

## **Understanding Hamas's Genocidal Ideology**

by Bruce Hoffman (*The Atlantic*)

“Not every German who bought a copy of *Mein Kampf* necessarily read it ... But it might be argued that had more non-Nazi Germans read it before 1933 and had the foreign statesmen of the world perused it carefully while there was still time, both Germany and the world might have been saved from catastrophe.”

~William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*

How many Israelis, or Jews, or anyone else for that matter, have read the 1988 Hamas Covenant or the revised charter that was issued in 2017? With 36 articles of only a few paragraphs' length each in the former, and 42 concise statements of general principles and objectives in the latter, both are considerably shorter and more digestible than the 782-page original German-language edition of *Mein Kampf*. Moreover, unlike Hitler's seminal work, which was not published in English until March 1939, excellent English translations of both the original Hamas Covenant and its successor can easily be found on the internet.

Released on August 18, 1988, the original covenant spells out clearly Hamas's genocidal intentions. Accordingly, what happened in Israel on Saturday is completely in keeping with Hamas's explicit aims and stated objectives. It was in fact the inchoate realization of Hamas's true ambitions.

The most relevant of the document's 36 articles can be summarized as falling within four main themes:

1. The complete destruction of Israel as an essential condition for the liberation of Palestine and the establishment of a theocratic state based on Islamic law (Sharia),
2. The need for both unrestrained and unceasing holy war (jihad) to attain the above objective,
3. The deliberate disdain for, and dismissal of, any negotiated resolution or political settlement of Jewish and Muslim claims to the Holy Land, and
4. The reinforcement of historical anti-Semitic tropes and calumnies married to sinister conspiracy theories.

Thus, as fighting rages in Israel and Gaza, and may yet escalate and spread, pleas for moderation, restraint, negotiation, and the building of pathways to peace are destined to find no purchase with Hamas. The covenant makes clear that holy war, divinely ordained and scripturally sanctioned, is in Hamas's DNA.

## Israel's Complete and Utter Destruction

The covenant opens with a message that precisely encapsulates Hamas's master plan. Quoting Hassan al-Banna, the Egyptian founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, of which Hamas is a constituent member (Article 2), the document proclaims, "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it."

Lest there be any doubt about Hamas's sanguinary aims toward Israel and the Jewish people, the introduction goes on to explain:

This Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS), clarifies its picture, reveals its identity, outlines its stand, explains its aims, speaks about its hopes, and calls for its support, adoption and joining its ranks. Our struggle against the Jews is very great and very serious ... It is a step that inevitably should be followed by other steps.

After some general explanatory language about Hamas's religious foundation and noble intentions, the covenant comes to the Islamic Resistance Movement's *raison d'être*: the slaughter of Jews. "The Day of Judgement will not come about," it proclaims, "until Moslems fight the Jews (killing the Jews), when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say O Moslems, O Abdulla, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him."

Article 11 spells out why this annihilation of Jews is required. Palestine is described as an "Islamic Waqf"—an endowment predicated on Muslim religious, education, or charitable principles and therefore inviolate to any other peoples or religions. Accordingly, the territory that now encompasses Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank is

consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgement Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered: it, or any part of it, should not be given up ... This Waqf remains as long as earth and heaven remain. Any procedure in contradiction to Islamic Sharia, where Palestine is concerned, is null and void.

In sum, any compromise over this land, including the moribund two-state solution, much less coexistence among faiths and peoples, is forbidden.

## Holy War

Article 12 links the exclusive Muslim right to the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River with the religious obligation incumbent upon all Muslims to wage a war of religious purification. "Nothing in nationalism is more significant or deeper than in the case when an enemy should tread Moslem land. Resisting and quelling the enemy becomes the individual duty of every Moslem [sic], male or female"—a point later reiterated in Articles 14 and 15.

Article 15, moreover, highlights the importance of inculcating this mindset in children. “It is important that basic changes be made in the school curriculum, to cleanse it of the traces of ideological invasion that affected it as a result of the orientalists and missionaries who infiltrated the region following the defeat of the Crusaders at the hands of Salah el-Din (Saladin).” Along these lines, Article 30 also points out that jihad is not confined to the carrying of arms and the confrontation of the enemy: “Writers, intellectuals, media people, orators, educators [sic]” are called upon to “fulfill their duty, because of the ferocity of the Zionist offensive and the Zionist influence in many countries exercised through financial and media control, as well as the consequences that all this lead to in the greater part of the world.”

