

PALESTINIAN ELECTIONS

Bush: Party that seeks end of Israel not partner



President says U.S. will not deal with Hamas until it renounces violence

By **TERENCE HUNT**
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

Stunned by Hamas' decisive election victory, President Bush said Thursday the United States will not deal with the militant Palestinian group as long as it seeks Israel's destruction.

"If your platform is the destruction of Israel it means you're not a

partner in peace," the president said. "And we're interested in peace." He urged Hamas to reverse course.

Hamas has taken responsibility for dozens of suicide attacks on Israel over in past five years but has largely observed a cease-fire since the election of Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas as Palestinian president last year. Bush left open the possibility of cutting off U.S.

aid to the Palestinians.

He called on Abbas, a U.S. ally, to remain in office despite Fatah's defeat by Hamas in parliamentary elections. Abbas, elected separately a year ago, said he was committed to negotiations with Israel and suggested talks would be conducted through the Palestine Liberation Organization, a possible way around a Hamas-led government.

"A political party that articu-

lates the destruction of Israel as part of its platform is a party with which we will not deal," he said at a White House news conference. But he also said, "Peace is never dead because people want peace."

Washington was shocked by Hamas' landslide victory. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., called it a de-facto declaration of war by the Palestinian people against the state of Israel.

AT A GLANCE

Hamas: The United States will not deal with Hamas as long as the group seeks Israel's destruction, President Bush says.

Surprise victory: The militant Palestinian group won parliamentary elections over the Fatah party, a U.S. ally.

U.S. concern: In the past five years, Hamas has taken responsibility for dozens of suicide attacks.

Hamas' surprise victory

Militant party wins majority in Palestinian parliament

By **RAVI NESSMAN**
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RAMALLAH, West Bank

Islamic militant Hamas' landslide victory in Palestinian elections unnerved the world Thursday, darkening prospects for Middle East peace and ending four decades of rule by the corruption-riddled Fatah Party.

The victory stunned even Hamas leaders, who mounted a well-organized campaign but have no experience in government. They offered to share power with President Mahmoud Abbas, the Fatah chief, who said he may go around the new government to talk peace with Israel.

Underscoring the tensions between the secular Fatah and fundamentalist Hamas, about 3,000 supporters of the militant group marched through Ramallah and raised their party's green flag over the Palestinian parliament. Fatah supporters tried to lower the banner. The two sides fought for about 30 minutes, throwing stones and breaking windows in the building.

Abbas had yet to decide how closely to work with a group that built its clout through suicide bombings. But his Fatah Party decided not to join a Hamas government, Fatah legislator Saab Erekat said.

"We will be a loyal opposition and rebuild the party," Erekat said after meeting with Abbas.

Leaders across the world demanded that Hamas, which is branded a terror group by the United States and European Union, renounce violence and recognize Israel.

"If your platform is the destruction of Israel, it means you're not a partner in peace, and we're interested in peace," President Bush said.

Acting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel will not negotiate with a Palestinian government that includes Hamas members, and senior Cabinet officials held an emergency meeting to discuss the repercussions of the vote. Acting Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni asked the EU not to deal with a "terror government."

Hamas leaders immediately took to the international airwaves to send out a moderate message.

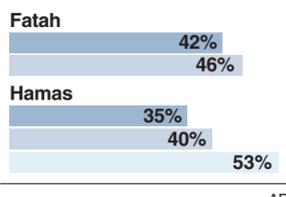
"Don't be afraid," Ismail Haniyeh,

Hamas takes majority of seats

The Islamic militant group Hamas and ruling Fatah Party said Hamas won control of the Palestinian parliament with at least 70 of 132 seats. Official results were expected later Thursday.

Exit poll results

■ Palestinian Center for Policy and Public Opinion poll
■ Bir Zeit University poll
■ Hamas estimate



AP

a Hamas leader, told the BBC.

Mahmoud Zahar, another Hamas leader, said the group would extend its year-old truce if Israel reciprocates.

"If not, then I think we will have no option but to protect our people and our land," he said.

At a victory news conference late Thursday, however, Haniyeh said Hamas will complete the liberation of other parts of Palestine. He did not say which territories he was referring to or how he would go about it.

Hamas has largely adhered to the cease-fire declared last February, while a smaller militant group, Islamic Jihad, carried out six suicide bombings during that period.

Abbas said he remained committed to peace talks and suggested they be conducted through the Palestine Liberation Organization rather than the Palestinian Authority. That could help him sidestep a Hamas-run government in peace talks.

"I am committed to implementing the program on which you elected me a year ago," he said in a televised speech. "It is a program based on negotiations and peaceful settlement with Israel."



Palestinian supporters of Hamas celebrate their victory in parliamentary elections in the West Bank town of Hebron on Thursday. The Islamic Hamas won a huge majority in parliament.

Party's victory message to Bush

In democracies, other side often wins

By **ANNE GEARAN**
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

After making democracy a defining marker for American foreign policy, President Bush got a jolting message from

ANALYSIS

Palestinian voters: Be careful what you wish for.

The United States promoted the democratic Palestinian election that now has produced an upset victory for the militant Islamic group Hamas. The election could install an organization the United States considers terrorist in place of a Palestinian leadership that, while weak, had pledged to work with Israel and with Washington.

The administration is caught between Bush's clarion rhetoric about spreading liberty even in unlikely places and the reality that self-determination can yield results that appear counter to U.S. interests. That's a challenge the United States may have to confront someday in other places as well, including Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Central Asia, the Balkans and, closer to home, South America.

Faced with the fruits of the democratic Palestinian vote he helped nurture, Bush made clear he was displeased.

Bush tried to put a positive spin on the election itself, even as he acknowledged the practical problem it poses for a United States that has tried to play midwife to Israeli peace efforts with Arab neighbors.

"I like the competition of ideas," Bush told reporters. "I like people that have to go out and say, 'Vote for me and here's what I'm going to do.' There's something healthy about a system that does that."

Hamas leadership may not mean end of peacemaking with Israel

By **STEVE GUTKIN**
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM

Hamas' victory in Palestinian parliament elections doesn't necessarily spell the end of peacemaking with Israel.

At least for now, the moderate Mahmoud Abbas is still leading the governing bodies that deal with

ANALYSIS

the Jewish state, and a Hamas leader on Thursday said his group is willing to extend a cease-fire.

Still, Hamas' unexpected victory in the parliament race is likely to encourage Israel to draw its own borders without negotia-

tions, and to redouble efforts to complete its West Bank barrier, as Israelis conclude there is no negotiating partner.

Palestinian support for Hamas was not a rejection of peace, however, but a protest against the ruling Fatah Party's corruption and mismanagement.

Hamas "got the protest vote, the revenge vote, the angry vote, the

vote that is the result of Fatah's corruption, the failure of the peace process, the Israeli escalation and violence," said Palestinian lawmaker Hanan Ashrawi.

The death of Yasser Arafat in 2004, the election of Abbas and last summer's Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip all raised hopes that Israelis and Palestinians could return to negotia-

tions after years of bloodshed.

Former U.S. Mideast envoy Dennis Ross called it extraordinary that instead of peace talks the world saw Hamas sweep the elections. He said the international community is largely to blame for failing to deliver promised aid that could have created jobs and a sense of hope.

Ross, a major player in past

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, said he doubted a peace process was possible with Hamas in power unless the group lays down its weapons and renounces its call for Israel's destruction.

The international community, he said, should let the militants know "the world is not going to adjust to Hamas. Hamas is going to have to adjust to the world."

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