

## **An Open Letter for the Readers of The Lancet**

I have read with interest and in an attempted state of emotional detachment the open letter for the people of Gaza published in the correspondence section of your Journal. (Published Online July 22, 2014 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(14\)61044-8](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61044-8))

I have no intentions of getting into a “fact contest” with the authors, and in fact, I totally agree and sympathize with the cry to stop war and suffering on all sides. This wish is built into my DNA as a physician, father to two daughters and grandfather to three grandsons.

I am not blind to the subjectivity of every “objective” information we (including the authors) are fed, and in turn voice out.

I also recognize the cynicism of politics and accept, with dismay, the reality that we are often simple pawns in the hands of global, corporate and religious interests far stronger than we can ever imagine.

For many years, I have taken upon myself to train neurosurgeons from the Palestinian authority and maintain strong working collaborations with them after their return to their hometowns. Until recently, almost 10% of our patients at the department of neurosurgery at Tel Aviv Hospital were patients from Gaza and the West Bank who came to us seeking treatment for complex brain disorders, including brain tumors, vascular malformations, trauma and congenital birth defects. This has come to a screeching halt in the past 3 years since Hamas (not Israel) has refused travel permits for their citizens to our hospital. Amazingly, our attempts to communicate directly with Hamas authorities to grant such permits (after ensuring the approval from the Israeli authorities) fell on deaf ears. Nevertheless, some high ranking Hamas leaders and their family members still find their way to our hospital for complex medical care even today.

Rhetoric of extremists is often dismissed by the world as words of delusion and insanity. I was also inclined to view the proclamations of the Hamas when it was founded several decades ago as pure meaningless rhetoric. Unfortunately, the events in recent years when suicide bombers exploded buses in the middle of Israeli cities, killing hundreds of civilians, rockets fired indiscriminately into civilian populations on a daily basis, and the scale up of such events in recent months preceding the current conflict made me wonder whether I was naïve in my beliefs. Slaughter of Muslims “infidels” by their fanatic extremists brothers that takes place today world-wide helped little to dissuade my fears.

The outcry by the authors of the letter for immediate international intervention in the current conflict is an understandable human response.

Unfortunately, when one makes the effort of studying a complex situation (as would be expected from the educated physicians and scientist who wrote the letter), the

attitude of Hamas towards such intervention is clearly stated in their Charter (also called the ***The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement***):

*"Initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences, are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement."*  
(Article Thirteen: Peaceful Solutions, [Peace] Initiatives and International Conferences).

This may explain the refusal, with which the authors of the letter sympathize, for truce, that has been offered through Egyptian mediators only a few days ago and unilaterally turned down by Hamas.

In addition, the Charter clearly states that the destruction of the state of Israel is one of their main goals. Again, quoting from the Charter and from their spiritual leader and founder of the Muslim Brotherhood Hassan al-Banna:

*"Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it."*

Actually, Hamas' charter goes beyond destroying Israel. It longs for Jewish genocide:

*"The Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him salvation, has said: 'The Day of Judgement (the typo is in the original document) will not come about until Moslems fight the Jews (killing the Jews), when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say O Moslems, O Abdulla, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.'"*

In view of the above, I would encourage (and even plead) the esteemed writers of the letter and the other scientists and physicians who have endorsed it to offer a solution to the current crisis. Apparently, this impasse calls for a miraculous and ingenious thinking, and I, as well as many on both sides of the conflict, would be grateful to hear it and plead with our leaders to adopt such course.

I am a secular person with a Jewish identity, as most Israelis are, and will not let religious fanaticism of any kind dictate our life style and choices. Turning the other cheek, as a good Christian would do didn't help us much in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and for that matter, throughout history. Accepting the Hamas Charter for annihilation of the Jews and the state of Israel is strangely not a very appealing option.

I am looking forward for a constructive and fair discussion

Sincerely

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**Attachment: Hamas Covenant 1988**

**The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement**

[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/hamas.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp)