



## Educator's Guide

# Hamas's Control Over Gaza

In 2005, Israel withdrew completely from the Gaza strip. What has been going on there since? This video explores how Hamas came to power, what its role is today, and what Israel's relationship is with the group. It raises big questions like: Is Hamas a democracy? Can Israel negotiate with a terror group that refuses to recognize its right to exist? Can Israeli citizens endure the rocket fire and terror attacks indefinitely? Can Gazans tolerate the way their government treats them? Watch this video and use these prompts to tackle this tough topic with your students.

Link to video:

## Further Reading

1. Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn*, chapter 16
2. Haaretz and DPA, "The Bloody Hamas-Fatah Power Struggle That Threatens to Return Following Gaza Assassination Attempt"  
<https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/the-bloody-hamas-fatah-power-struggle-that-threatens-to-reignite-1.5054803>
3. Jeffrey Goldberg, "What Would Hamas Do If It Could Do Whatever It Wanted?"  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/08/what-would-hamas-do-if-it-could-do-whatever-it-wanted/375545/>
4. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/background-and-overview-of-hamas>
5. <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/hamas/>
6. Primary source - Hamas charter  
<https://israeled.org/resources/documents/hamas-charter-islamic-resistance-movement-palestine/>



## Review – Did the students understand the material?

1. How did Hamas come to power in Gaza?
2. When was the last time elections took place in Gaza?
  - a. 2006
  - b. 2008
  - c. 2012
  - d. 2016
3. Why would the Palestinian people choose a terror organization for a government?
4. In addition to Israel, which country also has a complicated neighbor relationship with Gaza?
  - a. Jordan
  - b. Egypt
  - c. Syria
  - d. Lebanon
5. If Israel limits the materials allowed to enter Gaza, how does Hamas have supplies for the thousands of rockets they fire into Israel?

## Discussion Questions

1. Winston Churchill once said: “Democracy is the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.” What did he mean by this? Do you agree with this statement? How might it shed light on the political situation in Gaza?
2. [Some](#) suggest that Hamas is a legitimate form of government because they were elected democratically. But, others suggest that democracy means more than voting rights. It also includes the rule of law, civil liberties, freedom of expression and [other](#) democratic values. To what extent do you view the Hamas government in Gaza as democratic and to what extent do you contend with that idea?



- 3.** In addition to having a military wing, Hamas also provides social services within Gaza. Some people say this is out of a sincere Muslim commitment to helping others through the principle of Zakat, while others claim that the social services they provide are for optics purposes alone, in order to gain followers and supporters of their vision for the destruction of Israel. Where do you fall on this dispute?
- 4.** Hamas asserts that "there is no solution to the Palestinian problem except by Jihad." While jihad [technically](#) means "striving for," in the context of Hamas, especially when looking at their charter, it should be understood as violent. Can Israel negotiate with a group whose very premise is anti-negotiation and pro-terror? What might a long-term plan look like with such a neighbor?
- 5.** Use the [classroom tips](#) from our Weekly to help guide a debate in a respectful way. David Brooks has said, "most debates are between two provisional truths." If Hamas has anti-semitic language and willingly attacks civilians, is there any room for empathy for the people who voted them in? When is empathy an important value and when should values like security and safety guide one's thinking?

## Reflection Questions

- 1.** Author Daniel Gordis writes: "For Hamas's followers, a central religious obligation was the liberation of all of historic Palestine from the 'Zionist occupation,' claiming that the land 'from the river to the sea' was a Muslim waqf or 'endowment.' They vowed to wage holy war or jihad against Israel." Clearly, Hamas's mission is religiously driven. Does this justify Hamas's actions? Do you think people can do anything in the name of religion, or are some things out of bounds?
- 2.** While 8 million Gazans face miserable conditions and an employment rate of 40%, Hamas leaders often [amass](#) wealth and property. Put yourself in the shoes of the average Gazan and imagine how they feel. Would you be frustrated with your family, your leadership, Israel? Would you feel like you have control?



- 3.** In 2014, Hamas terrorists kidnapped and killed three Israeli teenagers. Israel launched Operation Brother’s Keeper to find the boys, which lasted 18 days and culminated in the launch of Operation Protective Edge in Gaza. The Israelis [responded](#) by creating a National Unity Day to commemorate this event and the great sense of unity felt during this time, while the Palestinian Authority has [responded](#) by increasing the attack planner’s salary. When considering these different responses, what emotions do you experience? Pride? Disgust? Confusion? Despair?
- 4.** Compare and contrast the [original](#) Hamas charter with the [revised](#) charter from [2017](#). After viewing the episode and reading these charters, evaluate what steps need to be taken by Israel, if any, to build peace with its neighbors.