



## Exclusive: An Interview with “*Hamas al-Iraq*”

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### NEFA Foundation Exclusive: An Interview with Ahmad Said al-Hamed, Spokesman for the Political Wing of “*Hamas al-Iraq*” (a.k.a. the *Al-Fatih al-Islami Brigades*, the *Islamic Resistance Movement*)



*[In May 2008, the prominent Iraqi insurgent organization known as “*Hamas al-Iraq*” (a.k.a. the “*Al-Fatih al-Islami Brigades*”) agreed to an exclusive Arabic-language interview with NEFA Senior Investigator Evan Kohlmann. For more information on *Hamas al-Iraq*, the 1920 Revolution Brigades, and other Sunni insurgent groups cited in this interview, see “*State of the Sunni Insurgency in Iraq: August 2007*” (<http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/iraqreport0807.pdf>.)]*

**Q.) What is *Hamas al-Iraq*? It is a political movement, a military movement, or both? Who was responsible for founding *Hamas al-Iraq*?**

A.) “The establishment of the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Hamas al-Iraq*) came after the American occupation took over our country. It first formed, launched itself, and announced its name in June 2003, which means two months after the occupation—though its personnel began resisting during the first days of the occupation. However, it was not known by this name or location; then, it was known as ‘the National Islamic Resistance Movement’, and in 2005 (specifically on July 25, 2005), it took the name of ‘The Islamic Resistance Movement.’ At that point, it created a military wing, and that was known as the 1920 Revolution Brigades. Later, the general command of the Movement decided to split into two parts because of some internal administrative disagreements. Several of the fighting units decided to break off, while still operating under the name of the former military wing, by which we mean the 1920 Revolution Brigades. The others remained under the banner of the movement... [and] reorganized its forces under three main wings, as follows:”



- “The military wing represented by (the *Al-Fatih al-Islami Brigades*). They serve as the military forces of the movement and were initially comprised of 64 brigades spread across the areas of resistance operations.”

- “The political wing, which itself is comprised of domestic and foreign relations committees, and the media department.”

- “The civic wing that organizes civic actions on behalf of the movement across diverse segments of the Iraqi population, and this wing also contains the Shariah Department, which is in charge of addressing questions of Shariah faced by the movement.”

“This happened in March 2007 and, as a result, the movement distinguished itself by adopting this new acronym (*HAMAS*). So the name became: The Islamic Resistance Movement / *Hamas al-Iraq*, as it is a full-responsibility movement, taking care of all aspects of daily life and easing the impact of the occupation on the Iraqi citizenry.”

**Q.) What impact generally have fighters from Hamas al-Iraq had on the insurgency? Why should those who are unfamiliar with Hamas al-Iraq recognize its critical importance within the Iraqi insurgency?**

A.) "Hamas al-Iraq has spread—anyone who monitors the situation in Iraq will be well familiar—in Baghdad, Anbar, and Fallujah; passing through Ramadi, the center of the province, and reaching out to Al-Qaim, Salahuddin, Diyala, Kirkuk, and Nineveh. This has made the movement a firm reality in every formal aspect, and it has established its influence in all matters regarding the situation in Iraq."

**Q.) What are the political principles of Hamas? What is the role of the army of Hamas after the end of the occupation?**

A.) "We are a movement established as a reaction to the foreign occupation of Iraq. Our first goal is to liberate Iraq, and then to participate in the re-building of Iraq in accordance with the principles of justice, equality, and citizenship. The fast spread of the moderate ideology of our movement has caused it to be enthusiastically accepted among the population. That's why it has become an important force, and not easy to simply bypass, when it comes to military and political action."

**Q.) Some have referred to you as part of the Muslim Brotherhood movement, while others allege that you are followers of the Salafi-Jihad movement, what is your response?**

A.) "Our movement is independent in its decisions and actions and that is what our personnel have sworn to uphold. However, it is no secret that some of our personnel adhere to the [Muslim] Brotherhood ideology, which means that within the movement there are also differing opinions as well. However, everyone has agreed upon the moderate ideology of the movement which fits the fabric of Iraqi society across all its ethnicities and sects. Perhaps, this is one of the central merits of our movement."

