

PMW Special Report: Dec. 21, 2009

Palestinians see Israel's release of terrorists as the driving force behind continued kidnappings

by Itamar Marcus, Nan Jacques Zilberdik and Barbara Crook

This PMW Special Report includes 50 Palestinian statements concerning the Palestinian kidnapping-for-hostage policy.

The statements cover the period since the release of 1000 terrorists by Israel in exchange for a kidnapped Israeli in 2004, until the current negotiations for the release of Gilad Shalit in December 2009. These Palestinian statements document that the Palestinian motivation and justification today for continued kidnappings is the direct result of the earlier prisoner releases.

Israel's release of prisoners in exchange for hostages is not seen by Palestinian society as merely the last stage of one kidnapping, but as the first act of the next kidnapping.

Executive Summary:

Background:

More than 10,000 Palestinians are currently in Israeli prisons for terrorism of various degrees. The Palestinian Authority demands that Israel release them all, including murderers of civilians and masterminds of suicide terror who are serving multiple life sentences. Israel argues that they have been imprisoned following proper judicial process and must complete their sentences.

PMW Findings:

Due to Israel's willingness to release Palestinian terrorists from jail in exchange for freeing kidnapped and imprisoned Israeli hostages, Palestinians have concluded that kidnapping-for-hostage is a valid strategy to achieve the release of additional Palestinian terrorists. This report documents that these opinions are found across the political spectrum and among the Palestinian leadership, both Fatah and Hamas.

Case Study 1

2004 -2006: 1,000 terrorists released for 1 kidnapped Israeli and bodies of 3 soldiers

The first major boost for the Palestinian kidnapping-for-hostage policy came in 2004, after Israel released more than 1,000 jailed terrorists in exchange for one Israeli kidnapped by Hezbollah and the bodies of three Israeli soldiers. Palestinians – including both Fatah and Hamas members -- expressed support for the Hezbollah achievement as a positive precedent, stressing that kidnapping Israeli hostages would be, from then on, their *modus operandi* for the release of more prisoners.

"Fatah's military branch organized a civilian and military procession yesterday through the streets of Rafah. This event was held in appreciation and gratitude for the efforts Hezbollah made for the release of Arab and Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails as part of the prisoner exchange deal with Israel. In a public statement by the Abu Al-Rish Brigades, Fatah's military wing emphasized the need to follow Hezbollah's example in order to achieve the release of all prisoners."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Jan. 29, 2004]

See more statements that followed the 2004 prisoner release, in body of report, below.

Case Study 2

2006-2008: 3 Israeli soldiers kidnapped

In June 2006, Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit was kidnapped and taken to Gaza. Shortly thereafter, Israeli soldiers Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev were kidnapped by Hezbollah and taken to Lebanon. Again, both Fatah and Hamas expressed support for the kidnapping-for-hostage tactic:

"Fatah spokesman, Ahmad Abd Al-Rahman, conveyed his congratulations to the heroes who carried out the heroic act in southern Lebanon, in support of their Palestinian brethren... and emphasized that the demand to free the Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the Israeli soldier [Shalit] is a natural right... He emphasized that the Israeli soldier should be freed only in the event of the release of Palestinian prisoners."

[Al-Ayyam, July 13, 2006]

See more statements that followed the 2006 kidnappings, in body of report, below.

Case Study 3

2008- Present: Israel's release of terrorist murderers seen as precedent

In July 2008, for the first time since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, Israel released terrorist murderers. In exchange for the bodies of Goldwasser and Regev, Lebanese terrorists were released. This had significant impact on Palestinian resolve because it was seen as breaking the last of Israel's "red lines." Since then Palestinians have argued that every single Palestinian prisoner, even murderers, will be released, as long as Palestinians continue to kidnap Israelis.

The following are some of the reactions immediately following the release of terrorist murderers in 2008:

Fatah TV after the release:

"[Israel now] will not be able to refuse the Palestinian demands to release hundreds of prisoners, including heroes who carried out heroic military actions that led to the killing of Jews, soldiers, etc. Israel is trying to hide behind criteria that it calls 'those with blood-stained hands,' so as not to release prisoners, yet this deal includes heroes, such as Samir Kuntar, who carried out heroic actions in which Jews and soldiers died... This creates a new precedent."

[PA TV (Fatah), July 6, 2008]

Hamas TV news after the release:

Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas Prime Minister in Gaza: "Just as today a respectable exchange took place with the resistance [Hezbollah] in Lebanon, so we too are determined to achieve a respectable exchange deal for our prisoners in the jails of the Israeli occupation. The Israelis have to pay a price, and they must know that they will pay a price."

TV Newsreader: "The Palestinian prisoners regard this deal with great optimism and hope, now that Hezbollah has managed to break the Zionist equation which has opposed, for years, the release [of prisoners] who killed Zionists."

[Al-Aqsa TV (Hamas), July 16, 2008]

Hamas cleric:

"I want to tell the residents of Gaza that the next captives' exchange deal will be stronger and more painful for the descendants of monkeys and pigs [i.e. Jews]... you [Israel] will pay dearly for this deal [prisoner exchange], and in the deals that will follow it, and in the deals that will follow those."

[Al-Aqsa TV (Hamas), July 18, 2008]

Additionally, the release of murderers serving life sentences in 2008 was seen by some as the end of Israeli deterrence:

Prisoner, Al-Sayed, serving 35 life terms plus additional 150 years:

"Life sentences of the occupation are meaningless... the success of the resistance [Hamas and Hezbollah] in kidnapping of occupation soldiers and the carrying out of [prisoner] exchanges have made these [prison] sentences meaningless."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, July 19, 2008]

See more statements that followed the 2008 prisoner release, in body of report, below.

