

Point of View

COPYRIGHT © 2005 The Re'ut Institute

Is recognition of Israel's existence good enough?

British Foreign Minister Jack Straw stated that Britain was interested in "normal relations" with Hamas and pointed out that "recognition of Israel did not mean a formal declaration by Hamas, but a practical acceptance of the reality." (**Ha'aretz**, 4/20/06).

The Re'ut Institute poses the question: Will Israel be satisfied with Hamas' recognition of the "existence of Israel"?

What is the Issue?

- So far, the international community has demanded that Hamas recognize Israel, reaffirm existing agreements and end violence, as a pre-condition for continuing transfer of funds to the Hamas-led government.
- The lack of funding to the PA places Hamas in a truly perilous position, and the organization is looking for a way to ease the international pressure.
- Statements by Hamas leaders suggest that one of the ways in which the organization is attempting to cope with the international pressure is by **recognizing the existing reality of Israel** – as differentiated from **the right of Israel to exist**:
 - Moussa Abu Marzouq: "Relations with the Jewish state are inevitable as the existence of Israel is a fact", **Ha'aretz**, 1/26; "There's no doubt that there is a realistic recognition on our part of Israel", **Ynet**, 2/20;
 - Dr. Adnan Asfour: "Hamas recognizes Israel's existence as a fact, but it opposes Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land", **Ma'ariv** 1/31/06.

Why is this Important? Why Now?

- It appears that the members of the international coalition wish to prevent a humanitarian crisis and are therefore looking for a way to soften the demands placed on Hamas (See statements by Straw, Russia, China, France and India).
- Hence, the international community may be satisfied with Hamas recognizing the reality of Israel's existence.

Policy Options

The government of Israel needs to decide whether to:

- Stick to its demand that Hamas recognize **its right to exist**. From the perspective of Hamas, the acceptance of this demand would be an ideological surrender. From Israel's perspective:
 - *On the one hand*, this policy may become futile if the international coalition collapses;
 - *On the other hand*, it is possible that Israel would find it easier to maintain its strict position despite the break-up of the international coalition, while third parties would work with the PA to prevent a humanitarian crisis.

Brought to you by:



Point of View

COPYRIGHT © 2005 The Re'ut Institute

- Be satisfied with Hamas' recognition of Israel's actual **existence**. This action would enable Israel to keep its policies consistent with the international community and establish a threshold for future demands, such as ending violence and dismantling the terror infrastructures.

For additional sources see the Re'ut Institute website: www.reut-institute.org and the Re'ut Institute website on the subject of the **Israel's challenge in dealing with Hamas**: <http://www.reut2006.info/hamas/eng/>

End.

Brought to you by:

