

***Al-Fateh* – The Hamas Web Magazine for Children:
Incitement to Terror, Annihilation and Self-Destruction**



مجلة الفاتح

**A Draft Report
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Introduction

Al-Fateh (<http://al-fateh.net>) is an online Arabic newspaper aimed at Arabic-speaking children and young people. The Web site went online in September 2002, starting as a monthly publication. In October 2003 it became a bimonthly, consisting of a home page and 30 to 40 links to various columns. It claims to have a large and constantly increasing audience: In May 2006 it reported 34 million hits during its first four years of operation, with the figure growing to 48 million in the following eight months. (These figures are the Web site's assertion, and cannot be independently verified.)

The site is registered to an address in Lebanon, but after a substantial upgrade in March–April 2007, it was stated that *Al-Fateh* is based in London. In practice, it is identified with the Palestinian Hamas movement (see Part Four below),¹ supporting its ideology and terrorist activities,² and serving as a platform for Hamas propaganda and indoctrination, especially of the young.

The name chosen for the Web site is indicative of its ideology. *Al-Fateh* means “the conqueror,” and was the title given to the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II (1451-81), who conquered Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, in 1453, renamed it, and made it into the capital of the Ottoman Empire, while transforming many of its churches into mosques.

Politically, the Web site's consistent message is a call for establishing an Islamic state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea (covering all the area of the State of Israel), the destruction of the Jewish state, and an armed struggle of violence and terror against all who are defined as the enemies of Islam, including the West in general. Any notion of compromise or peace is ruled out, with one exception on page 15.

Having examined various issues on the Web site, this report documents its delegitimization of Israel and Zionism in every aspect, its incitement to hatred, violence and annihilation, the indoctrinating cult of jihad and martyrdom, the attitude to the West as an enemy of Islam (over which Islam is destined to triumph), and the use of the Lebanese terrorist organization Hezbollah as an example and model. Most importantly, the report documents the indoctrination of the younger generation into the tenets of Hamas. This report is based on examination of 132 issues of *Al-Fateh*, from the first (September 2002) to September 2008. The material found is repetitive, with a number of recurring motifs.

1 . Hamas (the Arabic acronym for Islamic Resistance Movement) was founded in 1987 by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin as an armed organization, following several years of activity as a social and religious movement based in the Gaza Strip. It regards itself as a wing of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and has never been a member of the PLO — the official Palestinian umbrella organization headed by the Fatah armed faction. In 2006 Hamas won the parliamentary elections in the Palestinian National Authority (a PLO-affiliated state apparatus) and formed the government, until friction with the Fatah-backed PNA escalated to a Hamas coup and the ousting of President Mahmoud Abbas from the Gaza Strip.

2 .The adjective and the noun “terrorist” are used in this essay to denote murderous militant activities deliberately directed at civilians and the civilian population at large to demoralize the population while inflicting maximal casualties. This definition applies regardless of the ideology that motivates terrorism and the goals it serves. It would apply to the means even if one sympathized with the ideology.

Part One: The Attitude to Israel and the Jews

I. Delegitimizing Israel and Zionism

The *Al-Fateh*/ Hamas outlook on Israel, as clearly expressed in the content of this Web site, is one of uncompromising hatred for a country it does not recognize and views only in terms of wickedness, cruelty, blood lust and lies. Hostility and contempt for Israel are intertwined with the aspiration to annihilate it. The site staunchly opposes any peaceful solution to the conflict or even an agreed-upon limited coexistence with Israel. The State of Israel, the rights of the Jewish people historically, terminologically and conceptually, and Jewish settlements within the State of Israel are deligitimized.

A. Historically: It denies any Jewish claim of ties to the land, making a three-pronged attack: on the biblical claim, on the exilic link of the Jewish people to its homeland, and on the basis of modern Israel through the return of the Jewish people.

1) The biblical claim of the Jewish people to the land.

Al-Fateh asserts that the ancient Canaanites were the “Arab” ancestors of the Palestinians, whose claim to the land precedes that of the Jews. The site indoctrinates young people to the view that the Jewish presence in the Land of Israel/Palestine is not only historically late but also insignificant, thus seeking to undermine the notion of a historical Jewish homeland and, consequently, the foundation of Zionist ideology on the right of the Jewish people to return to it. *Al-Fateh* devotes a great deal of space to this position:

The Canaanite Arabs were the first to emigrate from the Arabian Peninsula to Palestine ... and they established a strong country which lasted for more than 1,500 years and is called Palestine in the Land of Canaan.

Issue 66, December 15, 2005.

In Issue 9, May 2003, *Al-Fateh* tells children that “tribes of the Arab Canaanites” have dwelt in Hebron for 5,000 years³:

³ There is a widespread trend among Arab intellectuals in the Middle East to “Arabize” all ancient nations of the region – save the Jews. Thus, according to modern Arab historians, the ancient Babylonians, Arameans, Phoenicians and Egyptians were all “Arabs” who emigrated from the Arabian Peninsula. In the Palestinian case, the Arabization of the Canaanites, who preceded the Jews in ancient Palestine, is meant to portray the Jews as interlopers in the land since antiquity, while the Arab Palestinians, as direct descendants of the “Arab” Canaanites, are ascribed additional legitimacy. In reality, the ancient Canaanites spoke a language very close to Hebrew, not Arabic, and there is no evidence of their presence in post-Biblical times, making impossible any direct connection between them and the Arab conquerors of the region in the seventh century CE.

Palestine is an Arab land, where the Arab Canaanites have dwelt since ancient times, a long time before the arrival of the Jews in Palestine, and even when the Jews immigrated into Palestine, the Arab tribes lived there until the arrival of Islam, which made Palestine an Arab Islamic land ... and since that time to our day the Muslim Arabs have never left, because this is their land and because the soil is painted in the blood of their forefathers who built it and defended it ... and everything in it testifies to Palestine being Arab and Muslim, despite the arrogance of the Jews and imperialism that helps the Jews to occupy it.

