



News Release
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Liberty and Unity: Islamic Jihad Leader Analyzes the Future of the Palestinian Nation

Interview in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*

Washington DC, 10 June 2015 – “**In the process of struggle for national liberation, unity is not an option: it is a duty, an existential necessity, and a prerequisite for every Palestinian.**” In Part II of a rare interview with the elusive leader of Islamic Jihad, Dr. Ramadan Shallah examines the history of the Palestinian national movement, discusses the role of the resistance struggle, and lays out the principles he believes are necessary for national unity and Palestinian Statehood.

This interview offers in-depth analysis and rare insight into the strategy and goals of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. “The reason for our conflict with the Jews has nothing to do with their religion,” says Shallah. “We are not fighting them because of our religious differences. Our conflict is over the land of Palestine, because we have been dispossessed of our land and expelled from our homes by force and through terrorism.”

Speaking with the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Shallah enumerates the four founding principles he believes are essential to national unity. The first principle is an **overall objective**. He condemns past actions by Palestinian leadership that negotiated away land as well as unified objectives. Through negotiations, “the Palestinian side was divested both of its goal [liberation] and the means to achieve it [armed struggle], and, furthermore, was required to guarantee the security of its enemy while being engaged in a struggle for national liberation!” The second principle he believes is essential, is **a means to achieve the goal of Palestinian statehood**. Islamic Jihad calls for resistance, rather than negotiations as the means, and points to the failures of the Oslo Accords and the successes of the Gazan resistance to highlight this perspective.

The third principle he highlights is the need for **Palestinian institutions** that can support a nation, acknowledging the failures of the PLO. “The PLO has been at the forefront of the backsliding that has turned the conflict from one with Israel/the occupier into an intra-Palestinian struggle for power.” Finally, the fourth principle that he believes is at the core of Palestinian unity, is the **Israeli peril**. “The brutality of the Zionists, their targeting of our land, our people, our sacred sites, as well as our history and geography should have us focusing on the true conflict, the one with Israel, and downplaying our own differences.”

This in-depth interview provides not only valuable insight into the future of this important organization, the resistance struggle and the Palestinian national movement, Dr. Shallah also analyzes important moments in Palestinian history and provides perspective as well as predictions about their long-term consequences. “Palestinian nationalism will neither survive nor thrive if it is severed from its broader Arab and Islamic contexts and if it forsakes resistance to the Zionist project while Palestine remains occupied.”

[This interview](#) appears in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* Issue 175 and in Arabic in the *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyah*. To request a copy of the journal please contact Paige Brownlow at 202-342-3990 ext. 13 or paigeb@palestine-studies.org

About Dr. Ramadan Abdullah Shallah

Dr. Ramadan Abdullah Shallah, born in the Gaza City neighborhood of Shuja'iyyah in 1958, obtained his doctorate in economics from the University of Durham in the United Kingdom and was subsequently adjunct professor at the University of South Florida in the United States. In 1995, he assumed the leadership of Islamic Jihad after the movement's charismatic founder, Fathi Shikaki, was assassinated in an Israeli operation in Malta. Shallah himself remains based in Damascus, reflecting the closer relations Islamic Jihad has traditionally nurtured with Iran and Syria, when compared to Hamas.

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