

Mish'al's speech to Arab intellectuals

On November 5, Hamas Political Bureau Chief Khalid Mish'al gave a speech to Arab intellectuals gathered at the Palestine Culture Institute in Damascus. The following is the text of the speech carried by pro-Hamas Al Aqsa TV. The text is reprinted here with permission from and thanks to [Mideastwire](#).



Khalid Meshaal

In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. Praise be to God Almighty. Peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad, the last of the prophets and messengers, and upon all his kinfolk, companions, and his brethren prophets and messengers.

Brothers and sisters, peace be upon you, and God's mercy and blessings. It is a good thing for the patriotic intellectuals from Arab and Islamic lands, and from Palestine, to gather together, united by their nationalism and responsibility. The message they bear as an intellectual elite is closer to the language of the people and the nation. Yes, it is good for the intellectuals to meet, those intellectuals whom we take pride in, in their pulse and the message they continue to bear. This is the general wisdom among the nation, although there continue to be a

few exceptions that are really without value when considering the course of the nation and the cause.

I am very happy to be among this honourable group. All those present are prominent figures who have value in the Palestinian and Arab arena. However, allow me to single out one member of this honourable elite due to his status and value. This is Mr Abu-Sami, Mr Bahjat Abu-Gharbiyah, whose presence here we are very proud of as a former towering figure, who after nine gruelling decades of life continues to bear the wound and carry the message, without buying or selling any of the principles and values. All those present here are of this caliber, be they from Jordan, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and the entire Arab world from the extreme east to the extreme west, without exception. Our countries are free and dear to our hearts.

It is also positive that this meeting of intellectuals, which I am attending as a guest today, take place under the banner: "Towards Rebuilding the PLO," against which there are real conspiracies and a true desire to eliminate it. But we will be talking in the course of our discussion about our stance and the stance of every honourable person in the national arena towards the PLO.

On this occasion, I thank the organizers of this meeting, the brothers in the general secretariat of the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists, and the brothers in the Palestinian Cultural Institute. Thank you for hosting me. I ask God to ease the path before us and before you. I begin with the topic of the general political stance. Among the

most painful paradoxes today is the fact that although we are in the first decade of the 21st Century, the United States, international forces, and some forces in the region unfortunately, want to compel us to submit to the balance of powers that was formed in the past decade, in the 90's, as though things have not changed.

The balance of political powers that was formed after the cold war, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the second Gulf War, and the hegemony of the United States, which was short-lived, praise be to God. The intention is to extend the yardstick of the bitter era of the 1990's, during which the nation paid a huge price, offered painful concessions, and signed oppressive agreements, to the current decade as we enter the second millennium and the first decade of the 21st Century. This is injustice and oppression; we shall not allow anyone to fool us with these kinds of tricks.

The United States today is not the same as it was 10 years ago. Israel today is a different Israel than that of 10 years ago. The forces of resistance and opposition today are different than those of 10 years ago. The awareness of the people and the masses is not the same as that of 10 years ago. Therefore, this is an important matter. The United States today does not have the same might as at the beginning of the 1990's.

Today there are heads competing with the United States, elbowing their way against it to the top, and rebelling against it at different levels, from Russia, China, Latin America, to the free forces in the so-called Middle East, that is the forces of the Arab and Islamic nation. Even in Europe, there is some level of unease and a desire to keep slip away from the grip of the selfish US policy, which does not even provide manoeuvring space to some western powers, let alone giving such manoeuvring space to forces in the east and some feeble people in the Middle East who think they are friends of the United States.

Israel today, after its humiliating withdrawal from Southern Lebanon in 2000 and from Gaza in 2004, and after the slap in the face it received in the summer of 2006, Israel today is not the same Israel as that of 10 years ago. Unfortunately, some insist The United States aspires to live through what is not its property, to live as it used to live 10 years ago. As God Almighty said, they "love that they should be praised for what they have not done." But there are some in the region who still insist on dealing with this lie. They are cheating themselves and others.

Therefore, our problem today is that some are dealing with politics, relations, stances, conflict management, and alliances, just imagine, based on worn-out laws that are 10 years old. As I said once, we in the Arab world are very clever at accepting contemporary struggles in form only and abandoning the old things even if they are valuable, with the exception of this political issue: We continue dealing with the old games that others have abandoned and rebelled against. Some in the Arab, Islamic, and Palestinian region want to submit us to a balance of powers that has changed and been altered. I am not saying that it went from 100 per cent to zero, but some changes have taken place.