Issue 9, May 2003

2) The exilic link of the Jewish people to its homeland, focused on the Western Wall (a remnant of one of the supporting walls of the compound of Herod's Temple, which was built on the ruins of Solomon's Temple).

The Western Wall, a noble and honored Arab and Islamic remnant, one of the walls of the Al-Aqsa Mosque ... the most ancient Islamic site in Jerusalem. The occupying Jews claim that this wall is all that remains of their ancient temple, called Solomon's Temple. In actual fact, the Jews' claim is false, faked and incorrect, and history and archeological research prove our statements. The ancient Jewish temple was completely destroyed by the Romans approximately 2,000 years ago. All archeological researchers prove that this wall was built in the Umayyad period ... the Western Wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque is thus an Arab-Islamic remnant, and, consequently, has no connection at all to Solomon's Temple.

Issue 57, August 1, 2005

Denying the Jewish provenance of the Western Wall parallels the Web site's failure to mention any Jewish holy places in the land, while frequently mentioning Muslim sites.

3) The basis of modern Israel in the return of the Jewish people.

While denying the roots of the forebears of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel/Palestine and the exilic link with it over two millennia, *Al-Fateh* refers to the return of the Jews to their land as a greedy, colonialist, and imperialist action against Islam, supported by Western powers:

Beloved Palestine is collapsing under the cruel English imperialism collaborating with Jews against Arabism and Islam.

Issue 8, April 2003

The site suggests that one motive for imperialist support in establishing the modern Jewish state was the desire of European countries to get rid of their Jews:

The Jews looked for a land to settle in and the European states helped in order to be saved from them and their wickedness, and they chose the land of Palestine.

Issue 41, December 1, 2004

The site denies the Holocaust and accuses the Jews of its fabrication in order to reap financial benefits:



The inscription on the sack reads: “The Holocaust.” The Jew on the right says to his friend: “We lied a lie which was believed.” The Jew on the left responds: “Let us find a new lie, my friend.”

Issue 122, April 14, 2008

B. Terminologically and conceptually, the Web site avoids using the term “the State of Israel,” and frequently shows the map of the Middle East as if Israel were not part of it.

Al-Fateh never recognizes the State of Israel and uses terms of derogation and condemnation to refer to it — e.g., “the cursed state,” “the state of the monstrous entity,” or “the criminal state.” It also employs terms that deny Israel’s right to exist, such as “the

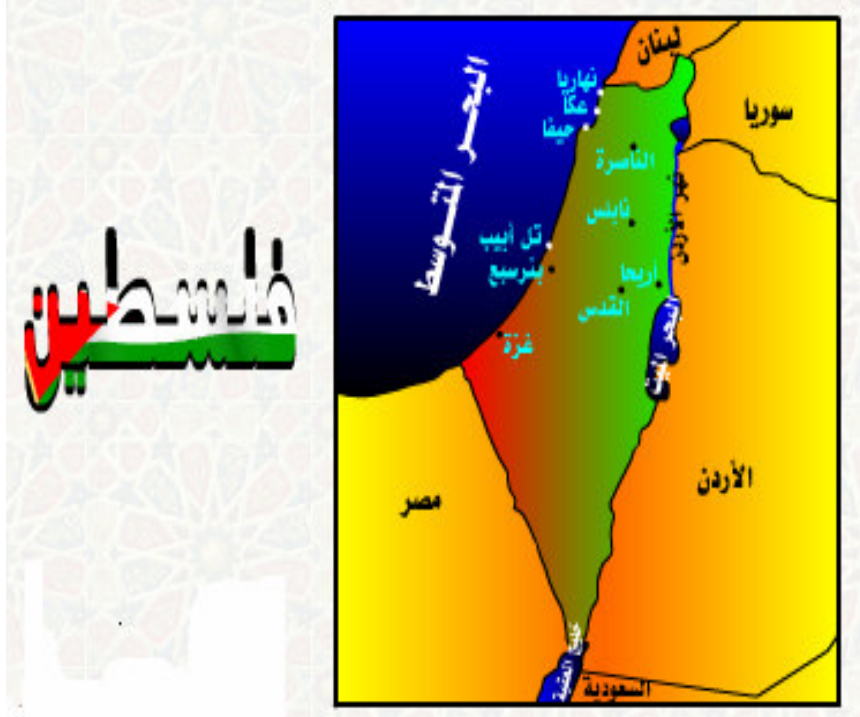
so-called State of Israel,” “the Zionist entity,” “the alleged entity,” and “the thieving usurping entity.” On the only occasion in which *Al-Fateh* uses the term “Israel” without such negative adjectives, it puts the word in quotation marks. When reporting on current affairs, the site sometimes uses the term the “Hebrew State,” which may not seem inherently negative, but, in fact, comes to replace the legitimate term “State of Israel.”

Al-Fateh omits Israel from its maps of the region, and its young readers learn that:

Palestine is an Arab Islamic country which borders on Lebanon in the north, Jordan and Syria in the east, and the Mediterranean Sea in the west. In the south and the southwest it borders on Egypt.

Issue 15, October 15, 2003

Here is a map of the region without Israel, from the introductory page of Issue 103, July 1, 2007. The colored inscription on the left says “Palestine.”



C. Internally in Israel *Al-Fateh* delegitimizes towns and villages established inside Israel (defined within even the most minimal of borders). The site uses terms connoting imperialism and colonialism to refer to Israeli towns and villages, including those within the pre-1967 Israeli boundaries. The Arabic word for “colony,” derived from a word connoting imperialism, is applied to various communities in Israel proper, such as Kibbutz Zikkim (*Issue 74, April 15, 2006*), Kibbutz Shamir (*Issue 78, June 15, 2006*), the city of Tel Aviv–Jaffa (*Issue 60, September 15, 2005*), and the town of Sderot, to which the adjective “stolen” is also applied. Communities in northern Israel are referred to as “the northern Zionist colonies” (*Issue 82, August 15, 2006*, and *Issue 83, September 1, 2006*).

