

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PALESTINIAN ISLAMIC GROUPS

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The story of how Palestinian Islamic groups evolved is one of the most interesting case studies in modern Islamist politics. By looking at the roots of these organizations and their recruitment techniques, one gets a far better appreciation of the nature, appeal, and strategy of these groups.

A key element in their development has been the struggle between Islamist and nationalist alternatives for the allegiance of individual Palestinians. Factionalism has also been an important dimension, given the multiplicity of groups deriving from the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad tendencies. Also interesting is the relationship between Islamist organizations and educational institutions, which have served as important centers for finding, socializing, and mobilizing supporters.

Until 1967, organized Islamic groups in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (henceforth called "the Territories") were situated in socio-religious centers and mosques run by the Waqf establishment, as well as several charity funds in Jerusalem and the West Bank. These groups drew most of their support from middle class traders who were beginning to develop in urban areas of the West Bank.

In the Gaza Strip, the Muslim Brothers, active under the Egyptian civil regime despite Nasser's hostility to the Brothers' Egyptian branch, were influential in several mosques run by their supporters. In fact, until 1967, Islamic groups maintained a strong hold on the population of the Gaza Strip with almost exclusive control of all social organizations. The only Islamic group not affiliated with the Muslim Brothers was supporters of several shaykhs who had adopted a strict Salafi or Wahhabi line during their studies in Saudi Arabia. (Saudi Arabia supported the Egyptian Muslim Brothers during the course of its rivalry with Nasser's regime during the 1960s.)¹

The Muslim Brothers were also dominant in the Jordanian-ruled West Bank. The Brothers controlled the Waqf establishment, operated legally, and even participated in the Jordanian government in the 1960s, though Jordanian security services did supervise the group tightly. The Jordanians restricted its movements, arrested its followers, and barred it from certain actions.² The group's only Islamic competitor was the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami), which was banned and persecuted by the government. Thus, the Brothers, who enjoyed some backing from the Saudi regime, were able to play an "open game" by mildly criticizing the government on internal affairs.

Until 1967, the Muslim Brothers faced no real competition from secular nationalist groups in the Territories, such as the banned Jordanian Communist Party or the Syrian and Iraqi Ba'ath party. These groups attracted a very narrow stratum of intellectuals and

university graduates. In Gaza, leftist organizations were often forced to collaborate with the Muslim Brothers as a result of joint imprisonment.

Israel's entry into the Territories in 1967 brought considerable change in the nature of Islamic activities there. Islamic groups now enjoyed more freedom than in the past. This newfound freedom, coupled with changes that took place during the 1970s in the organizational pattern of Palestinian society in the Territories as whole, were central factors in the Palestinian Islamic resurrection of the 1980s.

One of the central factors influencing Palestinians in the Territories since 1967 was socio-economic development, to which the Israelis were indifferent. The armed struggle waged by the Palestinian nationalist secular organizations from the onset of the occupation until the 1993-1994 period diverted Israeli attention away from Palestinian social processes. By the 1980s, these processes brought about several important results, including:

- A vast increase in the Palestinian population due to a high natural birthrate and immigration beginning in the late 1970s, as the number of Palestinians employed in the Persian Gulf sharply declined.³
- A major drop in the average age in the Territories.⁴
- A significant rise in the level of education and the number of educational institutes in the Territories concomitant with an awakening national awareness of the importance of education to political, economic, and social development.
- An increase in the standard of living among Palestinians, especially during the first half of the 1980s. The loss of income from Palestinian employment in Gulf countries was for by an increase in the number of laborers working in Israel and heavy funding since the late 1970s from Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) affiliates.⁵
- The (conscious or unconscious) adoption of Israeli behavior, way of thinking, and modernization, and the forming of a middle class influenced by Israel as well as communication with the rest of the Arab world.

The combination of these factors, together with an effort by the PLO and pro-Palestinian foreign organizations, gave rise to a Palestinian socio-political organizational foundation. Israel offered "covert help" in the sense that it did not interfere so long as it did not perceive an immediate military threat. This new foundation shifted the political national organizational weight from municipalities, which could easily be controlled by the Israelis, to a wide variety of new and growing institutions in the early 1980s.

The West Bank, and later also the Gaza Strip, saw the emergence of research institutes, newspapers, information offices, workers' unions, professionals' unions, student committees, liberal organizations, youth movements, women's organizations, social organizations, and charity funds - all somehow connected to PLO factions. Also notable

is the fact that this socio-political base was centered in East Jerusalem, which was regaining its importance in relation to West Bank Arab municipalities.

One of the main factors enhancing the development of this national foundation was the growth of higher education institutions in the Territories at the end of the 1970s. These bodies soon became central to Palestinian political and social development in the Territories. They offered social mobility to groups that previously did not have access to the higher education system. In the West Bank, for example, and even more so in Gaza's Islamic University, a large percentage of students came from refugee camps, small villages, and lower income families.⁶

These colleges and universities not only enhanced Palestinian political national awareness but also introduced the PLO's structure to the Territories as a supra-organization comprised of several active groups such as ideological movements and even political parties.⁷ Until this point, the PLO manifested itself only in the military-terrorist field and in the prisons where convicted terrorists were sent.

The political organization that developed across university campuses in the Territories and its social impact led to two processes that quickly influenced the entire population and its organizational structure. The first process was the almost total filling of the political void in the Territories. Gradually the entire younger generation - now the vast majority of the population - identified politically with either the PLO, an Islamic faction, the Communist Party, or Jordanian supporters. Even Israel, in the early 1980s, attempted (and failed) to start an organization of village associations that would lead a faction accepting the Israeli presence in the Territories.

