

Arabic Propaganda Analysis Team

WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS: HAMAS PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN POST OCTOBER 7

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides an in-depth examination of the sophisticated propaganda campaign orchestrated by Hamas and its military wing, the Al Qassam Brigades in the aftermath of the events of October 7 – the first such systematic and comprehensive analysis of Hamas propaganda in this period. It covers over 1300 Hamas videos and other materials – all in Arabic – posted on the group’s various Telegram channels from October 7 to December 3, 2023. It offers an unparalleled window for American, European, and other non-Arabic speaking audiences into how Hamas thinks it can win hearts and minds.

The propaganda efforts of Hamas and the Al Qassam Brigades are multifaceted and strategically designed to achieve four key objectives: the legitimization of the October 7 attacks, the demonstration of their military capabilities, the cultivation of regional and international support, and the portrayal of the group in a sympathetic light while simultaneously casting Israeli actions in a negative context.

The report is a detailed analysis of these strategic components, offering insights into the methods employed by Hamas to effectively utilize propaganda. It explores the intricate ways in which Hamas seeks to influence and shape both regional dynamics and international perspectives. Through a careful dissection of their propaganda tactics, the report aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how Hamas leverages media and communication tools to further its objectives, navigate its political landscape, and impact public opinion on a global scale.

TOPLINE FINDINGS

1. Hamas Propaganda Production: Hamas has maintained a prolific output of video and other propaganda materials, even amidst the intense constant Israeli airstrikes and ground invasions. From October 7 to December 3, the official Al Qassam Brigades Telegram channel has been notably active, producing approximately 26 videos and visual pieces on a weekly basis. The content predominantly showcases the group's military capabilities, reflecting a strategic emphasis on demonstrating strength and

resilience. Concurrently, an unofficial channel associated carrying the same logo and name of the official channel has been disseminating an average of about 139 propaganda materials weekly. The focus of these materials is markedly different, centering primarily on the civilian casualties and the suffering experienced by Palestinians. This dichotomy in content between the official and unofficial channels highlights a multifaceted approach to propaganda, wherein one avenue emphasizes military prowess and the other underscores the humanitarian impact of the conflict. This dual strategy appears to be aimed at appealing to different audiences and shaping perceptions on multiple fronts.

2. Primary Content in Hamas Propaganda: Official Hamas content predominantly focuses on showcasing the combat successes of the Al Qassam Brigades. This emphasis diverges from the commonly held assumption that such propaganda would primarily center on religious justifications. In the period from October 7 to December 3, the spokesperson for Al Qassam makes regular appearances, averaging twice a week, which constitutes approximately 9% of the total propaganda materials. These appearances are primarily dedicated to providing updates on combat situations, highlighting the successes of Al Qassam fighters on the battlefield, and detailing the losses incurred on the Israeli forces and their weaponry. Furthermore, about 44% of the videos released during this period are dedicated to showcasing ongoing military operations against Israeli forces, underscoring a strategic focus on military prowess rather than religious rhetoric. Additionally, approximately 19% of the content focuses on demonstrating the successful development of weapons by Al Qassam, such as rockets, suicide drones, and shells. These segments specifically highlight the effectiveness of these armaments against Israeli forces. This aspect of the propaganda underscores Al Qassam's emphasis on technological advancement and military capability as key components of their strategic narrative.

3. Propaganda Reach and Dissemination: Despite disruptions, Hamas has adeptly navigated these challenges and successfully disseminated its materials and messaging through online channels that have been amplified by mainstream media. For obvious reasons, the dissemination and reach of Hamas propaganda, particularly in the context of its online presence, have faced significant challenges due to various restrictions. Hamas and its military wing have encountered substantial limitations in accessing digital platforms. Their official websites have been difficult to access, and their social media accounts across various platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and others, have been [suspended](#). Despite these constraints, Hamas has been able, virtually continuously, to disseminate its materials and messaging through alternative channels. One such effective medium has been Telegram, a platform that has provided a more resilient and less regulated space for their communications. Moreover, the reach of Hamas's propaganda extends beyond these direct channels. It has found a significant audience in mainstream media, encompassing both Western and Arabic media outlets. This coverage in mainstream media has played a crucial role in amplifying Hamas's messages, providing them with a broader platform that compensates for the restrictions encountered on social media and other online platforms.

