

Attachment B**HAMAS' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades**

The following information is based on publicly available details regarding the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of the Islamic Resistance Movement – more commonly referred to under its Arabic acronym HAMAS. These details have been corroborated by material from intelligence investigations into the activities of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. ASIO assesses that the details set out below are accurate and reliable.

The HAMAS' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades have been proscribed by the UK. HAMAS (including the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades) has been listed as a terrorist organisation by the UN, US, Canada and the EU.

Background

The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades are the military wing of HAMAS and are distinct from the civilian functions of HAMAS. HAMAS is a radical Sunni organisation which emerged from the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in late 1987, shortly after the commencement of the first Intifada. The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades were first established in 1989 following an Israeli crackdown on HAMAS leadership.

HAMAS is generally divided into three distinct elements (political, military and communal or welfare activities). The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades represent the military wing of HAMAS.

HAMAS quickly became the dominant Islamic extremist group in the Occupied Territories. Its main presence is in the Gaza Strip and some areas of the West Bank. Co-ordinating with Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades conducted a number of suicide bombings in the mid 1990's in an attempt to derail the peace process. The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and HAMAS have continued their involvement in terrorism, and supported the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000.

Funding for HAMAS is largely received from Palestinian expatriates, and private benefactors (particularly in moderate Arab states). Some of the funds collected are channelled into the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades through specific charitable organisations located in the Occupied Territories, which also provide support to the families of HAMAS activists who have died as 'martyrs' or have been arrested for their activities against Israel. Iran provides some direct funding and support for HAMAS, however, HAMAS remains relatively independent from Iran in its political decision making.

Objectives

HAMAS aims to establish an Islamic Palestinian state which would include the territory of the current state of Israel. The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades regularly engage in terrorist acts in support of HAMAS' political objectives. HAMAS has opposed all previous peace negotiations with Israel and refused to give a formal commitment to a Palestinian unilateral ceasefire in 2005. While it signed the Palestinian Authority

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brokered Cairo Declaration committing militant groups to a 'period of calm', HAMAS has declared its continuing right to undertake acts of violence and has continued to conduct small scale attacks on Israeli targets.

Leadership and membership

The leadership of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades is unclear, although they do report directly to the HAMAS political leadership. In order to protect the political leadership, there is a clear separation of the military command and political leadership. Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was the founding leader of HAMAS and spiritual head until his assassination in March 2004, by Israel security forces. He was replaced by Abdel Aziz Rantisi, who was assassinated one month later. Since then Hamas has attempted to hide the identities of its leaders. HAMAS' current leader is believed to be Khalid al-Mashal, who controls operations from Damascus.

Due to the constant mobility of roles and activities between the civilian, military and welfare elements of HAMAS, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades are able to draw on those visiting HAMAS-sponsored mosques and communal facilities as candidates for terrorist operations.

Terrorist activities

The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades has been responsible for a series of bombings, including suicide bombings, shootings and kidnappings of Israeli/Jewish soldiers and civilians in Israel and the Occupied Territories. The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades do not discriminate between Israeli military and civilian personnel.

HAMAS has coordinated attacks and joint operations with a number of other Palestinian extremist groups, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which has been listed as a terrorist organisation by the Australian Government. HAMAS also has ties to Lebanese Hizballah, which through its External Security Organisation (which also has been listed as a terrorist organisation by the Australian Government) provides material support for terrorist operations by the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades.

The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades has not acted outside the Middle East or deliberately targeted Western interests; however, civilians from a number of countries, including the US, have been killed in terrorist attacks conducted by the group. The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades recruited two British Muslims to carry out a suicide bombing of a bar in Tel Aviv on 30 April 2003, in which four people were killed and over 60 injured.

Since its formation the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades has been involved in over 100 terrorist incidents resulting in the deaths of over 500 people and injuries to more than 3000. Attacks conducted by the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades have included:

- suicide bombings on buses and in crowded markets, nightclubs, and other highly populated places;
- drive-by shootings at military check points and of civilians at the roadside;
- abduction and murder of Israeli civilians and off-duty Israeli soldiers; and

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- rocket, mortar, small-arms and grenade attacks against civilian targets.

Recent major terrorist attacks for which responsibility has been claimed by, or reliably attributed to, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, have included:

- 18 January 2005: One person was killed and six injured when a suicide bomber attacked a security post in Kush Katif.
- 13 August 2004: Sixteen people were killed and up to 100 injured when two buses in Beersheba were attacked within minutes of each other by suicide bombers.
- 14 March 2004: Ten people were killed and 16 injured in a double suicide bombing in the Ashdod Post area.
- 14 January 2004: Four people were killed and 20 injured by a female suicide bomber attack at the Erez Crossing in the Gaza Strip.
- 15 October 2003: Three US nationals were killed and one injured when a bomb demolished an armoured jeep in the Bait Hanoun junction.

Conclusion

ASIO assesses that the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades is continuing to prepare, plan and foster the commission of acts involving threats to human life and serious damage to property. This assessment is corroborated by information provided by reliable and credible intelligence sources.

In the course of pursuing its objective of creating an Islamic Palestinian state, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades is known to have engaged in actions that:

- are aimed towards advancing its political and religious causes;
- are intended to cause, or have caused, serious damage to property, the death of persons or endangerment of life; and
- are intended to cause, or have caused, serious risk to the safety of sections of the public in Israel, and other persons visiting areas in which it operates.

In view of the above information, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades is assessed to be directly or indirectly preparing, planning, and fostering the conduct of terrorist acts. Such acts include actions which are to be done and threats of actions which are to be made with the intention of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause and with the intention of coercing, or influencing by intimidation the government and people of Israel. The actions or threatened actions which the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades is assessed to be involved in would, if successfully completed, cause serious physical harm and death to persons and serious damage to property.