2009: Israel's offer to release murderers reinforces kidnapping strategy

In the last months of 2009, as both Arab and Israeli sources have reported that Israel has agreed to release Palestinian terrorists serving life sentences for murder in exchange for kidnapped Israeli hostage Gilad Shalit, Palestinian sources are again reporting that this release will be the motivation for the next kidnapping:

"As we have learned from the [past] stories of prisoner exchanges... and now - the Shalit deal. The [Israeli] message is clear and unequivocal. Only, only - says the Hebrew state - by force, detainment, capture and kidnapping of occupation soldiers, is it possible to free Palestinian prisoners ' whose hands are stained with blood [i.e., serving life sentences for murder].'"

[Abdallah Awad, *Al-Ayyam*, Dec. 3, 2009]

In 2009 the leaders of both the Fatah and Hamas movements reiterated their resolve to achieve the release of all Palestinian prisoners:

Mahmoud Abbas, PA Chairman:

"We have 11,000 prisoners. We will definitely, always and forever, act to free them using all means."

[PA TV (Fatah), Oct. 6, 2009]

Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas political bureau:

"The resistance (Hamas)... is capable of capturing another Shalit and another Shalit and another Shalit, until not a single prisoner will remain in the enemy's jails."

[Hamas website, Oct. 2, 2009]

The Report

The following are 50 statements of this Palestinian policy that PMW has collected since 2004, showing the Palestinian Authority's response to the first release of terrorists for a kidnapped hostage, and showing how Palestinian motivation to kidnap again is reinforced each time Israel releases terrorists. All items below are translated from Arabic by Palestinian Media Watch.

2004 - 2005

In 2004, Israel agreed to release more than 1,000 Palestinian terrorists in exchange for one Israeli citizen kidnapped by Hezbollah (and the bodies of three Israeli soldiers). Palestinians – including both Fatah and Hamas members -- expressed support and admiration for Hezbollah's achievement, seeing it as a precedent, and stated that the release of the prisoners established kidnapping as a model. Kidnapping Israelis would henceforth be the Palestinian modus operandi for the release of more prisoners.

"The Minister for Prisoners and Detainees Affairs, Hisham Abdul-Razeq, expressed his joy at the

completion of the prisoners' exchange between Hezbollah and the Government of Israel. This deal includes the release of 400 Palestinian prisoners...

The spokesman of the Committee of the Relatives of the Prisoners in Israeli Jails, Khalid Al-Khatib... said: 'The Government of Israel, by reaching this agreement, sends the Palestinians a message, which indicates that the releasing of your prisoners will not happen through negotiations.'

Palestinian National Council member Basam Abu Sharif thanked Hezbollah for its efforts to release 400 Palestinian prisoners. He described this act of Hezbollah's as a Pan-Arab one deserving respect ...

The Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements described the deal as 'an achievement,' which confirms that the resistance is 'a realistic and practical option' for the freeing of the land and the people.

One of Hamas's leaders, Ismail Haniyeh, told the French News Agency that the deal is a Palestinian, Lebanese and Arab achievement, adding: 'This deal confirms that the resistance is a realistic and a practical option, capable of liberating the land and the people.'

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Jan. 26, 2004]

"The wife of the prisoner, Nafiz Haraz, a resident of Gaza who served 19 years of his life imprisonment [sentence] in jail... said: 'Every single prisoner who is released is an achievement for us and a victory for the resistance [Hezbollah]... We thank Sheik Nasrallah for this important achievement of releasing prisoners. He is the hawk of the Arabs.'... The [Palestinian] citizens believe that Hezbollah's action has opened a new door of hope for the families of the prisoners, after it was closed during the [negotiations of] political solutions between the [Palestinian] National Authority and Israel, which did not lead to any practical results."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Jan. 27, 2004]

"Fatah's military branch organized a civilian and military procession yesterday through the streets of Rafah. This event was held in appreciation and gratitude for the efforts Hezbollah made for the release of Arab and Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails as part of the prisoner exchange deal with Israel. In a public statement by the Abu Al-Rish Brigades, Fatah's military wing emphasized the need to follow Hezbollah's example in order to achieve the release of all prisoners and detainees."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Jan. 29, 2004]

Headline: "Protests in all areas, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades calls on its members to kidnap Israelis"

Sub-headline: "[PM Ahmad] Qurei: The detainees issue is one of the [Palestinian] government's top priorities. Their release is a condition for any possible agreement."

"The Presidency of the Legislative Council (PA Parliament) and the [national] forces announced their full support of the battle of the heroic prisoners whereas the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades called on its members to kidnap Israeli soldiers in order to pressure Israel on the prisoners' issue."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Aug. 16, 2004]

"The Islamic Jihad movement pointed out – in a public statement that was published on its behalf and was distributed during the procession – that it has the right to execute any action to obtain the prisoners' release... Mushir Al-Masri, Hamas spokesman, said that Hamas's threats to kidnap soldiers remain valid, and the movement will do everything in its power for the sake of the prisoners' release."

[*Al-Ayyam*, Aug. 17, 2004]

"The Hamas movement organized a mass parade yesterday in the Jabaliya refugee camp... demonstrating solidarity with the prisoners and detainees in the occupation's prisons..."

An official in the Hamas movement, Dr. Nizar Rayan, said... that whoever kidnaps and arrests our sons,

we have no choice but to kidnap his soldiers, settlers and land thieves, for the liberation of our heroes imprisoned in the occupation's dungeons. He called for all the resistance divisions to act to kidnap Israeli soldiers for their exchange with our brave prisoners..."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Aug. 21, 2004]

"Member of the Central Committee of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Mahmoud Khalaf, said that the Palestinians are faced with two ways of solving the prisoner issue: One through political negotiations, and the other through the capturing of soldiers, as happened with Hezbollah."