HAMAS AND AL QASSAM BRIGADES PROPAGANDA ON TELEGRAM

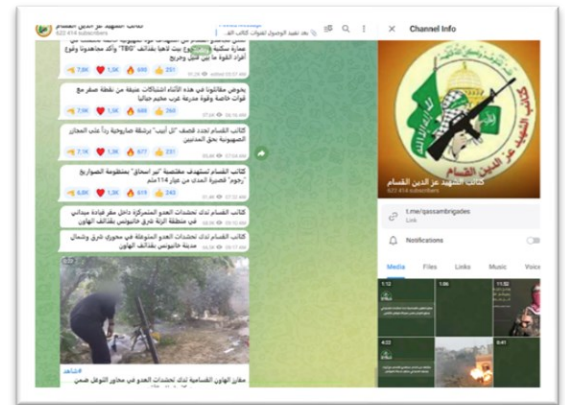
Hamas propaganda most consistently reaches the world mainly through Telegram, which has fewer restrictions than other social media platforms and has ease of re-launching disrupted channels. The materials compiled for this analysis consist of publicly available information. The Arabic Propaganda Analysis Team (APAT) at the Chicago Project on Security and Threats (CPOST) utilizes a dedicated team of Arabic linguists who specialize in gathering and analyzing these materials.

The “Brigades of Martyr Ezz El-Din Al Qassam” – the armed wing of Hamas -- Telegram channel disseminates two primary types of propaganda content. The first category includes materials originating from the Al Qassam Brigades, which adhere to the specific template mentioned above (Table 1). The second category (Table 2), not produced by Al Qassam but redistributed by the channel, predominantly features content that emphasizes humanitarian casualties and Israeli bombing operations. This content is sourced from various external entities, including news outlets and social media accounts of journalists or individuals in Gaza. Photos and videos addressing the same issue or incident are often omitted, treating them as a single count.

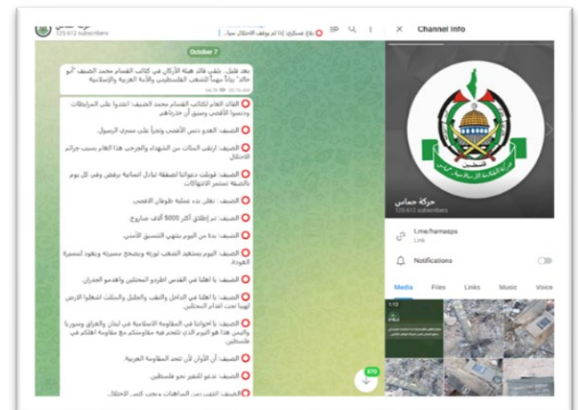
The materials being analyzed are identified as originating from the Al Qassam Brigades. These materials are distributed via an [unofficial](#) Telegram channel titled "Brigades of Martyr Ezz El-Din Al Qassam." As of December 11, 2023, this channel has garnered approximately 178,687 subscribers. The channel's creation can be traced back to October 7, 2023, which followed the blocking of Al Qassam's main official channel. The first post on this new channel appeared on October 11, 2023. The access to official channels has been restricted and Telegram has not shown the content since the beginning of the war between Hamas and Israel. However, APAT team managed to have access to the official [Telegram channel of Al Qassam Brigades](#) around December 11. The channel has about 622,414 subscribers.

Additional materials were sourced from another Telegram channel named "The 'official' Hamas Movement," which, as of December 1, 2023, has approximately 77,275 subscribers. The channel disseminates the group's official statements, remarks by its leaders to the media, and information about the military activities of the Al Qassam Brigades. APAT team has also managed to have access to the official [Telegram channel of Hamas](#) around December 11. The channel has about 125,612 subscribers.

As we can see, these Telegram channels have consistently released daily numerous propaganda material. This report covers the period from October 7, 2023, through December 3, 2023.



A screenshot from Hamas Official Telegram Channel.



A screenshot from Al Qassam Brigades Official Telegram Channel.

Table 1: Official Hamas; Al Qassam Brigades Propaganda (Oct 7-Dec 3)*

Release Date	Hamas Military Operation	Hamas Military Preparations	Hamas Spokesperson Reports	Posters of Hamas Fighters	Hostages Release	Total Entries
Oct 7-14	63%	20%	13%	4%	N/A	46
Oct 15-21	32%	28%	8%	32%	N/A	25
Oct 22-28	32%	32%	5%	32%	N/A	22
Oct 29-Nov 4	38%	18%	10%	35%	N/A	40
Nov 5-11	56%	11%	7%	26%	N/A	27
Nov 12-18	56%	25%	13%	6%	0%	16
Nov 19-26	32%	8%	8%	0%	52%	25
Nov 27-Dec 3	20%	10%	0%	0%	70%	10
Oct 7-Dec 3	44%	19%	9%	18%	9%	211

*Al Qassam Brigades is the military wing of Hamas.

