of them were civilians.

They were shot in the streets just demonstrating peacefully against the Israeli troops. The fact which everyone has to understand is that this occupation is killing the Palestinians all the time. ***It's not giving them any chance to have normal life, it's not giving them the chance to be independent and to have their independent sovereign state even after 30 years of signature of Oslo agreement, it's not implementing any international resolutions, it doesn't care about the international law****, so we are facing this fact:* ***the Israelis are killing you if you are treating them peacefully or if you are resisting them*** *and at the end of the day the occupation is still there so it's better to resist than being slaughtered daily without even resisting the occupation.* ***The target or goal was to make an end for the Israeli attacks against the Palestinians, to make an end for the Israeli attacks on Jerusalem and in West Bank taking over the lands, and to lift the siege on Gaza.***

The Israelis are planning for a long occupation on Palestine and I think they don't get the lesson, from what has happened the last four days. ***This army will not protect them, their***

who want to turn Israel into a theocratic regime that openly occupies the whole of Palestine.

Pappe and Ever argue that early indicators of the prompt collapse of Zionism are already here, and that it was Hamas's attack on October 7th that escalated the process:

"Hamas's assault of October 7 can be likened to an earthquake that strikes an old building. The cracks were already beginning to show, but they are now visible in its very foundations."[46]

Did Hamas intend for its attack to cause such upheavals? This is entirely plausible. In the past months, Hamas's communication and negotiating stance have shown that the movement is deeply aware of the divisions within Israeli society, particularly around the issue of Israeli captives and Netanyahu's political fortunes. Yahya Sinwar, the political leader of Hamas in Gaza who came from the ranks of the Qassam brigades, is said to be extremely knowledgeable of internal Israeli politics, thanks to the 22 years he spent in an Israeli prison, during which he learned Hebrew, studied the history of Israel, its politics and its intelligence apparatus.

In short, before October 7th Israel was managing to have its cake and eat it too: carry out "low-intensity" ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in the 1967 territories while fully benefitting from US-mediated normalization deals. Hamas's attack was certainly meant to stop this catastrophic process and re-open the issue of a solution for the Palestinian people. Additionally, Hamas probably hoped that the attack would escalate the contradictions inherent within the Zionist project and weaken it significantly and irreversibly.

One certainly wonders about the human cost of these objectives. As I am writing these words, at least 40,000 Palestinians have been murdered in Gaza. That is, more than three times the amount of Palestinians killed by Israel between January 2000 and September 2023. Why did Hamas decide to launch the

[46] Pappe, Ilan. *The Collapse of Zionism.* New Left Review, 21 June 2024

compared to the actions and rhetoric of groups like Al-Qaeda or ISIS.

Hamas's Charter from 1988[31] does contain passages that define the cause of Palestinian liberation as a cause for every Muslim, and that define Palestine as an Islamic Waqf, *"an Islamic land entrusted to the Muslim generations until the Judgment Day."* Thus, *"no one may renounce all, or even part of it."* The Charter is also infamous for its call to "fight the Jews" and for its reference to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Tamimi's book gives a detailed and contextualized theological-philosophical and political critique of the Charter and its anti-semitic language. I will only point out some important facts: the text of Hamas's 1988 Charter was most likely penned by a single man, Abdel Fattah al-Dukhan, one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood's older generation in Gaza, without broad consultation from the movement, in a period of extremely brutal Israeli violence against civilians and combatants alike, which had almost stopped the newly formed resistance group from operating. Since then, throughout the years several Hamas leaders have made it clear that the 1988 Charter is a document situated in a specific moment in time and that it does not guide the actions and intentions of the movement.

Hamas's 2017 new charter[32], which is the result of 4 years of consultations and broad consensus within the organisation, is the document that most clearly positions Hamas as a national liberation movement: As opposed to the lithurgical tone used in the 1988 charter, there are fewer references to Islam, mostly highlighting its importance for determining Hamas's methods and principles, and underlining the role of religion in Palestinian history and culture. The 2017 documents explicitly

[31] Hamas's 1988 Covenant, commonly referred to as Hamas's "charter": The Avalon Project : Hamas Covenant 1988 (yale.edu)

[32] Hamas's 2017 Document, commonly referred to as Hamas's "new charter": Hamas in 2017: The document in full | Middle East Eye

adopts the language of national liberation movements, using words such as "colonial" and "colonialism" (4 times), "occupation" (10 times), "settlements" (5) "rights" (19), "racist" (2), "national" (14), "self-determination" (3)[33].

