

Religion

HAMAS's charter, first and foremost, praises the Quran as divine revelation and as the direct, infallible word of God. This sets up the charter, which relies heavily on its scripture as evidence, as not only trustworthy but factual and purely Islamic. Similarly, those against the movement, or "he who denies its right," and those unwilling to accept the proclamations in the charter, as those who "turn a blind eye to facts" (Article seven). HAMAS's reliance on the tenets of Islam allows them to accomplish the depiction of the Zionist movement and Jewish occupation as a form of persecution for which they have the righteous call to defend against, while simultaneously aligning their movement and values with the duties that God demands and desires. Most of all, it works to reaffirm Palestine's position as a holy sanctuary of Islam with the modern Muslims as the great inheritors of the land their ancestors have always laid claim to.

_____HAMAS positions itself as the entity to fulfill one of the main tenets of Islam and the vision of Muhammad, which is the need for a compassionate and just society brought about by Islamic rule. From this logic, they contend that they are the sole force capable and deserving of the responsibility to enact a totally Islamic state in their ancestral homeland. Furthermore, they frame this to mean that Jihad, sacrifice, and violence are necessary for righteously and faithfully completing this endeavor. Article ten shares that "it will spare no effort to bring about justice and defeat injustice in word and deed," while Article thirty-one continues, "the Islamic Resistance movement is a humanistic movement. It takes care of human rights and is guided by Islamic tolerance when dealing with the followers of other religions." In its compassion, it will "share the people's joy and grief, and adopt the demands of the public" so that when the spirit prevails, "brotherliness will deepen, cooperation, sympathy, and unity will be enhanced" (Article

twenty-one). Similarly, in establishing Zionism as the enemy, HAMAS works to portray Jewish actions as embodying the very antithesis to compassion and justice. Herein lies the undertone of many of the articles, which is the need for the Islamic Resistance movement to save the Palestine people from the Zionists.

_____HAMAS utilizes the Islamic concept regarding oneness of humanity in a selective manner, framing unity as acceptable and usable only in the context of uniting the various Islamic resistance movements. Rather than a rejection of tribalism, the charter states in article twelve that “nationalism, from the point of view of the Islamic Resistance movement, is part of the religious creed.” Nationalism, and its reliance on the Westphalian notion of the nation-state, is based instead on the separation of society by distinct identities. Tribalism is also apparent in its framing of the world as two distinct entities, one driven by the principles of Islam and the other being those with an allegiance to the Communist East or the Crusading West. Rather than following Islam’s view on other monotheistic religions as possessing similar attributes and sharing holy and divine prophets, differing mainly in the existence of human interpolation, it contests “Israel, Judaism, and Jews challenge Islam and the Moslem people” (Article 28). On the other hand, the use of unity is then simultaneously critical for facing the enemy, which should be “faced by the people as a singular body.” In the contemporary context, this can be applied to the need for a singular political body for Palestine and an expectation of allegiance by its citizens.

The charter relies heavily on constructing a narrative based on one of the justified reasons for war, which is to end persecution. The charter repeatedly works on weaving a story of the Jews as capable and responsible for nuanced, complex persecution at both the local and international level. Article twenty two discusses Jewish control of the media, culpability in both regional wars and the World Wars, along with single-handedly ushering in the destruction of the

Islamic Caliphate. Article twenty eight refers to the variety of methods employed in this persecution, including espionage operations and secret organizations that masquerade as charitable. Article thirty one continues that World Zionism, in collaboration with imperialistic powers, maintains “a studied plan and an intelligent strategy to remove one Arab state after another.” In recalling Muhammad’s criticism of Meccan leaders for neglecting the poor, needy, and orphans, the charter in article twenty focuses on Zionist “demolition of houses,” “rendering children orphans,” “shooting at women, children and old people” to emphasize that the form of brutality they enact assaults Islam on two fronts: both its sanctified, religious principles and through physical, targeted violence against its followers. It paints Zionists as viciously materialistic and bent on the pursuit of world domination, while Article thirty-six reaffirms the Islamic Resistance movement as the complete opposite, one that “does not seek personal fame, material gain, or social prominence.”

Elements that suggest its contemporary context can be found in its nod to suicide bombing and vehement rejection of peace negotiations. The charter heavily emphasizes that “Jihad is its path” and “death for the sake of Allah is the loftiest of its wishes” (Article eight). Rather than aligning with Muhammad’s final triumph as radical non-violence, with him walking into Mecca as a religious pilgrim, the Islamic Resistance concentrates on war as necessary to end persecution and warranted when used in self-defense. Despite existing as an embodiment of the principles of Islam, it does not seek to embrace all overtures for peace before engaging in war. In the era which HAMAS operates, peace talks are dominated by Western ideology and does not lead to their solution, which is a peace achieved “under the wing of Islam” where it is “possible for the followers of the three religions - Islam, Christianity, and Judaism - to coexist in peace and quiet with each other” (Article thirty-one). Their construction of a current enemy very much so

calls upon historical enemies, as it links expansionists to crusaders, and thus implies these groups have similar ends as the crusaders who sought to rape, plunder, and ultimately eliminate all Muslims from the face of the earth.

The charter very clearly relies on the story of Islam to rally the Palestinian people as the inheritors of a great tradition that is threatened by those who seek to occupy its religious sites and take from them what has been bestowed by God. Ultimately, they reappropriate various aspects of religious tenets for political ends, altering their interpretation of the Quran so that it reaffirms their mission and legitimizes their strategies of violence.