The second process was the politicization of almost every aspect of Palestinian life. Relatively democratic election patterns and organizations were formed under Palestinian national political influence, perhaps also due to unconscious impression of Israeli democracy. Party-like structures developed in the Territories which allowed the PLO to exercise social, political, and economic control both from inside and from outside of the Territories.

These processes - beginning in the early 1980s - were actually part of a larger transformation of Palestinian society toward creating a basis for a forthcoming state. The core of Palestinian nationalism was transferred inward, from the refugee camps in Lebanon to the Territories, and from external Arab patronage to direct struggle with Israel.

Along with these socio-political processes, another process was also taking place - an indigenous Islamic resurrection that aimed to mold the character of the Palestinian state-to-be, which could follow in an Islamic or national secular direction.

Because of the importance of universities in the Territories in shaping the ideologies of secular nationalist activists, Islamic factions decided to pour a heavy effort into their

campus presence, especially since many students came from villages and refugee camps where Islam already had a relatively strong presence. It should be noted that for the Islamic groups, education, starting at a very young age, was a primary part of their socio-political activity.

The Muslim Brothers in particular focused on education. They had consistently abstained, from the beginning of the Israeli occupation until the Palestinian uprising - intifada - twenty years later, from any "armed struggle" against Israel, a main activity of all PLO-affiliated organizations. Just as the Muslim Brothers hoped to offer an alternative socio-political character to the future Palestinian state, they were also an alternative to violent protest until the uprising.

When, in the 1990s, the Palestinian national leadership chose to compromise with Israel and abandon terrorism, the Muslim Brothers remained an alternative and undertook terrorism in the guise of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The twenty years preceding the forming of Hamas were for the Brothers a period of building and reinforcing their social foundation through their influence in the educational arena and in the almost total control they had obtained in the mosques.

For the Muslim Brothers, the development of socio-political organizations and their student activities gave the Islamic cause a significant push, which was crucial to the revolutionary faction of Islamic Jihad. The Islamic groups in the universities began forming as soon as the national secular groups did and an overt ideological rivalry soon developed.

While Islamic groups kept pace with their national secular counterparts in universities, they lagged behind in other fields. For example, no Islamic factions were formed in organizations such as workers' unions, professional unions, or economic and social societies. No bodies, such as unions or Islamic information centers, were created, apart from student bulletins and charity funds. Until 1988, several centers for the preservation of Islamic heritage were founded, but far fewer than similar centers founded by nationalist groups. For example, in January 1983, one such center was founded in Jerusalem by the Waqf administration, which mainly documented Arab and Turkish manuscripts. In 1986, a research center which doubled as an Islamic library from the estate of the Al-Husayni family, was founded on behalf of the "Arab Child's House."⁸ However, until the founding of Hamas at the beginning of the intifada, universities remained the main public arena where Islamic organizations concentrated their presence.

Several reasons explain why Islamic organizations failed to engage in a full range of socio-political activities, like their nationalist rivals. First, outside funding from the PLO, which was crucial to building up the nationalist base, did not reach Islamic groups. Similarly, these groups - which did not turn violent until late 1986 - did not enjoy the large funds that supported terrorism or compensated the families of prisoners and dead activists.

Second, the Muslim Brothers' senior leadership, which in the West Bank was relatively older than its nationalist equivalent, worked in the traditional ways of the 1950s and 1960s. To attain public influence, it invested in social communal activities, charity funds, and religious centers such as the Waqf and mosques. For some of them, activities such as charity, selling Islamic literature, preaching, and distributing cassettes, were considered much more efficient than publishing newspapers and pamphlets or building a foundation of institutes taken from Western culture. The organized propaganda used by Hamas since its inception was engineered by younger activists who had learned from their nationalist colleagues in universities in the Territories or abroad.

Third, while the revolutionary faction of Islamic Jihad mimicked the activities of the Egyptian Islamic groups, where the student arena was also very central, other factions, especially the Salafi-based ones, were composed of people with little education who emphasized secret, armed activities and not building a large public base.

Fourth, the rivalry between Islamic groups and nationalist secular parties in colleges and universities very rarely reached the public sphere, and if so, it was almost exclusively in the Gaza Strip. Thus, there was no widespread competition for public support.

Fifth, the purpose of building an organizational infrastructure was to expand national awareness of the PLO as an exclusive Palestinian leadership ahead of future statehood. It was therefore built according to the accepted Arab national model. Islamic groups, on the other hand, envisioned the founding of an Islamic state at first narrowed to the entire land of Palestine and then enlarged to include the entire Islamic Arab world. Thus, their organizational emphasis was different.

Still, the Brothers' limited focus is surprising given that the Egyptian Muslim Brothers - who served as a model for branches in other countries - had developed front organizations until the early 1950s, similar to those of secular groups. The Muslim Brothers in Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf states had published Islamic newspapers and periodicals, as did other Islamic groups in Europe and the United States.

While secular groups established financial institutes and became heavily involved in professional or workers' unions, Islamic groups centered their activities in mosques which served as a communal factor no less than a religious one. Through the mosques, Islamic groups promoted awareness (wa'i), religious education, preaching and ideological, political, and social indoctrination, financial activity through charity funds, sports activities, and more.