Article 16 and 17 deal with the issue of anti-zionism and anti-semitism by affirming that *"anti-Semitism and the persecution of the Jews are phenomena fundamentally linked to European history and not to the history of the Arabs and the Muslims or to their heritage"*. Hamas, the articles state, is at conflict with *"with the Zionist project"*, which is seen as *"the most dangerous form of settlement occupation which has already disappeared from much of the world and must disappear from Palestine. [...] It is the Zionists who constantly identify Judaism and the Jews with their own colonial project and illegal entity."* The document continues: *"[Hamas] does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish" and "rejects the persecution of any human being or the undermining of his or her rights on nationalist, religious or sectarian grounds."*

While Article 25 renews the centrality of armed struggle for the movement, articles 2, 18, 19 and 20 clearly reaffirm the movement's aspiration to liberate the whole of Palestine, and hence the impossibility to recognize Israel's legitimacy. Without contradicting its principles, article 20 also inscribes the movement's political realism:

"Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea. However, without compromising its rejection of the Zionist entity and without relinquishing any Palestinian rights, Hamas considers the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital along the lines of the 4th of June 1967, with the return of the refugees and the displaced to their homes

[33] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government.* Seven Stories Press, 2012.

with the resistance of your brothers in Palestine. It is time for the Arab resistance to unite.

We call for mobilization towards Palestine. O, our brothers in Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, Egypt, and the rest of the Arab countries, take action and heed the call.

The era of bets has ended, and the occupation must be expelled."[43]

Hamas military commanders are well aware that a straightforward military victory against Israel is impossible. But the history of national liberation struggles shows that long-term political victories matter more than dominance on the battlefield: destroying the deterrance capacity and the myth of invincibility of the colonizer, hightening the contradictions within the settler society, inducing international isolation and major economic crises that the colonial project is unequipped to face.

Israeli-born historian Ilan Pappe[44] and BDS Political economist Shir Ever[45] argue that October 7th marked the beginning of the end for the Zionist project. An unprecedented number of Israelis have left Palestine (500,000 according to Pappe). The Israeli army, once believed to be capable of winning any war in impeccable "Blitzkrieg" fashion, is failing militarily both in Gaza against Hamas and in the North against Hezbollah. Direct foreign investments and domestic investments have plummeted, while countries like Colombia and Turkey have interrupted Israel-bound exports of key commodities such as coal and cement. Israeli society is more divided than ever, between what Pappe calls "the State of Israel" – liberal, mostly European-descending Israeli settlers, who want Israel to be an "advanced" and "pluralist" European society from which Palestinians are excluded – and "the State of Judea", comprised of deeply fanatical West Bank settlers

[43] https://t.me/PalestineResist/13228

[44] Pappe, Ilan. *The Collapse of Zionism.* New Left Review, 21 June 2024

[45] *How the Gaza genocide will lead to Israel's collapse, with Shir Hever*. Electronic Intifada, 11 June 2024

one in five Palestinians has been at some point in an Israeli jail. They embody the unity of the Palestinian people, beyond factions and political colours. Their moral standing makes them super partes – which is why, for instance, the most auspicious attempt at reconciling the different Palestinian factions, the one of May 2006, was initiated by the leaderships in the prisons. The prisoners' plight and their liberation is a constant priority for all Palestinians, regardless of political affiliation.

Yahya Sinwar himself, the leader of Hamas in Gaza, was freed after 22 years of captivity in the 2011 prisoner exchange, and had repeatedly vowed to make the liberation of prisoners a priority for the movement. A massive prisoner exchange deal between Israel and Hamas, which would have seen the release of all Palestinian captives, would have marked an unprecedented victory, and would have undoubtedly re-affirmed Hamas's role as the major resistance force in Palestine.

These objectives probably went hand-in-hand with further-reaching ones. Hamas hoped that its offensive would spark a major uprising in the West Bank, as well as draw other regional actors into putting significant military pressure on Israel and start mass mobilizations against the occupation in the region. This is clear in the message with which Mohammed Deif, the commander of the Qassam brigades, announced the attack on the morning of October 7th:

"Starting from today, security coordination ends. Today, the people reclaim their revolution, correct their path, and return to the march of return.

