

ADL/KLINGHOFFER FOUNDATION

FORUM

TERRORISM: DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES

*The Leon and Marilyn Klinghoffer Memorial Foundation
of the Anti-Defamation League*

TERRORISM: DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES

Thursday, October 28, 1993
5:00-9:30 pm

I. Opening Remarks

Welcome

Robert Machleder, Chair, NY Regional Board, ADL

Personal Reflections

Lisa and Ilsa Klinghoffer

Jewish Community and Terrorism

Abraham H. Foxman, ADL National Director

II. Terrorism: The Domestic Dimension

Karim Hajee, Investigative reporter, New York One News

"Reflections on the World Trade Center Bombing Case and the Role of the Media in Investigating Terrorism"

Victoria Toensing, Former Deputy Assistant Attorney General,
U.S. Justice Department, Criminal Division

"Obstacles Facing the Prosecution of Terrorists and Issues Surrounding U.S. Immigration Laws"

III. Dinner: Keynote Speaker

Barbara Bodine, Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State

"Global Terrorism in the 1990s": How will the Administration Respond?"

IV. Terrorism: International Challenges

Steven Emerson, Investigative journalist, author

"Impact of Militant Islam on Middle East Stability and Western Security"

Martin Kramer, Expert, militant Islam, Tel Aviv University

"Impact of Militant Islam on the Arab-Israeli Peace Process"

THE IMPACT OF MILITANT ISLAM ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE PROCESS

Dr. Martin Kramer

(Expert, Militant Islam, Tel Aviv University)

I want to begin with a short personal recollection, as an introduction to my subject of Islamic fundamentalist attitudes towards the Arab-Israeli peace process. In early 1993, Israeli newspapers carried the remarkable news that the leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah, Ayatollah Fadlallah, had recognized Israel as a fact. I obviously was intrigued by this and I did receive several inquiries as to whether he could have said anything of the kind. Was it possible that the leader of Hezbollah, the "Party of God," the arch foe of Israel in Lebanon, had said the unspeakable? I replied that it seemed to me highly unlikely Fadlallah would say just that, but it was essential to see the full text. A day later, I did receive the text in question. It turned out to be an interview with a Lebanese weekly, and in it Fadlallah talks about a meeting he had with the Papal Nuncio in Damascus, where he asked the Nuncio if Jesus Christ was with us now, would he recognize Israel? Would he approve of the Jewish



occupation of Palestine and the expulsion of the Palestinian people? Fadlallah didn't wait for an answer; he told the Nuncio that in his own view, if Jesus were with us now, he would drive the thieves from the Temple of Palestine. The Nuncio, in an effort to get a word in edgewise, responded that Israel was an accomplished fact, to which Fadlallah replied: "The devil is also an accomplished fact, but it is no business of ours to give him our blessing."

I regret to report that all such rumors of a fundamentalist change of heart on Israel have ended more or less like this one. Nevertheless, there are some interesting developments regarding the two movements which are

in the vanguard of the Islamic struggle against the peace process. They are Lebanon's Hezbollah, the "Party of God," and Hamas, which is the Palestinian version of the Muslim Brotherhood. At present, they are now pushing for legitimacy and recognition as respected political parties, even as they continue a sacred war consisting largely of terror against Israel. This bid for legitimacy may well succeed.

To refresh memories, if names like Hezbollah and Hamas are virtually household words, this is because of the violence of the 1980s. The name of Hezbollah will forever be associated in our minds with the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 and the abduction of foreigners in Lebanon. It is a Shiite movement which emerged in 1982 under Iran's guidance, and eventually it won a mass following, launching repeated attacks against Israel's southern security zone in Lebanon, and also in recent years, Katyusha attacks against the north of Israel.

Hamas appeared in 1987 after the outbreak of the *intifada*, the Palestinian uprising. It is the political and military face of an Islamic movement which had previously confined its activities largely to social welfare. Galvanized by the *intifada*, it has become associated with the abduction and murder of Israeli soldiers and police in the territories and in Israel. There have also been many attacks on Israeli civilians in Israeli cities. Here, too, the fundamentalist movement appeals to the most deprived and dispossessed inhabitants of the teeming refugee camps in Gaza. By any definition that you choose, both of these movements have engaged, at one time or another, in terrorist acts. But I think it would be wrong to call them, strictly speaking, terrorist organizations, because they engage in other activities as well — welfare, education and politics. Their sheer size at this point and the breadth of their

appeal suggests they are best described as social and political movements, whose leaders regularly resort to terror whenever this serves their interests to do so.