After 1967, due to the relative freedom Israel granted them and constant connections with the Jordanian regime and its supporters, the national secular network did not pose a significant threat to the Islamic groups' stable position. In addition, the national base in the West Bank, where most of the population was rural and even traditional, did not have a political manifestation contradicting the Muslim Brothers' ideology. In the Gaza Strip, where the Muslim Brothers were always popular, secular nationalist groups developed slowly, and only sped up in the middle of the 1980s. In fact, in Gaza's Islamic University

- which became a leading political and social center - the Muslim Brothers had almost full control over the administration and the male and female student councils.

To a certain extent, however, the Muslim Brothers underestimated the institutional strength of the PLO factions. This was proven at the onset of the intifada, when the nationalist leadership in the Territories succeeded in controlling the population and the uprising's course, even before the outside directive from the PLO. More so, the uprising itself was a manifestation of the mood fostered mainly by the nationalist factions and using their foundation that was built in the 1980s.

Colleges and universities, however, were an exception. Hence, they were very important to the organizational growth of the Islamic Jihad factions, especially its revolutionary one, though the Muslim Brothers' groups conducted the main Islamic activity.

What is special about these groups' publications is that they were locally produced, not imported like most of the Islamic literature being circulated. The percentage of local articles - as opposed to photocopied ones published in Islamic bulletins abroad - rose greatly in the 1980s. Previously, very few thinkers originated from Palestinian Islamic groups and until the establishment of Hamas, the groups imported all of their ideals.

The Islamic groups were independently organized in every one of the higher education institutes that were closed down after the uprising began. Once a year the groups convened a quasi-general assembly of their representatives, usually during al-Israa' wal-Mi'raj events in Al-Aqsa mosque. The last assembly prior to the uprising took place in April 1987⁹ and dealt with current issues in the Islamic Arab world. The groups attacked Arab regimes - including Palestinians - that supported a compromise with Israel. This hardline stance can perhaps be explained by the fact that the assembly took place at the same time as the National Palestinian Council meeting in Algiers, which brought the beginning of a turn toward a political solution.

The Islamic groups' main activities were focused on events and ceremonies for Islamic holidays or ancient Islamic history. They also organized exhibits of Islamic books and fairs and circulated bulletins, books, and sundry Islamic publications, mainly published from 1982. This year marked a new stage in the organizational pattern of the Islamic groups in institutions of higher learning.

More than one factor influenced the change in Islamic groups' orientation, including Israel's invasion of Lebanon and Sadat's murder, as well as the trials of Egyptian Jihad organization members. It appears that the "Lebanese effect" had to do not only with the Israeli control over southern Lebanon, but also with the infiltration of Iranian forces and the fallout from Iran's Islamic revolution that spurred the growth of the revolutionary faction of the Islamic Jihad.

The first publications in the spirit of the revolutionary Islamic Jihad, which probably posed a certain threat to the Muslim Brothers and also hastened their own publications, came from the Muslim Youth Association in Jerusalem. It was a series of three booklets

that were once published under different names:¹⁰ *Al-Nur*, *Al-Nur Al-Rabbani*, and *Al-Nur Al-Ilahi*.¹¹ The first was published in May-June 1982, before Israel's invasion of Lebanon, and its content reveals the influence of the Egyptian monthly *Al-Mukhtar al-Islami* of the radical Islamic groups in Egypt. The main issues featured in this publication and in subsequent ones were copied from the Egyptian publication and written by Dr. 'Iz al-Din Ibrahim, then one of the literary pseudonyms of Dr. Fathi Shqaqi, the founder of the revolutionary Islamic Jihad in Gaza.¹²

The first publications of the Muslim Brothers groups were a combination of photocopied material from abroad and handwritten articles and news items, mostly discussing the situation of Palestinian higher education. For example, a publication named *Al-Risalah* was published in November 1982 by the Hebron University student council, then led by the Muslim Brothers.¹³ It featured an interview with a student named Muhammad Harb, an active communist who repented and became a supporter of the Islamic group (another name for the Muslim Brothers).¹⁴ The interview, propaganda against the communists, also accused nationalist groups of creating disturbances in the university aimed at causing the Israeli army to arrest Muslim students. This claim occasionally reappeared to justify why Islamic groups did not participate in demonstrations against the Israeli army, since these were viewed as provocations with no "pure" intent.

The publication also contained a list of student council activities during 1982 that indicates the Islamic groups' mode of operation. Consider the following examples:

- Opening two mosques, one for male students and one for female students,
- Distributing free robes to needy female students,
- The sale of discounted books,
- Performing a ceremony for the birth (mawlid) of the Prophet. Among those registered as present were leaders of the Muslim Brothers such as Shaykh Ahmad Yassin from Gaza and Muhammad Fuad Abu Zaid from Qabatya/Jenin,
- A medical services card,
- Performing wide scale fundraising in "Palestine" raising 15,000 dinars,
- The noting of historic dates such as the Balfour declaration and the partition decision,
- Holding a Hebrew learning course,
- Collecting 1,600 dinars to pay for fines given to imprisoned students,
- Blood donations for several residents.¹⁵

One of the main issues preoccupying Islamic students was "immoral behavior" in colleges and universities. Many students attended daily meetings between Muslims and Christians, some of whom were more liberal regarding cross-gender relations. Some Christians also belonged to the Marxist organizations that advocated relative equality between the sexes. As a rule, the move from a strict, closed village society into an open one with daily cross-gender interactions, led to behavior strongly condemned by the Islamic groups.