O, our people in Al-Quds, expel the occupiers and demolish the walls. O, our people in the interior, Al-Naqab, Al-Jalil, and the Triangle [Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem], turn the land into flames beneath the feet of the occupiers.

Oh, our brothers in the Islamic resistance in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, today is the day when your resistance merges

from which they were expelled, to be a formula of national consensus."

As he publicly presented the charter, Hamas's leader Khaled Meshal stated: *"[our] document [...] introduces a balanced, creative and authentic model: how to resist, to adhere to the rights of people and to the nationalist ideals; it does not look for compromises and does not play with principles; at the same time it remains with an open vision, on the regional and international context. It knows the laws of the conflict and how to manage it, when to advance and when to stay back."*[34]

1.6 Hamas the party

> *"All of those who still view us as an armed group, and nothing more, you don't have any idea of what Hamas really looks like.... You focus on resistance, on the means rather than the goal—which is a state based on democracy, pluralism, cooperation. A state that protects rights and freedom, where differences are faced through words, not through guns. Hamas is much more than its military operations."*[35]
>
> - Yahya Sinwar, leader of Hamas in Gaza, during an interview to an Italian journalist in 2018.

Hamas's acceptance of the principles of representative democracy has a long history. In 1990, Hamas refused an offer to enter the PLO because the Palestinian National Council, the PLO's parliament meant to represent Palestinians in Palestine and abroad, did not pick its members through elections but rather through direct appointment from the PLO leadership[36].

[34] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government.* Seven Stories Press, 2012.

[35] *Sinwar: 'It's time for a change, end the siege' (ynetnews.com)*

[36] Tamimi, Azzam. *Hamas: A history from within.* New York (2007).

Hamas participated in elections for the first time in 2004, and importantly in the national elections of 2006, where it ran a campaign based on the platform of "Taghayyr wa al-IslaH" (Change and Reform). The platform used a language close to that typical of Western democracy, calling for the "construct[ion of] an advanced Palestinian civil society based on political pluralism and alternation of power."

"[It] called for a separation of judiciary, executive, and legislative powers in the Western European mold. Most importantly, in the section entitled "Public Liberties and Citizens' Rights," the manifesto talked of citizens "equal before the law" and of "citizens equal in rights and duties" for whom "security and protection for his or her life and properties" had to be provided. Toward the general public, therefore, a policy of "equal opportunities" had to be adopted, "reinforcing the culture of dialogue and respect for all opinions that do not contradict the people's faith or their civilisation heritage." Within the general body of the citizenry, it was necessary to "guarantee women's rights and accomplish the legislative frameworks for supporting them and endeavor to enable women to contribute in social, economic and political development," as well as to "[highlight] the role of women in building the society," albeit within an Islamic framework"[37].

Hamas's electoral manifesto clearly showed the conservative Islamic identity of the movement, for example by calling for Islam to be at foundation of education, on the grounds that it "dignifies the human being by striking a balance between individual rights and community rights", and by proposing to "shield women with Islamic education".

Still, analysts like Jeroen Gunning aruged that *"the bulk of Hamas' election manifesto reads like that of any 'secular' political party. Its focus on housing, health, agricultural policy, improving education and scientific research, increasing government*

[37] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government.* Seven Stories Press, 2012.

leadership in Gaza that only an unprecedented act could have broken the deadlock[41].

Hamas leaders probably hoped to achieve major and positive changes on the ground with its October 7th attack, both in terms of demolishing Israel's invincibility myth, and obtaining practical concessions. Hamas's leadership learned that Israel is completely unresponsive to political pressure, peaceful resistance, and Palestinian offers for negotiations. Armed resistance, on the other hand, had forced Israel to withdraw from Lebanon in 2000 and from Gaza in 2005, as well as to dismantle settlements around Nablus and Jenin.

The Qassam brigades had already taken a major risk when kidnapping Israeli soldier Gilat Shalit in 2006. Five years later, that gamble achieved the liberation of 1027 Palestinians. If one Israeli soldier could be exchanged for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, Hamas leaders probably predicted that holding hundreds of Israeli captives could have set back the colonial project and forced Israel and the international community to finally listen to the Palestinians.

In an official PR document in English published last autumn, Hamas reiterated the key issues for the movement, and the reasons behind the October 7th attack: the defense of Al-Aqsa Mosque against Israeli invasions and dessacrations, the blockade on Gaza, the exile of the seven millions Palestinian refugees, the colonial violence in the West Bank, and the thousands of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails[42].