[*Al-Quds*, Aug. 24, 2004]

"The Al-Quds Brigades, Islamic Jihad's military wing, and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, which belong to the Fatah movement, threatened to kidnap Israeli settlers and soldiers for the release of the prisoners in Israeli detention centers... The Al-Quds Brigades and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades said during a joint press conference in the sit-down strike tent in the Unknown Soldier's Square: '...We have decided to step up our efforts to kidnap Zionist soldiers and settlers... We will not back down and we will not change our minds about that purpose, in any way, and we will do everything in our power to achieve it.' They mentioned several previous kidnapping attempts within the last three months, which have failed... They added... that instructions were given... to all military squads to begin operations for kidnapping Israeli settlers and soldiers, in order to save the prisoners."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Aug. 27, 2004]

"The military wing of the Hamas movement has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping and killing of an Israeli intelligence officer, Sasson Nuriel..."

The [Hamas] Al-Qassam Brigades said in a statement that the Brigades' unit for liberating prisoners had kidnapped the Israeli... planning to exchange him for prisoners, but a sweeping detention campaign by the occupation forces in West Bank towns had forced the unit to kill the officer. The Brigades said that by claiming responsibility for the operation, they were promising the prisoners that this operation was [just] the beginning."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Sept. 28, 2005]

"During a seminar at the Islamic University in Gaza... Freed prisoner Izz A-Din Al-Masri argued that negotiations alone cannot lead to the release of the prisoners, nor will kidnapping soldiers alone lead to the release of prisoners. It is necessary for both aspects – political negotiations and the Jihadi aspect – to be combined together within the framework of a clear program of activity for the sake of the prisoners."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Dec. 15, 2005]

2006 – 2007

In early 2006, Palestinian officials continued to advocate kidnapping Israelis, and PMW released two bulletins warning that Hamas planned to kidnap Israeli soldiers to hold as hostages.

In June 2006, Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit was captured near Gaza by Palestinian terrorists. Shortly thereafter, another two Israeli soldiers, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, were kidnapped by Hezbollah and taken to Lebanon, leading to the Second Lebanon War. The kidnapping and Israel's subsequent negotiations with the kidnappers reinforced the drive for more kidnappings. One hostage (Gilad Shalit) would not be enough to make Israel release the thousands of Palestinian terrorists in Israeli prisons, and Palestinian leaders therefore advocated more kidnappings to achieve the release of all terrorists.

Said Siam, Hamas Minister of Interior:

"In the past, Hamas succeeded in kidnapping many Zionist soldiers. From among our forces there are thousands of prisoners. They (the forces) have to think how to free these prisoners, and I believe that there is no alternative but to kidnap soldiers to exchange for them. Hamas has kidnapped 10 soldiers. There is nothing the resistance (Hamas) cannot do. When there is a goal and a good plan, the goal can be achieved, especially about prisoners, which is top priority. During the PA administration, Hamas has succeeded in kidnapping and hiding bodies, but unfortunately, two bodies were handed over for nothing. When there is a kidnapping, and it is secured, each case at its own time has its own negotiations."

[Abu Dhabi TV, Jan. 1, 2006]

Headline: "How will a Hamas government act regarding the prisoners in the prisons of the occupation?"
"Nabil Nassar, the representative of Hamas in the National and Islamic Forces Prisoners Committee, said, 'We will not abandon them [i.e. the prisoners]. The coming government will double its efforts to set them free using every possible means.'

Nassar said that Hamas, which will form the coming government, can take care of the prisoner issue by kidnapping [Israeli] soldiers if it fails to set prisoners free by peaceful means..."

[Al-Ayyam, Feb. 14, 2006]

"The head of the Hamas party in the Palestinian Parliament [and Foreign Minister – ed.] Dr. Mahmoud Al-Zahar said that his movement would not hesitate to kidnap soldiers of the occupation in order to exchange them for [Palestinian] prisoners, should the opportunity arise."

[A-Sharq Al Awsat (London), March 7, 2006]

"The Islamic resistance movement (Hamas) yesterday threatened to carry out kidnapping operations of soldiers in the Israeli army, in order to release Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails. The threat was announced by Hamas Member of the Palestinian Parliament, Fathi Hamad."

[Al-Ayyam, March 16, 2006]

"[Palestinian Authority] Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh emphasized the importance of forming a mechanism for the release of our heroic prisoners who are held in the jails of the occupation... Prominent Islamic Jihad movement leader, Sheik Halid Al-Batash... called for seeking different mechanisms for the release of our heroic prisoners. He emphasized that among the mechanisms is the kidnapping of Zionists to exchange for the release of the [Palestinian] prisoners."

[Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, April 17, 2006]

"Senior member of the [Islamic] Jihad [Movement]: Kidnapping of Israeli soldiers - the fastest way to the release of the prisoners. A senior leader of the Islamic Jihad movement [Sheik Khaled Al-Batsh] called on the factions of the resistance to kidnap Israeli soldiers in order to exchange them for Palestinian prisoners, whom Israel holds and refuses to release."

[Al-Ayyam, May 9, 2006]

"Osama Hamdan, Hamas representative in Lebanon, said that the capture of the two soldiers 'shows Israel that the only way to free them [Israeli captives] is to free the [Palestinian] prisoners in the Israeli jails.'"

[Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, July 13, 2006]

Headline: " Hamas calls upon Hezbollah for a joint deal for exchanging prisoners..."

"In an announcement by Hamas... Hamas 'congratulates its brethren in Hezbollah for this quality operation. We admire its level of planning and execution...'

The announcement called upon 'the brothers in Hezbollah to make use of the capture of the two Zionist soldiers for an overall, joint Palestinian-Lebanese deal for exchanging prisoners...' The continued presence of Palestinian and Arab prisoners behind Zionist bars grants the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance complete legitimacy to capture more."