There are some margins today that were not available yesterday. The politician is not one who sees the large shifts, but one, who like a doctor, reads the small differences in

temperature, or like a painter who notices the slightest changes in colour. In politics also, the differences may be limited but nevertheless influential to those who want to have an independent decision and employ all the factors around them in the interest of their people and nation.

In the shadow of this atmosphere and trickery, and while there is the talk of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, and the upcoming Annapolis conference, the United States is throwing one game into the region while keeping another game hidden away in its secret agendas. It is providing the powerless people of the region with a game that is well-calculated and premeditated, though assembled hastily, but that is because it has been tested before.

It is also a temporary game that will be withdrawn from the market once past its validity period, like some of the electronic products that are put on the market for a period of time and then withdrawn because a new model comes out. We are nothing but a consumer nation, consuming unfortunately both the technology and the politics.

As for the fake game, it is that there is a US desire, expressed through President Bush, to create a Palestinian state in implementation of his vision of 2002, which he launched during his aggression on Iraq. In other words, the US Administration has all of a sudden remembered a game it launched five years ago, and its validity period at that time was five years. Imagine that it now wants to reproduce it and market it to us in the region.

The US Administration entitled this game the Annapolis fall conference. Everyone now speaks about it as if there are no other games and as if all the interests in the world, particularly in the region now hinge on this conference. A period of stagnation prevails in the region and everyone waits for what will take place at the conference as if the conference is a historic watershed that will introduce the region into a new world.

All parties have postponed their wagers and calculations awaiting this conference to convene. Imagine that the United States circulates on the market a deceptive game and the Arab world accepts to participate in it. Key leaders in the region are busy with it and play it.

A few months from now, this game will be withdrawn from the market and those who have played with it will dance like fools and will be ready to market a new game. Unfortunately, this is a tragedy. They believe that Annapolis will produce a Palestinian state and that the United States is serious. We in the Palestinian arena have become accustomed to such games and during our many contacts in the Arab and Islamic world, we see many people call at the end of every term in office of a US Administration people for grasping the opportunity and for benefiting from the occasion because the US President now is free from any pressure and will do something.

The game ends and we have people who say that the US Administration still has other things to offer. Thus, we keep pinning our hopes on illusions while the real game is a major strategic and dangerous game from the tactical point of view. This tactical and

dangerous game consists of enhancing Palestinian division, legalizing the Palestinian political and geographic division, weakening Palestinian steadfastness, and exhausting the resistance and depriving it of its main elements comprising military units and weapons.

During that period, territories will be annexed, Jerusalem will be Judaized and all the Israeli measures will continue to enhance Arab division by classifying the Arab countries as moderate and extremist countries. They will continue to support Olmert, back leaders in the Palestinian arena at the expense of other leaders and even create division among the leaders who are acceptable. There is a domestic game even among the leaders in the pro-US camp. Everyone fears for himself and for his future.

As for the major strategic game, it consists of paving the way and covering up for the forthcoming US war in the region. It is no longer a secret that the US Administration under the neo-conservationists and Maestro Cheney and the backing of Israel and the Zionist lobby prepares for an aggression on Iran and on other quarters in the region that might be Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, or Gaza for the West Bank is already under attack.

Therefore, the United States distracts us with a deceptive game and prepares itself for the real game. We would like to remind you how Blair, with his British fox-like ruses, told Bush in 2002 that the Palestinian issue is the key to the region. He started to pay attention to it and outlined his vision, which was launched through the Quartet and was called the road map.

When Iraq was attacked and invaded in March 2003, the game ended and it was withdrawn from the market. Now, many aspects of the game are being reactivated and we return to the road map. We interpret the current negotiations under this light. I thank God that I do not feel obliged to speak a lot about them because everything is clear for everyone knows that they have given in. At the beginning, they were enthusiastic but became implicated later on. They raised the ceiling and were forced to reduce it again.

It is enough that any Palestinian or Arab citizen reads their statements, the latest being the news conference that was held yesterday and today about the great negotiations. I am reassured that not a single Palestinian or Arab believes that these negotiations will fulfil our people's rights from one side and will not send the cause to oblivion on the other side. The United States and Israel and those who support their games cannot control the Palestinian cause because the Palestinian cause is greater than all this.

This is the cause of the people and the nation and the cause of the sincere nationalists and there are many of these in this nation. This is a sacred blessed, great, and deep-rooted cause that no one can contain. We are not worried that this might take place. We are not worried at the end results of the cause but we are worried at being exhausted while managing the conflict. We are at a time where the United States can no longer run the game, reap its fruits, and control its courses.

