

INSIGHTS

The Salafist Movement in the Gaza Strip, “Campaign Arm Us” – A Challenge to the Hamas Leadership? August 2015

The International Institute for Counter-Terrorism Monitoring Group, which monitors the Internet activity of jihadist elements, recently discovered a fundraising campaign on the social network, Twitter, under the heading “Campaign Arm Us” (*Hamlat Jahhizna*), which was organized by the Salafi-jihadist movement in the Gaza Strip for the purpose of purchasing weapons and ammunition.¹ In the framework of the campaign, the activists noted the types of weapons that they intend to purchase with the money raised (see banner below). For example, the banner indicated that the price of an RPJ rocket launcher was estimated at \$3,000 and the price of a sniper’s rifle was estimated at \$5,500. According to campaign organizers, the goal of the campaign is to arm the fighters in the Salafi-jihadist movement in the Strip in order to free their prisoners, among other reasons. To a certain extent, the campaign demonstrates a challenge to Hamas’s hegemony over the Gaza Strip against the backdrop of longstanding tensions between the two movements.



From left to right: The banner showing the prices of the weapons that the activists intend to purchase; the campaign logo

The deepening rift between Hamas and the Salafi-jihadist movement in Gaza is not new. Tensions came to a head in 2009 when Hamas militants slaughtered members of the Salafi-jihadist movement at the Ibn Taymiya mosque in Rafah following the declaration by Abu Nur al-Maqdisi, the leader of Jund Ansar Allah, of the establishment of an Islamic Emirate and his oath of allegiance to Al-Qaeda. This constitutive event became firmly fixed in the consciousness of the Salafi-jihadists and they viewed the Hamas leadership as a hostile force that does not hesitate to use brutal measures of repression against the Palestinian people.

Indeed, in Operation “Protective Edge” (June-July 2014), Hamas loosened the reins, allowing Salafi-jihadist organizations in its territory to launch rockets at Israeli communities. However, once a truce

¹ <https://twitter.com/jahezona03>

was reached with Israel, Hamas re-imposed its will on members of the Salafi-jihadist movement and prevented a renewed escalation with Israel. However, it is apparent that Hamas is not able to enforce its will completely in light of the growing trickle of rockets being launched into Israeli territory. There are two central reasons for this: First, feelings of rage and revenge developed in response to the wave of arrests of Salafi-jihadist activists by Hamas’s security forces. Second, the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate in Iraq and Syria in June 2014 by the Islamic State, led by Sheikh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, increased the rhetoric against Hamas - considered to be a strategic partner of Iran, the Islamic State’s sworn enemy, and a movement that perverts the primordial values of pure Islam. The meteoric rise of the Islamic State motivated many Salafi-jihadist activists in Gaza to swear allegiance to the Islamic State, and the two groups also collaborated together in the Sinai Peninsula.

Therefore, as previously asserted, the “Arm Us” fundraising campaign demonstrates a challenge to the hegemony of Hamas. In the framework of the campaign, methods for contacting representatives of the Salafi-jihadist movement in Gaza were provided, including Telegram encryption software, a Twitter account and an email address (see the banner below). The campaign was launched on July 24, 2015 and is supervised by “sheikhs and mujahideen who led the path of monotheism and jihad in Jerusalem from the Ibn Taymiya Center [referring to the jihadist media institution that serves as a platform for the Palestinian Salafi-jihadist movement]”.



Banner with contact details



Additional banners to promote the fundraising campaign

ABOUT THE ICT

Founded in 1996, the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) is one of the leading academic institutes for counter-terrorism in the world, facilitating international cooperation in the global struggle against terrorism. ICT is an independent think tank providing expertise in terrorism, counter-terrorism, homeland security, threat vulnerability and risk assessment, intelligence analysis and national security and defense policy. ICT is a non-profit organization located at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya, Israel which relies exclusively on private donations and revenue from events, projects and programs.

ABOUT THE JIHADI MONITORING GROUP

The Jihadi Websites Monitoring Group (JWMG) is a specialized research and analysis team at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT). Composed of researchers fluent in Arabic, the JWMG monitors websites that support and serve the Global Jihad organizations. The unique characteristic of JWMG publications is the team's integration of diverse materials from a wide variety of Arabic sources. JWMG connects each source to larger trends, providing a complete understanding of events on both a local and a global scale.

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