[*Al-Ayyam*, July 13, 2006]

"Fatah spokesman Ahmad Abd Al-Rahman conveyed his congratulations to the heroes who carried out the heroic act in southern Lebanon, in support of their Palestinian brethren... and emphasized that the demand to free the Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the Israeli soldier [Shalit] is a natural right... He emphasized that the Israeli soldier should be freed only in the event of the release of Palestinian prisoners."

[*Al-Ayyam*, July 13, 2006]

"Representatives of the national and Islamic factions said: 'Response to this continued [Israeli] aggression, and the capture of occupation soldiers, are the right of the resistance, for self-defense and meant to continue resistance to the occupation and to liberate the prisoners.'"

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, July 18, 2006]

"Representative [of PA parliament] Dr. Mustafa Barghouti... emphasized: 'This battle is for the liberation of our prisoners, who must not be abandoned.' He said that the procession [in Ramallah] was meant to emphasize the support of the Palestinian people for the Lebanese people... Deputy Minister of Prisoners' Affairs, Ziyad Abu Ein, stated that this year is the 'year of the prisoners.' He announced that not a single Palestinian or Arab prisoner would remain in the occupation's jails, and that the keys of the prisons were now in the hands of the resistance."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, July 18, 2006]

"During the program *Meet the Press* in Tulkarm, the speakers emphasized the need to empty the Israeli jails and to free the prisoners in exchange for Israeli soldiers... The representative of the Tulkarm region, Rushdi Al-Zaghal, said: 'The issue of the prisoners... proves that the occupation understands only the language of force.'"

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, July 18, 2006]

An-Najah National University, Opinion Polls and Survey Studies Center

"Poll of Palestinians following Hezbollah capture of two Israeli soldiers as hostages for releasing Arab and Palestinian terrorists from Israeli jails which caused the Second Lebanon War.

96.3% defined their attitude towards Hezbollah as "good"

90.9% supported the demand of those holding the Israeli soldier not to release him without a captives' exchange deal with the Israeli government."

[An-Najah web site, July 25, 2006]

"Fathi Hamad, Hamas member of the Palestinian Parliament, demanded the kidnapping of more Israeli soldiers in order to force Israel to free the [Palestinian] prisoners... Hamad stressed that it is the responsibility of the government, the Parliament, the [armed] factions and military arms to dedicate all means at their disposal to free the prisoners. He argued that the kidnapping of the soldier Gilad Shalit has hit Israel very hard."

[*Al-Ayyam*, March 10, 2007]

"Hamas Spokesman Ayman Taha confirmed... that kidnapping soldiers would continue to be the only means to liberate prisoners... 'The Hamas approach has been based, since [the movement's] inception, on liberating prisoners through kidnapping soldiers and exchanging them for Palestinian prisoners.' He expressed his pride in the ability of the resistance to take captives and to maintain negotiations."

[*Al-Rissala* (Hamas weekly), April 16, 2007]

PA Minister of Interior, Said Siam (Hamas): "There were suggestions to repeat the operations to kidnap other Israeli soldiers, because we know that the occupation understands no other language. Second, capturing the [one] soldier will not cause the liberation of over 10,000 prisoners."

Member of PA Parliament, Um Nidal (Hamas): "Disregarding the fact that I'm a member of parliament as a Palestinian citizen, by Allah, I don't believe in any solution other than one: Kidnapping Zionist soldiers. We hope that with the help of Allah, may He be praised and extolled, the kidnapers will stick with their demands and will not lower their demands in any way... until they [the Israelis] surrender to our conditions."

Hamas TV reporter: "[Kidnapping] 10 Zionist soldiers – maybe fewer - will guarantee the liberation of thousands of Palestinian prisoners. A number of suggestions were brought up during the meeting of Parliament. The most prominent was the call for further kidnappings of Zionists soldiers as a solution to end prisoners' suffering."

[*Al-Aqsa TV* (Hamas), April 18, 2007]

"The [PA] Parliament has declared April 17 Prisoners' Day ...

Some of the representatives called for Hezbollah to include Palestinian prisoners in any exchange deal with Israel, while others called to tie the ceasefire to their liberation, or to resume kidnapping soldiers with a view to further deals...

Representatives warned against the failure of the efforts to release prisoners through peaceful means, which would ultimately lead to a search for other means, including the kidnapping of soldiers for the purposes of exchange, and a strengthening of the [violent] resistance which, some representatives said, is the only language that the occupation understands."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, April 18, 2007]

Representative Mussa: Operations to kidnap soldiers will continue

"[PA Parliament] Representative [from Hamas] Yihya Mussa emphasized that prisoners can be freed only by continuing kidnapping operations..."

He emphasized further that it is important to continue with operations to kidnap Israeli soldiers. He added: 'The [prisoner] exchange deal [for Gilad Shalit] will break all the [Israeli] rules and cross all the red lines that Israel has set down, since [Palestinians believe] there is no such thing as 'prisoners whose hands are stained with blood,' [Israeli term for prisoners sentenced for murder] 'Jerusalem prisoners,' '1948 prisoners'[Israeli Arabs] or 'Arab prisoners' [citizens of other Arab countries] . All of them will be included within the [Shalit] deal, with no discrimination.'

He said further: "We will not abandon the prisoners! The jails will be emptied through one strategy alone, which is resistance and the kidnapping of soldiers."

[*Al-Rissala* (Hamas weekly), April 23, 2007]

"Senior Hamas official Khalil Abu Layla confirmed that the intention to kidnap Israeli soldiers, beyond being merely a threat, is a strategy of the Hamas movement. He said that [Hamas] – as its leadership has declared publicly - will carry out operations to capture soldiers for the lofty and just purpose of freeing our heroic prisoners."

[*Al-Rissala* (Hamas weekly), April 26, 2007]

"Fathi Hamad, Hamas representative in the [Palestinian] Parliament, confirmed that the Shalit kidnapping operation will not be the last."