Table 2: Unofficial Al Qassam Brigades Telegram channel

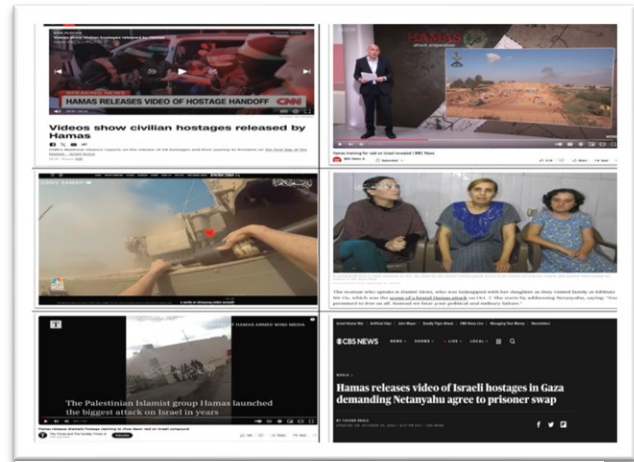
Release Date	Civilian Casualties Gaza	Photos, Civilian Casualties Gaza	Israeli Bombing Operation	Total Entries
Oct 7-14	67%	27%	7%	15
Oct 15-21	77%	13%	10%	154
Oct 22-28	79%	9%	12%	140
Oct 29-Nov 4	77%	7%	16%	150
Nov 5-11	88%	4%	8%	170
Nov 12-18	84%	10%	6%	182
Nov 19-26	90%	3%	7%	146
Nov 27-Dec 3	75%	9%	16%	159
Oct 7- Dec 3	81%	8%	10%	1116

*Unofficial Al Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, created on October 10 with same name and logo as Official Al Qassam Brigades channel.

DISSEMINATION BEYOND TELEGRAM

Hamas propaganda on Telegram, including daily updates and narration, is almost exclusively formal Arabic rather than local dialects. This choice of language underscores a strategic approach to communication, aimed at ensuring comprehensibility and accessibility across a wide Arabic-speaking audience, transcending regional linguistic variations. Formal Arabic, known for its universality in the Arab world, lends a sense of formality, legitimacy, and broader appeal to the messages conveyed. This choice ensures that their messages are accessible and understandable to a wide Arabic-speaking audience, not just those within their immediate geographical sphere.

Despite the language barrier, Hamas's propaganda does find its way to Western and international audiences, primarily through coverage in mainstream media. Since the onset of the conflict, prominent Arabic-speaking media networks such as Al Jazeera and Al Araby TV have been active in covering developments. More notably, prominent Western networks including CNN, CBS, NBC, and BBC have also been engaged in reporting on these events. These international media entities have been actively covering the developments, and in certain cases, this coverage extends to the broadcasting or streaming of propaganda materials produced by the Al Qassam Brigades.



A Screenshot showing media outlets like CNN, NBC, BBC, and CBS streaming Hamas Propaganda.

BACKGROUND

On October 7, 2023, a substantial and coordinated offensive was launched by Hamas, alongside other Palestinian militant factions, from the Gaza Strip against Israel. This attack, which Hamas designated '*Operation Al-Aqsa Flood*,' resulted in the loss of over 1,200 lives, predominantly Israeli civilians, and foreign nationals, and led to the capture of approximately 240 hostages. The offensive commenced with an intensive rocket barrage from Gaza, which was strategically followed by ground incursions. These incursions were executed by militants employing a variety of infiltration methods, including vehicles, tunnels, and powered paragliders. Notably, the militants employed deceptive tactics, disguising themselves as Israeli soldiers, to target adjacent towns, kibbutzim, and military bases.

In response, Israel initiated a comprehensive air and ground military campaign. The primary objectives of this campaign were to neutralize Hamas's operational capabilities in Gaza and to secure the release of the hostages. On November 22, the Israeli Cabinet sanctioned a temporary ceasefire agreement. This agreement entailed a four-day cessation of hostilities and included the release of a minimum of 50 hostages, primarily women and children. In a reciprocal gesture, Israel consented to the release of 150

Palestinian prisoners. This truce, a critical step towards reducing immediate tensions, has since been renewed, leading to further exchanges of detained individuals on both sides.