### **Nothing Is Negotiable**

Article 13 rejects any kind of negotiations for, or peaceful resolution of, Jewish and Palestinian territorial claims to the land. On this point, the covenant is completely transparent: “There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors.” Nor are these words historical artifacts. Hamas “military” communiqués heralding the triumphs of Operation Al-Aqsa Flood end with the words “It is a jihad of victory or martyrdom.”

Indeed, this part of the covenant stresses that:

Initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences, are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement. Abusing any part of Palestine is abuse directed against part of religion. Nationalism of the Islamic Resistance Movement is part of its religion. Its members have been fed on that. For the sake of hoisting the banner of Allah over their homeland they fight.

The covenant further says of international negotiations that the “Palestinian people know better than to consent to having their future, rights and fate toyed with.”

### **Base Anti-Semitism**

The covenant is especially noteworthy for its trafficking in odious calumnies and conspiracy theories about the Jewish people and the alleged superhuman influence and power that they exercise over all mankind. “In their Nazi treatment [of other peoples], the Jews made no exception for women or children,” Article 20 begins. “Their policy of striking fear in the heart is meant for all. They attack people where their breadwinning is concerned, extorting their money and threatening their honor. They deal with people as if they were the worst war criminals.”

Article 22 advances this theme. Channeling the fantastical arguments of the infamous Protocols of the Elders of Zion (which is discussed in Article 32), Hitler’s Mein Kampf, and the Ku Klux Klan, it elaborates on the depth and breadth of Jewish perfidy. The language of this article is so unhinged that it is worth quoting in full:

For a long time, the enemies have been planning, skillfully and with precision, for the achievement of what they have attained. They took into consideration the causes affecting the current of events. They strived to amass great and substantive material wealth which they devoted to the realization of their dream. With their money, they took control of the world media, news agencies, the press, publishing houses, broadcasting stations, and others. With their money they stirred revolutions in various parts of the world with the purpose of achieving their interests and reaping the fruit therein. They were behind the French Revolution, the Communist revolution and most of the revolutions we heard and hear about, here and there. With their money they formed secret societies, such as Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, the Lions and others in different parts of the world for the purpose of sabotaging societies and achieving Zionist interests. With their money they were able to control imperialistic countries and instigate them to colonize many countries in order to enable them to exploit their resources and spread corruption there.

You may speak as much as you want about regional and world wars. They were behind World War I, when they were able to destroy the Islamic Caliphate, making financial gains and controlling resources. They obtained the Balfour Declaration, formed the League of Nations through which they could rule the world. They were behind World War II, through which they made huge financial gains by trading in armaments, and paved the way for the establishment of their state. It was they who instigated the replacement of the League of Nations with the United Nations and the Security Council to enable them to rule the world through them. There is no war going on anywhere, without having their finger in it.

Article 28 continues this theme and again cites various civic organizations and fraternal orders as the malign vessels through which the Jewish people relentlessly pursue their goal of global domination. Alcoholism and drug addiction are integral tools of the Jews' nefarious plot:

The Zionist invasion is a vicious invasion. It does not refrain from resorting to all methods, using all evil and contemptible ways to achieve its end. It relies greatly in its infiltration and espionage operations on the secret organizations it gave rise to, such as the Freemasons, The Rotary and Lions clubs, and other sabotage groups. All these organizations, whether secret or open, work in the interest of Zionism and according to its instructions. They aim at undermining societies, destroying values, corrupting consciences, deteriorating character and annihilating Islam. It is behind the drug trade and alcoholism in all its kinds so as to facilitate its control and expansion.

After Palestine, Article 32 explains, "the Zionists aspire to expand from the Nile to the Euphrates. When they will have digested the region they overtook, they will aspire to further expansion, and so on. Their plan is embodied in the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion,' and their present conduct is the best proof of what we are saying." Standing against this overwhelming force is Hamas—"the spearhead of the circle of struggle with world Zionism and a step on the road."

Tucked into Article 31, toward the end of the delineation of its three dozen guiding principles, Hamas claims that all faiths can "coexist in peace and quiet with each other" under its unique "wing of Islam." But lest anyone be lulled into believing the promise of this paradise on Earth, Hamas demands as the price of entry full allegiance and unquestioning compliance with its rule:

“It is the duty of the followers of other religions to stop disputing the sovereignty of Islam in this region, because the day these followers should take over there will be nothing but carnage, displacement and terror.”

### **A Kinder, Gentler Charter?**

On May 1, 2017, Hamas issued a revised charter. Gone were the “vague religious rhetoric and outlandish utopian pronouncements” of the earlier document, according to analysis prepared for the Institute of Palestine Studies. Instead, the new charter was redolent of “straightforward and mostly pragmatic political language” that had “shifted the movement’s positions and policies further toward the spheres of pragmatism and nationalism as opposed to dogma and Islamism.” Nonetheless, the analyst was struck by “the movement’s adherence to its founding principles” alongside newly crafted, “carefully worded” language suggesting moderation and flexibility.