This time is over but we fear that this game will continue to exhaust resources that will enhance Palestinian and Arab division because the United States would have exploited this state of division. This state of affairs will allow many to pant after this track not because objective elements have surfaced in favour of peace and a settlement.

Unfortunately, rushing towards negotiations is like some kind of evasion and settlement of accounts in the Palestinian arena. While proceeding along this course, there is the danger that we will practically serve the objectives of the United States and Israel. This game serves the United States and Israel. This game strengthens Olmert, extricates him from his domestic dilemma and gives Israel the opportunity to normalize relations with the Arabs.

The only thing that Israel wants from Annapolis is to normalize relations with the Arabs. I believe that the countries with whom Israel wants to normalize relations are aware of this. From our contacts with the Arabs, we realize that there is an Arab awareness as to what Israel wants to get for free. These negotiations also serve the US agenda by distracting the region and covering up for the real US agenda concerning the forthcoming aggression on the region.

This is why there is a danger that the game of negotiations will continue along these lines. The United States most certainly is not serious and has no serious plans. Preparations for the Annapolis conference are taking place in these circumstances. In spite of what I said and this game in which many participated I am aware that many are aware of what is taking place. Few people are not aware of what is taking place but I regret to say that many are aware of the truth but act like those who keep repeating a lie until they believe it themselves. The time has come for us to wake up.

This is why the Arabs are worried by this conference. The conference appeared suddenly without any preparations. Its agenda and objectives are not clear. What does the United States want to achieve in the region through the conference? There are no clear objectives. This is why the Arabs are worried and this anxiety can be sensed in the statements of most of the Arab countries, specifically Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, other Arab countries and the Arab League. The question one poses is what must take place after this anxiety? We are aware that the Arabs worry and are not reassured.

This can be noticed in the statements. But the question one poses is what should take place after this anxiety? Where is the Arab and Palestinian political willpower that can translate this anxiety into a stand? You have Turkey as an example. Turkey has relations with the United States and Israel and we here are not in the process of bestowing legitimacy on anyone. There are countries in the region like Turkey that enjoy some freedom of movement in administering the conflict and administering and defending their interests in a different way than that adopted in our Arab region.

The big question is why? In light of the anxiety towards Annapolis and the anxiety of those who support Annapolis before those who are observing it, there is an attempt to minimize the damages and cover up for the failure starting with a change of the ceilings.

The Annapolis conference was presented at the beginning as a conference that will crown the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations course and will proclaim great results. The Annapolis conference has now become just a meeting to launch the negotiations process.

They now make general statements but pursue the negotiations. The Annapolis conference used to be portrayed as being a serious step for the discussion of the final-status solutions. These people came out with statements deciding the future of Jerusalem, the right to repatriation, sovereignty, the issue of the borders, the crossings, and the future of the settlements in the West Bank. Now the talk focuses on the first stage of the road map.

Our people have accepted even this minimum level and they claim they have set conditions by which the other party should abide concerning the security agreements on the checkpoints, barriers, and other details that we have been discussing since Abu-Ammar's days, may God have him rest in peace. The same old tune is being repeated since 1994 and has not changed. They swamped us with these details. Unfortunately, the PNA found itself moving from the discussion of a final solution to the discussion of security demands the PNA must fulfil, to Dayton plans and to the security coordination between the Palestinian and Israeli sides that was reactivated recently, particularly in the West Bank.

Many have started to talk with some audacity about disbanding groups, divesting the resistance of its weapons, and conspiring against the mujahidin. This is no longer a secret. The conspiracy first targeted the Fatah mujahidin, the real martyrs of Al-Aqsa. They also tampered with the dates of the Annapolis conference. They first said it will be held on 15 November. This was changed to the end of November, to December and no date has been made, as yet, on when to hold the conference.

When the Palestinian negotiator brought a little pressure to bear on the issue of the timetable, Rice brought them glad tidings that the timetable will be until the end of Bush's term in office. When Bush ends his term, he will, naturally, not be able to commit the administration that comes after. Thus, we will be paying the price without getting anything in return.

I would like now to emphasize an explicit stand. We in the Hamas Movement and I believe many share us this principled stand are not against an international move or any Arab or Palestinian move to regain the Palestinian national rights but not in this manner, not with a new game that is not the genuine game. We do not accept to be deceived. There is no loyal man who accepts to become involved in a deceptive game while knowing that this game is not the real game, a man who accepts to exhaust himself and his people and tampers with feelings, aspirations, and promises. We also do not accept moves that do not take place on sound foundations.