As of November 30, 2023, the Gaza Health Ministry has [reported](#) that in excess of 15,000 Palestinians have perished in Israeli assaults since October 7. This figure encompasses over 6,150 children. It is important to note that the actual death toll may be higher, considering that approximately 7,000 individuals remain unaccounted for or are presumed to be buried beneath debris.

HAMAS PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN GOALS

Propaganda is an indispensable instrument for militant groups, serving multiple strategic purposes that extend beyond mere shaping of public perception.

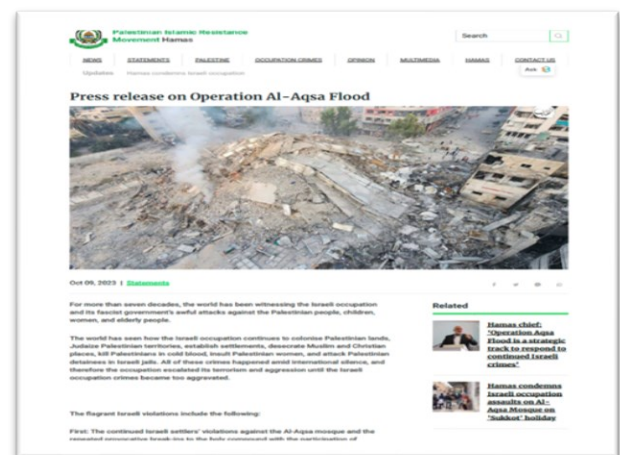
Since they are typically far weaker than their state rivals and lack many of the material and organizational advantages of states, militant groups normally derive their power mainly from people – not just their numbers of active fighters, but also their support among a variety of local, regional, and international audiences.

For militant groups, propaganda is thus a tool of multifaceted utility, employed not only to construct a favorable narrative and recruit and mobilize supporters but also to justify actions, demoralize adversaries, maintain unity among members and allies, and instill fear and uncertainty. The advent of digital media has significantly amplified the reach and impact of such propaganda, enabling these groups to disseminate their messages more widely and effectively. Hamas, and its armed wing, Al Qassam Brigades, exemplify the sophisticated use of propaganda in achieving their strategic objectives. Their approach can be delineated into four primary objectives:

1. Legitimizing The October 7 attacks

Since the October 7 attacks, a key element of Hamas' propaganda strategy has been to legitimize the attacks. This has been achieved by framing the attacks as a direct response to the ongoing Israeli occupation and its alleged violations against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank, including frequent incursions into Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli security forces.

Above is a screenshot from Hamas's website taken on October 26, 2023. The screenshot highlights a press release from Hamas regarding "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood." It outlines their justification for attacks against Israel, primarily focusing on what they describe as long-standing grievances and actions by the Israeli government and settlers. The main reasons cited by Hamas for justifying the attacks include:

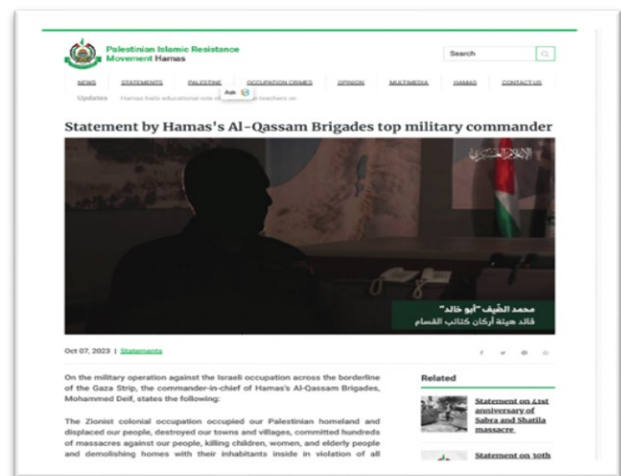


A screenshot taken from the Hamas website featuring a statement on Operation Al-Aqsa Flood.

- i) **Violations at Al-Aqsa Mosque:** Hamas accuses Israeli settlers and government officials of repeated provocative actions at the Al-Aqsa mosque, including break-ins and restrictions on Palestinian worshippers. They allege that these actions are part of a broader plan to change the status quo in Jerusalem.
- ii) **Continued Settlement Expansion:** The statement criticizes Israel for its ongoing settlement activities in the West Bank, which Hamas views as a systematic annexation of Palestinian lands. They argue that these actions defy international law and United Nations resolutions.
- iii) **Treatment of Palestinian Detainees:** Hamas alleges that Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails are subjected to attacks, torture, and suppression, particularly following incitement by Israeli officials.
- iv) **Broader Israeli Policies:** The statement references what Hamas describes as a brutal war against Palestinians in the West Bank, including invasions, arrests, apartheid policies, ethnic cleansing, and the long-standing siege on the Gaza Strip.