The issue of the prisoners, in particular, has been central to Hamas's strategy, and it has been a major focus of the movement's communication and of its negotiating stance since October 7th. Prisoners enjoy a privileged status in the Palestinian struggle and society – unsurprisingly, given that

[41] Scahill, Jeremy.*On the Record with Hamas.* Dropsitenews.com, 9 July 2024:

[42] Hamas. *Our Narrative: Operation Al-Aqsa Flood*

the tonnes of unexploded Israeli bombs that have pounded the Strip for years. Self-sufficiency in weapons production has been one of the priorities set by Mohammed Deif, the commander of the Qassam brigades. Disinterested in politics and the fight with Fatah, Deif has written Hamas's military doctrine, which also established Hamas's focus of the military confrontation in the occupied Palestinian territories, and the provision that only Palestinians can become part of the Qassam brigades.

During the years of Sumud, S. argues, Hamas has also engaged in a strategy of deception, which led Israeli leadership to believe that the movement had become solely interested in maitaining power in Gaza, and was not willing to pursue major confrontations. For example, In the summer of 2022 and spring of 2023, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in Gaza and the Israeli army exchanged fire, following Israeli raids in the West Bank against the group and the death of a PIJ prisoner-leader in hunger strike. In both occasions, Hamas did not participate in the hostilities, which gave the Israelis the impression that the movement had become content with the status quo and had effectively abandoned the path of resistance.

What convinced Hamas's leaders in Gaza that the moment had come to shift from Sumud to pro-active resistance? Clearly, it was not the case that in October of last year the balance of power had shifted in favour of Palestinian resistance, giving an opening for an effective counter-offensive against Israeli colonialism. Quite the opposite, S. continues. Hamas's leadership realized that Sumud had become a losing strategy, because Israel was slowly winning the war of position. Israel had been able to pursue its continuous project of ethnic cleansing effectively undisturbed, maintaining the siege on Gaza and proceeding with plans to annex the West Bank, while eliciting no international opposition. The normalization agreements with various Arab regimes and the general descent of the Palestinian cause to the bottom of the international agenda convinced the

efficiency and reigning in the secuirty agencies is not ostensibly influeced by religion."[38]

As mentioned earlier, after Hamas's electoral victory, Palestine saw a US-Israeli-led campaign of international isolation and sanctions, a coup attempt and essentially a civil war between the Qassam brigades the PA's security forces. For reasons of space, I can only refer the reader to the resources mentioned thus far to delve into the complicated history of this period. For us, what is important to recall is that following a coup de main by the Qassam brigades in 2007, Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip and has been governing it ever since. Subsequent attempts to reach an agreement on new elections in the West Bank and Gaza have failed.

The narrative I have heard among leftists is that of Hamas as a regime force that Gazawi Palestinians have learned to hate as much as the Israeli occupation. Based on the resources I have mentioned thus far, and especially based on what I have heard from Palestinian academics and comrades, the real picture seems to be unsurprisingly more complex than what many leftists would like to think. Among Palestinians, who know very well the brutality of Israel's military rule and the corruption and oppression of the PA, many recognize that Hamas has managed to administer quite fairly and efficiently a territory, the Gaza Strip, that has been enduring one of the thightest and most inhumane sieges in recent history. No freedom of movement, basically no import of the most basic goods and technologies needed for public services, no possibility to regularly build and renew vital infrastructure.

"And yet daily life in Gaza, closed like a prison, somehow functioned. The trash was collected. The ministries functioned, and there was working Internet available for public use. The traffic laws were upheld, and penalties and fines were assessed. Incred-

[38] Gunning, Jeroen. *Hamas in politics: democracy, religion, violence.* HURST Publishers, 2007.

ibly, the so-called black market of the tunnels [connecting Gaza and Egypt] was even properly taxed."[39]

Palestinians in the Strip have also loudly protested against some of Hamas's legislation and taxes, the worsening of living conditions – for which they held both Hamas and the PA responsible – the repression on dissent, and what they see as factionalist political manouvers from Hamas and Fatah.