In the two years since the inauguration of direct Arab-Israeli peace talks, these two groups have done everything in their power to perpetuate a spirit of unending strife and struggle. They declared their opposition to the talks in a conference which met in Teheran at the same time as the ceremony in Madrid opening the Arab-Israeli talks. The Teheran conference declared the Zionist regime a fictitious and illegitimate entity, which would have to be eliminated through all-out *jihād*. Each of these movements has individually affirmed its determination to continue the *jihād*. The Hamas movement, for example, says in its covenant: "There is no solution to the Palestinian question except through *jihād*. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors." While none of these movements is really in a position at this moment to wage this all-out *jihād*, they have been unrelenting in their attempts to create islands of *jihād*, which they hope to expand as soon as the peace process falters or fails.

It would be tiresome to recite the litany of attacks carried out by these groups since the beginning of the Arab-Israeli talks, those that succeeded and those which were foiled, those directed against soldiers and those against civilians. Israel has been involved in a continuous counter-strike, most notably the deportation of over 400 fundamentalist inciters, after a wave of murders in the territories and Israel, and of course the shelling of South Lebanon and attacks on Hezbollah in the wake of Hezbollah rocket attacks against northern Israel. This has not been a confrontation Israel has relished, and there may be room for debate over Israel's handling of its battle with fundamentalist rejectionism. I think, though, that it can be agreed that if Israel had not acted forcefully, the sense of insecurity engendered by these attacks would have made any breakthrough in the peace talks a virtual impossibility.

Now we have had that breakthrough. The attitude of the fundamentalists towards the accord between Israel and the PLO, the "Gaza-Jericho First" accord, has been no different from their reaction to the very idea of negotiation. They condemned it roundly and have conducted a campaign of violence against it. Again, I could quote the statements made in condemnation of Arafat and his sale of Palestine to the Jews. One example is a recent issue of Hezbollah's weekly newspaper. The headline reads: "Blow up Gaza and Jericho first," with an accompanying photo showing the results of a Hamas suicide operation. In periodicals such as these, both of Hezbollah and Hamas, the authors of such actions are lionized and the publications carry full details and praise of these attacks.

At the same time, there is a growing awareness in these two movements that from the point of view of launching an all-out *jihād*, things are likely to get worse for them before they get better. More accords will be reached, and they will be implemented. The leading strategists in these movements understand that they cannot prevent the accords by violence alone. The peace process has too much momentum now; the forces behind it are many thousands of times more powerful than the combined forces of its fundamentalist opponents. Therefore, Hezbollah and Hamas are today moving to develop a political side to their action. The objective is to make themselves recognized political players, so that they can continue to preach the *jihād*, yet enjoy all the protection of legitimate political parties.

Hezbollah began this process last year when it decided to run candidates in the Lebanese parliamentary elections. These were the first such elections in Lebanon since 1972 before the civil war. All of Hezbollah's candidates won seats in the new parliament. Their purpose there, as they have made clear, had been to use their position in parliament to defend what they call the Islamic resistance against Israel in the south. The role of the Hezbollah parliamentary deputies is to make it difficult to disarm Hezbollah and render it difficult to get any Israeli-Lebanese accord through the Lebanese parliament, once it is signed. Until this decision, Hezbollah had only two dimensions — armed struggle (including terror) and social action. As a political party, it has become three-dimensional, and has all the legitimacy conferred by the Lebanese political system. The same issue of the newspaper which I referred to earlier also carries a report of a parliamentary delegation of Hezbollah which recently visited Brazil. Hezbollah has always sent emissaries abroad. Now, however, we have official delega-

tions of distinguished Hezbollah MPs. It may not be too long before we see them at the United Nations as well.

Still, if one listens very carefully to the leaders of Hezbollah, they are saying that despite all these efforts Lebanon may well be forced to sign a peace accord with Israel. The same Ayatollah Fadlallah, mentioned earlier, has told the faithful that it is no longer reasonable to expect to drive Israel out of South Lebanon by acts of *jihad*. As he recently stated: "The Islamic Resistance cannot expel the occupier in its present capabilities, unless God performs a miracle and shows His power. We are people who believe in miracles, but God has instructed us to act according to His law and not to base our life on miracles." And Fadlallah goes further: "If Syria signs an accord with Israel," he says, "Lebanon will do the same."