In an *Al-Muntalaq* issue published in Al-Najah University's bulletin, the immoral behavior of the student council - "corruption and debauchery" - is cited as a direct reason for the founding of the Islamic group in 1987.¹⁶

One of the issues at the top of the Islamic groups' agenda was friction with the administrations of other universities, especially the two considered more secular and nationalist—Bir Zeit University and Al-Najah University in the West Bank. In both, there was a connection (and sometimes common interest) between the administration and nationalist student parties. Apart from disagreements on mundane issues such as tuition and dorms, the Islamic groups confronted the administration while attempting to conduct separate events, usually with Islamic content, that were usually points of tension between the rival parties, interfered with studies, led to conflicts that extended beyond university walls.

In both these institutions, and surely in Freres College (which became Bethlehem University), there was also Christian influence which added to the tension. In one *Al-Muntalaq* issue, the university administration is called "the hostile crusade management."¹⁷ Reference to Christian students in the Islamic publications was rare.

The February 1984 *Al-Muntalaq* bulletin surveyed the achievements of Al-Najah University's Islamic group six years after its establishment. It is interesting to see how the Islamic group's followers classified the achievements in order of importance. The first was developing an Islamic personality and saving young men and women from moral and ideological deterioration; the second was building two separate mosques for men and women; the third was giving scholarships and loans to needy students; and the fourth was supplying Islamic books. Only in thirteenth place one can find activities which may be viewed as socio-political, copied from the nationalist groups and first introduced to the Territories by the Communist Party: one day of volunteer work in Gaza and two in the university itself.¹⁸

The volunteer framework was developed by leftist groups in the Territories as early as the second half of the 1970s and was adopted by Fatah supporters the following decade. It was turned into one of the main elements of the younger generation's organization in all aspects of political and social life in the Territories in the framework of what was called "the youth committees for social work" (*lijan al-shabibah lil-'amal al-ijtima'i*) popularly known as "Shabibah." Much of the volunteering consisted of charity work.

Volunteer days could be found only in the colleges and universities and was part of the Islamic groups' influence there. The Islamic groups did not, however, form voluntary front organizations, as did the nationalist groups, with the exception of the Islamic group at Gaza's Islamic University, which operated a voluntary labor committee. The dominant influence of the Muslim Brothers at Islamic University perhaps accounts for the rise of such a committee there. Indeed, an Islamic workers' union also formed at the university that doubled as an organizational center for the Muslim Brothers.¹⁹

Islamic groups were also concerned with the recurring closings of educational institutions by the Israelis, whether due to violent clashes among students or to clashes with the army and riots. The Islamic groups placed the utmost importance on maintaining regular studies in the Territories, as demonstrated by an *Al-Muntalaq* editorial from December 1984:

"Owing to the reopening of the university after a forced closure of four whole months, we cannot but congratulate the new and senior brothers and sisters.... We appeal to the senior students to be sensible and serve the public interest and abandon the activities that bring the university to give our enemies a golden opportunity.... We call upon our new brothers to see things clearly and understand that regular studies and the opening of the university are the peak of constructive positive activity, and this is what our people and nation want."²⁰

This position also demonstrated the Muslim Brothers' passivity regarding resistance to the Israeli regime. Until the uprising, this policy advocated carrying on with life as usual in order to enable the movement to establish itself.

The Islamic University in Gaza was different from other institutions in that it was established initially as an Islamic institute, although it also offered secular studies. The centerpiece of Muslim Brothers' power, it became the largest university in the Territories with the most political and social weight in the Gaza Strip.

The Muslim Brothers controlled the student council at the university and also became the most organized of the Islamic groups in the Territories. Several active committees were established in the 1980s, including a cultural and educational committee, an art committee, a volunteer work committee, a mosque committee, and a sports committee. These became the movement's main propaganda tools in the Gaza Strip. The group distributed publications such as *Al-Shihab* (on behalf of the mosque committee) and *Al-Nidaa'* (on behalf of the student council) and also irregular ideological publications such as "From The Young Generation's Desk" (*Bi-aqlam al-Shabab*).²¹ In 1986 and 1987, the student council's Islamic preaching and guidance committee published a series headed "Voice of Truth, Power and Freedom" (*Sawt al-Haqq Wal-Quwwah Wal-Hurriyyah*), a well-known slogan of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt.²²

The student council's culture committee was prolific, publishing some material that was openly circulated under the name of the Muslim Brothers.²³ The student council publications in Gaza were also more ideologically consolidated than those in the West Bank. *Al-Nidaa'*'s bulletins included ideologically richer material from local writers, knowledgeable in the Muslim Brothers' philosophy. As a rule, their bulletin and other publications were similar to those of Islamic groups abroad.

It should be noted, however, that the Islamic group's publications in Nablus' Al-Najah University were better funded than those in Islamic University, probably due to the

indirect Jordanian funding of the Muslim Brothers in Nablus and Samarea. The Jordanian Muslim Brothers were part of the Jordanian government even after 1967.

A prominent subject in all of the Islamic groups' publications was the rivalry with secular nationalist groups. In the West Bank, where the Muslim Brothers did not have as much control over popular centers as they did in parts of the Gaza Strip, the higher education institutes became the main arena for competition between the two camps. The rivalry was most fierce in Al-Najah University, which saw student clashes beyond the administration's control from the beginning of the 1980s until it was closed during the intifada.