Hamas presents these issues as evidence of an ongoing war against the Palestinian people by the Israeli government. They claim that "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood" is a response to these actions and assert the right of Palestinians to defend themselves under international law. The statement concludes with a call for international support for the Palestinian struggle for freedom and self-determination, emphasizing the goal of ending Israeli occupation and establishing an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Along with Hamas political statement, Mohammed Deif, the commander-in-chief of Hamas's Al-Qassam Brigades, issued another statement and a video interview that posted on Al Qassam's website, echoing Hamas's statement, explaining why the group decided to carry out the October 7 attacks. He stressed narrative that is deeply rooted in historical grievances and perceived injustices. Deif articulates a chronicle of suffering and victimization under Israeli occupation, highlighting the demolition of Palestinian homes, the killing of civilians, and the violation of international laws and human rights conventions. This culmination of grievances is strategically used to justify the announcement of a military operation, framed as a necessary response to ongoing aggression and the failure of international mechanisms to address Palestinian grievances.



A screenshot from the Hamas website shows Mohamed Deif, the commander-in-chief of the Al-Qassam Brigades.

This rhetoric reflects a broader strategy of armed nationalist militant group, positioned as a defensive response to perceived continuous Israeli transgressions. This narrative and grievances have been consistently echoed in the appearances made by Al Qassam spokesperson, Abu Ubaidah who has expressed Hamas' willingness to negotiate the release of Israeli hostages in exchange for all Palestinian detainees, indicating openness to partial negotiations to determine the hostages' fate.

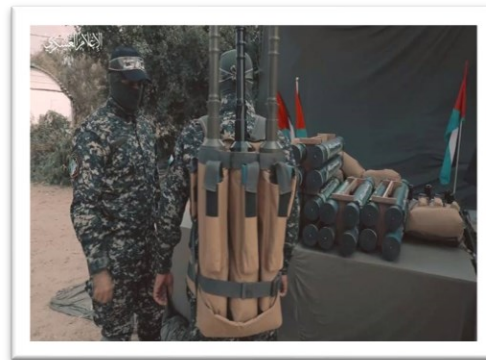
2. Showcasing Military Capabilities and Success on The Battlefield

In the three months preceding the October 7th attacks, Al Qassam disseminated a series of videos depicting their past military operations. These videos predominantly showcased a strategic narrative centered on military successes, such as assaults on Israeli forces and footage of military training exercises. Notably, on September 12, 2023, Al Qassam released a video highlighting key operations conducted between 2001 and 2005, which they claim compelled the Israeli forces to withdraw from Gaza. This collection also includes a video, released on the same date, featuring the first documented jihadist attack by Al Qassam in 1993, wherein three of its fighters ambushed a military vehicle, resulting in the deaths of three Israeli soldiers. Additionally, other videos in this series portray a heroic narrative, chronicling the stories of former Al Qassam fighters prior to executing attacks against Israeli forces. This raises a pertinent question: What motivated Al Qassam to release videos of historical military operations in the lead-up to the recent attacks?



A screenshot showing the fire support plan in preparation for the October 7 attacks.

A cornerstone of Hamas' propaganda strategy since October 7 has been showcasing its military strength and preparedness for the anticipated extensive Israeli retaliation. Three days after the attacks, al Qassam Telegram channel posted an elaborate video showing collaborative military exercises in a plain field in Gaza strip, employing strategies akin to those utilized on October 7 attack. These drills, executed in proximity to the Israeli border, approximately 1 kilometer/0.6 miles. During these training sessions, the groups rehearsed various tactics, including the capture of hostages, infiltration of compounds, and penetration of Israeli defense lines. A about a month later, a video was released showing in great details what happened on October 7. The video included well-designed infographics showing the military preparation and the number of fighters in the attack.



Two fighters from Al Qassam are carrying the newly developed Al-Yassin anti-tank shell.

Analysis of approximately 211 propaganda materials disseminated since October 7 reveals that 172 of these, accounting for 81%, features the ongoing military operations against Israel, military propaganda videos, and posters showcasing the readiness of Al Qassam fighters. About 44% of the videos are dedicated to depicting Al Qassam Brigades fighters clashing against Israeli forces, destroying Israeli armored vehicles and tanks, and launching rockets at Israeli settlements, and urban centers, including Tel Aviv. A significant portion of the propaganda, about 19%, is devoted to highlighting the advanced military capabilities that Al Qassam has developed over time. For instance, Al-Qassam released footage demonstrating the effectiveness of the Al-Yassin anti-tank shell (a 105mm anti-tank shell) against Israeli tanks. It also showcases suicides drones and torpedo which were developed by the group's engineers corps.



