

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	728
Land:	Libanon
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	Country Report on Terrorism 2020 - Chapter 5 – Hamas
Udgivet:	16. december 2021
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	12. januar 2022

Document #2065674

USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2020 - Chapter 5 - Hamas

Hamas

Aka the Islamic Resistance Movement; Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya; Izz al-Din al Qassam Battalions; Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades; Izz al-Din al-Qassam Forces; Students of Ayyash; Student of the Engineer; Yahya Ayyash Units

Description: Designated as an FTO on October 8, 1997, Hamas was established in 1987 at the onset of the first Palestinian uprising, or First Intifada, as an outgrowth of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. The armed element, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, has conducted anti-Israeli attacks, including suicide bombings against civilian targets inside Israel. Hamas also manages a broad, mostly Gaza-based, network of *Dawa* or ministry activities that include charities, schools, clinics, youth camps, fundraising, and political activities. After winning Palestinian Legislative Council elections in 2006, Hamas gained control of significant Palestinian Authority (PA) ministries in Gaza, including the Ministry of Interior. In 2007 Hamas expelled the PA and Fatah from Gaza in a violent takeover. In 2017 the group selected a new leader, Ismail Haniyeh, who is based in Gaza. Hamas remained the de facto ruler in Gaza in 2020.

Activities: Before 2005, Hamas conducted numerous anti-Israeli attacks, including suicide bombings, rocket launches, IED attacks, and shootings. U.S. citizens have died and been injured in the group’s attacks. In 2007, after Hamas took control of Gaza from the PA and Fatah, the Gaza borders were closed, and Hamas increased its use of tunnels to smuggle weapons into Gaza through the Sinai and maritime routes.

Hamas fought a 23-day war with Israel from beginning in 2008 and concluding in 2009.

During 2012, Hamas fought another war with Israel during which it claims to have launched more than 1,400 rockets into Israel. Despite the Egypt-mediated cease-fire between Israel and Hamas that year, operatives from Hamas and the Palestine Islamic Jihad coordinated and carried out a bus bombing in Tel Aviv later that year that wounded 29 people.

On July 8, 2014, Israel launched Operation Protective Edge in Gaza with the intent of preventing rocket fire into Israel; the rocket fire from Gaza had increased following earlier Israeli military operations that targeted Hamas for the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers in 2014, including 16-year-old U.S.-Israeli citizen Naftali Fraenkel. In 2016, a Hamas member carried out a suicide attack on a bus in Jerusalem, killing 20 people.

Hamas-organized protests at the border between Gaza and Israel continued throughout much of 2019, resulting in clashes that killed Hamas members, Palestinian protestors, and Israeli soldiers. Hamas claimed responsibility for numerous rocket attacks from Gaza into Israeli territory throughout 2018, and the Israeli military reported that some rocket attacks in 2019 and 2020 came from Hamas launchers. In August the Israeli military accused Hamas of being responsible for launching incendiary devices tied to balloons into Israel, causing more than 400 blazes in southern Israel.

Strength: Hamas comprises several thousand Gaza-based operatives.

Location/Area of Operation: Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon

Funding and External Aid: Hamas has received funding, weapons, and training from Iran and raises funds in Gulf countries. The group receives donations from some Palestinians and other expatriates as well as from its own charity organizations.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of the Hamas
(Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country
report on terrorism 2020)

Countries:

Lebanon, State of Palestine

Source:

USDOS – US Department of State

Original link:

<https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2020/#Hamass>

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

16 December 2021

Document ID:

2065674

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