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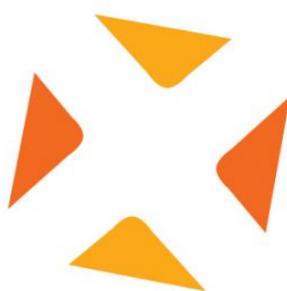
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UK Islamist reactions to the proscription of Hamas as an international terrorist group

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On 19 November 2021, Home Secretary Priti Patel **laid** before Parliament an order to outlaw the Islamist terrorist movement Hamas in its entirety from the UK, stating “This action will support efforts to protect the British public and the international community in the global fight against terrorism”. This step has extended the proscription of Hamas’s ‘military wing’, which was implemented back in 2001. The *List of proscribed international terrorist groups* **declares** “The government now assess that the approach of distinguishing between the various parts of Hamas is artificial. Hamas is a complex but single terrorist organisation”.

The main Palestinian factions have condemned this act. **According** to Al-Jazeera, the Palestinian embassy in London, which also referred to the “historic responsibility of Britain towards the Palestinian people”, called the decision “A serious identification with the agenda of the occupying state, which seeks to criminalise the struggle of the entire Palestinian people and kill the chances for a just solution based on international law and resolutions”. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) called on Britain to reverse the decision, asserting that it targets “the legitimate resistance [*muqawamah*] of the Palestinian people”. Policy Exchange’s Security and Extremism unit has also **unveiled** the words of senior Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) figure Khaled Al-Batsh who **said** that “It is clear that there is a Zionist minister in the British government who works under the orders of Bennett, Lapid and Gantz, and who must be held accountable”.

UK Islamist figures were also quick to respond to Hamas’s full proscription. Among the leading themes was the claim that Hamas performs its resistance [*muqawamah*] according to international law and has no presence outside the territories from which it

operates, including Britain. It should be noted however, that both the US and Israel have previously identified several UK based bodies as being affiliated with Hamas.

Daud Abdullah, Director of the pro-Islamist news website [Middle East Monitor](#) (MEMO) – who [signed](#) the controversial 2009 *Istanbul Declaration* while serving as Deputy Director General of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) [told](#) the Qatari daily *Al-Sharq* that this step was meant to scare Palestine supporters, adding that more of such measures should be expected. Abdullah added that this decision was taken in order to impress British voters at the expense of the Palestinians.

Zaher Birawi, who currently heads the Palestinian Forum in Britain (PFB) [told](#) *Al-Sharq* the decision reflected the short-sightedness of Boris Johnson's government, because of what he described as the key part Hamas plays in the Palestinian arena. Birawi saw this as part of attempts to constrict spaces of solidarity with the Palestinians, and hoped that this would not materialise, due to what he sees as the escalation in solidarity with Palestinian rights in the West, and Britain in particular.

Tarek Hamoud, the Director-General of the Palestinian Return Centre (PRC), expected the decision to facilitate what he described as a process of demonisation of institutions and individuals working to expose the violations of the Zionist occupation, introduced by the lobby supporting the occupation. Hamoud also bound the decision with attempts to criminalise the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, in which Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood affiliates play a major role worldwide.

The prominent British Muslim activist [Azzam Tamimi](#) – who is considered to be close to the Muslim Brotherhood – presented a dedicated [programme](#) on the proscription of Hamas on the Al-Hiwar TV Channel – which he co-founded. Online guests included Anas Altikriti, the [CEO](#) of the Cordoba Foundation, which in 2009 then Prime Minister David Cameron [called](#) a front to the Muslim Brotherhood; Hafez Al-Karmi, [Director](#) of the [Mayfair Islamic Centre](#) in London and a [former director](#) of the Muslim Welfare House, an organisation [identified by academics](#) as part of the Muslim Brotherhood-aligned 'Islamic movement' in the UK; and Anouar Gharbi from Switzerland – who had [served](#) as State Secretary and Senior Advisor to Tunisia's President Moncef Marzouki. Various claims were made during the programme, including:

- That after Brexit, Britain is moving closer to American policy. Moreover, the decision on Hamas is also connected to the Nationality and Borders bill, which allows the removal of citizenship by the government – and all these decisions are part of anti-terror laws. It was also claimed that Home Secretary Priti Patel has ties with the UAE and the 'Zionist country';
- That the decision on Hamas is a combination of pro-Zionism and Islamophobia, since many have pointed out that Hamas was democratically elected and its violence is

aimed only against the Israeli occupation.

- That the timing was connected with the incident involving the Israeli ambassador Hotovely **outside** the London School of Economics (LSE). Anouar Gharbi also asked whether the UK, which is responsible for the Balfour Declaration, is trying to impose its choice of leadership on the Palestinians. In contrast, he claimed, the Swiss position on engaging with Hamas has become positive over the past two years.

Azzam Tamimi also published an **article** on the Palestinian Information Center's (PIC) website, which the Palestinian Authority had previously **blocked** because of its Hamas affiliation. Tamimi claimed that Britain would not have taken such a step if it were not for the current negative environment in the Arab world towards resistance [*muqawamah*] and Hamas. He named countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which he alleged were hostile to Hamas also because it belongs to the Muslim Brotherhood school – which they consider to be their enemy. Tamimi ascribed the hostility to the Muslim Brotherhood's wish to lead a democratic transformation process in countries which experienced the “breeze of the Arab Spring”. Thus Hamas has become integral to their global anti-Muslim Brotherhood campaign – which they have directed at decision makers, intellectuals and the media.

Tamimi added that there is no doubt that Boris Johnson's government also finds an additional incentive following the transformation of the Labour Party after the ‘coup’ against Jeremy Corbyn, who was known for his support for the rights of the Palestinians and sharp criticism of ‘repressive Zionist practices’ against the Palestinians. According to Tamimi, the Labour Party's current leadership succumbed to the Zionist demands to declare a war of anti-Semitism vis-a-vis Israel's opponents within the party, and also utilise that war to cleanse the party of symbols aligned with Palestinian rights.

Tamimi continually asserted that the problem was not Hamas; rather, it was Palestine. Hamas and the other militant Palestinian factions are merely tools created by the Palestinian people in their long struggle for freedom, dignity and restoration of the stolen homeland. Therefore, the important point is the idea, which will remain alive as long as believers adhere to it. It is the idea that the Zionist project is an intrusive settler-colonial project and an opponent of the entire nation [*ummah*] – a project from which the people of Palestine, and indeed all Arabs, must be liberated.

Dr Paul Stott is the Head of Security and Extremism at Policy Exchange.
