

GAZA

Timeline of Events

Sept. 2000	Al-Aqsa Intifada begins
July 2002	Senior Hamas leader Salah Shehadeh is assassinated by Israel in Gaza
March 2003	Leader of Hamas's military wing Ibrahim Al-Makadmeh is assassinated by Israel in Gaza
Jan. 6, 2004	Hamas official Abdel Aziz Al-Rantissi offers a 10 year truce (hudna) in exchange of Israel's complete withdrawal to the 1967 borders in Gaza
March 22, 2004	Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmad Yassin is assassinated by Israel in Gaza (replaced by Abdel Aziz Al-Rantissi)
April 17, 2004	Hamas's Abdel Aziz Al-Rantissi is assassinated by Israel in Gaza; Khaled Masha'al is named new overall leader and Mahmoud Zahar new leader in Gaza.
Sept. 26, 2004	Sheikh Izzeddin Khalil, in charge of Hamas's military wing outside the OPT, is assassinated in Damascus
Oct. 2004	Assistant of military wing leader Mohammed Deif, Adnan Ghoul, is assassinated by Israel in Gaza
Nov. 11, 2004	PLO Chairman and PA President Yasser Arafat dies
Jan. 2005	PLO Chairman Mahmoud Abbas is elected in the Presidential Elections to replace Yasser Arafat; Hamas boycotts the elections
2005	Hamas participates successfully in several rounds of municipal elections
March 2005	Hamas proclaims tahdiyah, a period of calm
Jan. 25, 2006	Hamas wins 74 of the 132 seats in the PLC elections
March 17, 2006	Fateh refuses to join a government formed by Hamas
Dec. 2006	First round of heavy fighting
Feb. 8, 2007	Mecca Accord is signed between Fateh and Hamas
March 17, 2007	The PLC approves the new national unity government
May 2007	Second round of heavy fighting
June 10, 2007	New fighting begins (dubbed the "Battle of Gaza")
June 12, 2007	Hamas fighters take control of the Fateh HQ in Gaza
June 14, 2007	Hamas completes takeover of the Gaza Strip
June 15, 2007	Pres. Abbas dissolves the national unity government, declares state of emergency
June 17, 2007	Pres. Abbas installs an "emergency cabinet" headed by PM Salam Fayyad; Haniyeh still exercises de facto authority in the Gaza Strip

and the PLC, though several members ran independently and won. During those years the profile of Hamas rose as the main opposition to Yasser Arafat's PLO, of which it has never been a member. Hamas stepped in to fill the void created by a weakened the socio-economic and political infrastructure due to continued Israeli aggression and a stalemate in the peace process. It provided social, cultural, and educational services, running clinics, schools and welfare projects in addition to its militant resistance to the occupation.

In the following years the two factions struggled to coexist, and with the beginning of the second Intifada in September 2000, the "National and Islamic Forces," a thirteen-member coordination coalition of Fateh, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and others was even formed, though Hamas - recognizing its growing strength and influence at the expense of its rival Fateh - continued to refuse offers to join the PA. The latest wave of factional fighting can be traced back to the aftermath of the death of Yasser Arafat in November of 2004 and the subsequent presidential, municipal and legislative elections that

helped consolidate Hamas's political power. Hamas won their seats with an electoral strategy that was more reasoned and pragmatic than that of Fateh, which appeared disunited and had to struggle with accusations of corruption. Furthermore, in many races, multiple Fateh candidates ran for a post simultaneously, splitting votes amongst themselves and subsequently losing to a single Hamas figure.



Ismail Haniyeh celebrates after the 2006 elections

Why did the Hamas-Fateh hostilities increase after the Hamas election victory in 2006?

When Israel and the West demanded that newly-elected Hamas renounce violence, recognize the Jewish state, and promise to abide by past peace agreements such as the 1993 Oslo Accords, Hamas leaders only went as far as omitting its call for the destruction of Israel from its election manifesto, calling instead for the establishment of "an independent state whose capital is Jerusalem." As a result, international sanctions were imposed upon the Palestinians; foreign aid to the PA was suspended and Israel stopped the transfer



Hamas fighters in Gaza

of Palestinian taxes, leading to a severe liquidity crisis and an unprecedented deterioration of the local economy, especially in Gaza. Officials from Fateh and Hamas began criticizing each other, and the tensions began to boil over into violence.

After dozens of deaths in the internecine fighting that followed, a hasty truce was brokered by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. Meeting in Mecca in February 2007, the leaders of Fateh and Hamas signed an agreement to stop the clashes and form a national unity government. This was presented to the PLC on 17 March, but violence soon flared up again with dozens of street battles, kidnappings, and property seizures. Dubbed the "Battle of Gaza", the fighting led to Hamas prevailing in Gaza and securing control of the Strip. In the aftermath, President Abbas dissolved the National Unity Government in June and appointed a provisional "caretaker" government under Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, although he had no power to affect Hamas's hold on the Gaza Strip.

Israel, which had suspended all contacts with the PA when Hamas won the elections, resumed meetings between President Abbas and PM Olmert after the dissolution of the Hamas-led government, a move regarded by Hamas as proof of the collaboration between Fateh and the Israeli government.



Hamas disperses a pro-Fateh demonstration in Gaza City in August 2007