There is a Palestinian ceiling on which there is a consensus. There is a Palestinian ceiling in the national accord document that enjoys a semi Palestinian if not a complete consensus. Any moves must be based on this stand and we reject any moves outside this

framework. Therefore, Hamas, the national and Islamic forces that are seriously working in the Palestinian arena or the Arab forces do not reject the principle of carrying out moves.

We support movement and we are for movement towards the Palestinian rights and ending our people's ordeal but on sound bases and not on the basis of a deceptive operation and far from Palestinian controls and national constants. Matters did not stop at this point. In view of the negotiations that are taking place within the context that I explained and the preparations for Annapolis and the attempts to divert the attention of the region with this game, I would like to repeat what I already said that we are apprehensive about several issues. First, there are signs about serious concessions.

I do not want to anticipate events. We are all observing and monitoring what is being said. I called them signs to give those who make these concessions the opportunity to go back. Many in the Palestinian arena and in the Palestinian negotiations camp believe they have achieved much when they speak about a Jewish and Palestinian state. This is an unprecedented recognition of the Jewish nature of the Israeli state. This means two things.

Those who say such talk wittingly or unwittingly are responsible for two things. The first responsibility has to do with the displacement of approximately 1.25 million of our heroic Palestinian people who have been living in Israel since 1948 so that Israel will remain a purely Jewish state. The second responsibility they will assume has to do with the cancellation of the right to repatriation. Israel, which does not want the 1948 Palestinians, will not also accept to absorb the refugees. Then this is a serious concession that we reject.

All those in this conference hall, the Islamic and national forces, the writers, the independent figures reject such a concession that legalizes the Jewish nature of this entity and cancels the right to repatriation and displaces our 1948 relatives. There is also another sign on concessions and this has to do with the exchange of land. On the occasion, I would like to say that this is not something new but it is being dealt with now with greater audacity. I regret to say that when we studied even the Arab stand, we found out that many Arab countries have come to accept the principle of the exchange of land.

The weakness of the Palestinian negotiators has encouraged these stands. Why? They say because there is no other way, that Israel faces critical issues and we have started to look at things from the Israeli angle while no attention is being paid to what the Arabs want or what the Palestinian interests dictate. Exchange of lands starts with one, two, and three per cent but since you accepted the principle in light of Arab generosity and the acceptance of the deceptive game, then the matter might unfortunately lead to more than this.

This is some form of legalization of the settlements. The exchange of land is grave not only in principle but also in view of the nature of land exchanged. Exchange operations take place on a land in Jerusalem and in important locations in the West Bank under

which there are important waterbeds. Brothers, we must know that the settlement blocs that Israel wants to annex are either sacred because they are around Jerusalem, have military and strategic dimensions, or because they sit on important waterbeds.

If Israel annexes these areas, the West Bank people will have no water to drink. Imagine we give a dunam here or a kilometre there, in Jerusalem for example or in other West Bank locations while we get in exchange land in Negev or God knows where. Signs about Jerusalem are old but since the issue was sensitive, there was no much talk about them. But Israel implicitly refers to some plans and I fear that in light of this state of unequal negotiations, many will be forced to carry out bargains and accept an administration for the holy places without any sovereignty. Brothers and sisters, what will we get from all these dangers? First of all, we will be swamped with details away from basic issues.

The game will be replayed. The basic issues will be forgotten and we will become preoccupied with the details once again as if we were in the first stage of Oslo. The other danger is that with this negotiations course, we will be laying the grounds for a new Palestinian and Arab ceiling. When we study the history of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, Israel always has had the freedom to go back to square one as was the case with the story of Rabin's deposit. Israel arrogates to itself a right to return to square one and the United States supports it when it believes it will be somewhat defeated.

As for the Palestinians and Arabs, they must start from where they ended. Every concession we make cannot be retracted. We even wonder what happened to the Arab initiative? I say that if we go to Annapolis with these components, this will result in an automatic concession of the Arab and Palestinian ceiling. Let the Arabs tell us if this not true.

The other danger is that in addition to the fact that basic issues and final solutions are not discussed and we are cornered and forced to discuss details only, we are also being cornered now with respect to the security requirements that always constitute an introduction to domestic strife. Brothers and sisters, media people and all the news agencies, a crime is being committed in the West Bank that the media does not cover.

But the media is forced not to cover. However, the media must assume its responsibilities. Mistakes and sins are being committed in the West Bank by Israel, the PNA not against Hamas only but also against the Palestinian people on all levels. But no one dares to cover them. No one is permitted to shed light on these crimes. The weapons of the resistance, Palestinian security and even the civil society institutions pay the price. The people also pay the price for their unity.