Generally, the site does not describe places in Israel as “Israeli” and chooses the appellation “Zionist” (always used with the connotation of colonialist), as in “the coastal Zionist town of Eilat” (*Issue 51, May 1, 2005*) or “Zionist Tel Aviv” (*Issue 69, February 1, 2006*). The State of Israel is referred to as “the occupied territories of 1948,” (*Issue 43, January 1, 2005*) and the term “occupied” is also applied to cities and regions within Israel, such as Netanya, Ashkelon, Haifa, Afula, Upper Galilee, the entire North, and the South — the Negev region.

II. From Delegitimizing to Incitement to Hatred, Violence, and Annihilation

A. The Claim of Dispossession

By demonizing Israel at every opportunity, even without connection to the subject at hand, *Al-Fateh* drives home its point that Israel/Zionism dispossesses the Palestinians. For instance, in an article on botany, children are taught about basil, *rihan* in Arabic, by mentioning two Arab villages with names derived from the plant — Umm Rihan and Rihaniyyah — and then the author adds:

The first [village], in the Haifa region, was destroyed by the evil Zionists, who scattered its residents in every direction, and the second [village] was captured in the year 1948 by the evil enemy who tried to erase its Arab identity.⁴

Issue 65, December 1, 2005

B. Scorn and Disgust for Israel and Israelis

The site frequently attaches derogatory, condemnatory and even racist terms to the word Israelis, also referred to as Jews and/or Zionists. So, for instance, *Issue 8 (April 2003)*, states:

... criminal Zionists, the Jews are the lowest of the human race, Zionist spies or hateful Israelis.

Issue 8, April 2003

Al Quds (Jerusalem) will remain as a trust in our hands and the hands of all Muslims, and they are to unite and gather for its liberation and the liberation of the land of Palestine from the **impurity of the Zionists, the descendents of apes and pigs.**

Issue 129, August 2008

The following is a small selection of anti-Israeli hate phrases prevalent on the *Al-Fateh* site: “the filth of the settlers ... their mothers are known while their fathers are anonymous ... raised as lost dogs (*Issue 9, May 2003*),” “...cowardly Zionists, cursed Zionists, contemptuous Zionists, thieving and usurping Zionists, satanic Jews, the

⁴ The residents of Rihaniyya were originally Circassians from the Caucasus, who have zealously maintained their Circassian identity and have never adopted an Arab identity.

impurity of the Zionist Jews (*Issue 47, March 1, 2005*),” “...evil Zionists who do not have even one grain of culture in them (*Issue 63, November 1, 2005*).”



Caricature of an “evil” Israeli soldier, merged with a caricature of a Diaspora Jew, reminiscent of prototypical European anti-Semitic cartoons. The caption is “The Criminal Jews” (*Issue 10, June 2003*).

C. Incitement to Violence

Stories and articles on this Web site, which addresses children, systematically portray Israel as thirsty for Palestinian blood and lusting to commit murder and acts of cruelty for the sake of pleasure. Accusations of this kind teach children that they should harm and destroy Israelis, and that such action is justified. For example, *Issue 47, March 1, 2005* proclaims that “one must purify the land of the impurity of Zionist Jews.”

One child writes on the site:

[I will do] to the Jews what the hawk does when it catches sight of its prey, it pounces on it quickly from the sky ... I don't want to cause pain to any person except the criminal Jews.

Issue 40, November 15, 2004



An *Al-Fateh* drawing showing an Israeli in the 1948 war (War of Independence) seeking to spill Arab blood

Issue 31, July 1, 2004

The site is rife with messages to kill Jews, meaning specifically Israelis.

You will be in the ranks in the near future, the future in which we cleanse our holy land of the impurity of the Jews.

Issue 45, February 1, 2005

Numerous testimonials of terrorists quoted on the Web site serve a similar educational purpose.

I want to follow in the footsteps of the fighters in order to liberate this land from the impurity of the contemptible Jews, from the impurity of the evil and the corrupt.

[Message quoted from a terrorist's will]

Issue 50, April 15, 2005

Yet another will, left by a suicide bomber who detonated his explosives in front of a school bus, is posted on the site:

The Jews sowed destruction in the land and distributed corruption.... I wanted to seek revenge against them and kill as many of them as possible.

Issue 57, August 1, 2005

D. From Liberation of Palestine to Annihilation of Israel

The notion that the destruction of Israel is entwined with liberating Palestine is implied in the Web site's name (*Al-Fateh*=the Conqueror), and is explicitly promoted.

All Muslim children are the hope for the future and by their hands, with Allah's help, the accursed Jewish state will be totally destroyed.

Issue 43, January 1, 2005

Palestine is the cradle of religions and the source of its [divine] mission, and therefore the descendants of the **murderers of the prophets**⁵ — the uninvited Zionists — have no right to be here.

Issue 41, December 1, 2004)

To instill this ideology, *Al-Fateh* publishes stories written, as it were, by cities within Israel proper that address children and “plead” with them to act to liberate them “from the hands of the abject Jews.” The cities of Haifa, Acre, Tiberias, Safed, Nazareth, Lod, Beit Shean and Beersheba — all located within the sovereign State of Israel — “tell” the children:

We await the pure fighters, [those who are already] free [and] who will liberate us from Zionist colonialism.

⁵ This expression is reminiscent of classic Christian anti-Semitic portrayals of the Jews as the killers of Christ.

Issues ranging from January 2003 to February 1, 2004



I am the imprisoned Haifa, awaiting my liberation by Allah, by means of the heroic Al-Qassam students, the esteemed fighters who risk their lives and face death. My expectation for my liberation, and the liberation of the rest of Palestinian Muslim cities, is that it will not take much longer [to accomplish].