[*Al-Rissala* (Hamas weekly), April 30, 2007]

2008

In July 2008, Israel released terrorist murderers for the first time since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. In exchange for the bodies of two Israeli soldiers taken by Hezbollah, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, Israel released Samir Kuntar, a convicted murderer serving four life sentences, and other Hezbollah prisoners, together with the remains of 200 Palestinians and Lebanese buried in Israel.

Israel's release of murderers had a significant impact on Palestinian society because it was seen as shattering the last of Israel's "red lines." The act was viewed as the needed proof that Israel succumbs to "the language of force."

In addition to serving as motivation for continued kidnappings, the release of prisoners serving life sentences was seen as opening up larger segments of society to terror, by significantly reducing the fear of prison as a deterrent. Palestinians believe now that all prison sentences are temporary and "meaningless." Today Palestinians are convinced that every single Palestinian prisoner, including all murderers, will eventually be released as long as Palestinians continue to kidnap Israelis.

Ashraf Al-Ajrami, PA Minister of Prisoners:

"The language of peace and negotiations is not enough to urge Israel to cooperate positively regarding prisoners. The way Israel likes, it seems, is to exchange [prisoners] with kidnapped Israeli soldiers."

[PA TV (Fatah), June 5, 2008]

Hamas TV broadcast a video clip showing Hamas exercises that include the simulated kidnapping of an soldier. The segment included an Israeli tank exploding, images of a Hamas fighter carrying and running with a Israeli soldier.

[Al-Aqsa TV (Hamas), June 16, 2008]



training
Israeli
followed by
captured

***Israeli soldier captured
(Al-Aqsa TV, June 16, 2008)***

Telephone interview with Hani Al-Masri, former official in Ministry of Information, Palestinian writer and senior political commentator. The interviewer asked about the importance of the prisoner exchange between Hezbollah and Israel:

Al-Masri: "The importance of this deal is that Israel is proving, for the millionth time, that it understands only the language of force. Despite all the initiatives and attempts at peace invested by the parties and [by] many Arab states, which have signed agreements with Israel, or which have tried to sign agreements with Israel, Israel releases prisoners only through [prisoner] exchange deals... This proves that Israel understands only the language of pressure, the language of interests, the language of force. It is another victory for Hezbollah and for the resistance, which has achieved a good deal, succeeding in releasing all of the Lebanese prisoners and the bodies of the Lebanese, Palestinian and Arab *Shahids* (Martyrs)."

Interviewer: "Hani, after the deal that is going to take place between Hezbollah and Israel, Lebanon will be the first Arab country to have liberated its prisoners from the occupation's prisons by means of the resistance. What is the significance of this?"

Al-Masri: "The significance [of the deal] is... Israel understands [only] one language: The language of kidnapping soldiers and Israelis, to exchange them for prisoners. Could Israel not have released Palestinian prisoners while it was conducting talks with the Palestinians at the highest levels, in order to build confidence, in order to encourage the Palestinians towards peace, instead of resorting only to resistance, only to force? It's a clear message that tells the Palestinians, and all the Arabs, that Israel understands only the language of resistance, only the language of force, the language of pressure, and the language of loss."

Interviewer: "Hani, in your opinion, will the prisoner exchange deal between Hezbollah and the occupation [Israel] influence a [Shalit] deal between the factions in Gaza [Hamas] and Israel?"

Al-Masri: "Of course it will influence it. Israel, which has released all the Lebanese prisoners and all the bodies of the Lebanese and others, will not be able to refuse the Palestinian demands to release hundreds of prisoners, including heroes who carried out heroic military actions that led to the killing of Jews, soldiers, etc. Israel is trying to hide behind criteria which it calls 'those with blood-stained hands,' so as not to release prisoners, yet this deal includes heroes, such as Samir Kuntar, who carried out heroic actions in which Jews and soldiers died. In addition, this creates a new precedent, which supports the issue and allows the Palestinians to arrive at a deal in which heroes, who were sentenced to lengthy [prison] terms, will be released. We do not want them to remain in prison for long terms, and in deals of this type as many as possible of them should be released."

[PA TV (Fatah), July 6, 2008]

Issa Karake, head of the Prisoners' Committee, Palestinian Parliament (Fatah):

"The Israelis released Samir Kuntar only when their soldiers were taken captive. While there were negotiations for peace and talks and a genuine, serious peace process, they put up very grave racist conditions, leaving [the prisoners] in the prisons for many years. It would be better for the Israelis, and better for Israeli society, to release prisoners through a peace agreement that would bring about coexistence, through the establishment of two neighboring states. But they [Israelis] began to understand the value of freedom and the value of the detainees' issue [only] when their own soldiers were captured..."

The truth is that the freeing of Samir [Kuntar] breaks the Israeli veto, breaks the Israeli criteria, breaks the Israeli terms since they refused to release Samir [Kuntar] arguing that 'his hands are covered in blood'... In all previous agreements that were signed between Israel and the PLO, Israel always refused to release any Palestinian prisoner who had been accused of killing Israelis... Now there is a break, a true break in this Israeli taboo or veto."

[PA TV (Fatah), July 7, 2008]

Amin Dabir, political commentator:

Interviewer: "How will this matter influence... the Shalit deal and the speed with which it is carried out?"

Dabir: "Ultimately, it is clear that Israel will give in to the resistance (Hamas). Ultimately, Israel will, owing to its internal political situation and what is currently going on in the region, give in to the resistance, sooner or later, and will be forced to pay the price. What reinforces this is Hamas's declaration that it will not release this prisoner [Shalit] without exacting a price, and even if in a year's time... it [Israel] will have to pay this price. And if it pays the price, this will be a new precedent, a new event, which will emphasize the possibility of subjugating this entity [Israel]."

[Al-Aqsa TV (Hamas), July 8, 2008]

Ashraf Al-Ajrami, PA Minister of Prisoners' Affairs (Fatah):

"There is no doubt that this is an historical and important event for the Palestinian people, the Lebanese [people] and the Arab nation in general. It is a great victory – in other words, the release of the Arab veteran prisoner, the heroic fighter Samir Kuntar..."

It had been hoped that Samir Kuntar would be released earlier. However, the language of the negotiations and the agreements with Israel do not help towards the release of Samir Kuntar [and the release] of 344 prisoners [serving life sentences] who are still in the prisons... The message that Israel is conveying to the Palestinians and to the Arabs, one way or another, is that the release of prisoners is not attained through negotiations...

Israel has released some prisoners as a gesture, but has left in its prisons the veteran [prisoners], the ill, the women, the children and the commanders, as captives in its hands, as bargaining chips. Israel can forego these prisoners in a deal for an exchange of captives, in other words, if there are Israeli soldiers in captivity. Then Israel would forego these [bargaining] chips. But if there are no Israeli soldiers in captivity, then Israel will delay and delay, and the matter will remain this way for a long time."

[PA TV (Fatah), July 16, 2008]

Hamas TV news broadcast:

Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas Prime Minister in Gaza: "We are now watching the exchange deal [between Israel and Hezbollah], and emphasize that for us, too, as the Palestinian people, there is no possibility of our foregoing our prisoners; there is no possibility of our foregoing these heroes. Just as today a respectable exchange took place with the resistance in Lebanon, so we too are determined to achieve a respectable exchange deal for our prisoners in the jails of the Israeli occupation. The Israelis have to pay a price, and they must know that they will pay a price."

Newsreader: "The Palestinian prisoners regard this deal with great optimism and hope, now that Hezbollah has managed to break the Zionist equation which has opposed, for years, the release [of prisoners] who killed Zionists. From the point of view of Hamas, this is a victory deal, favoring the resistance."

[Al-Aqsa TV (Hamas), July 16, 2008]

Hamas cleric:

"I want to tell the residents of Gaza that the next captives' exchange deal will be stronger and more painful for the descendants of monkeys and pigs [i.e., Jews]... you [Israel] will pay dearly for this deal [prisoner exchange], and in the deals that will follow it, and in the deals that will follow those."

[Al-Aqsa TV (Hamas), July 18, 2008]

Headline: "Sentenced to 35 life terms and an additional 150 years, prisoner Al-Sayed: 'Life sentences of the occupation are meaningless as long as the resistance [Hamas] achieves successes'"

"The prisoner Abbas Al-Sayed, a member of the Hamas political leadership and commander of the [Izz A-Din] Al-Qassam Brigades in the northern West Bank, congratulated the Lebanese resistance and head of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, and praised its successes achieved in the recent exchange deal [i.e., bodies of two Israeli soldiers exchanged for terrorist murderer Samir Kuntar] ... Al-Sayed, sentenced to 35 life terms and a further 150 years... stated that the life-sentences passed by the occupation state on our people's prisoners are meant to break their spirit... 'However, the success of the resistance [Hamas and Hezbollah] in kidnapping of occupation soldiers and the carrying out of [prisoner] exchanges have made these [prison] sentences meaningless.'"
[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, July 19, 2008]

Abbas Zaki, representative of the PLO Executive Committee in Lebanon:
"In my opinion, Israel has now become a paper tiger; [it is] weak. I'm telling you, people are wondering why the Palestinians should remain quiet while 200 [prisoners] came out [of Israeli jails] along with Samir Kuntar. Perhaps 50, 60, 200 or 700 could come out [of jail] with [the release of] this Shalit?"
[PA TV (Fatah), July 22, 2008]

Headline: "Haniyeh: We will soon celebrate an anticipated exchange of captives"
"Dismissed Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh announced yesterday that 'the Palestinians will soon celebrate an anticipated exchange of captives,' thereby strengthening Hamas's persistence in its demands in relation to the exchange deal [of prisoners for kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit]..."
[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, July 22, 2008]

Hani Al-Masri, former official in Ministry of Information and Palestinian senior political commentator:
"Israel understands only the language of pressure, the language of interests, the language of force... During the history of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle we have noticed that in some of the deals, thousands of detainees were exchanged for a single soldier, or two, or three. If so, that is the message that Israel is giving us – that it understands only the language of force and the language of interests. We must resort to the one language or to the other, or to both languages jointly [force and interests]."
[PA TV (Fatah), Aug. 12, 2008]

Hassan al-Kashef, writer and media personality:
"There are currently negotiations concerning an exchange of captives with Gilad Shalit. We must all support any effort that is aimed at raising the price that the Palestinian people will receive."
[PA TV (Fatah), Aug. 14, 2008]

Headline: "During military maneuvers in southern Gaza - [Islamic Jihad] Al-Quds Brigades: Operations for kidnapping Israeli soldiers and taking them captive are an option available to all of the military wings"
"The Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of the Islamic Jihad, emphasized that operations of kidnapping soldiers and holding them in the hands of the resistance are an option available to all of the military wings. This was said during the course of military maneuvers organized by the 'Al-Quds Brigades' yesterday in southern Gaza, using light and medium ammunition and [anti-]tank and mine ammunition. Operations for storming buildings amidst heavy explosions were drilled, and training for kidnapping Israeli soldiers was carried out. One of the field operatives said, during the exercise, that 'Hezbollah's Lebanese experience, and [that of] the Palestinian resistance in Gaza, in kidnapping Israeli soldiers and holding them captive, has proved successful in forcing the various Israeli governments to accede to the

captors' demands, and [it has proved] that the theory of bringing back soldiers by force has collapsed. The resistance has broken it and has forced the occupation leadership to submit to its demands."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Aug. 23, 2008]

