

Hamas rejects \$15-billion aid from major powers conditioned on disarming

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Gaza City, July 28 (RHC)-- Ismail Haniyeh, the head of the political bureau of the Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas The head of the political bureau of the Gaza-based Palestinian resistance movement Hamas says the movement has turned down a \$15-billion development aid offer conditioned on disarming.

Ismail Haniyeh was speaking to the Qatari newspaper al-Lusail in an exclusive interview, whose full transcript was published on Monday. "There were parties that came to us two months ago, who we know had been paid off by major powers. They offered us new projects in the Gaza Strip worth about \$15 billion. Of course, we said this is excellent, we want to establish an airport, port, and economic development projects in the Gaza Strip," said Haniyeh, who lives in the Qatari capital of Doha.

He added that the offer, however, was conditioned on Hamas relinquishing its military capabilities. For years, Hamas has been defending the Palestinian cause against Israel.

"We learned that, in exchange, we would have to dissolve our military factions and integrate them into the police and retire our weaponry, especially heavy weapons, the rockets that hit Tel Aviv and beyond, and dissolve the capability of Gaza for self-rule," the Hamas leader further said.

According to Haniyeh, the hefty aid offer had been made in the context of U.S. President Donald Trump's highly provocative 'peace' plan, which would allocate \$13.38 billion to Gaza for development if implemented.

Trump gave Tel Aviv the green light to annex large parts of the West Bank and Jordan Valley in his self-proclaimed "Deal of the Century," which was unveiled in January with the aim of legitimizing Israel's occupation and re-drawing the Middle East map.

The scheme has drawn global condemnation. Still, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he is

determined to carry on with it. Trump's plan largely gives in to Israel's demands while carving out a Palestinian state with limited control over its own security and borders, enshrining the occupied Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's "capital."

Under the U.S. scheme, the future Palestinian state will consist of scattered lands linked together via bridges and tunnels. The plan also denies Palestinian refugees the right of return to their homeland, among other controversial terms.

Many Palestinians believe Israel's plan to annex one-third of the already occupied West Bank, including parts of the strategic Jordan Valley, is only a formality and a de facto Israeli occupation of their land has been underway for many years.

Trump's scheme also stipulates Hamas' disarmament as a precondition for talks on Palestinian statehood. The resistance movement rejects such a precondition. Haniyeh said disarming of Hamas as a condition for receiving such an aid offer was unacceptable.

"They want to put an end to the existence of resistance and separate Gaza from the rest of the Palestinian national movement," he said in the interview, referring to the ultimate goal of the plan that would essentially create two separate Palestinian entities in the West Bank and Gaza.

"We want to break the siege, and we want projects in the Gaza Strip. We want a port in Gaza — but as a right and not in exchange for our political principles or disarmament. Our principle is Palestine from the river to the sea, the right of return, the liberation of prisoners and the establishment of a full sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem [al-Quds] as its capital," the Hamas leader added.