A poster depicts a group of Al Qassam fighters loading S-40 rockets. The image is accompanied by a citation from Quran 8:17, "Nor was it you 'O Prophet' who threw 'a handful of sand at the disbelievers', but it was Allah Who did so," along with the phrase.



A screenshot shows an Al Qassam fighter placing an explosive for guerrilla action on an Israeli tank.

Additionally, Al Qassam has showcased the specifications of a newly developed weapon, referred to as the "guerrilla action explosive," designed for close-range attacks on Israeli tanks. Furthermore, Al Qassam has publicized its naval commandos' tactical operation in the Zikim area, a location that includes a kibbutz and the Bahad 4 military base, underscoring their capability to execute complex military maneuvers.

The group's spokesperson has also been a prominent figure in their propaganda, representing approximately 9% of the materials. These appearances are primarily focused on providing updates on battlefield developments and enumerating the casualties and damages inflicted on Israeli forces. Notably, the spokesperson revealed the use of a torpedo, named Al Assef, aimed at Israeli naval assets, accompanied by a brief video showcasing the torpedo.



A photo depicts Al Qassam frogmen underwater, en route to execute an attack in the Zikim area.

This analysis indicates that Hamas' propaganda efforts are strategically designed to project an image of military competence and success on the battlefield, emphasizing their capability to challenge Israeli forces through a variety of military tactics and advanced weaponry.

3. Garnering Regional and Global Solidarity and Support

Hamas has strategically employed propaganda to cultivate regional and global support, aiming to influence international perspectives, namely the global public opinion by portray Hamas as a defender of Palestinian rights, while actively soliciting global intervention and backing. It is a calculated effort to shape global opinion, seeking to gain international solidarity and support for their cause.

The leadership of Hamas and Abu Ubaidah have consistently issued statements and remarks directed at international audiences. These communications often emphasize solidarity with the Palestinian cause, advocating for global support. Specifically, Hamas has called for actions such as a ceasefire and the opening of the Rafah Crossing, positioning these as critical steps in supporting the people of Gaza. Moreover, Hamas has reached out to Arab and Islamic nations, as well as the United Nations, urging them to establish a permanent humanitarian corridor for aid delivery to Gaza. Khaled Mesha'l, a notable Hamas figure, has made appeals to encourage global protests to condemn what he terms as aggression against Gaza. Abu Ubaidah has called for diplomatic efforts to facilitate aid to Gaza.



A statement by Hamas calling on people around the world to show support for Gaza.

In a significant video update, Abu Ubaidah initially stated that Hamas would not negotiate the fate of Israeli hostages amid ongoing bombings and attacks by Israel, he later mentioned negotiations involving several countries with nationals held hostage in Gaza. He announced the impending release of some foreign nationals, framing this as a humanitarian gesture and a response to what Hamas considers "false and baseless" accusations by the Biden administration. The release of two American hostages, facilitated through Qatari mediation, was particularly highlighted as a humanitarian act by Hamas.

In the statement published by Hamas on October 26, and several other statements released since the inception of the war, the group urges the Palestinian people, Arab and Islamic nations, and the free people of the world to intensify mass protests. These protests are aimed at halting the genocidal war on Gaza and advocating for the opening of the Rafah Crossing. Located on the Gaza-Egypt border, the Rafah Crossing is crucial for the Palestinians in Gaza. It serves as the primary passage for the movement of people and essential goods into and out of the territory. The functioning of this crossing is vital for accessing medical treatment, educational opportunities, and economic activities, thereby significantly influencing the daily lives and humanitarian conditions of the Gazan population.

4. Humanizing The Group and Highlighting the Brutality of Israel

In an effort to reshape its public image and counter its portrayal as a terrorist organization by Western media and governments, Hamas has been strategically focusing on humanizing its actions while simultaneously highlighting the perceived brutality of Israel. This dual approach serves to position Hamas as a legitimate resistance movement rather than a group engaged in indiscriminate violence. This strategic communication by Hamas is aimed at not only humanizing the group but also at portraying Israel in a negative light, thereby seeking to gain sympathy and support from the international community.