Headline: "During military course graduation ceremony: Popular Front [PFLP] emphasizes importance of continuity of military activity alongside political [activity]"

"Two days ago the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine concluded its military course, entitled 'Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Shahids' [Martyrs] Course'... Participants in the training demonstrated military maneuvers, using light ammunition, medium-caliber ammunition, and anti-tank ammunition. They set off a number of explosives and also conducted a mock storming of the enemy's military positions with the objective of kidnapping Zionist soldiers."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Aug. 24, 2008]

Headline: "Joint Palestinian-Israeli public opinion poll"

"59% of Palestinians think that the best way to release prisoners is a peace agreement

39% think that the best way is to kidnap soldiers

78% of Israelis favor releasing Barghouti for Shalit

79% of Israelis prefer a two-state solution, while 11% prefer the solution of a single state"

"A joint Palestinian-Israeli opinion poll showed that a large majority of Israelis favor releasing Marwan Barghouti in exchange for Gilad Shalit, while three-quarters of Palestinians support kidnapping Israeli soldiers in order to exchange them for Palestinian prisoners..."

The poll was conducted during the period between Aug. 25th and Sept. 1st, 2008, by the Palestinian Center for Political Studies and Polls in Ramallah, and the Truman Institute for Peace Studies at the Hebrew University, to examine Israeli and Palestinian readiness for the various negotiating processes... The survey showed that 59% [of Palestinians] believe that the best way to release prisoners from Israeli jails is by reaching a peace agreement that will release them, while 39% believe that the best way is to kidnap Israeli soldiers and exchange them for Palestinian prisoners. However, in view of the experience [gained] from kidnapping Gilad Shalit, 74% [now] favor kidnapping Israeli soldiers and exchanging them for Palestinian prisoners, while 21% are opposed.

When [respondents were] asked when it would be possible to arrive at a reconciliation between the two nations, 31% of Israelis and 43% of Palestinians said that it would never happen; 40% of Israelis and 29% of Palestinians believed that this would happen only in another few generations or in the next generation, and 24% of Israelis and 20% of Palestinians believe that it would happen within the next decade or during the next few years..."

[*Al-Ayyam*, Sept. 9, 2008]

Headline: "Most Israelis are in favor of releasing Marwan Barghouti in exchange for Shalit - three quarters of Palestinians support kidnapping soldiers to exchange them for prisoners"

"A joint Palestinian-Israeli public opinion poll conducted in both societies emphasized that a large majority of Israelis favor releasing Marwan Barghouti in exchange for the release of Gilad Shalit, and that three-quarters of Palestinians support the kidnapping of soldiers in order to exchange them for Palestinian prisoners..."

The Palestinian Center for Political Studies and Polls announced yesterday the results of the joint poll on general opinion which was conducted by the Center in cooperation with the Harry Truman Center for Peace Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, between Aug. 25th and Sept. 1st, 2008...

The results showed that 78% of Israelis support the release of Marwan Barghouti from prison in exchange for the release of Gilad Shalit, in contrast to 16% who are opposed. However, only 45% of

Israeli opinion supports Barghouti's release, and 50% are opposed to his release, if it is necessary to negotiate with him in order to reach a resolution agreement that is acceptable to the Palestinians. While most Palestinians - 59% - maintain that the best way to release prisoners from Israeli jails is by reaching a peace agreement that will release them, 39% believe that the best way is kidnapping soldiers and exchanging them for Palestinian prisoners. However, in view of the experience [gained] from kidnapping Gilad Shalit, 74% support kidnapping Israeli soldiers and exchanging them for Palestinian and Arab prisoners, while 21% are opposed..."

[*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, Sept. 9, 2008]

2009

In 2009, as both Arab and Israeli sources report that Palestinian terrorists serving life sentences for murder will be released in exchange for kidnapped Israeli hostage Gilad Shalit, Palestinian sources once again report that this release will motivate the next kidnappings. Since Israel has abandoned all its criteria, and is willing to release terrorists murderers, additional kidnappings become the best strategy to get Palestinian terrorists out of prison. The heads of both the Fatah and Hamas movements each view kidnappings as a valid tool to release prisoners.

PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, commenting on the release of female prisoners in exchange for a video of Gilad Shalit:

"We have 11,000 prisoners. We will definitely, always and forever, act to free them using all means." [PA TV (Fatah), Oct. 6, 2009]

Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas political bureau:

"The resistance (Hamas), which has succeeded in capturing Gilad Shalit... is capable of capturing another Shalit and another Shalit and another Shalit, until not a single prisoner will remain in the enemy's jails."

[*Hamas website*, Oct. 2, 2009]

Friday sermon on Al-Aqsa (Hamas) TV, broadcast from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia:

Dr. Walid Al-Rashudi, head of Islamic Studies at Saud University:

"O dear ones, O Mujahidin [Jihad fighters], O mighty ones, we have a great wish: That you will be on guard and do all that you can to capture Jews. Try to take as many Jews as possible into captivity. I ask of the exalted Allah that He make it easy for you to take them captive and that He place them, humiliated and small, in your hands. Allah hears.

I ask Allah for complete victory for the Mujahidin. Allah – direct [the stone] towards the enemy. Allah – provide Your forces with many soldiers. There is no one who can defeat His [Allah's] soldiers.

O Allah, cause the Jews the greatest possible losses; kill them one by one and do not leave even one. O Lord, make every one of the Mujahidin's missiles cause casualties among the Jews, and may this be a crushing blow. I ask of You, Allah, that You show us many killed and prisoners from among the Jews. O Allah, allow the Mujahidin to kill and to take into captivity the greatest number of Jews..."

