



Israel Security Agency

Spotlight on Hamas – Ideology and Involvement in Terror

January 15, 2009

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Background and Ideology

Hamas – whose name means “Islamic Resistance Movement” – is a Sunni fundamentalist Islamic movement with **the goal of establishing an Islamic Palestinian state in place of the state of Israel**. Hamas was founded by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin from the Gaza Strip and began to operate in the “territories” in December 1987, with the beginning of the first Intifada.

According to its charter, put forth in August 1988, Hamas defines itself as the “Palestinian branch” of the “Muslim Brotherhood movement. However, in contrast to the reigning approach of the movement, which calls for establishment of Islamic legal systems in the Muslim world first, and only afterwards, attention to the issue of Palestine, Hamas establishes ***jihad* (holy war) as the only means of solving the issue of Palestine**, and establishes that the commandment of *jihad* is an individual religious duty incumbent upon every Muslim. The Hamas slogan, as defined in their charter, establishes that “Allah is the goal (of Hamas); Muhammad is its sign; the Qur’an is its law, **jihad is its path and death on behalf of Allah is (Hamas’s) highest aspiration.**”

Hamas is strongly opposed to recognition of Israel and to dialogue with Israel, and one of its goals is to torpedo any chance of a political process. In Hamas’s viewpoint, their primary aspiration is to ensure the **continuation of the armed struggle against Israel** until Israel withdraws unconditionally from all of the “territories,” as a first stage; **until Israel’s disappearance**, in the following stage.

And thus since 1993, and most significantly since the Oslo Accords, Hamas has been one of the major terrorist elements carrying out attacks against Israel, including suicide attacks and mass killings, via the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades.



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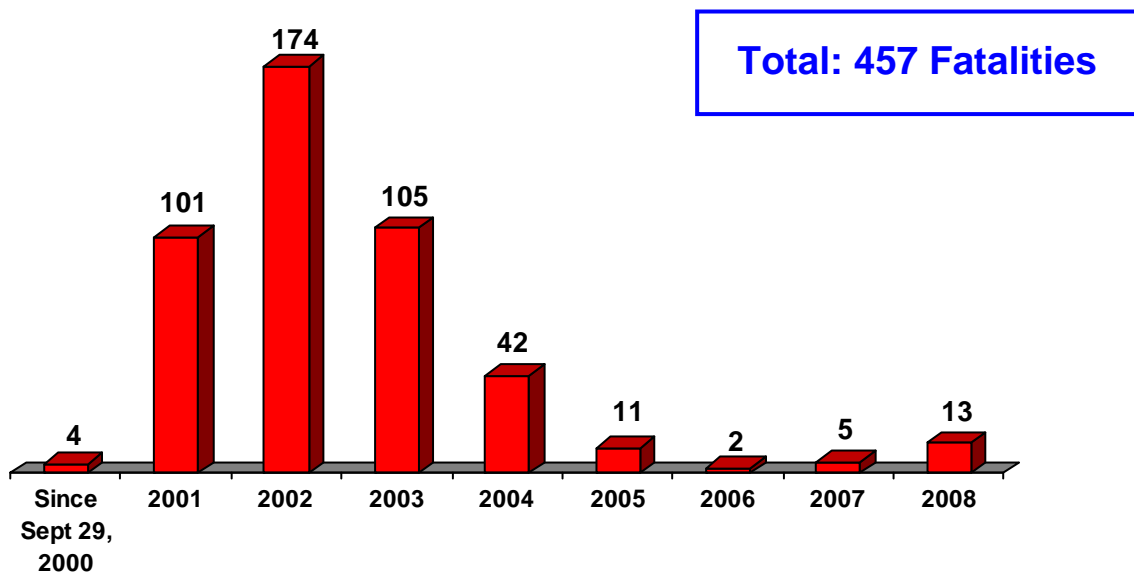
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Hamas's Role in Terror Attacks

Hamas is the most prominent organization among the various Palestinian terror organizations that carry out attacks against Israeli targets; this is due in part to the extent of damage caused by its attacks. Thus, since the beginning of the current conflict (September 2000), until the end of 2008, 1,162 people have been killed in terror attacks, of which 457, some 40%, were the result of attacks carried out by Hamas. Data on wounded demonstrates similar Hamas prominence: 3,008 of 7,787 total wounded resulted from Hamas terror attacks.

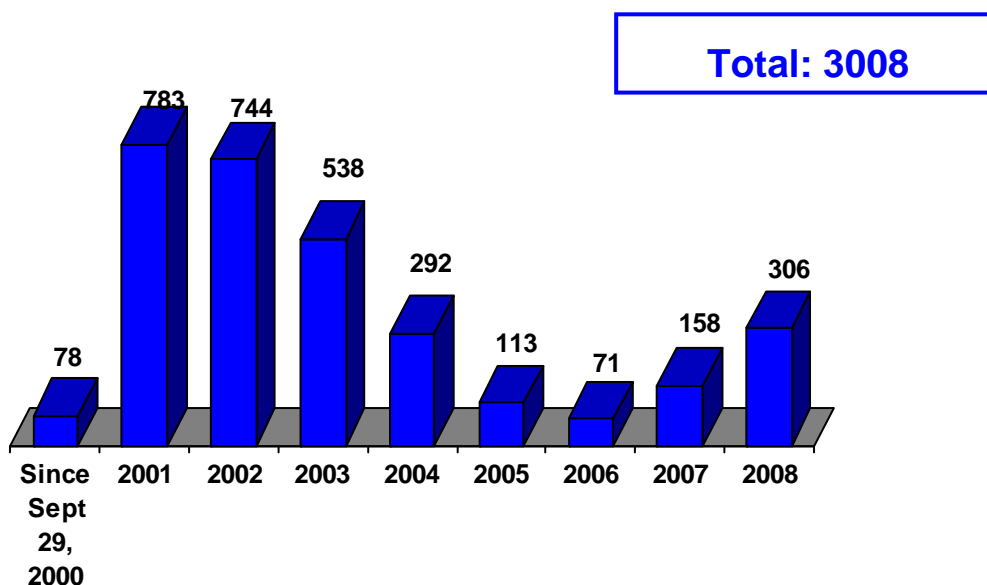
Fatalities resulting from Hamas terrorist attacks 2000-2008





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Wounded resulting from Hamas terrorist attacks 2000-2008



During the early years of the conflict, Hamas's role was **even more extensive**: the organization was responsible for **more than 50% of dead and wounded**. Thus, in 2003, for example, **101** of 207 killed in that year (50.5%) were killed as a result of Hamas terrorist attacks, and **538** wounded of 1002 total (54%) were wounded as a result of Hamas attacks. These high numbers resulted from the Hamas adoption of **suicide attacks**, which **cause the highest number of fatalities**. It is important to note that Hamas was the first to carry out suicide attacks; following this, this type of attack was adopted by the other Palestinian terrorist organizations.

Hamas has carried out the majority of all suicide attacks, and is responsible for **92** of 155 total (59%). Regarding other organizations: Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades – 28 attacks (18%); Palestinian Islamic Jihad – 25 attacks (16%); PFLP – 5 attacks (3%); multi-responsibility attacks – 6 attacks (4%).



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Hamas also leads in the number of **suicide attackers**. Thus, out of 163 suicide attackers who carried out 155 suicide attacks over the years since the beginning of the conflict, **64 suicide attackers** (39%) were Hamas activists; 37 (23%) were from the Islamic Jihad; 36 (22%) were from the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, and 26 (16%) were from other organizations (PFLP, Resistance Committees, multi-organizational, etc).