Issue 31, July 1, 2004

E. War against Israel as Jihad (Holy War), Islamic Duty, and a Virtue

1) War as jihad

Al-Fateh teaches its young readers that the only way to “liberate” the land and annihilate the State of Israel is through jihad — a holy war. The Web site interprets jihad not as a spiritual or ethical quest, as it is sometimes thought of in the Muslim tradition, but in the most radical sense of the term as a violent holy war that is a religious duty. *Al-Fateh* calls upon its readers to express their loyalty to Islam by becoming jihad fighters.

The site devotes a regular column to jihad, and incites children to take an active part in the holy war. The basic militant message of the site to the children, which is given a religious dimension, is:

The way to the complete liberation of the land is through the muzzle of a gun.

Issue 72, March 15, 2006

The regular column on jihad tells children that jihad means investing an effort (the word for “effort” in Arabic is derived from the same root as jihad), but insists on putting “effort” in the context of a holy war:

If your father says to you “make an effort” ... he means that you should invest all the effort you are capable of to fight your enemies.

Issue 2, October 2002

Al-Fateh devotes a great deal of space to messages that glorify violent jihad (as distinct from a possible peaceful, spiritual interpretation of the term), not least through hortatory messages from jihadists. A Hamas terrorist writes in his will, describing the sweet taste of jihad:

O Muslims, life is jihad, your glory is jihad, and your existence creates a crucial connection to jihad.

Issue 2, October 2002

The editor of *Al-Fateh* urges children to become Islamic fighters:

We call upon you to help your families in Palestine, in the Arab world and throughout the Islamic world — therefore we want you with us.

Issue 2, October 2002

Elsewhere in the jihad column readers are taught:

Jihad is an individual duty for every Muslim when infidels capture Muslim lands. That is to say, it is currently required of every Muslim to fight the Jews who occupied Palestine — until they leave [the land] and return it to the Arab people.

Issue 2, October 2002

2) The ultimate goal of jihad: annihilating the Jewish state

The purpose of the holy war against Israel — the “united Arab jihad for the liberation of the stolen lands” (*Issue 78, June 15, 2006*) — is none other than complete annihilation, and it cannot stop until the purpose is achieved.

We are in a constant jihad, fighting against the enemies of Allah who stole our lands in Palestine ... we will always continue in the ways of jihad, and death for the sake of Allah, and he will be with us.

Issue 13, September 2003

Evidently, no partial victory would put an end to the war.

F. The Political Implications: Rejecting Negotiations and a Peace Agreement

While advocating jihad as a total, unrelenting war of annihilation, *Al-Fateh* asserts the corollary of that position, too: rejecting any peaceful solution, or even negotiations that might lead in that direction.

1) The authority of radical leaders who oppose negotiations

Al-Fateh has a column dedicated to Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the most prominent Palestinian leader prior to 1948 (when the modern State of Israel was established), known for his collaboration with Nazi Germany. Among his statements quoted on the site is this exhortation to Palestinians never to make peace with the Jews:

If you do not succeed in liberating Palestine, I am warning you not to conclude a peace agreement with the Jews, whatever the situation will be.

Issue 5, January 2003

Among the more recent radical Palestinian leaders, Abd al-Aziz Rantisi, who was a senior Hamas figure in the Gaza Strip and a staunch opponent of the Oslo Accords and all subsequent agreements between Palestinians and Israel, is approvingly quoted by *Al-Fateh*. Referring to Palestinian protests against negotiations and agreements, Rantisi praises the Palestinian demonstrators who

...left their homes in order to tell the negotiators: "No to this ridiculous negotiation! Yes to continuing resistance. Yes to the gun!"

Issue 8, April 2003

2) The message from martyrs

The Web site often uses stories of *shahids* (martyrs) or their last wills and testaments to convey the message of total rejection of any agreement with Israel. So, for example, we have the story of the *shahid* Osama who

...belonged to the youths who did not agree to surrender. He did not know the hall of negotiation and humiliation; he grasped his weapon and showed us the path of honor and glory, when he rejected any path which does not lead to freedom or Paradise.

Issue 11, July 2003

One last will and testament of a Hamas terrorist has this message:

We will say clearly to the treacherous Arab countries and to those responsible in the [Palestinian] Authority who trade in the blood of the *shahids*, of women and children: "Return from the path of supporting the Jews ... because whoever helps a traitor is a traitor ... [take the path] to war until victory or to death in battle."

Issue 13, September 2003

The expression “victory or death in battle” conveys an extreme fundamentalist stance, similar to that of Iran under the ayatollahs, and preached by the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Victory is a desirable option, but not the only one. It is not the criterion for the ultimate evaluation of the jihadi campaign.

3) Allegorical stories with a political message

An additional method *Al-Fateh* employs for implanting in its young readers’ minds opposition to any peace agreement is the use of allegorical stories and images with a political moral.

One picture story concerns two rabbits who claim ownership of the same house. The rabbits agree to allow a cat, who pretends to be wise and pious, to be the judge in the dispute. In the end, the cat pounces on the rabbits and devours them with great pleasure. *Al-Fateh* supplies the moral:

The enemy is [always] the enemy, and will never be a friend.
Issue 34, August 15, 2004

4) Ignoring existing agreements

Yet further evidence of the total rejection by *Al-Fateh*/ Hamas of any agreement with Israel is its tendency to ignore agreements that have already been signed. Thus, for instance, when describing the Israeli military withdrawal from most of the Gaza Strip in 1994, the site deliberately omits any reference to the Oslo Accords, which provided for transferring authority in that area and elsewhere from Israel to the Palestinians.

III. Indoctrinating the Young for Holy War (Jihad) and Martyrdom (*Shahadah*)

Al-Fateh’s delegitimization of Israel and incitement to violence, terrorism, and annihilation are not only expressions of Hamas ideology. They serve an educational purpose: to indoctrinate children to commit themselves to a total holy war (jihad) and martyrdom (*shahadah*). Everything said and shown on the Web site comes to mold the children’s minds in that direction and to whip up fervor for it.