The Islamic groups circulated pamphlets²⁴ which, at their core, represented the cultural and social rivalry between the two sides - a rivalry which was most manifested at the universities. The West Bank institutions, which employed not only secular Arab instructors but also Americans and Europeans, became the center of secular revolution for many young people who came from villages and refugee camps. Since most members of the Islamic group came from similar homes and social status, they fought hard to preserve a traditional lifestyle in the face of Western influence in the universities.

The issue of Palestine was also a prominent point of contention. The Islamic groups were mostly concerned with Islam in the Palestinian arena, though there was some mention of the jihad in Afghanistan and the trials of Muslim groups in Egypt and Syria. Mainly, the groups in the Territories addressed the PLO's political line and accused Arab governments of neglecting the Palestinian cause. They concentrated on Palestinian political problems or local problems arising from the Islamic-secular rivalry.

The Palestine focus is to be expected given that Islamic Palestinian groups grew within a conflict that is nationalist in essence. Islamic supporters were well integrated into general Palestinian society. What is interesting, though, is that the Islamic groups were controlled by the Muslim Brothers, who, at least in the West Bank, were part of the Jordanian movement. But, the Muslim Brothers' transformation into a mainly Palestinian group that viewed the problems of the Arab Islamic world and of creating a large, new Arab state as secondary, was a direct result of the activities of Islamic groups in colleges and universities. Students during the 1980s had grown up fighting the Israeli occupation. Indeed, resisting the Israelis became the center of Palestinian political work in the Territories that led Islamic activists to address a question that became significant in Palestinian society: establishing the character and nature of the future independent state.

Higher education institutions in the Territories became one of the centers of fighting the Israeli regime, and Islamic resistance was prominent. In violent riots initiated by leftist students at Bir Zeit in December 1986, Islamic group members played an active role for the first time. Both of the students killed in these clashes belonged to the Islamic group and were residents of the Gaza Strip.²⁵ Their residency is noteworthy because it represents an increase in the number of Gaza Strip residents who studied in West Bank

institutions and their influence on the Islamic activity in this area. This increase accelerated the militancy of Islamic groups in the West Bank.

In summary, it appears that the flourishing of socio-political life in colleges and universities as central to the national Palestinian foundation in the Territories accelerated the organizational development of Islamic groups. The political implications of these changes were mainly felt during the intifada when the Muslim Brothers, in the form of the Gaza-born Hamas, openly opposed the Israeli regime.

At the same time, though, a new Islamic opponent surfaced - the Islamic Jihad - which was more threatening ideologically than organizationally. The Muslim Brothers had difficulty coping with Islamic Jihad's rise in popularity in 1986 and 1987 after it committed itself to violence against Israel, something the Muslim Brothers had consistently refrained from doing until that point.

The strengthening of the organizational infrastructure of Islamic groups in colleges and universities gave impetus to the growth of the revolutionary faction of Islamic Jihad in the territories. In contrast to the Muslim Brothers' leadership, which consisted of older, religious establishment figures, Islamic Jihad's leadership came from students and academics who had spent time in Egyptian universities in the 1970s and absorbed the revolutionary militancy of groups there.

The elitist concept of a revolutionary group whose role was to lead the masses found an attentive audience among university activists. Unlike the Muslim Brothers, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad was enthused by the success of Iran's Islamic revolution. From its mid-1982 founding at Islamic University in Gaza, the group publicized its disagreement with the Muslim Brothers over Iran's revolution. Its first publication²⁶ contained the movement's main ideas: Khomeini's call to the Muslims of the world; an article about the Islamic revolution of oppressed led by 'Iz al-Din al-Qassam; a call for permanent and organized dialogue among the Islamic groups; the battle against the tyranny of the Arab regimes based on the philosophy of Sayyid Qutb; and raising jihad to the top of the Islamic struggle's agenda.

Next, it ran in the 1982 student council elections under the name "The Independent Islamists" (Al-Islamiyyun al-Mustaqillun). In 1984, the group attempted to form a faction called "The Islamic Student Movement" (Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah al-Tulabiyyah) and published and distributed handwritten promotional material at the end of 1983 at Islamic University. This flyer attacked the old Muslim Brothers' student council for kindling the fire of disagreement instead of striving to unite the Islamic groups. It cited the council's ban on the circulation of the new group's publications and compared the Muslim Brothers to a repressive government.²⁷

It is interesting that Islamic Jihad's first flyer in the Territories was not published in Gaza but rather in Al-Najah University in Nablus in May 1983.²⁸ The flyer severely attacked the university's secular student council for publishing a long declaration against the Islamic movement on different issues, including the support of the Islamic revolution in

Iran. One of the subjects raised in the Islamic movement's counter-flyer was the Arab secular nationalists' neglect of the Palestinian cause.

The year 1985 marked a new organizational feat for Islamic Jihad. It succeeded in forming as a proper party in several universities in the Territories under the name "The Islamic Group" (Al-Jama'ah Al-Islamiyyah) - a name borrowed from Egyptian student groups. This name, signaling Islamic violence, was used until the university was closed during the intifada. The group became the student faction of the Jihad movement.

Islamic Jihad differed from the Muslim Brothers and the nationalist groups on three basic points. The first was their support of the Iranian revolution. The second concerned the Palestine issue. Islamic Jihad favored military action against Israel, which served as a common denominator with the nationalist groups, especially Fatah. Inherent in its publications was harsh criticism of the Muslim Brothers' passive stance. And, the third difference concerned the unity of Islamic groups, not only in the Territories but throughout the Arab world. Islamic Jihad was influenced here by Shi'a Iran, which wanted to end discord with Sunni Muslims and rebuild the Caliphate state. Anyone who disagreed with Islamic Jihad's strategy was declared an enemy. (In contrast, the Muslim Brothers emphasized Islamic pluralism.)