We in the Hamas Movement and our brothers in the Palestinian forces acted under this climate on more than one track. I will briefly explain what we did as a movement. On the Palestinian level, we acted in and outside the homeland. We prepared for our national conference that we actually postponed as was mentioned at a former news conference. But it will be held simultaneously with Annapolis conference. We will attend the national

conference because we are worried over Palestinian rights and because we have a sense of national responsibility to our people and cause, to Jerusalem, to the right to repatriation and to the Palestinian future, and to all our people's rights.

There is activity on the Palestinian level and I believe these activities will increase and the world must realize that there is another Palestinian voice and will discover that this voice represents the majority. We acted on the Arab level and cautioned against falling into the trap. We realized there is anxiety and awareness. But I would like to say that this is not enough.

This needs to be translated into serious stands by the Arab officials. We also acted on the international level. Those who believe that Hamas is isolated should realize that the contacts by the Europeans and international quarters with Hamas after last June have been more intensive than the period before that date. The coming days will convince those who are not still convinced. We are not throwing ourselves at anyone.

I will speak about this point later. But Hamas's sense of responsibility dictates on it to act on all levels to caution everyone, each according to his position. Responsibility should be shouldered on the Palestinian, Arab, and international level. Under this climate, I would like to emphasize the following stands and messages.

On the Palestinian level, from the premise of all that I said about our vision, components, and information for Hamas deals with only tangible elements, information, and facts on the ground. This is so because we are involved in the decision-making process and in moving in a way that serves the interests of our people and nation and we are not bystanders or analysts.

In light of all these elements that I explained, there are positions that the far and near should know. On the Palestinian level, no one is authorized to offer any concessions or downsize the Palestinian national stand that was agreed upon. The message is clear. No one, regardless of his identity or position can do so. No one is authorized. No one has empowered others to cede one inch of the land, carry out an exchange, cede the right to repatriation, or place others in a corner by saying that agreement will have to be reached on the right to repatriation.

No one can restrict this right to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, or make concessions on Jerusalem. No one in the Palestinian arena has authorized or empowered anyone to do so. In light of the Palestinian division, the absence of national accord and the role of the legitimate Palestinian institutions, no one in the Palestinian arena is authorized to run negotiations of this type. We are saying this firmly and decisively.

Not only no one is authorized to offer concessions, no one has such an authorization under the canopy of this Palestinian division and the absence of Palestinian national accord and of the genuine Palestinian decision-making institutions. No person is authorized to pursue the negotiations as he wishes. Those who believe that the institutions that have been paralysed constitutionally and democratically for at least 15 years and

have unfortunately become usable tools can provide them with a cover will find that they are naked.

The Palestinian people who have a live conscience will not accept that any person, whoever he may be, runs negotiations on the future and the essence of the Palestinian cause within the framework of a loathsome game as the one we have explained. Our people are aware that this game will ultimately fail. Therefore, no one accepts that the sacred cause of Palestine becomes part of an overt and deceptive game while many of the Palestinian negotiators, regrettably, consider the sacred Palestinian cause and rights as just figures and numbers.

They view the West Bank as just being a total of square kilometres. They just want to regain these few kilometres. This is not the case for us. A homeland is not measured in figures. A homeland comprises history, affiliation, roots, civilization, future, and fate that no one can control. No logical person according to the elementary principles of political science will accept to conduct negotiations in an imbalanced situation as the one that we experience on the Palestinian and Arab level.

I would like to say one last word on the Palestinian issue. I address the brothers in Ramallah, without naming names to tell them that their game is dangerous. Do not risk your political future and learn lessons from your leader Abu-Ammar, may he rest in peace. When he became aware of the facts, he opted for history and for facts and for the national conscience.

I believe that today's adventurers in Ramallah do not have the history, charisma, or qualifications of Abu-Ammar that were not even enough for him that will allow them, others, and any Palestinian leader, whether from Fatah or Hamas to enter into these futile adventures.

On the Arab level, I address the Arab countries and we spoke with their leaders in our meetings. We toured capitals, contacted them by phone and sent letters, envoys, and delegations. But we must confirm this through the media, confident that our Arab nation remains a noble nation that while it might stumble will remain a noble one. We address the nation because we are certain it is a noble nation and we continue to wager on the nation and on our people and on all the good elements in the Palestinian forces. We also wager on the national elements within the Fatah Movement.

I call on the Arab countries not to become involved in this suspect Israeli-US game and not to remain content with relying on the legitimacy of the Palestinian behaviour. The behaviour of the Palestinian negotiators nowadays does not cover those who carry out the negotiations, let alone cover the Arabs. This is so because every wise man in the Arab nation and the world is aware where the compass points. We continue to wager on the Arabs, particularly on the key Arab leaders and wise men.

