

Is Hamas opposed to a “two-state solution”?

Israel and its allies say repeatedly that Hamas is committed to the destruction of Israel and opposed to a “two-state solution”, that is, to Israel continuing to exist, but within 1967 borders, and a Palestinian state coming into existence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza.

On recognising Israel

It is true that Hamas refuses to recognise Israel, but that is understandable since Israel has never defined its borders.

Israel's history is one of territorial expansion, accompanied by the expulsion of Arabs in order to maintain an effective Jewish majority within the expanded territory. The 56% of mandate Palestine awarded to Israel by resolution 181 of the UN General Assembly in November 1947 (in which around 45% of the population was Arab) was expanded to 78% of Palestine by Israeli military force in 1947/8 and over 750,000 Arabs were driven out, in order to make the Arab minority manageable.

In 1967, the rest of Palestine was taken over, plus a large bit of Egypt (the Sinai) and a small bit of Syria (the Golan Heights). East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights were annexed, and are still annexed. Over 40 years later, the West Bank and Gaza are still under Israeli military occupation and Israel has transferred around 500,000 Jewish settlers to the West Bank, contrary to Article 49(6) of the 4th Geneva Convention, which forbids the colonisation of occupied territory.

Is Hamas supposed to recognise the 56% entity? Or is it the 78% entity? Or is it a future entity of as yet undetermined territorial extent, but certainly greater than 78% of mandate Palestine, perhaps including the Jewish colonies on the West Bank, perhaps 100% of mandate Palestine? After all, Prime Minister Netanyahu was elected on a platform that “not an inch” of territory would be given up [\[1\]](#).

Recognising Israel while its borders are not determined is the political equivalent of buying a pig in a poke.

Palestinian state in 1967 borders

There is little doubt that, if a state of Israel existed within its 1967 borders, then Hamas would accept its existence. For years, Hamas spokesmen have emphasised that they are seeking a long-term truce with Israel, the price being Israeli withdrawal to its 1967 borders and the creation of a Palestinian state in the rest of mandate Palestine.

As we demonstrate below, Hamas has been stating this position at least since the movement won the Palestinian election in January 2006. There is no doubt about this, even though political discussion about Palestine often assumes that Hamas is unalterably opposed to the existence of Israel and to a “two-state solution”. There follows a series of press reports, quoting various Hamas spokesmen, which cast doubt upon this proposition:-

30 January 2006, Ynet News

Hamas: Ceasefire for return to 1967 border [2]

“Top Hamas official Mahmoud al-Zahar tells CNN ‘long-term truce’ possible if Israel withdraws to pre-1967 borders, releases Palestinian prisoners; ...

In an interview with CNN, Mahmoud al-Zahar of Hamas said: ‘We can accept to establish our independent state on the area occupied (in) ‘67’”

9 February 2006, Daily Telegraph, Tim Butcher

Hamas offers deal if Israel pulls out [3]

“Hamas yesterday offered a long-term ceasefire if Israel withdraws from all land occupied in 1967. ..

“Mr Meshaal said he wanted to send a message to the Israeli government that Hamas would be ready to talk if Israel met conditions that included a withdrawal to the 1967 boundaries. Hamas would then ‘possibly give a long-term truce with Israel’, he said. Others have suggested a 10- to 15-year truce.”

18 December 2006, Junge Welt, Berlin

Hamas ready for peaceful coexistence with Israel within the borders of 1967 [4]

In an interview with Rainer Rupp, Hamas Leader Khaled Meshaal said:

“Because of many factors, we now accept to build a Palestinian state within the borders of 1967. But that doesn’t mean that we recognise Israel. But we are prepared to make a long term truce with Israel. Accepting the status of Israel without recognising it.”

21 April 2008, Guardian, Rory McCarthy

We can accept Israel as neighbour, says Hamas [5]

“Hamas said today it would accept a Palestinian state on land occupied in the 1967 war, but it would not explicitly recognise Israel.

“Khaled Meshaal, the leader of Hamas, said the group would “respect Palestinian national will even if it was against our convictions”, an apparent reference to a referendum on a peace deal.”

9 November 2008, Ha'aretz, Amira Hass

Haniyeh: Hamas willing to accept Palestinian state with 1967 borders [6]

“The Hamas leader in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh, said on Saturday his government was willing to accept a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders.”

12 April 2009, New York Times

Hamas Comes Out of Hiding [7]

In an interview with Paul McGeough, Khaled Meshaal said: “ Hamas has already changed — we accepted the national accords for a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, and we took part in the 2006 Palestinian elections.”

31 July 2009, Wall Street Journal

Hamas Chief Outlines Terms for Talks on Arab-Israeli Peace [8]

Hamas leader, Khaled Meshaal, told the Wall Street Journal that Hamas wouldn't be an obstacle to peace: “ We along with other Palestinian factions in consensus agreed upon accepting a Palestinian state on the 1967 lines. This is the national program. This is our program. This is a position we stand by and respect.”

The Wall Street Journal report continues:

“ Khaled Meshaal ... said in a 90-minute interview at Hamas's Syrian headquarters that his political party and military wing would commit to an immediate reciprocal cease-fire with Israel, as well as a prisoner swap that would return Hamas fighters for kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

“ He also said his organization would accept and respect a Palestinian state based on 1967 borders as part of a broader peace agreement with Israel—provided Israeli negotiators accept the right of return for millions of Palestinian refugees and the establishment of a capital for the Palestinian state in East Jerusalem.”

20 September 2010, Jerusalem Post

Hamas: We agreed in the past to state within '67 borders [9]

“ Group's Gaza leadership says it passed messages to Washington requesting dialogue with US, supporting 2 state solution.

“ Hamas sent messages to the US government in the past stating that the movement does not oppose the formation of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital”

These reports indicate that Hamas is prepared to accept a Palestinian state in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza – and, therefore, the continued existence of an Israeli state with the borders it had in 1967. Since Hamas has significant support amongst Palestinians, it makes no sense to exclude it from a process which is supposed to be about realising this kind of “two-state solution”.

David Morrison
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References:

- [1] www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article5683360.ece
- [2] www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3207845,00.html
- [3] www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/1510074/Hamas-offers-deal-if-Israel-pulls-out.html
- [4] www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=4192
- [5] www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/21/israel

- [6] www.haaretz.com/news/haniyeh-hamas-willing-to-accept-palestinian-state-with-1967-borders-1.256915
- [7] www.nytimes.com/2009/04/13/opinion/13mcgeough.html
- [8] online.wsj.com/article/SB124899975954495435.html
- [9] www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=188656

Note: Sadaka supports a peaceful settlement in Israel/Palestine based on the principles of democracy and justice, be that in two states or in one state. We maintain an independent position on internal politics within Palestine, favouring neither Fatah, Hamas or any other Palestinian political organisation.