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Sent: Wednesday, December 1, 2010 8:17 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: (Reuters) Hamas would honor referendum on peace with Israel

From: Simmons, Krista M
To: NEWS-Mahogany; NEWS-NEA
Cc: SES-O_OS; SES-O_Shift-II
Sent: Wed Dec 01 08:13:22 2010
Subject: (Reuters) Hamas would honor referendum on peace with Israel

GAZA (Reuters) - The Islamist Hamas movement, whose charter advocates the elimination of Israel, would accept the outcome of a Palestinian referendum on a future peace treaty with the Jewish state, its Gaza leader said on December 1.

Ismail Haniyeh, addressing a rare news conference in the Israeli-blockaded enclave, signaled a softening of Hamas's long-standing position prohibiting the ceding of any part of the land of what was British-mandated Palestine until 1948.

"We accept a Palestinian state on the borders of 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital, the release of Palestinian prisoners, and the resolution of the issue of refugees," Haniyeh said, referring to the year of Middle East war in which Israel captured East Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories.

"Hamas will respect the results (of a referendum) regardless of whether it differs with its ideology and principles," he said, provided it included all Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and the diaspora.

The Hamas charter, drafted in 1988, regards all of the land of Palestine, including what is now Israel, as the heritage of Muslims. The idea of a referendum on a future peace accord with Israel was rejected by some Hamas leaders when it was proposed by Palestinian President Abbas several months ago.