

Hamas is Choosing Violence Over Peace Ahead of Ramadan

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As the Muslim holy month of Ramadan begins March 10, Israeli and American officials have grown increasingly concerned about Hamas’ efforts to inflame religious tensions and increase attacks against Israelis.

Israel is dedicated to de-escalating tensions and maintaining religious freedom, including normal access for Palestinians and Israeli Arabs to Muslim holy sites on the Temple Mount. But Hamas has rejected efforts to calm tensions — instead viewing Ramadan as an opportunity to expand the conflict with Israel. And, unfortunately, the Palestinian Authority (PA) has stepped up its incitement in this delicate period.

America must stand with Israel as it protects its citizens and works to safeguard access to holy places for all faiths. The administration should press the PA to reciprocate Israel’s efforts to calm tensions and fulfill its security commitments to prevent violence during this sensitive period.



Palestinians wave Hamas flags after Ramadan prayers on the Temple Mount in 2022.
(JAMAL AWAD/FLASH90)

The Latest: Hamas Rejects American-Led Efforts to Decrease Tensions

- Hamas leaders continue to reject a framework — agreed to by Israel and negotiated with America, Egypt and Qatar — which would pause the fighting for six weeks (including during Ramadan) in exchange for the release of some Israeli hostages. The framework provides for more humanitarian aid entering Gaza on top of the significant amounts Israel is already facilitating. Instead, Hamas leaders seek to increase violence against Israelis.
- On Feb. 28, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh urged Palestinians throughout Israel and the West Bank to converge on the Temple Mount in an effort to replicate the violence seen in recent years.
- Haniyeh also called for the Iran-aligned “Axis of Resistance” members including Hezbollah, the Houthis, and various Iraqi Shia militias to escalate their attacks against Israel.

- A spokesman for Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), another Iranian-backed Palestinian terror group, echoed Haniyeh's speech by calling for a "month of terror" against Israel during Ramadan.
- Rather than condemn this dangerous incitement, the PA is continuing to stand with Hamas — refusing to condemn October 7 and promoting unity with the terrorist organization — while spreading its own anti-Israel incitement through official PA media.
- Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant recently assessed that Hamas' main goal is to utilize Ramadan to inaugurate the second phase of the plan they began on October 7.

History of Escalating Violence Against Israelis During Ramadan

- The most well-known case of violence against Israel during Ramadan was the Arab surprise attack against Israeli forces in 1973, the Yom Kippur War.
- In recent decades, Arab states regularly have aired anti-Israel and antisemitic television programming during prime time, often triggering significant increases in bloodshed and violence.
- In the run-up to Ramadan 2023, PA President Mahmoud Abbas denied any Jewish connection to Jerusalem by declaring, "We alone have the religious, historical, and legal right to Al-Buraq Wall (Western Wall)."
- Following previous violent Palestinian riots on the Temple Mount during Ramadan, PA President Abbas praised the rioters, telling them that "Every drop of blood spilled in Jerusalem is pure, every shahid [martyr] will reach paradise, and every injured person will be rewarded by God."
- During Ramadan 2022, Palestinian terrorists dramatically increased their attacks, including approximately 49 shooting, stabbing, bombing and other violent attacks. Palestinian terrorists in Gaza and Lebanon also fired a series of rockets toward Israel during this period.
- During Ramadan 2023, Palestinian rioters barricaded themselves on the Temple Mount and launched fireworks and threw rocks at Israelis praying at the Western Wall below. Israeli police were forced to disperse the rioters who were inspired by and carrying the flag of Hamas. Iranian-backed terrorists in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria also joined by launching dozens of rockets at Israeli communities.

Palestinian Officials Must Reciprocate Israel's Steps to Decrease Tensions

- Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's office released a statement on March 5 reaffirming Israel's commitment to freedom of worship for all faiths and to upholding Muslim prayer on the Temple Mount during Ramadan.

- Israel remains committed to maintaining the status quo on the Temple Mount — the holiest site in Judaism and the third-holiest site in Islam — under which Muslims can pray on the Mount and non-Muslims may visit but are not allowed to pray. However, some Palestinian leaders have in prior years incited violence by contesting the right of Jews to visit the Mount or even pray at the Western Wall beneath it.
- Israel is also taking steps to make it easier for Palestinians from the West Bank to enter Israel to pray at Al Aqsa.
- But the security situation in the West Bank is already on edge, as the PA’s security control over major Palestinian cities in the West Bank, including Jenin and Nablus, has significantly decreased — allowing some cities to become terrorist hotbeds.
- Rather than invest in stable Palestinian governance and economic infrastructure, the PA continues its “pay-for-slay” program. In 2022 alone, the PA paid more than \$350 million in stipends for terrorists and their families. This policy directly incentivizes continued terror attacks against Israelis.

The Way Forward

To help promote peace and stability, America must continue to publicly condemn Hamas for continuing to reject the agreement on the table, press Palestinian leaders to end their deadly policies, and help ensure Israel has the resources and support needed to defend its citizens from this growing terrorist threat.

The United States must also applaud Israeli efforts to protect the freedom of worship for people of all faiths. The international community should press Palestinian leaders to end their dangerous incitement, which threatens all worshipers and undermines American efforts to ultimately bring an end to the fighting.