A. Aspiring to join the jihad and the ideal of killing Israeli soldiers

Al-Fateh calls on the young to express their devotion to Islam by becoming jihad fighters.

Arise, o youth of Jerusalem, the land is calling you! Arise, o lions of war and
God will protect you.
Issue 79, July 1, 2006

The Web site provides educational stories like that of the boy Mahmoud who chose a toy gun as a reward for doing well at school and, upon receiving the promised gift, told his father that “this will become a real gun in my hands.” The father, we are told, praised him and said: “ Mahmoud has become a man today.” (*Issue 72, March 15, 2006*).

This educational goal is reinforced by pictures showing young boys with rifles and, to drive home the practical goal, pictures pointing to the killing of Israeli soldiers.



A boy plays at shooting Israeli soldiers

Issue 3, November 2002

B. Indoctrinating for martyrdom

The site does not merely exhort children to take up arms to kill Israelis and become fighters in a jihad; it educates them to seek *shahadah* — martyrdom for the sake of Allah — and idealizes suicide bombings as an expression of devotion to Islam. It incites young people to aspire to take part in terrorist attacks, while presenting suicide bombers as role models. This is what they should aspire to and emulate.

The Web site features numerous stories, articles, pictures, and games for children that convey admiration for terrorists and their actions, often related in detail. Among the many suicide bombers praised by *Al-Fateh* are perpetrators of the following operations:

- the attack on a main road in Netanya in March 2001 in which three people were killed and 53 injured
- the bombing at the Sharon shopping mall in Netanya in May 2001, in which five people were murdered and over 100 injured
- a suicide bombing at an entertainment spot in Tel Aviv frequented by teenagers — with a toll of 21 dead and 120 wounded
- a suicide bombing at a road junction in Jerusalem in June 2002, killing 19 and injuring 74
- a suicide bombing in a crowded bus at the Meiron junction in August 2002, killing 9 and injuring 48
- The attack on the Ashdod port in March 2004, which left 10 dead and 12 wounded
- a suicide bombing in the city of Dimona in February 2008, killing 1 and injuring 11

In short, *Al-Fateh* prepares its young readers to seek death like the *shahids* it glorifies and praises, and such preparation is also reinforced by systematically exposing the children to graphic images of torn limbs and dead bodies. Thus, *Al-Fateh* is creating the next generation of suicide bombers, as its fundamental educational mission.

A female suicide bomber, Zeynab Abu Salam, who killed two police officers when she blew herself up in Jerusalem in 2004, is praised on the site:



"Her head was severed from her pure body; however, her veil remained in order to adorn it, To Paradise, O Zeynab, oh sister of the men."

Issue 38, October 15, 2004

The sole exception that proves the rule is the following passage in which a thirteen-year-old girl, Yasmin Shamalawi, "the youngest Palestinian writer and media person," relates, among other things, to the conflict with Israel:

Yasmin Shamalawi rejects violence as a means of confronting the other, believes in peace as a means of achieving the goals of the Palestinian people and rejects the killing of Israeli children just as she categorically rejects the killing of the children of Palestine. And she goes on to say: "I don't carry a rifle as the singer Umm Kulthum⁶ once sang: 'I now have a rifle in my hands, take me with you to Palestine...' All I will make is a sincere and true call on behalf of the children of Palestine to the rulers of Israel, so that they may look at us and their own children through the perspectives of childhood and the future ... and let us live together, as there is room for all in the land and in the heavens."

Issue 129, August 2008

⁶ Umm Kulthum is Fatima Ibrahim Elbeltagi, dubbed "The Star of the East," and considered the greatest Arab female singer of all time.

Part Two: The Attitude to the West

Although it relentlessly focuses on hatred and incitement to violence and annihilation of Israel, *Al-Fateh* has a wider negative and militant perspective that also targets the West — as a perceived enemy of Islam and ally of Israel; as a source of past colonialism and past and present imperialism; as the alleged perpetrator of crimes against Muslims; as decadent and inferior to the Islamic world on which it is said to have a corrupting influence; and as the antagonist over whom Islam will claim eventual victory. The young readers of *Al-Fateh* are indoctrinated to hate and to feel obligated to wage holy war — on the various fronts, including Afghanistan and Iraq (the latter being regarded as sharing the fate of Palestine) — in the name of Islam for ultimate victory.

This doctrine of hate, it should be noted, is not usually framed in religious terms as a conflict with Christianity. One does not find many references to Christians and Christianity on the *Al-Fateh* Web site. However, there are repeated references to the Crusades as a defining historical memory and to the Christian West as a crusading force then and now. Nevertheless, militant animosity toward the West is framed mainly in other terms, as summarized below:

I. The West as an Enemy of Islam and Ally of Israel

Al-Fateh refers to conflicts involving Western and Muslim countries as an attack on Islam that requires a response from all Muslims.

Muslims and their children everywhere are under a siege of injustice — in beloved Palestine, in wounded Afghanistan, in Kashmir, in Chechnya, and in other parts of the world which are controlled by the most despicable of God's creatures: the Jews, and their agents in crusader America who are hostile to Arabism and Islam ... in the West which carried out eight crusades against the Arab and Muslim land of *al-Sham* [Greater Syria] and in Egypt, and killed and stole and plundered, not sparing a young man or an old one, a young girl or an old woman ... until the beaches of *al-Sham* and Alexandria were dyed in the color of pure and innocent blood.

Issue 4, December 2002

Al-Fateh's attitude to the West is intertwined with its position regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both historically (referring to the 1917 Balfour Declaration, which recognized the land of Israel/Palestine as a home for the Jewish people, and the alleged role of Western colonial and imperialist designs in establishing the State of Israel in 1948) and in the present (involving Western, especially American, support for Israel).

The Jewish enemy kills our people in beloved Palestine, while America, Britain and the other European countries help it.