But it is quite the mischaracterization to describe the protests against Hamas's government as simply a sign that Palestinians in Gaza saw Hamas as an obstacle to their liberation, and that they outright wanted the movement gone. Palestinians are well-aware that the matrix of their oppression is Israeli colonization, and evaluate their political leaders based on the level of sacrifice, honesty and competence with which they confront Israeli colonialism and pursue national interests. As an interesting example of this dynamic, a Palestinian comrade told me about the time she talked with a Gazawi labour union official, affiliated with the PFLP. He told her that despite Hamas's restrictions (in fact, ban) on labor unions in the Strip, he would never try to undermine the movement, given their active role in confronting the occupation. Instead, he managed to work around Hamas's restrictions by setting up a union officially as a civil society organization. Another example comes from the nationwide protests of March 2011. In the height of the Arab spring, while peoples around the Arab world revolted for the fall of their regimes, Palestinians demonstrated to end factional divisions and for Hamas and Fatah to form a national unity government that could stand up to Israeli colonization. The famous slogan of the Arab springs, as-shab yurid isqaT an-nizam ("the people want the fall of the regime"), was chanted in Palestinian streets as as-shab yurid intaha'a al-iqtisam ("the people want the end of the division").

[39] Caridi, Paola. *Hamas: From resistance to government.* Seven Stories Press, 2012.

we could call pro-active resistance. Sumud, the form of resistance based on active resilience and resoluteness, is what allows Palestinians to stay on the land and limit the effects of Israel's continuous project of displacement and annihilation. Sumud continues until the power balance changes and an opening appears for Palestinian resistance forces to go on the offensive – to practice pro-active resistance. K., a Palestinian comrade, echoed this analysis when she explained Sumud to me. She compared Sumud to the Gramscian concept of "war of position". That is, the phase of class conflict in which forces seek to slowly acquire a position of advantage while limiting the advances of the enemy, awaiting the beginning of the "war of manouver", where the two parts confront each other in the open.

In the context of Gaza, Sumud meant withstanding the siege, designed to keep the population in a constant survival mode, and confronting Israel's strategy of war of attrition against the Strip, what Israeli generals have called the "mowing the grass" strategy. But Sumud is not simply reactive. Throughout the years, Hamas has developed its military and strategic arsenal necessary to go on the counter-offensive. This is particularly evident for military technology. Hamas has not only been transfering technology and expertise with its regional allies, notably Iran and Hezbollah, but it has also been developing the university system inside Gaza to train its own engineers. This capacity-building brought about two major results. Firstly, Gaza's system of tunnels, possibly the longest and most intricate one in military history, designed to escape Israel's sophisticated intelligence-gathering technology (satellites, drones, planes) which check every centimiter of an area that measures only 365 km2 and that is totally flat, devoid of mountains and forests to shelter fighters and store weapons. Secondly, as the smuggling of weapons inside Gaza became more difficult, Hamas developed the know-how to manufacture weapons inside the Strip, mostly by repurposing

derstanding the decisions of Hamas's leadership and the genuine rootedness of the whole movement in Palestinian society.

As long as this rootedness is robust, we should add, there will be no military solution for Israel to the "Hamas question", just like there is no military solution for Turkey to the "PKK question", and just like there has been no military solution for the US to the "Vietminh question":

The idea that the Israeli army could destroy Hamas by rolling in the tanks and raining down the missiles brings to mind a chilling American comment during the Vietnam War: 'We destroyed that village in order to save it.' This strategy did not work in Vietnam and it will not work with Hamas. Hamas is not some alien guerrilla force. It is someone's brother, neighbour, or the guy who gives your son money for his education.[40]

In taking decisions, Hamas ponders options based on their understanding of the current situation, of the interests of Palestinians and the interests of the resistance.

Far from being a desperate effort to remain in power or an attempt to achieve a mass "suicide-by-Israeli-cop", the October 7th attack most definitely followed from extensive strategic considerations of Hamas's military and political leadership in Gaza.

Why, then, did Hamas conduct its attack on October 7th? Although I clearly cannot give an exhaustive answer to this question, here are some elements that I believe to be crucial to understand this issue.

S., a Gazawi Palestinian who is familiar with the strategic thinking of the armed resistance factions and with whom I talked in two separate occasions, underlines that the decision to attack Israel on October 7th stems from Hamas's understanding of the Palestinian resistance strategy as being based on two complementary pillars: Sumud ("steadfastness"), and what

[40] Chehab, Zaki. *Inside Hamas: The untold story of militants, martyrs and spies.* Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007.