The revolutionary faction within Islamic Jihad was the only one to act as an official party in Islamic University and in the universities in the West Bank. It refrained from using the name "Islamic Jihad" until June 1987, when it distributed a flyer bearing the name "Islamic Jihad Organization" at Islamic University. By October and November of 1987, it was the only name used and became the permanent name of the group led by Shaykh As'ad al-Tamimi during the intifada. The group affiliated with Fatah in the Gaza Strip began calling itself "The Islamic Jihad Squadrons" (Saraya al-Jihad al-Islami) and in the West Bank it added the words "Jerusalem/the temple" (Bait al-Maqdes).

The Islamic Jihad's bulletins were dull in comparison to those of the Islamic groups of the Muslim Brothers and contained few details regarding their groups' activities in different institutes, revealing Jihad's inferior position in the higher education institutions in numbers, organization, and finances.

Until the outbreak of the intifada, the revolutionary Islamic Jihad group was only successful in Gaza, where it originated. In Islamic University's male and female student union elections in 1984 through 1986, it obtained six to seven percent of the male students' votes and a lower percentage among the female students. In the 1987 elections, held immediately after the outbreak of the uprising, it polled 15 percent of the votes. One may assume that this relatively high percentage is mainly due to the military actions of the other Jihad factions.

It seems that the main importance of the revolutionary faction in colleges and universities in the Territories lay more in its challenge to other Islamic groups than in any of its own achievements. It did supply the ideological basis that encouraged the forming of armed Islamic Jihad groups in 1986 and 1987, which implemented the revolutionary group's

callings. The group also contributed to accelerating militant processes that developed among the young generation of Muslim Brothers. Its activity and mode of organization were based on the student arena, most strongly at Islamic University.

CONCLUSION

The higher education institutions in the Territories had a crucial effect on the development of most Islamic groups, particularly the Muslim Brothers and the revolutionary faction of the Islamic Jihad. It molded a new, young, and educated generation that filled important leadership positions in these groups. This generation, which grew up in the midst of the general Palestinian national struggle in the Territories, introduced Palestinian patriotism to the Islamic arena in lieu of the "Islamic cosmopolitanism" which characterized the Muslim Brothers until the 1980s. It also emphasized the political and cultural struggle between Islamic groups and popular nationalist secular groups. Actually, until the December 1987 intifada, colleges and universities were the main arena for Palestinian-Israeli conflict, a prelude of what was to engulf the whole Palestinian community during the uprising. In time, the young veterans of the secular-religious conflict would form the indigenous leadership of the intifada against the Israelis.

This secular-religious conflict also had a cultural dimension. The universities and colleges in the Territories, especially those in the West Bank, accelerated the absorption of Western secular culture, particularly among the lower class, traditional folk who comprised the majority of the student population. Daily exposure to Israeli society also contributed a Western influence. Bir Zeit University and Bethlehem University became the centers of the cultural struggle, with a notable number of Christian professors, local and foreign, and even Israeli Arab citizens. Al-Najah University in Nablus, despite having a Muslim character and very few Christian students and professors, developed a relatively strong Marxist element side by side alongside labor and professional unions.

Attempts were also made in the universities to create Palestinian cultural roots by exhibiting clothing, food, agricultural tools, and buildings from the pre-1948 era. Similar attempts at emphasizing the Canaanite heritage of the Palestinians, especially in Samaria, increased to a large extent immediately after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the 1990s. As in other Arab and Islamic countries (the Pharaonic culture in Egypt, the Phoenic in Lebanon, the Pan-Turan in Turkey and the pre Islamic Iranian-Persian one), these attempts led to religious tension and were sometimes seen as part of an anti-Islam battle. In general, Palestinian culture in the Territories (and outside of them since 1967) developed along secular lines, largely influenced by left-wing artists.

During the second half of the 1980s - right before the uprising - the Muslim Brothers were strong rivals of the secular nationalists among PLO supporters in the Territories. Their popularity was based partly on their passivity in the struggle against Israel. The tension between the Muslim Brothers and the secularists is well-illustrated by the booklets circulated by both sides during the 1987 student council elections at Islamic University.

In the Muslim Brothers' *Al-Haqiqah al-Gha'ibah* (The Absent Truth),²⁹ the group quite apologetically presents its contribution to the Palestinian struggle since the 1930s through the participation of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers in the wars against Israel from 1948 until 1967. The booklet's main weak spot, exposed by the Muslim Brothers' opponents, was the fact that this contribution ceased in the same years in which "the Islamic holy places, foremost the Al-Aqsa mosque, fell into the hands of the Jews." The movement could not claim any achievements for the liberation of Palestine between 1967 and 1987.

The combination of cultural and political battles was characteristic of the Palestinian students' activities in all the higher education institutions from 1980 until the uprising. The uprising spread the battle to the entire Palestinian population. The establishment of the Palestinian Authority worsened the internal conflict. The centrality of the higher education institutes to the development of both the Islamic and nationalist groups strongly points out to two issues related to Israel which up until now have not been given proper attention.

Israel completely ignored the growth of Islamic socio-cultural and national-secular foundations in these institutions, as they were not violent. In certain respects, Israel's behavior was a historical repetition of British behavior toward Jewish universities during the mandate period, chiefly Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the Technion in Haifa. But unlike the British, who were foreigners and did not consider themselves responsible for the future of the country, Israel is sure to be closely involved in the development of Palestinian society even after a permanent agreement is reached.

