

We must talk with Hamas

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-We must talk with Hamas; they also can be partners

-The crucial choice: deterioration and ever more bloodshed or the opening towards a firm peace of which Hamas is part.

-The choice depends both on Hamas and on Israeli government

The government of Israel had dozens and even hundreds of opportunities to negotiate with Fatah and Abu Mazen, and it persistently avoided all of them. But, it is no use crying over spilled milk.

The Palestinian people managed to hold fair, democratic elections under international supervision, in spite of the hard conditions of living under a regime of occupation and oppression, and the Israeli military raids which continued until the election day itself.

The parliament elected in these elections, and the cabinet which will get the confidence of the parliament will be the representatives of the Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem – authorized to represent them in any negotiations – just like the Knesset and the government of Israel represent the Israeli people.

The Hamas victory carries both great risk and enormous chance – for both peoples. On the one hand, there is now a real danger of cutting off all contact and relation between the two sides, leading to chaos and increased bloodshed. On the other hand, there is also a historical chance to achieve peace, a more firm peace of which the Hamas – with its leaders, supporters and voters – will be full partners. The choice which of these possibilities will materialize depends on the decisions taken by the Hamas leadership in the coming days and weeks – but at least as much by the decision taken by the government of Israel.

The State of Israel has conducted negotiations with the PLO long before its Covenant was officially abolished, not did it wait for its abolition before signing an agreement with the PLO and starting implementation on the ground. The very holding of negotiations has rendered the Covenant meaningless. The same is true for the Hamas Covenant: the holding of talks between a Hamas-led government and the State of Israel will constitute mutual recognition – by the Hamas movement of the existence of Israel and by Israel of the Palestinian government also when formed by the Hamas.

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