Israel immediately dismissed the group’s effort to promote a kinder, gentler image of its once avowedly bloodthirsty agenda. “Hamas is attempting to fool the world, but it will not succeed,” a spokesperson from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office predicted.

In fact, the new document differs little from its predecessor. Much like the original, the new document asserts Hamas’s long-standing goal of establishing a sovereign, Islamist Palestinian state that extends, according to Article 2, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea and from the Lebanese border to the Israeli city of Eilat—in other words, through the entirety of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. And it is similarly unequivocal about “the right of return” of all Palestinian refugees displaced as a result of the 1948 and 1967 wars (Article 12)—which is portrayed as “a natural right, both individual and collective,” divinely ordained and “inalienable.” That right, therefore “cannot be dispensed with by any party, whether Palestinian, Arab or international,” thus again rendering negotiations or efforts to achieve any kind of political settlement between Israel and the Palestinians irrelevant, void, or both. Article 27 forcefully reinforces this point: “There is no alternative to a fully sovereign Palestinian State on the entire national Palestinian soil, with Jerusalem as its capital.”

The most striking departure from the 1988 charter is that the 2017 statement of principles and objectives now claims that Hamas is not anti-Jewish but anti-Zionist and, accordingly, sees “Zionists” and not “Jews” as the preeminent enemy and target of its opprobrium. The revised document therefore modulates the blatantly anti-Semitic rhetoric of its predecessor but once again decries Zionism as central to a dark, conspiratorial plot of global dimensions.

For centuries, Jews have been blamed for causing the anti-Semitism directed against them. The new Hamas charter perpetuates this libel, arguing, “It is the Zionists who constantly identify Judaism and the Jews with their own colonial project and illegal entity” and who are therefore responsible for the conflation of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

The Zionist project, according to Article 14, is a “racist, aggressive, colonial and expansionist project based on seizing the properties of others; it is hostile to the Palestinian people and to their aspiration for freedom, liberation, return and self-determination. The Israeli entity is the plaything of the Zionist project and its base of aggression.” Article 15 goes on to claim that Zionism is the enemy not just of the Palestinian people but of all Muslims, and that it poses “a danger to international security and peace and to mankind and its interests and stability.” The following article then attempts to thread the needle between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism: “Hamas affirms that its conflict is with the Zionist project not with the Jews because of their religion.”

Although the new charter lacks the febrile denunciations of “initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences” of its predecessor, it makes Hamas’s position on Israel’s existence abundantly clear. “The establishment of ‘Israel’ is entirely illegal and contravenes the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people,” Article 18 states, “and goes against their will and the will of the Ummah.” Driving home this point, the new Article 19 proclaims, “There shall be no recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist entity. Whatever has befallen the land of Palestine in terms of occupation, settlement building, judaisation [sic] or changes to its features or falsification of facts is illegitimate. Rights never lapse.”

As for the promise of peace between Israel and Palestine expressed in the 1993 Oslo Accords, Article 21 is explicit in stating Hamas’s rejection of that landmark agreement: “Hamas affirms that the Oslo Accords and their addenda contravene the governing rules of international law in that they generate commitments that violate the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Therefore, the Movement rejects these agreements and all that flows from them.”

Hamas affirms, instead, its commitment to liberating Palestine by force. “Resisting the occupation with all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws,” the document states. “At the heart of these lies armed resistance, which is regarded as the strategic choice for protecting the principles and the rights of the Palestinian people.”

Perhaps the most astonishing statement in the entire new document—issued by a terrorist group that has forbade elections in Gaza since 2007—is the fatuous claim in Article 29 that “Hamas believes in, and adheres to, managing its Palestinian relations on the basis of pluralism, democracy, national partnership, acceptance of the other and the adoption of dialogue.”

## **Plus Ça Change, Plus C'est la Même Chose**

In the British historian Richard J. Evans' magisterial account of the Third Reich, he recounts the reflections of a young German woman who'd read *Mein Kampf* in 1933: "Like many of her upper-middle-class friends, she discounted the violence and antisemitism of the National Socialists as passing excesses which would soon disappear." Until October 7, 2023, many in Palestine, Israel, and elsewhere may similarly have dismissed or discounted the acuity of Hamas's aims and ambitions, its true objectives, and its as-yet-unfulfilled master plan as stated in both the 1988 and 2017 documents. Few are as ignorant or uncomprehending now.