Israel's apathy regarding Palestinian social developments in the Territories contributed to its inability to read the "Palestinian map" correctly. It misjudged the intensity of hatred toward the Israeli occupation, the causes of the national uprising headed by the lower classes in refugee camps, and the growth of Islamic groups and their deep hold on society. This hold was achieved mainly by community socio-cultural-educational activity centered in higher education institutions.

A second point concerning Israel is its conscious and unconscious influence on Palestinian society in the Territories. Palestinian colleges and universities and social foundations, both on the Islamic side and on the nationalist-secular side, continuously nurtured the study of Israeli society - an ability to read the "Israeli map" and analyze the events in Israel. The large-scale employment of Palestinians in Israel, which grew in the 1980s, naturally contributed to this understanding, but it was also common among the lower classes both in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank.

When members of these classes became a main force in Palestinian higher education in the Territories, they used their familiarity with Israeli society as a means of personal and national advancement. Palestinian colleges and universities manifested the two most important elements of Israeli society: education as the key to personal and collective advancement, and democratic pluralism.

NOTES

¹ Abu 'Amru, Ziad, *Usul al-Harakat al-Siyasiyyah fi Quta' Ghazah 1948-1967* (Acre: Dar Al-Aswar, 1987), pp. 70-74.

² Regarding the Muslim Brothers see: Amnon Cohen, *Parties in the West Bank during the Jordanian Reign* (Jerusalem, Magnes Publishers, The Hebrew University, 1980), pp. 128-193.

³ Regarding the demographic developments in the Territories and in the entire Palestinian arena, see: Gad Gilbar, *Trends in the Palestinian Demographic Development, 1870-1987* (Moshe Dayan Center, Tel Aviv University, No. 108, September 1989).

⁴ The age group of 0-24 formed 69.5 percent of the entire population in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip in 1986. 60.5 percent of these were in the age group of 0-19. This is one of the world's youngest populations, and this effected the development of political awareness. The age group of 20-34, the potential age of students in higher education institutes in the Territories, then formed 21.5 percent, more than one fifth of the population.

According to a study made by "The Higher Education Council" in East Jerusalem, the number of those studying in higher education institutes in the school year of 1982-83 was 10,295, which formed 0.84 percent of the population in the Territories (including East Jerusalem). See: Majlis al-Ta'lim al-'Aali, *Hawl al-Ta'lim al-'Aali fi al-Dafah al-Gharbiyyah wa-Quta' Ghazah* (Arabic) (Jerusalem, 1983), p. 170.

⁵ Naturally, there is no data, not even in general, regarding the extent of funding from PLO to the Territories, although this funding was not kept secret by the organization. The best-known fund for helping the national foundation in the Territories was established during the convention of the Arab League at Baghdad in 1978. The funds were to come from all the Arab States. According to Arab publications, what happened was that in the 1980s only Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States participated in the funding. In the 1980s, "The Joint Jordanian-Palestinian Committee" which was to determine the distribution of the funds, operated on and off next to the "Baghdad Fund." This committee's activity varied according to changes in Jordan's relations with the PLO. In July 1986 there was a long break in its activity after the expulsion of Khalil al-Wazir "Abu Jihad" from Jordan and the closing of most of the organization's offices in Aman. After that it seldom assembled, according to the state of the political relations between Jordan and the organization. For some details regarding the funding of the national institutes in the Territories see: Khalil Nakhleh, *Mu'asasatuna al-Jamahiriyah fi Filastin: Nahwa Tatwir Ijtima'i Hadif (Our Public Institutions in Palestine: Towards Comprehensive Social Development)* (Geneva, January 1990. A PLO inner publication. Private copy with author). Dr. Nakhleh is a sociologist; an Arab Israeli citizen who left Israel in the 1970s and among other things was involved with the activities of Palestinian funds in Europe.

⁶ Several studies regarding the social influence of the Universities and the education of the Palestinian population in the Territories were published, some in the Territories themselves. See: Samir N. 'Anabtawi, *Palestinian Higher Education in the West Bank and Gaza* (KPI, 1986). Nabil A. Badran, "The means of survival: education and the Palestinian Community 1948-1967," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Summer 1980), pp. 44-74. Gabi Baramki, "Aspects of Palestinian life under military occupation, with a special focus on education and development," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 19 No. 2 (1992), pp. 125-132. Gabi Baramki, "Building Palestine Universities under occupation," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Autumn 1987), pp. 12-20. Munir Fasheh, "Education under occupation," in Nasser H. Aruri (ed.), *Occupation: Israel over Palestine* (Belmont: publisher, 1989), pp. 511-535. Sarah Graham-Brown, "Impact on the social structure of Palestinian society," in Nasser H. Aruri (ed.), *Occupation: Israel over Palestine* (Belmont: AAAUG, 1983), pp. 230-256. Muhammad Hallaj, "Mission of Palestinian higher education," in Emile A. Nakhleh (ed.), *A Palestinian Agenda for the West Bank and Gaza* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1980), pp. 58-63. Khalil Mahshi, "The Palestinian uprising and education for the future," *Harvard Education Review*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (1989), pp. 470-483. Sally Ramsden, and Cath Senker (eds), *Learning the hard way: Palestinian Education in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Israel* (B.R.) Muhsin D. Yusuf, "The potential impact of Palestinian education on a Palestinian state," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Summer 1979). Ahmad 'Awad Munir, *Al-Ta'lim al-'Aali fi al-Dafah al-Gharbiyyah wa-Quta' Ghazah: Tatawwuruhi wa-Ususuhu* (place: Jam'iyat al-Najah al-Wataniya, Markaz al-Dirasat al-Rifiyyah, 1983). See also: R. Shadid Muhammed, "The Muslim Brotherhood movement in the West Bank and Gaza," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (April 1988), pp. 658-682.

