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Hamas: The Fundamentalist Challenge to the PLO

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Executive Summary

Hamas—the Islamic Resistance Movement—arose during the intifada as the organization of Palestinian Muslim fundamentalists of the West Bank and Gaza. Because it views the Arab-Israeli conflict as a religious struggle between Islam and Judaism that can only be resolved by the destruction of the State of Israel, it opposes the current Arab-Israeli peace talks.

Since its founding in December 1987, Hamas has refused to operate under the aegis of the PLO, and instead has published its own Covenant, called and enforced its own strikes, and mounted bitter criticism of PLO policies. This independent activity has challenged the PLO's claim to be the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Despite the imprisonment of its main leaders, Hamas has regularly claimed the support of 30 percent or more of voters in various local elections in the Gaza Strip and West Bank and seems to enjoy more popular support than any constituent group of the PLO, except Arafat's Fatah itself.

The PLO has sought to counter this challenge through a two-pronged strategy of co-opting Hamas and waging a bitter polemic against it. Efforts to marginalize Hamas have been unsuccessful, as epitomized by a November 1990 agreement between Hamas and al-Fatah acknowledging Hamas' right to call its own strikes and engage in independent political activity.

In reward for its restraint during the Gulf crisis, Hamas has received large Saudi subsidies that previously had gone to the PLO, thus giving it an operational advantage over the PLO in the territories. At the same time, owing to a special relationship with Jordan, Hamas has served as a channel for Jordanian influence in the territories at the further expense of the PLO.

Despite their inflammatory rhetoric, Palestinian Islamic fundamentalists are, for the most part, cautious and conservative. In the event of a negotiated settlement of the conflict with Israel, Hamas is likely to denigrate the terms of peace while continuing long-term efforts to gain further territory.

THE FOUNDING OF HAMAS

Throughout the 1970s, the Muslims of the West Bank and Gaza displayed clear signs of a turn toward religion, similar to developments elsewhere in the Arab and Muslim worlds. By the 1980s, this took the form of religious-political activism and organization. Against the backdrop of worsening economic and social conditions, several specific factors fueled this trend: the rise of the Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian revolt; the victory of Afghanistan's Mujahadin over Soviet occupation; and the success of fundamentalist Lebanese Shi'a in forcing an Israeli withdrawal from most of southern Lebanon. Many Palestinians were further attracted to religious groups out of disillusionment with the PLO's demonstrated inability to improve their political fortunes and out of dismay over the perceived weakness, division, inconsistency, and even corruption, within the PLO.

One of the earliest significant manifestations of this trend came during the course of student council elections at institutions of higher learning in the territories in 1986. Running against the PLO-oriented National Bloc, the Islamic Bloc, consisting mainly of adherents of the Muslim Brotherhood, attained 65 percent of the votes at the Islamic University in Gaza, 50 percent at the University of Hebron, 44 percent at the Hebron Polytechnical Institute, 40 percent at al-Najah University (Nablus), and 33 percent at Bir Zeit University (al-Bireh).[1] Though local circumstances helped determine these outcomes, it was nonetheless obvious by 1987 that Islam had made significant headway among Palestinian youth, at the expense of the secular Palestinian nationalism represented by the PLO and its constituent organizations.

When the Palestinian uprising, or *intifada,* broke out on December 9, 1987, it bore a distinctively religious stamp. In the Gaza Strip, the tension surrounding the arrest, escape, and subsequent deaths of extremist Islamic Jihad militants in confrontations with Israeli security forces gave rise to early disorders which broke out in the Jabaliya refugee camp, in which fundamentalist activists played a dominant role.[2] Within a few days, as the disorders spread to the Balata refugee camp near Nablus on the West Bank, religious activists, brandishing the green flag of Islam, played a conspicuous role. As numerous observers have noted, mosques were central to the spread of the *intifada* as makeshift headquarters and, through the use of their loudspeaker system, as forums to rally crowds to revolt in the name of Allah. In general, looking beyond tactics to ideology, the theme of self-sacrifice, which pervaded and fanned the *intifada,* came largely from

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the religious consciousness that had been growing within the Muslim population throughout the 1980s.[3]

When the main constituent factions of the PLO in the territories (Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Palestine Communist Party) organized themselves into the Unified National Command (hence UNC) in order to lead and control the *intifada*, they invited the Muslim Brotherhood to join. Their eagerness to co-opt the Brotherhood stemmed from a number of factors: their recognition of the popularity that the fundamentalists had gained through their active initial role in the *intifada*;[4] their awareness of the burgeoning return to religion among Palestinian Muslims; and their desire to retain solidarity within the ranks of the *intifada* under the UNC's (i.e. PLO's) exclusive leadership.

