

Inside Hamas - The Untold Story of Militants, Martyrs and Spies by Zaki Chehab
I B Tauris 2007

The recent Israel-Hamas conflict, played out so bloodily on the streets of Gaza, brought the Hamas organisation to the attention of many who previously were either in ignorance of it, or only knew its name. Since Operation Cast-Lead commenced much has been written in the press about Hamas, its ideology and intentions, its leaders and key activists.

Zaki Chehab's new and authoritative book on Hamas sets out to recount the history of the organisation and the lives and deaths of many of its key members. In the course of 9 chapters he details the origins of Hamas, its military and political wings, the key leaders and ideologues, many of whom have been assassinated by Israel after their whereabouts were betrayed by Palestinian informers, those who have performed suicide operations, or what Hamas terms 'martyrdom operations', the politics of its founder and key leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Hamas' relations with other nations and especially Iran, its connection with other terrorist groupings and the future for it and the Palestinians.

Inside Hamas is an important book because it seems clear that Hamas will be a major player as the modern history of the troubled Middle East unfolds during the 21st century, and further because its Palestinian-born author is extremely well-informed and has met with and interviewed all of the major figures in Hamas, within Gaza and elsewhere, giving the book its authoritative feel.

One minor point: Inside Hamas evinces a lack of attention to detail in its proof-reading prior to publication, and while this in no way diminishes the impact of the book it should be a source of frustration to the author, as it will be to the reader, that some obvious and significant errors have been allowed to remain in the text.

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