[*Al-Aqsa TV (Hamas)*, Jan. 8, 2009]

As part of a discussion on Fatah-Hamas relations and about Palestinian Prisoners' Day, an unidentified Hamas speaker says:

"If one Gilad [Shalit] isn't enough for the Zionist enemy, the Jihad fighters and our resistance fighters are ready to capture more Gilads, with the help of Allah, until this Zionist enemy will be forced to free our prisoners, the glory-bringers."

[*Al-Aqsa TV (Hamas)*, April 21, 2009]

Hamas TV animation:

(Song): "In the prisons, our heroes cried with joy: Our day of release has come; this land is our country! You [Israelis] will all be 'Gilads', we'll capture you."

Child [to chain]: "You don't want to break- that's okay. Take your time; we're not in a hurry, we're very patient. [To kidnapped Israeli soldier] You stay where you are; don't move. Tomorrow we'll be back and we'll finish the job."

(Song): "It is inevitable that the chains will be broken."

[Gilad Shalit's image on stone, crying]: "Mommy!"

[Al-Aqsa TV (Hamas), April 21, 2009]

Hamas TV animation:

Gilad Shalit: "Mommy!"

Hamas child: "Who is it, Gilad [Shalit]? [Laughing] Poor you! You've been rotting here for 3 years, and no one cares."

Gilad Shalit: "Please release me!"

Hamas child: "Are you asking me to be a collaborator and a traitor, that I'll betray my people and my homeland? Are you crazy!"

Gilad Shalit: "I have an idea: You [Hamas] go and capture more soldiers, they [Israelis] will be afraid and accept your terms to free me."

Hamas child: "Ah, they will free you not because they love you, but to prevent anxiety among your soldiers, so they won't be afraid, and stop their military service."

Gilad Shalit: "True."

Hamas child: "Gilad, stay here, and pray that [Hamas] succeeds in capturing another [soldier], so you'll be freed. Bye."

Gilad Shalit: "Mommy! Mommy! (in Hebrew) Free me!"

[Al-Aqsa TV (Hamas), July 6, 2009]

Khaled Mashaal, head of Hamas political bureau:

"The resistance (Hamas), which has succeeded in capturing Gilad Shalit, keeping him alive and well for more than three years, giving him proper treatment, and excelling in conducting indirect negotiations, is capable of capturing another Shalit and another Shalit and another Shalit, until not a single prisoner will remain in the enemy's jails."

[Hamas website, Oct. 2, 2009]

Mahmoud Abbas, PA Chairman, interview

TV Host: "The occupation [Israel] released 20 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for a video confirming that [Israeli hostage] Gilad Shalit is alive. What do you think about this?"

Mahmoud Abbas, PA Chairman: "I see it from only one perspective – 20 female Palestinian prisoners have left prison. The price may be high or low, that is not the issue. The issue is that some prisoners have left prison, which gives hope to many others. We have 11,000 prisoners. We will definitely, always and forever, act to free them using all means."

[PA TV (Fatah), Oct. 6, 2009]

"Waed Association for Prisoners and Released [headed by Hamas's Interior Minister Fathi Hamad] announced its readiness to raise one million Jordanian Dinar (\$1.4 million USD) for anyone who

captures a Zionist soldier in order to exchange him with Palestinian prisoners. [Waed] said that the freedom of the prisoners requires everyone to act in all possible ways to free them... [Waed] added that one of the Zionist associations offered \$10 million for anyone who gave precise information about the Zionist soldier Gilad Shalit."

[Website of Waed Association for Prisoners, Nov. 24, 2009]

Hani Al-Masri, former official in Ministry of Information, Palestinian writer and senior political commentator

Headline: "The effect of the prisoner exchange deal on the Palestinian map"

"The degree of influence of the prisoner exchange deal [on Palestinian society] is dependent on the conditions of the deal and whether it follows Israel's criteria, which include not freeing those serving lengthy prison terms 'whose hands are stained with blood'...

The information thus far shows that Israel's criteria have largely been shattered, while the Palestinian criteria have been breached to a lesser degree...

Completing the deal according to Palestinian criteria means:

a. Israel understands only the language of force, since kidnapping is the only thing that leaves open the gates of hope for freedom for prisoners with long prison terms. This encourages others towards self-sacrifice for the sake of the homeland and to respond to the mandatory call to resist the occupation and to cause it loss of life.

b. Israel was forced to negotiate - even if indirectly - with a Palestinian organization that refuses to recognize it and to stop its (violent) resistance, and does not accept the Quartet's conditions. This will weaken Israel's ability to object to European, American and international contacts and meetings with the Hamas movement.

c. The Hamas movement's success in completing the prisoner exchange will deal it an important hand that will improve its internal [Palestinian] position, especially since the [exchange] deal occurs at a time when the bilateral negotiations [between Israel and the Palestinian Authority] have reached a dead end."

[Al-Ayyam, Dec. 1, 2009]

"[Gilad] Shalit is better known in the world than any Palestinian prisoner, as if it is obvious to the near-sighted and racist world that Shalit will be released from prison... while a Palestinian must enter prison and die there...

The Hebrew state understands nothing but force in the 'conflict and solution' game. The microcosm of this is the 'imprisonment and release' game, which is currently at its climax, in what is known as the 'Shalit deal'...

In this [prisoner] game there is no place for 'humaneness' and 'morality' [on Israel's part]... as we have learned from the [past] stories of prisoner exchanges, or the exchange of bodies [of kidnapped Israeli soldiers] for prisoners between Hezbollah and the Hebrew state, and the Ahmad Jibril deal [1,150 prisoners exchanged for three Israeli soldiers], and [as we] now [learn from] - the Shalit deal.

The [Israeli] message is clear and unequivocal. Only, only - says the Hebrew state - by force, detainment, capture, and kidnapping of occupation soldiers, is it possible to free Palestinian prisoners 'whose hands are stained with blood [i.e., serving life sentences for murder].'"

[Al-Ayyam, Dec. 3, 2009]