The Muslim Brotherhood, however, refused to join the UNC. Instead, Shaykh Ahmad Yasin, head of the Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip, founded Hamas (an acronym for "Islamic Resistance Movement") as a military organization that would lead the religious sector of the Palestinian population in the *intifada*.[5] The Muslim Brotherhood had not previously played a militant role in Palestinian affairs, concentrating instead on educational activity and fostering an Islamic society. However, many factors impelled Shaykh Yasin to give the Brotherhood an active, militant role in the *intifada*: the active participation of its youthful adherents in the *intifada's* initial disorders; the popularity of Islamic Jihad, a rival, militant, religious group; and the attempt by the PLO to gain exclusive control over the *intifada* by the establishment of the UNC.[6] That in turn gave the *intifada* a distinctly Islamic character. After initiating the formation of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the Shaykh made contact with the Muslim Brotherhood in the West Bank to facilitate the establishment of the organization there.

In order to direct the activity of the religious camp in the *intifada*, Hamas, from the outset, printed and distributed its own circulars, or handbills. Its first handbill, of December 14, 1987, was also the first to apply the term *intifada* ("tremor") to the disorders that were taking place.[7] Hamas' handbills, drafted by Shaykh Yasin, chiefly differed from those of the UNC in their predominantly religious content, including the depiction of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a religious struggle between Islam and Judaism. Palestine, according to Hamas, is only one arena of conflict with the Jews, but an arena of central importance necessitating an Islamic holy war, or *jihad*. Yasin argued that Palestine, in which the Jews stole lands that were eternally consecrated for Islam and the Muslims, is a holy land by virtue of its being the site of the night flight of the Prophet Muhammad to heaven and of the al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest shrine in Islam.[8] Moreover, Hamas asserts that the Jews are endemically evil and constitute a danger to the entire world,[9] treat the inhabitants of the occupied territories in a brutal and "Nazi" manner,[10] and in ancient times were the enemies of the Prophet Muhammad.[11] The fight with Israel, therefore, is a fight to the finish; and owing to the holiness of Palestine, there is no room for compromise, by partition or otherwise.

HAMAS' STRENGTH

Owing to the pre-*intifada* growth of fundamentalism in the territories, and especially the development of an "Islamic Bloc"

at the institutions of higher learning, Hamas was able to emerge at the start of the *intifada* as virtually a full-blown entity. Indeed, it was able to maintain its institutional momentum thereafter, despite two waves of arrests (August-September 1988; April-May 1989) that decimated its leadership, particularly in the Gaza Strip. In addition, the breakdown of normal life and the other hardships and sacrifices occasioned by the *intifada* created fertile soil for a return to religion on the part of many Palestinians. And for some, the attendant frustrations, exacerbated by the seeming impossibility of achieving a political solution to the Palestine problem, could more easily find relief in the simplistic and extremist remedies offered by Hamas than in the highly theoretical and diplomatically constrained positions of the PLO and its component groups.

Still, the question remains as to whether, and to what extent, support for political Islam, as represented by Hamas, has actually increased since the *intifada*. Unfortunately, there is little hard data as to Hamas' numerical strength. The best data are the results of various small-scale elections that have been held in recent years in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to councils of Engineers, Doctors, and Lawyers Associations, to the employees assembly of the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA), and to the respective councils of the Hebron and Ramallah Chambers of Commerce. The importance of the elections for professional associations stems from their being the main channel for political expression among the elite political activists in the territories; the UNRWA elections are significant in that they are a barometer of sentiment among the refugees.[12]

a) *The Engineers Association* (Gaza Strip; January 27, 1990). In the elections to the council of this association, 37 percent of the 3,550 votes went to Hamas-supported candidates. Hamas also won a majority in the executive council (five out of nine seats), but only fortuitously. Since the pro-PLO bloc was split between two competing lists (headed by Hatim Abu Sha'ban and 'Aqil Matar), its votes were dispersed among eighteen candidates. Hamas, in contrast, maintained a unified list of nine candidates. Significantly, despite the PLO split, the relatively unknown Hamas candidates (their main figure among the engineers, Ibrahim Abu Shanab, being under arrest since the previous May) captured only the fifth through ninth places. In the vote for the chairmanship, in which all 3,550 members participated, the Hamas candidate, Jamal Khudari, came just seven votes from winning. Evidently, even this electoral support for Hamas resulted from divided PLO supporters who preferred to cast a protest vote for Abu Sha'ban, rather than back the PLO candidate, 'Aqil Matar.

b) *The Engineers Association* (West Bank and East Jerusalem; August 1990). Hamas ("The Islamic Alliance") won 36 percent of the vote in these elections, with 37 percent going to the Fatah-DFLP-Communist Party list and 27 percent to a joint Fatah splinter-PFLP-independent list. Hamas also captured five out of eleven places on the executive council.