It is true that the United States exploits the anxiety the region expresses about several regional changes and the change of the balance of power in the region and exploits the

Arab fear of the extension of roles here and there. This does not justify panting after the US game. The Arab and Islamic countries in the region can reach an understanding and remove the fears.

The Arabs must shoulder their responsibilities and each Arab country can achieve the required balance of power without running after the US game that wants to have us clash with one another. There is a difference between the nineties and the current decade. The United States and Israel can no longer scare people as they used to do in the past and they also cannot fulfil their promises and protect others as they used to in the past, even partially.

On the international level and with respect to the United States, Europe, the United Nations and those who are active in the international arena, we tell them the following: You can deal with the Palestinian negotiator in isolation of others as you are doing now. You also can exploit the Palestinian and Arab division. But what after this and can you implement on the ground the solutions you impose? With whom will you sign such agreements? Can you implement on the ground what you conclude under cover of darkness?

I tell you that in our meetings with the Europeans, they tell us that this cannot be. There is a European anxiety. No one is reassured. They are aware of the overt and covert game and are aware there can be no peace in the region without the Palestinian people's rights and there is no peace in the region without the influential forces in the Palestinian and Arab arena. Continuing to address the international community, I would like to say that concocting stands in the dark does not produce peace or stability in the region.

Genuine peace is the one that is explicitly forged on the basis of the people's rights and with the people and not secretly under the cover of darkness. I believe that Europe is aware of this. On this occasion, I would like to say that on the basis of the many elements that exist, the United States also believes this and is not reassured. But it pursues the game because it benefits from the game. From this premise, and as I already told you, Israel and the United States encourage rivalry even in the one camp. The United States and Israel encourage sedition within the present camp of the Palestinian negotiators for this is their game. They divide and rule in everything even in the camp of the moderates.

I will now discuss a point by which I will end my speech in a few minutes time and this point has to do with the resistance and its future. I am not making promises or claims and I am aware of the extent of the anxiety over the future of the resistance for many fear that their friends will abandon them or that the power struggle, the so-called power struggle has diverted the people's attention from the resistance, not to mention that there are fears caused by the commitments that may arise from the negotiations or the road map and the impact it will have on the Palestinian struggler and Palestinian weapons.

I would like to speak about specific points. First of all, no one can exercise oneupmanship over our great people and they do not need to be taught. We would like to remind them only because our people are the source of heroism and bountiful offerings.

The people are the last to get tired. The leaders might get tired but the people do not. We would like to tell the people to trust their leaders that continue to uphold the resistance.

There are Islamic and national Palestinian leaders that have not given up and will never give up the resistance option. Our great people should not despair fearing that the leaders have sold out their cause. God forbid. But one has to face objective circumstances exactly like we did in 1995 and 1996-2000.

There are cycles of struggle in the people's lives and there are objective circumstances they have to deal with. But the great people, confident that their leaders continue to support resistance, must prepare themselves under the canopy of the cycles of struggle and when all doors are closed and the people have given a chance to everyone. We are aware that the game of the PNA is a game in which we originally were not convinced.

We joined the authority to carry out reform, combat corruption, and enhance our people's rights and their resistance option. But the size of the embargo, the efforts to exhaust us, and the conspiracy against us have made our people act as they did. We tell those Arabs who blame our people by saying that they placed them in an unpleasant situation when they out infighting that thought it is very bad for the Palestinians to carry out infighting, the dispute was imported from abroad. The US and Israeli interference with some of the sick minds in the Palestinian arena that have dealt with this have led us to what we did. But our great people with all their colours realize that this is an exceptional case from which they will emerge quickly, God willing.

Therefore, our people should prepare themselves for a new bout of struggle and the days and the months to come and the forthcoming stage will give the genuine reply as where Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the PFLP-GC and all the Palestinian forces stand. The Fatah loyalists, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade members and those who remain committed to the cause and the homeland will realize where we stand on the resistance.

The second point is that many warn that if Annapolis fails, the region will experience a wave of violence, terrorism, and chaos. Unfortunately, this is an Arab warning. I would like to tell our Arab kinfolk that this warning is out of place. Tell the Americans something else. Hold them at fault, caution them against being biased, and against not respecting the Arab and Palestinian rights. This is so because the alternative is to carry out resistance, have the people back the resistance and resume a new cycle of resistance. This is the course of the Palestinian struggle that will move from one cycle to the other. This is the natural situation and not the claim that the region will go back to terrorism and violence.