What will Hezbollah do in these circumstances? Fadlallah has come up with a new strategy: "The battle which will commence after reconciliation with Israel will be the battle against the subjugation of the Arab and Muslim person to Israel, in politics, culture, economics and security. In the vocabulary of the Koran, we Islamists have much of what we need to awaken the consciousness of Muslims, relying on the literal text, because the Koran speaks about the Jews in a negative way, concerning both their historical conduct and future schemes. The Islamists must deploy their Koranic and Islamic legal culture to combat normalization. *Fatwas* (Islamic legal rulings) should be issued against purchasing Israeli goods, and receiving Israeli visitors. We may not enjoy complete success, because not all Muslims are committed to Islam, but this will hamper much of the effort by Israel to become a natural member in the region."

In other words, Hezbollah will act as a barrier to the implementation of the peace, by working to prevent the peace between governments from becoming a peace between peoples. And one can well imagine Hezbollah creating an atmosphere that would make any normalization in Lebanon virtually impossible. By normalization we mean tourism, trade ties, transportation. Hezbollah could easily make Lebanon as unsafe for Israelis in the 1990s, as they made it for the Americans and the French in the 1980s. Hezbollah believes that if it can persist in this position long enough, the Islamic movement can outlast these accords.

The Secretary-General of the movement, Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah put it this way: "With the spread of Islamic awakening, the peace that might be signed with the Israelis will not be implemented. Its implementation might be imposed by Arab regimes for one, two, or three years. But it won't be the peace that defines the future of the region."

In other words, Hezbollah's struggle will focus on preventing implementation, which, to a large extent, means the prevention of normalization and which, I submit, would be done largely through acts of terror, inspired by religious edicts and the preaching of Hezbollah's leaders. And who can silence Hezbollah? After all, it is a legal political party, with eight members in Lebanon's parliament.

Hamas is positioning itself to gain precisely this same kind of legitimacy for the next stage in its struggle. Its progress has been a little more fitful, involving three false starts. The first was in early 1993, when it entered talks with the PLO about an agreement and possible entry into the Palestine National Council (PNC). The protocols of these talks, which were held in Khartoum, Sudan, were leaked, and they indicate that Hamas had one central demand — that the PLO back out of the talks. The PLO held its ground and no agreement was reached with Hamas.

The second false start was when Hamas initiated a dialogue with Western governments, through their embassies in the Jordanian capital of Amman. It also had talks with the Americans in that context. The Hamas spokesman in Jordan has given us an account of the content of his message to the Americans. He told them that Hamas had learned from mistakes made by the Palestinian resistance in the past, and would think it meaningless to hijack or blow up an aircraft. But he also told the Americans that Hamas "is fighting the occupation forces and settlers, and we do not harm children and the elderly as Rabin is doing." This was an interesting sleight of hand, since, in an earlier leaflet, Hamas defined all Israeli Jews as "settlers." Quite clearly, of course, Hamas thought that this dialogue with the U.S. would have the effect of legitimizing Hamas as a political player. Fortunately, the contact was terminated by the U.S.

The third false start was when some figures in Hamas suggested it might be useful to change the Hamas covenant, a document of unrelieved extremism which is not only anti-Israeli, but plainly anti-Semitic. The revised version would have been characterized by milder rhetoric, but the substance would have remained unaltered. It would still affirm that *jihad* offers the only solution and that no inch of Palestine may be alienated to non-Muslims. In the end, however, even these cosmetic alterations were too much for Hamas to bear, and the covenant still stands to this day in its original form.

The ultimate step towards legitimation, of course, would be a decision by Hamas to contest the elections which are to be held for Palestinian autonomy as provided by the Israel-PLO accord. Hamas is of two minds about this decision. Some believe that participating in elections would constitute recognition of the autonomy accord, and therefore, should be rejected out of hand. Others argue that there is no better place from which to fight the smooth implementation of autonomy, than through the autonomy council itself. The general sense is that the supporters of participation will prevail.

And so, through the Trojan Horse of democracy, Hezbollah and Hamas are positioning themselves to defeat implementation of the peace accords. At the same time, they continue to wage a *jihad* which nicely complements their political activity. Now, there are some who say that the willingness of both movements to turn themselves into political parties is a sign of their potential domestication, and that it should be welcomed. I wonder, though, whether ultimately, the price of this domestication will not be exacted in the coin of what we call true peace. Was it wise of Syria to legitimize Hezbollah and involve it so intimately in the Lebanese political process, especially without disarming it? Only if their policy is to do everything possible to complicate the negotiation of an Israeli-Lebanese peace. Would it be wise for the PLO to allow Hamas a foothold in the autonomy council at a time when Hamas remains committed to murderous acts? Only if it is intent on adding complications to an already complicated transition to a final settlement. These fundamentalist movements, once entrenched in parliamentary or parliamentary-like institutions, will be difficult to dislodge. They may eventually compel the Syrian-backed government in Lebanon, and Arafat in the West Bank and Gaza, to take actions against their own parliamentarians that would make Mr. Yeltsin blush.

I think it is time that we all give up for now the hope of engaging the fundamentalists constructively in the peace process. We have the more important job now of implementing peace accords that will end a century of conflict. The time for democratic experiments should come later rather than sooner. I do not wish to be misunderstood on this score. A stable peace will eventually require a more pluralistic Middle East, a democratic Middle East. But the accords we have now are with the powers that be, and admitting the fundamentalists to the political arena as legitimate players at this stage, when the situation is fragile, when it is fraught with tension, would be a step, I think, we would all come to regret. A part of the world that has known only despotism for a millennium can afford to wait a few more years. When Arab democracy does come, it will then be born into a world of agreed boundaries, and a guaranteed peace, and then it can focus on the local and the domestic issues that are the building blocks of participatory politics. I fear that otherwise, those who now threaten to blow up Gaza and Jericho first may end up exploding the entire Middle East. Thank you very much. □

Q & A

Question: Mr. Emerson, how long before the World Trade Center bombing did the Israeli government inform U.S. officials that there was a danger from terrorists or cells operating in the U.S.?

Mr. Emerson: I am not precisely sure about the exact dates, but the Israeli government for at least a year, or a year-and-a-half, prior to the World Trade Center had been protesting to the United States about the entry into the United States of Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah and Hamas terrorists, and the use of the United States as a sanctuary from which they were coordinating attacks back in Gaza, the

West Bank and in Israel.

Question: Dr. Kramer, how can Israel defend itself against the Arab world in the long run prior to the realization of the fundamentalist threat to the Arab world?

Dr. Kramer: That's a very large question, and this is an issue that really goes beyond the deliberations that we have had here this evening. I would only say this: The challenge that Israel faces from the movements I have described is largely one from within. In the case of Hamas, the base of the movement is in the territories. It is true that Hamas has support from the outside, but our belief in Israel is that the movement draws on indigenous sources of popular support in the West Bank and Gaza. As for Hezbollah, it is a response to the distress of Lebanon's Shiites, although it is impossible to imagine Hezbollah's rapid expansion without outside help from Iran. Both Hamas and Hezbollah have profited from the failure of more moderate leaderships, both of the PLO in Tunis and the Amal movement in Lebanon. But the source of these movements is in social and economic grievances, and only the redress of those grievances can erode the support for Hamas and Hezbollah.

Question: Dr. Kramer, what do you think of the Israel-PLO Accord?

Dr. Kramer: This question also goes beyond our current discussion, but let me say a few words about the connection to fundamentalism. If we want to believe anything about these agreements, it is that ultimately the best way to quell, forestall, perhaps in the long run, to eliminate, the trends that have been described here is through the peace accord and the economic development that it will bring through the shared interests and the search for commonalities. It may be impossible to do that. We may discover difficulties and obstacles along the road, but as was mentioned earlier, one of our major considerations in making this breakthrough was a fear that the fundamentalist movements which we have been discussing would gain the upper hand. Current support is at about 60 percent in Gaza, and 40 percent in the West Bank. Had the PLO disappeared, we would be talking about 80 percent in Gaza and 60 percent in the West Bank.

And then, we would have had what would fairly have been described as a theologization of the conflict. A conflict between two peoples over land would have become a conflict between adherents of two religions over ultimate truth. And in such conflicts, there is no room for compromise on either side. So I would say that while I am not very pleased with many aspects of this agreement, and I am not enamored of Mr. Arafat, I assure you, however, that I prefer Mr. Arafat to Ahmed Yassin, the sheikh who is now in our hands and who leads and inspires a movement that advocates a policy of the liberation of all of Palestine by all means and who has left himself no room to maneuver into another position. We are all full of apprehensions about this accord but I think Steve Emerson has given us an excellent example of just how apprehensive we might become if these fundamentalists are the ones who gain, ultimately, the upper hand.

