

How the World Can Help Defeat Hamas

written by Asher Fredman | 24.10.2023

Following Hamas's October 7 massacre, world leaders released statements of support for Israel, iconic buildings were lit up in blue and white, and Jewish communities rushed to donate to Israel's first responders. The question that now must be asked is: beyond statements of solidarity, what can policy-makers, private sector actors, and civil society do to support the efforts to defeat Hamas and return the children, women, and men being held hostage in Gaza?

The first step is placing international pressure on the countries that support and fund Hamas, so that these countries press Hamas to release the hostages, and in the long term, end their support for the terrorist organization. These countries include Qatar, Turkey, Algeria, Malaysia, and Kuwait.

Qatar for example has been hosting Hamas headquarters since at least 2012, while sending an estimated 1.5 billion dollars to Gaza over the past decade, the vast majority of which reached Hamas, its operatives, and employees. On October 18, 2023, the US placed sanctions on a Qatar-based Hamas operative involved in the transfer of tens of millions of dollars to Hamas. Qatar's Al Jazeera media outlet has been a central mouthpiece for Hamas propaganda. At the same time, in 2022, the United States recognized Qatar as a major non-NATO ally.

Similarly, Turkey, beyond simply hosting Hamas leaders and offices, granted senior Hamas officials such as Ismail Haniyeh and Saleh al-Arouri, Turkish passports, so that they could travel freely around the world. This despite the fact that Turkey is a member of NATO, and is seeking to purchase advanced weapons systems from the US.

Hamas's sponsors also include Iran, a country against which there is already an ongoing campaign to promote sanctions for its promotion of terror, nuclear program, support for Russia's war against Ukraine, and domestic repression.

Governments and parliaments should send a clear message to Hamas sponsors with extensive Western ties, like Qatar and Turkey, that they can no longer enjoy warm relations with the West while supporting an ISIS-like terrorist group

holding Israeli, American, and European citizens hostage.

Further development of economic and military ties with these countries should be reexamined, including exploring alternatives to the purchase of Qatari liquid natural gas. All financial and commercial entities in these countries involved in transferring funds to Hamas should be sanctioned.

Removing US bases from Qatar

The US should also begin examining the transfer of military installations and assets from Qatar to Saudi Arabia, which would strengthen a US ally against Iran, help block inroads made by China into Saudi Arabia, and advance regional peace.

Private sector companies, civil society actors and academic institutions should refuse to take part in conferences or events hosted by Qatar, and refuse Qatari sponsorships until Hamas releases all of its hostages and Qatar shuts down Hamas' HQ. Lawsuits should be filed in every relevant jurisdiction by the victims of Hamas terror targeting all countries that have provided Hamas financial or logistical support.

It is important to note that Hamas is not apathetic to the worldwide condemnation of its massacres, as seen by steps the group has taken regarding public relations damage control, including through media appearances and the release of two American-Israeli hostages. International pressure on Hamas, highlighting its ISIS-like barbarity, must be intensified.

German and French prosecutors have already opened investigations into Hamas for its crimes against citizens of their countries. Other countries whose nationals are being held should follow suit.

While many countries have designated Hamas as a terrorist organization, others have not. These include Switzerland, Norway, India, Turkey, and the Philippines. In 2018, a US resolution at the UN Security Council to label Hamas's actions as terrorism was supported only by the US, with European countries abstaining. In light of Hamas' large-scale, sadistic atrocities, there can no longer be any excuse for not designating Hamas as a terrorist entity. Parliamentary human rights committees can be used as a forum for highlighting Hamas's brutal human rights violations.

Where terrorist designations have been made, all available tools should be used to sanction any and all actors associated with Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

As noted, on October 18, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control "imposed sanctions on ten key Hamas members, operatives, and financial facilitators" in Gaza, Sudan, Turkey, Algeria, and Qatar. These actions targeted operatives managing Hamas's investment portfolio, facilitating the transfer of funds, and a Gaza-based virtual currency exchange. It should be noted that Hamas has made extensive use of cryptocurrencies and platforms, which should be sanctioned as well.

Following Hamas's massacre, Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Sweden announced that they would review their funding to the Palestinians. Western funds which serve to strengthen Hamas in Gaza, such as funding for UNRWA's Gaza operations, or which serve to enable terror incitement in the Palestinian education system and through the Palestinian Authority's "pay to slay" system, should be ended immediately.

The time for action is now. Hamas has committed the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. There is wide consensus in the West that Hamas is equivalent to, or worse than ISIS. Every government, parliament, commercial body, civil society organization, and individual must seize the opportunity to contribute to the defeat of Hamas and the release of the hostages.

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