Another point concerning the Palestinian division and I will not discuss its background because everyone knows about this. I would like to say a few words. From that time until now, we have exerted all efforts on the Palestinian and Arab level to regain Palestinian solidarity and tackle Palestinian division. But what you must know, brothers,

intellectuals, sisters and all our viewers is that the fault is not with a step that Hamas takes or not.

There were those who mediated, whether it was Ali Abdallah Salih in Yemen and President Umar al-Bashir in Sudan. There were also invitations by the brothers in Egypt and Saudi Arabia to all the parties for holding a dialogue. Invitations were also extended by the brothers here in Syria to all the parties for holding a dialogue. There were proposals by many Arab countries like Qatar and North African countries. National and Islamic conferences were held, and all Arab parties mediated. All these were aware that the issue does not depend on a step Hamas will or will not take.

I will not repeat the explicit bases we offered and I will be content with just one sentence. But here you must know that Palestinian dialogue has become like a key in the hands of the United States and Israel. The United States and Israel do not permit inter-Palestinian dialogue. There is a limited group, unfortunately, that believes that the Palestinian division is an opportunity to act far from any control, partnership, and far from the institutions.

They want to negotiate as they wish and monopolize the authority, which they continue to believe as being a piece of cake they want to keep for themselves. We in Hamas want dialogue and many well-known Fatah figures also want dialogue. But the United States does not permit such a dialogue. Israel makes threats against the dialogue and several figures in the Palestinian arena do not want dialogue or Palestinian accord.

Therefore, do not think there is anything that can be done or that should be done. We made explicit proposals. I said I will not go into its details and repeat what has been said. It suffices me to say the following: Hamas does not want a state or a statelet in Gaza, and does not want to divide the Palestinians or fragment the Palestinian political system.

We have not originally accepted any division between the situation in the territories and outside them, between the PNA and the PLO. We want one Palestinian term of reference. But at the same time, we do not beg for dialogue. We explained our stand and this is more than enough. There are people who have wagered and continue to wager that Annapolis will enhance their positions, and who believe that Gaza will be besieged and that the Gazans will turn against Hamas and the government in Gaza and Hamas will be exhausted in a programmed and systematic battle in the West Bank.

This will dictate on Hamas to return to the husband's house I would like to tell these people that if facts on the ground only convince you, then we have a date with you to see facts. Developments on the ground will prove who is true and who is false. We support dialogue and Palestinian unity but we do not beg for dialogue. We wait for the facts on the ground to be the judge.

We would like to say one last word on this issue. Arabs, Palestinians, and official and non-official quarters have offered to mediate. I would like to declare in public that Hamas accepts any Arab, Palestinian, or Islamic effort that is carried out on objective and

national bases that are far from party politics and you will then see who is at fault. We do not want to turn a page on what took place in the past. The Arabs decided immediately after the incidents in June to investigate them. But they did not follow up on this, why?

I tell the Arabs: Please go ahead and investigate this past and the Hamas leadership has the courage to hold a meeting with the world and a news conference where it will accept the findings of an objective investigation into what happened. We are confident because we know that we have right to our side and we do not fear the truth. We do not accept a conditional dialogue. The PLO will be the title of this wonderful meeting.

Our brothers must know that there is no agreement in the region to rebuild the PLO. We experienced this for two and half years. There is a basic provision in the March 2005 Cairo Declaration to rebuild and reactivate the PLO. The term of reference and the mechanisms were spelled out. But many placed the key to the PLO in their pockets and ran away. When they needed the key, they took it out of their pockets and opened the institution they want. Many want the PLO as a tool to be used and not as a national term of reference and they paralysed a democratic institution for one and half years in favour of an institution that has not exercised democracy for 15 to 16 years.

The United States has no objections. It maintains silence on these and punishes the others. Therefore, we have seen over the past two and half years that those who control the PLO's decision-making process have no willpower. I regret to say more than this. When we studied the Arab stands, we found out that many unfortunately were not concerned with the PLO issue. This is so because the United States does not want the PLO. In short, and I believe this is a common stand, we all remain committed to the PLO.

We want to rebuild, reactivate, and develop it and reinfuse life in to it and restore its prestige because we cannot do without the right to repatriation, the role of six million Palestinians in the Diaspora, and the unity of the cause and the people. The Palestinian people are in dire need of a national term of reference. The Palestinian people are currently without any term of reference. The PNA is not a term of reference. The PNA is part of the Palestinian political system in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

It is very dangerous to ignore the PLO when there is a conspiracy through which the United States believes that Palestine is just the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Our message to these people is that you canceled the Cairo Declaration, the PLO and you concealed the key to the PLO and threw it in the sea. We insist on building a Palestinian national term of reference. How to do this?