⁷ For a good and concise view on the nationalist groups in the higher education institutes and their political division, see: Emile Sahliyeh, *In Search of Leadership: West Bank Politics since 1967* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1988), pp. 115-136.

⁸ Hamuda Samih, "Marakiz al-Turath al-Islami fi Filastin" (The Centers for Islamic Heritage in Palestine), *Al-Hilal Al-Dawli* No. 15 (May 1-15 1988), p. 10.

⁹ A flyer of the fourth student Islamic convention, Sha'ban 1407 - April 1987.

¹⁰ Changing the names of bulletins was a known method of circumventing the need to receive a permit from the Israeli military rule for publishing a newspaper. A one-time bulletin did not need a permit in the Territories nor in East Jerusalem under Israeli law. The method was to choose a word identifying the paper to the public, and add another word or words to every issue creating a different phrase, as if it were a one-time publication.

¹¹ *Al-Nur al-Rabbani (The Celestial Light)*, one-time publication of the culture department of The Young Muslims Association in Jerusalem. Undated, 41 pages. According to its content it was published during the first months of 1982. *Al-Nur (The Light)*, one-time publication of the Young Muslims association, July 26th 1982, 77 pages. *Al-Nur al-Ilahi (The Divine Light)*, one-time publication of the Young Muslims association, October 19, 1983, 73 pages.

¹² This fact was related to the author from Dr. Fathi Shqaqi himself, during a discussion with him in February 1986 in the Gaza prison.

¹³ *Al-Risalah*, one-time publication of the student council of Hebron University, undated. According to its content it was published in November 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-9.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-37.

¹⁶ *Al-Muntalaq*, the mosque committee of Al-Najah University's bulletin, No. 8 (February 1984) pp. 16-17.

¹⁷ *Al-Muntalaq*, No. 9 (April 1984), p. 49.

¹⁸ *Al-Muntalaq*, No. 8, pp. 18-19.

¹⁹ See, for example, the results of the union elections held on June 27th 1983, in which the Muslim Brothers won in all the faculties. *Al-Nidaa'*, a publication of the student council in the Gaza university, undated (according to its content it was published in the summer of 1983), p. 22.

²⁰ *Al-Muntalaq*, No. 11 (December 1984), p. 3.

²¹ At least four such undated publications were known to have been distributed by the culture committee in the student council. According to their content they were published during the years 1983-1985. They included more ideological content than the group's bulletins and were probably meant to enhance the Islamic awareness.

²² See, for example: *Al-Haqiqah al-Gha'ibah (The Absent Truth)*, November 1987, 55 pages. This was the second booklet in the series.

²³ See, for example, the booklet about "The Islamic Awakening and the Muslim Brothers," No. 1, a one-time cultural publication of the culture committee of the student council in the Islamic University in Gaza, undated.

²⁴ A flyer signed by the Islamic group in Al-Najah University in Nablus, September 11, 1987. It is noteworthy in that the tension in the Islamic University in Gaza, in regard to the elections there, continued in the first days after the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising. After the elections, Fatah supporters blamed the Islamic group for rigging the elections. See: *Al-Fajr*, December 7 and 9 1987.

²⁵ "The Islamic group in Bir Zeit University Mourns its Dead," an undated flyer circulated in December 1986.

²⁶ *Voice of The Oppressed (Sawt Al-Mustad'afin)*, a publication on the occasion of the culture week in the Islamic University in Gaza, June 1986, 56 pages. The use of the Koranic term *Mustad'afin* was occasionally used by the Muslim Brothers, but was much more widely used in the terminology of the Islamic revolution in Iran, almost synonymical for revolutionists.

²⁷ In July-August 1983, a large number of members of the Islamic Group, which called itself then "The Islamic Forerunner" (*Al-Tali'ah al-Islamiyyah*), named after the bulletin they circulated by that name in the Territories, were arrested. The arrests were for distributing illegal and inciting material, and most were sentenced to short terms up to one year. Among the imprisoned was their leader Dr. Fathi Shqaqi. During their detention and trial several members of the group blamed the Muslim Brothers and the Islamic group

in the University of Gaza for assisting the authorities in uncovering them. Their trial revealed that they were not engaged then in any violent activity against Israel, but only in subversive activities.

²⁸ "The War against Islam Continues," a manifest of the Islamic student movement in Al-Najah University, May 23, 1983.

²⁹ *Al-Haqiqah al-Gha'ibah* (Gaza, November 1987). This booklet was the second publication in a series named *Sawt al-Haqq wal-Quwwah wal-Huriyyah* (*Voice of Truth, Power and Freedom*), a known slogan with the Muslim Brothers. It may very well be that the name of the booklet was chosen to deliberately resemble the name of the known book by the engineer Muhamad 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, the ideologist for the Egyptian Jihad group whose members murdered the late president Sadat: *Al-Faridah al-Gha'ibah* (The Neglected Obligation, in this case - Jihad).