**Q.) What religious leaders does Hamas al-Iraq follow? What is your opinion on Dr. Yusef al-Qaradawi, or the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq? Were the fighters from Hamas al-Iraq part of the Saddam Hussein regime or the Baath party? According to Shariah law, was Saddam a criminal or a hero? Where were the mujahideen of Hamas al-Iraq during the U.S. invasion of Iraq?**

A.) "Hamas al-Iraq, as we said before, is independent in its management and decisions and has its own [religious] sources within the movement. It has a Shariah Committee in charge of general directions and monitoring, and to oversee that our actions are in accordance with pure Shariah. We regard all the other Islamic movements with respect, and deal with them as they represent a respectful point of view: the Association of Muslim Scholars, the Council of Iraqi Clerics, and other Islamic movements resisting the foreign occupation. We have a good relationship with them, but we have our own vision that might match or diverge from theirs. Regarding our relationship with Saddam or the Baath regime, it does not exist, because our movement was established after the occupation began. Also, because the movement is Islamic in its orientation and actions, it is in conflict with the core of their ideology—even though some of the members of our movement were [part of] the former regime. Regarding where were the mujahideen of Hamas at the beginning of the occupation, as we have said before, the movement is comprised of the fabric of the entire Iraqi people—we have the businessmen, the students, and the ex-soldiers. Since the start of the occupation, all of them have sworn to defend their homeland and liberate the country."

**Q.) During the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the U.S. government claimed that Al-Qaida had worked in partnership with Saddam Hussein. What is your view of these allegations and do you have any evidence to prove them?**

A.) "The answers came from inside the institutions of America rejecting the truth of this information, as there is no proof of any relationship between Saddam and Al-Qaida."

**Q.) In your opinion, what are the most important events and battles in the history of the Iraqi insurgency? What was the importance of the battle for Fallujah in 2004? What were the major turning points for the Iraqi insurgency?**

A.) "Every day of resistance against the occupiers is important and plays a role in our liberation. Still, the first and second Fallujah battles in 2004 had their significance and the resistance benefited from them greatly, which made it a continuing strength and a continuing project."

**Q.) Everyone knows who [Al-Qaida in Iraq commanders] Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhajir are, but would you like to share with Americans the names of some mujahideen leaders who are not from the Al-Qaida organization?**

A.) "If you meant knowing those two persons by their names only, the answer is yes as everybody else knows. However, whatever is the truth behind them or about them, we do not know. If you have any information about them, then we hope you will be able to share it with us."

**Q.) Has Hamas al-Iraq worked with other Iraqi insurgent groups besides the Reform and Jihad Front (RJF)? Has Hamas al-Iraq found particular inspiration in the operations or statements of any other insurgent groups?**

A.) "Since the establishment of the movement, we have tried to work in cooperation with all the other armed organizations, and that was through the creation of a liaison office in 2006 with the Mujahideen Army, the Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI), and the Islamic Front for the Iraqi Resistance (JAAMI). In 2007, this cooperation resulted in the creation of the Political Council for the Iraqi Resistance (PCIR) with a group of armed organizations. They are: the Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI), the Mujahideen Army, the Al-Fatihin Army, the Shariah Committee of the Ansar al-Sunnah Army, and the Iraqi Islamic Resistance Front (JAAMI). In addition, we have cooperation in the field with all the other armed organizations in the region except Al-Qaida, and everyone has fought against them because we see this group as promoting a particular agenda that does not fit with the realities of Iraqi society. As for our relationship with the other political fronts, the Reform and Jihad Front (RJF) is part of the Political Council [for the Iraqi Resistance] and we work with them in full cooperation. With regards to the Front for Jihad and Change (FJC), we have a good relationship with them—even though we differ in some subjects, we agree on some other subjects."