To better understand the dissent against Hamas, it is crucial to understand the reasons behind its popular support. Many Palestinians have recognized the movement's leadership to be well-principled, uncompromising in its support of armed resistance, and close to the people. That is, diametrically opposed to the corruption and the elitism of the PA, which is also widely despised for acting as Israel's colonial watchdog in the 1967 territories. It is important to remember that many Hamas leaders live in the same crowded refugee camps as any other Gazawi Palestinian, and they and their families get murdered by Israeli airstrikes too. For example, Ismail Haniyeh, previously leader of Hamas in Gaza and now heading the national Politburo, lived for years in his house in Al-Shati refugee camp, where he was born, even as he was prime minister of Hamas's government, risking Israeli assassination attempts. Even now that he, as Hamas's highest-ranking political leader, lives in Qatar, he pays the consequences of Israeli crimes. On April 15th of this year, an Israeli airstrike in Gaza targeted and killed 3 of his children and a number of his grandchildren while their were going to visit relatives by car. In the end of June 2024, Haniyeh's sister and 9 other Palestinians were also the victim of an Israeli targeted assassination.

The opposition to Hamas comes not only from dissatisfaction with the conduct of the government in Gaza, but also from an erosion of the movement's perceived honesty, closeness to the people, and willingness to put the national interest above factional politics. On the other hand, in the past Hamas has also been responsive to popular pressure, for example by withdrawing proposed legislation and stepping up attempts to reach a unity government with Fatah.

1.7 October 7th

After 75 years of relentless occupation and suffering, and after failing all initiatives for liberation and

return to our people, and also after the disastrous results of the so-called peace process, what did the world expect from the Palestinian people to do […] ?

- "Our Narrative… Operation Al-Aqsa Flood" - Official document from Hamas's media office following the October 7th attack.

"If we have to choose, why choose to be the good victims, the peaceful victims? If we have to die, we have to die in dignity. Standing, fighting, fighting back, and standing as dignified martyrs."

- Basem Naim, a senior member of Hamas's political bureau, speaking on October 7th.

Of course, one could see everything Hamas does, including its apparent pursue of Palestinian interests and its concern for popular approval, as political opportunism aimed at staying in power at all costs. When it comes to October 7th, I have often heard leftists argue that for once, Hamas's offensive shows that the movement's leaders only care about pursuing their own political objectives (these are usually left unspecified in the argument), regardless of the toll on Palestinian lives.

Another perspective on Hamas's motivations, which was voiced extensively by mainstream and right-wing outlets in the immediate days after October 7th, and that was picked up to different extents by parts of the left, simply relies on "war-on-terror" talking points and islamophobic tropes: They hate life, they just want death, their own and those of others, they wanted Israel to respond as violently as possible, they don't care about anyone, not even Palestinians, not even themselves, and that's because they are irrational monsters who just aspire to go to heaven by jihad.

I won't attempt to deal with this second interpretation more than I have already done.

Given our opposition to political leaderships, anarchists can be drawn to the first interpretation, which would hold that Hamas only follows calculations to maintain an exclusive grip on authority. Structurally, we know that political leaderships alienate power from the people and act to reproduce this alienation. Anarchists' opposition to political leaderships is based on a reputable analysis, but is also manifested by a healthy, visceral contempt for leaders. Western politicians lend themselves easily to this disdain: opportunists, cynicals, hypocrites, above all consequences that common people have to face. But we should also recognize that not all leaders are the same. Not all leaders are part of an opportunistic elite that calls for war knowing all too well they will never have to see a trench or hear a bullet. Palestinian resistance leaders are Palestinians. They live in the same refugee camps, besieged and raided by the colonial army, they get imprisoned for decades at a time, they get tortured. Their houses get bombed, they see their relatives die in their arms. They suffer and mourn when their families, friends and countrymen/women are murdered.

As for the analysis, we should recognize once again the deep complexity in how Hamas thinks and acts. As a force of government and a political movement, Hamas is driven by sincere dedication to ideals as well as by the desire to maintain its authority. The contradiction is only apparent. It is logical (and, I believe, perfectly consistent with anarchist analyses) that when an organization that is strongly moved by ideals of (national) liberation conquers a state apparatus – or something resembling a state, as in the case of Gaza – rather than abolish it, it will start identifying the interest of the people and the struggle with its own ability to remain in a position of power.

Portraying Hamas as an opportunistic and elitist clique that does not represent the Palestinian people and cares first and foremost about its own interests is not only factually wrong. It is also damaging to our own analyses, as it prevents us from un-