On one front, Hamas has been vociferous in attributing the mass civilian casualties and forced evacuations to Israeli actions. Official statements and *the* spokesperson have accused Israel of committing massacres and genocide, emphasizing the plight of Palestinian prisoners under Israeli custody. A significant aspect of Hamas' propaganda involves highlighting what they describe as indiscriminate Israeli violence against civilians and purported violations of international humanitarian law. For instance, Hamas reported a substantial number of human casualties, including 5,791 deaths (with 2,360 children and 1,292 women), following 18 days of Israeli attacks. These figures are presented to garner sympathy and support from international communities. These allegations are aimed at drawing international attention to what Hamas frames as systemic violations by Israeli authorities.

In examining the propaganda materials disseminated by the Brigades of Martyr Ezz El-Din Al Qassam Telegram channel under investigation, which are unrelated to their ongoing military operations, there is a significant focus on highlighting Palestinian civilian casualties resulting from the intensive Israeli bombardment. The group has posted videos depicting Israeli military planes bombing residential homes, hospitals, mosques, and churches in Gaza. Additionally, these materials feature instances of Israeli forces killing, arresting, and harassing unarmed civilians. As indicated in Table (2), 10% of the videos showcase Israeli bombing operations and other forms of assault on Palestinians. The remainder of these materials is comprised of videos (81%) and photos (8%), portraying graphic human casualties, deceased individuals,

distressed and crying children, civil defense members attempting to rescue civilians or retrieve bodies from the rubble, and even cats that have survived the bombings. A noteworthy aspect of these materials is their accompaniment by descriptions in both Arabic and English, signifying an attempt to reach a broader audience beyond Arabic-speaking individuals. Following the same pattern, the Telegram channel dedicated to Hamas news has posted in both Arabic and English, especially for the official statement declared by the group.

One of the very few materials posted on the channel targeting the western governments for their unconditional support to Israel is a video titled “Fight all The Polytheists.” This video marks a significant shift as was the first to directly target leaders from the United States, Britain, France, and other Western nations for their support of Israel's military actions in Gaza. The video juxtaposes statements of Western leaders expressing solidarity with Israel ("we stand with Israel") against scenes of Israeli bombings in Gaza. Notably, the President of the United States is the first Western leader featured in the video. The narrative of the video adopts a tone of social martyrdom, portraying Palestinians as victims under attack and being indiscriminately bombed, while Western support is shown to be firmly behind Israel, the perceived aggressor. This approach in the video aims to highlight the disparity between the plight of the Palestinians and the international political stance, particularly of Western nations.

Concurrently, Hamas has been deploying propaganda to demonstrate its humane treatment of hostages, even amidst intense Israeli bombardment. This narrative was particularly evident when, on October 30, Al Qassam, the military wing of Hamas, released a video featuring three Israeli hostages criticizing the Israeli government and Prime Minister Netanyahu for their prolonged captivity. The video was presented as evidence of Hamas's benevolent treatment of captives, contrasting with the alleged brutality of Israeli actions. Furthermore, Hamas claimed its readiness to release two Israeli hostages on humanitarian grounds, a claim that the Israeli government dismissed as mere propaganda.

Following a temporary truce, Hamas disseminated several videos purportedly showing the transfer of Israeli hostages to the Red Cross. These videos were crafted to showcase the kind treatment of hostages



A screenshot depicts three Israeli hostages sending a message to Netanyahu.



A message from one of the hostages expressing gratitude towards the Al Qassam fighters.

by Al Qassam fighters, including scenes of fighters providing water to the hostages and engaging in friendly interactions. One particularly notable *example* is a letter from a released detainee, named Daniel, expressing gratitude towards the Al-Qassam Brigades for their humane treatment during her detention.

Following the implementation of the truce, the period between videos showcasing the release of hostages has emerged as a predominant category in propaganda, surpassing those featuring Hamas's military operations and preparations. As illustrated in Table (1), the week of November 19-26 saw 52% of videos focusing on the release of hostages, compared to 8% that were dedicated to depicting Hamas's military preparations and 32% dedicated to Hamas ongoing military operation during the same period. This represents a decrease from the week before. In the week of November 12-18, the military preparation videos represented 25% while the ongoing military operation videos represented 56%. This decline trend in both categories continues in the following week, November 27- December 3, as the hostage release continue. It reached 70% in this week which highlight Hamas desire to show the human treatment the hostages received while in captivity and to counter how western media portrayed the group as a terrorist bloodthirst organization.