**Q.) Many Americans do not wish to stay in Iraq, but at the same time, are worried about the consequences of an outbreak of civil war between Sunnis and Shiites, and the return of the influence of Al-Qaida if there were to be an abrupt withdrawal of our troops. What is your opinion on this, and on the future of the sectarian militias and Al-Qaida in Iraq? What would you say to those Americans?**

A.) "The civil war is a creation of the occupier, and one of his tools. Iraqis have lived together for centuries as beloved brothers. There were no sectarian or nationalist disagreements, and when the occupation leaves, the fabric of the nation fabric will repair itself and come back together as one, Allah willing."

**Q.) Sources in the U.S. media have claimed that some commanders linked with Hamas al-Iraq—such as "Abu Abed"—are working with the Awakening Councils and other groups allied with the U.S. Also, there are reports that Hamas al-Iraq is only fighting against Al-Qaida, rather than with the U.S. military. What is the truth of these claims? When did the conflict begin between the insurgents and Al-Qaida?**

A.) "We do not have among us a commander called Abu Abed, and we heard of him as you have. We have no relationship with the Awakening Councils, even though we understand that these councils emerged as a normal reaction to the encroachment and misjudgments of the Al-Qaida organization and the sectarian militias, as well as the merging of various sects of the Iraqi people by the regime. With regards to the subject of fighting against the occupiers, our military wing has worked day and night to defeat the occupation forces, and you can go back to other media outlets to see that the activity of the fighters is continuing on in the various provinces that we are active in. Even though we have fought against the Al-Qaida organization because they killed a

number of our mujahideen, this will not distract us from our primary goal, and that is the liberation of Iraq by all necessary means.”

**Q.) During his most recent speech, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi introduced a truce agreement offered to other insurgent groups which were harmed by the Al-Qaida organization. What is the result of this offer?**

A.) “For our positions on the battlefield, we do not rely upon on speeches and statements which have been proven unworthy and ineffective in the past. We want the situation to change for this group, however the facts prove otherwise.”

**Q.) Also, recently, during a question and answer session, Al-Qaida’s Deputy Commander indicated that the establishment of Al-Qaida’s Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) was a step towards the re-establishment of a greater Islamic empire—and therefore—Al-Qaida superceded all other jihad movements in Iraq, and accordingly, it is the duty of other mujahideen groups to acknowledge their superiority (and not the reverse). Regarding suicide bombing attacks on markets and mosques, Zawahiri said this was merely American and Saudi media propaganda. Was al-Zawahiri correct or incorrect?**

A.) “Ruling according to the Shariah law is an objective outcome which comes about when people adhere to the true meanings of Islamic Shariah—which does not accord with ruling through the killing of innocent civilians or the killing of other resistance mujahideen. Those who desire to rule in accordance with Islam must first understand true Islam, and [they must] prevent their hands and the hands of those working under them from spilling innocent blood and taking what does not belong to them. We do not deny that the region is wide open and Iraq has become a place to settle vengeance and to mix issues up with each other.”

**Q.) Which voices from the Iraqi insurgency should Americans pay attention to?**

A.) “The Americans must listen to the voices refusing the occupation. Even if some [Iraqis] have sold out their homeland to the occupiers, there is still a renegade segment of the people who continue to refuse to comply through their actions of resistance, such as in the insurgent organizations or as part of the political resistance. The occupier must know that this segment is the larger of the two, and the most capable of changing the current realities. Any resolution must be accepted by these people, because for five years, they have been the ones confronting the American project and they are the ones who are most capable of undermining American strength in the region. This is why the solution starts with the announcement of the withdrawal of their forces and negotiations with the resistance and the Iraqi people to arrange for this withdrawal.”

**Q.) Have you been paying attention to the U.S. elections? What do you think of them?**

A.) “The elections—even we are following them—are still, primarily, an internal American issue and their impact on foreign policy is minimal. We do not see any difference between the one who sits in the White House and even the average American citizen himself. However, we hope that America will elect a leader who will better its people and who will initiate reconciliation among the nations of the world—most of all, with the people of Iraq and the Islamic nation.”