

## al-shabaka executive summary

# WHY IT'S DANGEROUS TO CONFLATE HAMAS AND DAESH

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### Key Points

- Conflating Hamas with Daesh promotes the interests of Israel and certain Arab governments while ignoring the very real political and theological differences between the two groups.
- While Daesh rejects democracy in its entirety, Hamas embraces elections and coalition governments with Christian, leftist and secular parties.
- The General Court of the European Union has urged the removal of Hamas from the list of terrorist organizations, citing lack of evidence.
- Palestinian and Arab leadership must not support efforts to link Hamas with Daesh because the exclusion of moderate Islamists in Palestine could promote radicalism.

### Serving Short-Term Political Gain

The conflation of Hamas with Daesh ignores the reality that the political environment in Palestine is defined by the Israeli occupation, whereas the political environment where Daesh emerged is defined by authoritarianism, repression and sectarian and religious conflicts. For Israel, however, the attempt to link the two may pay off regionally and internationally. Many Arabic media outlets have no qualms about referring to this terrorist organization as an “Islamic” State, while many Western media outlets embrace the Israeli conflation of Hamas and Daesh without scrutiny.

The official Egyptian stance under Abdel Fattah Sisi claims that Hamas was cooperating with Jihadist groups in the Sinai, the [same narrative promoted](#) by Israel and its media. However, any links Hamas has established with those groups is [limited to securing the needs](#) of the enclave besieged by Israel and Egypt. It is important to refute this narrative concerning one of the largest Palestinian political movements: Excluding moderate Islamists from political life risks pushing Palestinian society towards radicalism.

### Differences in Doctrine

Hamas positions itself as a centrist Islamic movement and an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood, with a rational jurisprudential authority, whereas Daesh deals with Islamic texts in isolation from their

historical context. Hence, for Daesh, movements like Hamas are secular and un-Islamic, since Hamas is primarily a resistance movement against the Israeli occupation and believes in a moderate Islamic authority.

Hamas has condemned Daesh's threats and considered these part of a smear campaign that extends beyond Palestine. Hamas has in fact dealt decisively with a Daesh-like group in the past. In August, 2009, security forces encircled the Ibn Taymiyyah Mosque where the "[Jund Ansar Allah](#)" (Soldiers of God's Supporters) armed group announced the creation of the Islamic Emirate in Gaza. When Musa's group refused to surrender, Hamas [ended the emirate project in its infancy](#) by killing its members with the stated goal of eradicating extremism in the Gaza Strip.

### Different Stances on Statehood

Hamas and Daesh differ in their view of the modern state. Hamas maintains that it has come to fully accept democracy and the concept of the civil state. At the opposite end, Daesh views any expression of democracy as a manifestation of apostasy and any movement or individual taking part in elections as apostates.

When Hamas decided not to participate in [1996 Palestinian Authority elections](#) its position was based on a political and ideological stance towards the Oslo Accords. Following the 2005 Cairo Agreement, Hamas nominated many members to a [Change and Reform](#) list to run for the Legislative Council, winning the majority of votes. Hamas has called for [coalition governments](#) inclusive of leftist and secular parties. Its government as well as its parliamentary list has included women and its first government included Muslim and Christian ministers.

### Polar Opposites in Treating the Other

The most significant difference between Hamas and Daesh is their position towards followers of other religions. During its formation, Hamas published a charter that used religious vocabulary to describe the conflict. Following severe criticism, Hamas [effectively sidelined this Charter](#) and no longer considers it an authoritative reference.

The human rights violations committed by Gaza's government cannot be considered an indication of Hamas' resemblance to Daesh, but rather an indication of misgovernment. [The political leadership](#) of Hamas has spoken out against such practices on occasion, for example those committed by the Ministry of the Interior under Fathi Hammad.

### Moving Forward in Relations with Hamas

Hamas was added to the list of terrorist organizations following the events of September 11, 2001, even though it had nothing to do with the attack. In fact, the General Court of the European Union [issued a decision](#) on December 17, 2014, urging the removal of Hamas from the list. The Court argued that the order to list Hamas in 2003 was based on media reports rather than solid evidence.

Palestinian movements must not allow the disagreement with Hamas to justify accusations that harm the Palestinian cause internationally and create tensions locally. Hamas must also realize that its rule of



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Gaza has not been free of abuses and human rights violations, and must therefore revisit its conduct and be more careful in its political discourse. Finally, failure to oppose efforts to link Hamas with Daesh carries the danger of destabilizing Palestinian society in the medium and long-term.

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