METHODS

The primary platform utilized for collecting the materials analyzed in this report has been Telegram. This decision was made due to the inaccessibility of Hamas's website and its other social media accounts, coupled with the Al Qassam website's infrequent updates and lack of organization. APAT chose Telegram as the primary source for data collection based on its proven effectiveness in studying propaganda from various militant groups. Telegram is known for its resistance to censorship and takedown efforts by governments, a feature that has made it a preferred platform for groups such as Hamas. Furthermore, Telegram supports large group chats and channels, accommodating a high number of members. This functionality renders it an efficient tool for broadcasting messages to a broad audience swiftly and effectively, a key requirement for the dissemination of propaganda. Additionally, the global availability of Telegram allows for the reach of international audiences, an aspect particularly appealing to groups intent on extending their message and influence beyond their immediate geographic confines. This global reach is instrumental for entities aiming to disseminate their narratives on a wider scale.

In the context of preparing this report on Hamas propaganda, particularly given the restrictive efforts aimed at curbing its dissemination, accessing, and verifying the necessary materials for this report posed significant challenges for APAT. Nevertheless, through reliance on unofficial Telegram channels associated with both Hamas and the Al Qassam Brigades, APAT has successfully authenticated the propaganda materials as originating from these sources. The verification process utilized by APAT identified a unique template characteristic of the materials produced and disseminated by Hamas and Al Qassam Brigades. Key branding elements include the Al Qassam Brigades' logo, along with specific phrases such as "Battle of Al-Aqsa Flood" and "Military Media," all inscribed in Arabic. These elements are consistently presented against a distinctive green screen template, a hallmark of the Al Qassam Brigades' propaganda materials. Furthermore, each video material typically begins with an information card that displays the title and date of the material. In the case of visual posters, the presence of the

“Military Media” [الإعلام العسكري] logo is a recurring feature, serving as a definitive identifier of the propaganda disseminated by the Al Qassam Brigades. This systematic approach to identification and verification underscores the meticulous nature of APAT's research methodology, ensuring the authenticity of the materials analyzed in the context of this study.

APAT successfully gained access to the official Telegram channels of both Hamas and the Al Qassam Brigades. This access enabled APAT to conduct a thorough cross-check of the propaganda materials disseminated by these groups. The focus of this verification process was primarily on materials pertaining to ongoing military operations, military propaganda, spokesperson reports, and official statements issued by Hamas. Through this meticulous cross-verification, APAT was able to authenticate these materials, thereby ensuring the reliability and accuracy of the information and analysis presented in this report. This step is crucial in providing a factual and unbiased analysis of the propaganda strategies employed by Hamas.

To gather materials disseminated between October 7 and October 10, Al Qassam's website was utilized. Although not frequently updated, the website contains videos released by the group covering the period between October 7-10.

During the week of November 19-26, we introduced a new category titled “Hostage Release” to our analysis. This category is designed to specifically track and analyze a new trend in videos focusing on the release of hostages. This development follows the implementation of a temporary truce that commenced on the morning of November 24 and has been extended subsequently. A key provision of this truce includes the exchange of prisoners between Hamas and Israel.

ABOUT APAT

In March 2020, CPOST launched the Arabic Propaganda Analysis Team (APAT), a new project to analyze militant propaganda by groups like ISIS, AQAP, and AQ targeting audiences in the Arabic-speaking world. The APAT builds on CPOST's decade of research by applying its experience and expertise in monitoring, collecting, and analyzing terrorist group video propaganda to systematically studying terrorist group efforts to recruit in the Gulf States, Middle East, and North Africa. Most video propaganda by Islamist terrorist groups — 90% according to CPOST data — is in Arabic and specifically seeks to mobilize Arabic-speaking populations — posing a significant threat to local and regional security. To address this threat, CPOST proposes two initiatives: 1) A systematic analysis of terrorist propaganda targeting the Arabic-speaking world to identify the messages and narratives groups use to recruit (from appeals to religious obligation and duty to the promise of excitement and adventure); and 2) The evaluation of new technologies and artificial intelligence to support the propaganda analysis process.

ABOUT CPOST

The Chicago Project on Security and Threats (CPOST) is a non-partisan research center at the University of Chicago dedicated to advancing scholarship on international politics, security, and trade that advances peace and prosperity. CPOST brings together leading scholars at the University of Chicago conducting rigorous, data-driven research on issues of national and international importance to provide critical knowledge to policymakers, scholars, and the public. CPOST's research lab model supports faculty research with dedicated teams of graduate and undergraduate research assistants, strengthening world-class education for future professionals.

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