Issue 2, October 2002

Al-Fateh vents its hatred for the president of the United States:

... the light-headed [man] who resides in the Black House and carries out the instructions of the Jews ... they are liars and the young Bush imagines futile fancies.

Issue 30, June 15, 2004

II. The West Accused of Crimes against Muslims

Al-Fateh informs its readers that the West not only aids Israel and the Jews in their aggression and villainy, but is itself responsible for attacking Muslim countries.

Our Muslim lands are under severe attacks in beloved Palestine, in Iraq, in Afghanistan and in Pakistan, in Chechnya and in the Balkans, in India and in Kashmir. The people and the lands are exposed to disasters which the **enemies of mankind**, our enemies, the Jews and their allies in the countries and evil on five continents, bring upon them.

Issue 5, January 2003

America is the terror, my child... she is the plague that destroys my liver ... she is the viper that scatters poison inside me.

Issue 15, October 15, 2003

III. The West Regarded as Inferior to Islam and Accused of Stealing its Ideas

The West is depicted as inferior to the Islamic world — certainly morally, but also regarding many scientific discoveries over the centuries which, *Al-Fateh* tells the children, are of Islamic origin, though passed off by the West as their own.

Today many scientists think that Columbus was not really the first to discover America, because he reached it hundreds of years after the Arabs and Muslims had reached it.

Issue 27, April 15, 2004

Similarly, *Al-Fateh* asserts that the Arabs discovered gravity before Newton. The “legend” of Newton making his discovery while sitting under an apple tree is said to be a ruse designed to hide the fact that the idea was of Arabic provenance (*Issue 31, July 1, 2004*). *Al-Fateh* cites, among other scientific firsts by Arabs later appropriated by the West without acknowledgment, the notion that the world is not flat and the discovery of electricity.

Al-Fateh also claims that a charter of human rights emerged, not in France or America, but in Mecca in the seventh century, from the Islamic faith. While the nations of the world have violated their own proclamations concerning human rights, the emergence of Islam in Mecca brought:

... equality between the slave and his master, between the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the man and the woman, the Arab and the

non-Arab. And from these roots grew a strong Islamic society which has no oppressor or oppressed, and in which no man can steal the rights of the other

Issue 13, September 2003

As to the moral aspects of civilization, the West is regarded as a source of decadent and corrupting influence that should be avoided — from “Western imperialist clothing” (*Issue 61, October 1, 2005*) to television programs that “aim to make us live according to their ways in spite of the fact that this is far from what Allah intended for us” (*Issue 85, October 1, 2006*). *Al-Fateh* expresses scorn and contempt for Western culture, just as it preaches hatred and incites for a violent confrontation with it.

IV. Islam at War with the West and Destined for Victory

The claims of Western oppression, attacks, and crimes, as well as of its moral inferiority, lay the groundwork, together with religious fervor, for a call to jihad and for the belief that Islam will defeat the West. The West is lumped together with Zionism and the Jewish state in this respect.

Jihad for Allah’s sake expresses itself in a war against the heretics ... it is incumbent [upon the jihad fighter] to kill them himself with his own hands, to carry a weapon and fight the Jews, the Serbs, and the Russians, and anyone [else] who attacks the Muslims.

Issue 2, October 2002

Allah, subdue the Jews and the Americans who behave like Zionists;
Allah, destroy them!

Issue 9, May 2003

We are currently subjugated by the Jews, the Americans, and the English who occupy our holy land in Palestine, in Iraq, and in many Arab and Muslim states.... It is [incumbent] upon us, the lion cubs of Arabism and Islam, to be prepared to fight these abject people and to liberate our country from occupation.

Issue 28, May 1, 2004

Al-Fateh teaches that Islam is bound to prevail eventually over the West because its just cause gives it the advantage, and the West, especially the American superpower, will collapse like all previous great empires known to history.

See how they fell like the leaves of a tree in winter, the British Empire where the sun never set ... also the French Empire which stretched from East Asia to Canada ... and Hitler’s empire, which he planned to last a thousand years.... Afterward the immense Soviet Union collapsed and went out of history. Today America is the only one in the arena ... but this is not its final fate ... the judgment of Allah will fall upon it as it fell upon its predecessors.

Part Three: Hezbollah as an Example and Model

Although references to the Lebanese terrorist organization Hezbollah on the *Al-Fateh* site are sporadic and not a central topic, they are invariably positive. Hezbollah is admired and honored as a movement of Islamic armed resistance, and is looked up to as a source of inspiration for the readers, who are invited to emulate as well as to support it. Stories and reports glorify what is said to be Hezbollah's victory over Israel in the wars in Lebanon and during the intervening campaign of attrition. Specifically, *Al-Fateh* expresses support and admiration for Hezbollah's kidnapping of Israeli soldiers for bargaining purposes.

A series of stories in several issues of *Al-Fateh* glorifies Hezbollah. In one of the stories, a Palestinian prisoner held in Israel (during the time when Israeli forces held southern Lebanon, following what is now known as the First Lebanon War) says to his mother:

The [Israeli] occupation army is crying because of Hezbollah's blows and wishes a thousand times every day to leave.

Issue 23, February 15, 2004

The leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, is revered as a model, and his son, as a *shahid*. Hezbollah operations to capture Israeli soldiers are seen as positive and brave, and essential for the release of prisoners held in Israel. These prisoners are quoted as saying:

With Allah's help we will meet again soon outside the prison: the Islamic resistance in Lebanon has kidnapped three Zionist soldiers, thus creating an opportunity for a prisoner exchange deal, of which we will hopefully be a part.