We know how to approach this issue. In the same manner that the Palestinian revolution in 1969 imposed itself on the PLO framework as an Arab framework and the Arabs accepted the new spirit for building the PLO, the spirit of the great Palestinian people will impose this Palestinian national term of reference, regardless of the challenges and obstacles we may encounter.

We do not accept that anyone brandishes in our face the sword of the PLO as a tool to be used. There is a difference between our not respecting the PLO and not respecting how it is used. All the criticism that was carried out in the past had been a bitter criticism against those who use the PLO for domestic disputes and those who humiliate the PLO. As for us, we insist on maintaining the PLO and will defend it and we will do our best for this objective with all our allies and on the basis of a Palestinian decision. Do not be afraid and the days to come will be the judge.

There is also the story of outside roles and regional interference. We tell those who fear regional interference that we are ready to work with them in a transparent manner and see who has a regional or international term of reference and who has a Palestinian term of reference. I do not need to say much about the story of the lies on the contacts with Israel. But unfortunately, when a lie is repeated once and twice by various sources, there is need to define a stand.

I would like to say that this lie is not just to defame the other party so that we may become even with them and so that no one is better than the other. This is not the only motive. This is only one face of the coin. As for the other face, you would be surprised when I say that they are worried that we might compete with them in the arena. By God, if the walls can speak, they would have said much. They were very sad when they thought that there were contacts.

But when we reassured them, they smiled as if there was something over which to compete. I am not reassuring them because the question of holding contacts with Israel is not part of our goods. On the occasion and this is no secret, there are European and non European countries that try to offer Hamas what has been offered to others in the past. But we not have the inferiority complex that others have. We are not fond of such a dialogue and we do not like them. We do not believe that our stature will be further enhanced if we meet with others. We have a yardstick by which we abide, meaning the Palestinian rights.

It is not important which party achieves this. If the Palestinian negotiator secures us the Palestinian ceiling, we will salute him. What is important is to secure Palestinian national rights without any concessions. I would like to affirm here that there are no contacts between us and the Israelis and there are no secret, overt, under or above the table meetings. Let those who can prove otherwise produce their evidence. The only thing we have with them has to do with the Egyptian role as a mediator concerning the issue of Gil'ad Shalit and the prisoners.

This is an honour for us to seek to free the hero prisoners in the occupation jails in exchange for Gil'ad Shalit. I would like to say one word about the prisoners, particularly after their great rebellion in the Negev. They are our beloved brothers and sisters. Their issue is a major issue. It is evident that the negotiations will produce no results. This is why we need additional national and Arab efforts for these 11,000 heroes who are living in very harsh conditions. We have to defend their rights and we hope that we will not forget them.

We will not forget the martyrs of the prisoners and the hero prisoners and those who can capture Gil'ad Shalit can bring others. The battle is open with Israel until it recognizes Palestinian rights. Israel is currently bargaining with us, makes us stupid offers which we rejected. The Zionists should know that we will not bargain over the rights of the prisoners.

The last point has to do with the siege imposed on Gaza. Brothers and sisters, the Gaza siege is a major crime that cannot be justified. The Palestinian people have been under siege for many years. They experience a new phase of the siege at every stage. After we succeeded in the elections early last year, we and the entire people came under siege. After what took place in June this year Gaza is being treated as if it is not part of the Palestinian people and land. There is a collusion to besiege and starve it and I will not go into other details. I believe that Brother Isma'il Haniyah said much about this yesterday.

But I would like to affirm that it will be a major crime if any Palestinian participates in the siege on Gaza, helps to starve it, and incite people against it. This Arab, Islamic, and international silence on the crime of besieging and starving Gaza is shameful. We acted on the Arab and international level. We asked specific and known countries to lift the siege on Gaza and keep it away from politics and political bickering. It is impermissible to punish 1.5 million of our people. The members of Hamas, Fatah, and the PIJ, the independents, the big and small are being punished. Elderly people, women, and children are being punished. It is shameful to treat a beloved part of our land in this way, especially after it was liberated by the gun and not through the negotiations.

This part of our land is being besieged on the Palestinian and Arab level. This is a shame and a disgrace. The talk that is being repeated that they did not remain silent cannot be believed. The Palestinians and the Arabs can act to tell the Americans, the international community, and the Quartet that this is enough concerning the siege imposed on Gaza. I thank you and may God's peace and blessings be upon you.