Question: Dr. Kramer, how should we investigate Arab terrorism in the United States?

Dr. Kramer: I would not dare to comment on what should be done in way of an investigation. I just might offer an observation. During my Klinghoffer Foundation lecture tour, I found that there is a tremendous amount of interest in Muslim communities throughout the U.S. in hearing what others have to say about Islam, and in addition, I suppose, to keeping an eye on the more extreme elements. There is a need, perhaps, for an enhanced dialogue with Muslim communities. There are many moderates who are, as Steve Emerson said earlier, the ninety-nine or the ninety-eight percent who were taken aback, and even appalled at the World Trade Center bombing and who are interested in a dialogue. And I think an organization such as the Anti-Defamation League is well-equipped to do just that. I found that they were among my best audiences during this trip, Muslim audiences, and Muslims who were present in general audiences were very keen to discuss the issues, very sensitive of course to the after-effects of the World Trade Center bombing. And perhaps in the longer term, the best defense of the Jewish community is such a dialogue, because, hopefully, these people, when we next face a challenge of this kind, will rise up and expunge from within their midst that one or two percent. Expunge those that we by our own efforts are unable to identify ahead of time.

Question: Mr. Emerson, what will happen to the peace initiative if perchance Arafat was assassinated?

Mr. Emerson: It is a very difficult problem and I think Israelis know that if Arafat were to be assassinated — and there are a lot of people aiming to do that — the whole peace agreement would fall apart very easily. One of the problems I have with the accord is that it is premised on Arafat being the executor of the accord. And one of the problems so far is that he has not infused any of his people, his assistants, with enough authority to properly negotiate with their Israeli counterparts. Arafat has not shown that he has totally given up his entire liberation thoughts about Israel. Recently, he intimated that Israel may have been behind the Siftawi murder in October, the murder of the top Arafat supporter in Gaza, when, in fact, it was done by a fellow Fatah person. Arafat gave an interview following the murder claiming it was done by “a great conspiracy” and “not by Arabs”; he was implying that it was done by the Israelis. That type of incendiary insinuation is not the dialogue that is going to cement this peace. In addition to which, if Arafat were to disappear, there is no heir apparent whatsoever. None whatsoever. Arafat is the only glue in the “secular wing,” of the Palestinian movement. The hope and the design of Israeli officials is that somehow, as the accord takes hold and solidifies itself within the next several years, it can exist independent of Arafat. Whether this is wishful thinking or not, I’ll take a dodge on that.

Question: Dr. Kramer, what would happen if democratic elections were held in the West Bank and Gaza, and Hamas became the majority party. Could Israel renege on the agreement on the basis that the agreement was with the PLO and not with Hamas? Could Hamas then repudiate or else demand more concessions from Israel? What would be the role of the U.S.? The U.S. would probably pressure Israel not to repudiate the accord regardless of the fact that the PLO was no longer in power. Could you comment on those possibilities?

Dr. Kramer: You raise an interesting theoretical question. The polling information that we have now is that the PLO would win in such a free election. I think, however, that even as a minority in the autonomy council, Hamas would represent a serious threat to the implementation of the accord. They do not have to command a majority to throw up obstacles to implementation. And I would only hope that Chairman Arafat has the good sense to gerrymander the rules in such a way as to assure that the autonomy council is composed of persons who are genuinely devoted to implementing the autonomy. The council is not a parliament, and its function is not parliamentary. Its function should be the implementation of the accord. It will be a tremendous test of Arafat’s leadership to create electoral rules which will assure his kind of control. I think that in the longer term, there should be true parliamentary institutions, where there will probably have to be representation that includes an Islamic movement. But then, I think, this development should come later, after we have passed the interim phase.

Palestinian democracy, as much as we all want it, as much as it is desired by the Western underwriters of this agreement, and also by many Israelis, can wait. And I think Arafat has enough common sense to know that he cannot afford to share power at this stage, and that only when his position is stronger can he afford to accommodate an Islamic movement as, for example, King Hussein has done. Until then, he would do better to follow the example of Hosni Mubarak. □