Issue 45, February 1, 2005

Another issue praises the capture of Israeli soldiers. Here the reference is to three soldiers — Benny Avraham, Adi Avitan, and Omar Sawa'id — who were captured by Hezbollah in the Har Dov area on October 7, 2000, and whose bodies were returned to Israel in January 2004 in exchange for Hezbollah prisoners.:

Soldiers were captured by the Islamic resistance in southern Lebanon ... [Hezbollah] pounced on their armored patrol shouting "Allah is the greatest." Like the eagle's grabbing maneuver, they caught them by surprise, fear overcame [the Israeli soldiers] and their weapons did not help them. [The Hezbollah fighters] dragged them by the scruff of their necks like rabbits ... this was a professional operation.... Now secret

contacts are under way to reach a deal on exchanging Palestinian prisoners for the soldiers of crime.
Issue 47, March 1, 2005

A last will and testament quoted in Issue 24 draws an explicit parallel between Hezbollah and the Palestinian groups, and calls on the readers to emulate the example of the Lebanese movement (while giving a backhand slap to those in the Fatah organization who accept negotiations toward a peaceful solution):

We see how Hezbollah inflicted horror on [the Israelis] and defeated them, as did Hamas and the Islamic Jihad and those who have honor in Fatah... I wish that you would all be like Hezbollah, which is undefeatable.
Issue 24, March 1, 2004

Part Four: Al-Fateh's Affiliation with Hamas

Al-Fateh is technically affiliated with Hamas and, in its content, serves as a mouthpiece for Hamas' ideology, effectively indoctrinating the young to follow in its path.

I. The Technical Affiliation

The technical connection between *Al-Fateh* and other Web sites known to be affiliated with Hamas has been documented by the Society for Internet Research, based in Carbondale, IL, US. It has shown that *Al-Fateh* is connected with the Palestine-info Web sites (palestine-info.co.uk in English, palestine-info.info in Arabic), which are themselves connected to an organization identified with Hamas, the Palestine Information Centre.

II. Content: *Al-Fateh* as a Mouthpiece of Hamas

Identical images of Hamas members and statements left by suicide bombers can be found on the Hamas Web site (<http://palestine-info.info>) and on *Al-Fateh* (<http://al-fateh.net>), and a link to the *Al-Fateh* site appears on the home page of the Hamas site. However, the relationship is more pervasive and more fundamental than that. *Al-Fateh* functions in the service of Hamas. It mentions the movement countless times, praises Hamas leaders, and effusively rejoiced when Hamas won the Palestinian elections. It supports the military wing of Hamas (the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades), commemorates Hamas *shahids*, and publishes their last wills and testaments. The Hamas ideology is behind everything published by *Al-Fateh* and is the driving force behind the Web site's educational mission.

A. Identical ideological position on the dispute, identical jihadi solution

Al-Fateh expresses the same ideological positions that Hamas takes in its Charter:

Palestine is an Islamic endowment (*Waqf*) and its liberation is an obligation for every Muslim.

Issue 2, October 2002

Given this stance, the corollary, for *Al-Fateh*, as for Hamas, is jihad to liberate Palestine and remove the Jewish state. *Al-Fateh* urges the children to join the fight “to liberate Palestine from the Zionists and the Jews,” (*Issue 73, April 1, 2006*) quoting Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the founder of the Hamas movement. Last wills and testaments of suicide bombers reinforce this message repeatedly on *Al-Fateh*. So, for instance, one such testament says:

Do not forget to pursue the Jews wherever they may be and to invest every effort to liberate Al-Aqsa [the mosque on the Temple Mount] and the blessed land [all of Palestine], so that Allah will be satisfied with us.

Issue 34, August 15, 2004

Such a campaign does not admit negotiations, compromise, and a peaceful solution. The demonstrators at Hamas funerals shout, “No to negotiations, yes to the continuation of the resistance and to the rifle” (*Issue 8, April 2003*) and *Al-Fateh* praises them.

The illustration below makes a visual statement about Hamas’ ideology and commitment to bloodshed.



Issue 109, October 1, 2007

We see the walls of Jerusalem in the shape of the Arabic word “Palestine.” In the center is written: “God save Palestine.” The most noticeable element in the drawing is the hand holding a rifle. Basically, this is the logo of Lebanese Hezbollah, which took it from the

Iranians, who have used it since 1979 as the symbol of the Islamic Revolution, but here it is employed with one visual difference: The Palestinian arm has a map of Greater Palestine drawn on it, and just below it, we see the trunk and roots of a tree painted in the color of blood—the *Al-Fateh*/ Hamas graphic expression of the way to liberate Palestine.

B. Praising Hamas and its Leaders, its Military Wing, and its *Shahids*

1) Praising Hamas

Al-Fateh consistently praises this movement, while tending to ignore other Palestinian organizations (there are scant references to other organizations, such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and more rarely, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades). An explicit example of this allegiance is the jubilant message published by *Al-Fateh* when Hamas emerged victorious in the Palestinian elections:

Maybe the blessing of this year and this holy month is the success of our fighting brothers, people of the Hamas resistance, in the elections for the legislative council in our beloved Palestine. The warrior Palestinian people elected them because they are fighters and [so] love the fighters of the jihad, and hate the traitors ... and the corrupt ... a blessing to them and may we be blessed by them.

Issue 69, February 1, 2006

The caption for the picture of a Hamas terrorist who carried out a lethal attack in Beersheba reads:

Even if the face and the circumstances have changed, the Hamas movement maintains its unified image and painful blow.

Issue 34, August 15, 2004

The overwhelming majority of *shahids* glorified by *Al-Fateh* are Hamas members. So, for instance, in the first seventeen issues, every column of “A *Shahid*’s Story” deals with Hamas operatives — called Qassam *shahids*. Issue 17 (November 15, 2003) glorifies one of the most notorious among them, Yahya Ayyash — nicknamed “the engineer” because of his great expertise in preparing explosive devices — who was responsible for taking the lives of scores of Israelis. *Al-Fateh* describes Ayyash as “one of the heroes of the Islamic struggle over the land of Palestine” (Issue 17, November 15, 2003).

Another Hamas terrorist, Ayman Muhanna, is described in these words:

...if you want, it is possible to call him an angel walking on earth or a man from the inhabitants of paradise who lives amongst the people of this world.

Issue 8, April 2003

2) **Glorifying Hamas *Shahids* and Revering them as Role Models**

Al-Fateh publishes statements that Hamas suicide bombers make before setting out on their mission and gives them a highly positive spin, encouraging young people to follow in their footsteps. A Hamas terrorist who killed ten Israelis in a suicide attack in the port of Ashdod wrote in his testament published by *Al-Fateh*:

Our soldiers follow in the path of Al-Qassam, our vigor is our honor, and jihad is the foundation. If you [should] ask “Who are you?” we will tell you that we are the soldiers of Muhammad, and our name is Hamas.
Issue 32, July 15, 2004

Another Hamas terrorist responsible for a suicide attack on a bus in Jerusalem that left nineteen dead, said in his testament, as quoted on the Web site:

Thanks be to Allah who made me one of the sons of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades.
Issue 37, October 1, 2004

Pride of place is given on the Web site to senior Hamas members who have been arrested or killed, such as Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the founder of Hamas, and Yahya Ayyash, “the engineer.” On the occasion of the fourth anniversary of Sheikh Yassin’s killing by Israeli forces, the magazine praises and extols him. In the illustration below, Sheikh Yassin, whose picture appears in the center, constitutes the trunk of the Hamas tree, drawn in the shape of Palestine, from which various branches grow, bearing the names of Hamas leaders Ismail Haniyyeh, Mahmoud al-Zahhar, Ahmad Bahr, Khalil al-Hayyah, Sa’id Siyyam, Mushir al-Masri, and an empty branch signifying the next generation.



Issue 121, April 1, 2008

One can learn of the status of Ismail Haniyyeh, the Hamas prime minister in Gaza, in *Al-Fateh*, from the conclusion of an article praising him:

"اللهم احفظ بابا إسماعيل هنية" "God save daddy Ismail Haniyyeh."⁷

Issue 123, April 1, 2008

3) **Glorifying the Military Wing of Hamas, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades**

If Hamas is mentioned by *Al-Fateh* far more often than any other Palestinian group, its military wing — the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades — receives special emphasis. Its fighters are portrayed as brave heroes, their suicide bombing operations as daring and successful. Expressions of high praise and admiration, such as “giants” and “lions,” are often linked with them, and they are regarded as role models for young Palestinians to emulate. A case in point is the story of the *Shahid* Mahmoud, as told in Issue 21:

Since the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada [in 2000] and the start of jihad military activity against the plundering and occupying Zionist enemy, our *shahid* yearned to be active in the ranks of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades because of his love for them.... He strove to realize his wish and knocked on all doors [to get help so he could] join.

Issue 21, January 15, 2004

The recruitment of youngsters is expressed directly in the last will and testament of a terrorist, published in Issue 30:

The soldiers of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades can cope with the occupation which tramples on our land and holy places. Therefore, it is up to you, brave children of my people, to back the brigades ... until Muslim victory, with the help of Allah.

Issue 30, June 15, 2004

⁷ Note that the wording is parallel to that of the inscription in the illustration on page 21: “God save Palestine.”

CONCLUSION

Al-Fateh is the Internet educational instrument of the Hamas movement than focuses on the younger generation. As such, it propagates Hamas ideology and indoctrinates Palestinian, and more generally Arab and Muslim, children.

The **doctrine** expressed is at the extreme pole of Palestinian nationalist militancy; with a religious dimension that sees victory in battle as desirable, but martyrdom as a criterion for success as well. It is in many ways akin to the aggressive fundamentalist stance of the regime of the ayatollahs in Iran, including the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

While taking a hostile and confrontational attitude toward the West in general, which is portrayed as corrupt and imperialist, *Al-Fateh* focuses on delegitimizing the rights of the Jewish people and the State of Israel, and correspondingly propagates intolerance, hatred and incitement to murderous violence toward the Jewish state and its citizens. It uses blatantly racist and anti-Semitic language, including the portrayal of the Jews as enemies of mankind and killers of prophets, and even Holocaust denial. The site frequently manipulates Koranic verses to add religious bigotry to militant nationalist incitement against Jews and the Jewish state. It expresses total commitment to an armed struggle relying on terrorist activities, especially of the suicidal kind, with the ultimate aim of annihilating the State of Israel and establishing an Islamic state in the entire area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Compromise and political solution are rejected in principle, and peace agreements already in place, or Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and commitments aimed at such a solution, are not recognized.

The **educational campaign** involves the relentless indoctrination of the young into these ideological principles and into the commitment to carry them out. Children are guided, indeed molded, to hate and demonize the “other“ — all non-Muslims and Westerners, but especially Jews, whether in Israel or elsewhere — to glorify bloody violence, and to aspire to become not just fighters but suicidal *shahids*, like the “martyrs” who are constantly praised by *Al-Fateh*. Children are effectively prepared to become the next sacrificial instruments in the war of terror and annihilation carried out by Hamas.

Such doctrine and educational policy **violate the most elementary fundamental principles** expressed in the Charter of the United Nations, which in its preamble states that the nations of the world are determined:

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war ... to reaffirm faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small ... and for these ends to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors.

The most extreme, consistent, and cynical violation perpetrated by *Al-Fateh*/Hamas, as it instructs its young audience in hatred and incites them to bloodshed

and suicide, is against the fundamental rights of children, as formulated in the International Convention on the Rights of Children, which in Article 6 recognizes that “every child has the inherent right to life.”

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The Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (formerly CMIP), is an NGO nonprofit, nonpolitical think tank whose purpose is to encourage a climate of tolerance and mutual respect between peoples and nations, founded on the rejection of violence and the changing of negative stereotypes, as means to resolving conflicts, through researching state educational curricula. Established in 1998, IMPACT-SE has become one of the leading experts in this field.

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