c) *The Doctors Association* (Gaza Strip; January 10, 1990). In these elections the leading Hamas candidate, Mahmud al-Zahar, received more votes than any other candidate. However, popular Hamas candidates 'Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi and Ibrahim al-Yazuri were both under arrest so Hamas took only one seat on the nine-man council. Still, in the

opinion of several Gaza Strip physicians, the overall vote showed Hamas with a 30 percent base of support.[13]

d) *The Lawyers Association* (Gaza Strip; March 1, 1990). With the main Hamas candidate, Fa'iz al-Ghul, under arrest, Hamas took only one seat on the seven-man council.

e) *UNRWA Elections* (Gaza Strip; July 1990). The "assembly" of UNRWA employees constitutes one of Hamas' most visible electoral successes. Overall, Hamas candidates more than doubled their representation, from the seven they won in the 1987 pre-*intifada* vote to the fifteen they won in 1990 (out of a total of twenty-seven). Hamas' achievement is all the more striking when viewed in terms of the occupational breakdown of the assembly, in which eleven seats are allotted to teachers, nine to workers, and seven to employees in the service sector: Hamas won an overwhelming 82 percent of the teachers' seats (nine out of eleven seats, as compared with 18 percent, or two out of eleven, in 1987). If this return indeed reflected the strength of Hamas among teachers, that would amount to about 2,500 teachers who exercise a considerable influence over the young refugee population in the Gaza Strip. However, some observers doubt if this is the case, because in UNRWA elections the votes are distributed among many candidates, as teachers in each of five districts (Rafah, Dir al-Balah, Khan Yunis, Jabaliya, and Gaza) vote for independent or bloc candidates from their own district, while the two candidates from each district (three in the case of Gaza) with the highest number of votes are elected. Nevertheless, if it is unlikely that Hamas won 85 percent of the vote, it is equally unlikely that its candidates received anything less than one-third of the vote, which would roughly correspond to the election results in the doctors and engineers associations.

f) *Chamber of Commerce Elections* (Hebron; June 18, 1990). Headed by the most prominent fundamentalist figure in traditionally religious Hebron, Hashim Abd al-Natshe, the Hamas-supported "Islamic Group" won 60 percent, or six out of eleven places on the Chamber's governing council, while the PLO-affiliated "Hebron Commercial Group" took only 36 percent, or four seats. Notwithstanding the opinion of the pro-PLO former mayor of Hebron that fundamentalists doubled their actual strength owing to non-political factors (i.e., their candidates were more respected professionally)[14] they would still have enjoyed the support of some 30 percent of the city's 1,500 voting merchants.

g) *Arab Chartered Accountants Society* (Gaza Strip; July 19, 1991). In these elections, perhaps the most successful for Hamas to date, some seven hundred accountants (84 percent of the society's members) gave Hamas seven out of nine (or 77 percent) on the Board of Governors, with Fatah receiving only one seat; one other seat was won by an independent. Hamas had won only two seats in the previous elections in 1989.

h) *Chamber of Commerce Elections* (Gaza Strip; November 4, 1991). In these elections, held shortly after the Madrid Peace Conference, 40 percent of the 1,500 merchants supported Hamas. The fundamentalists, however, won only two of the seventeen seats on the chamber, because of peculiarities in the electoral regulations.[15]

i) *Chamber of Commerce Elections* (Ramallah; March 4, 1992) In the most striking success for Hamas, the Islamic Bloc won ten of eleven seats in these elections. If one of the

Bloc's nominees had not been disqualified, they would have won all the seats. Given Ramallah's large Christian population and its role as home to several members of this Palestinian delegation to the peace talks, this was an especially severe blow to the Nationalists and their supporters.

In sum, it would seem from even a conservative reading of the various elections results in the Occupied Territories that support for Hamas is at least 30 percent. However, before accepting these results as a basis for evaluating the movement's strength, certain aspects of the elections should be considered. First, the election results in the professional associations may merely reflect the political preferences of a relatively small (albeit, active) political elite. Second, many of the voters cast at least some of their votes on a personal or professional, rather than strictly political, basis. The fact that Dr. al-Zahar received a greater number of votes than any other candidate in the doctors' election (many of the votes obviously not cast by Hamas followers), indicated a high degree of personal regard for him. Similarly, the elected chairman of the UNRWA employees council, Ramadan al-Umari, explained his victory as a result of a campaign that focused on the mismanagement of employees' pension funds rather than his being supported by Hamas. Also, some observers in Hebron attribute Hamas' success in the Chamber of Commerce contest to the stress it laid on the need to improve business ethics among the merchants in that city.

Other data from the territories may also serve to warrant a more conservative estimation of Hamas' overall strength. For example, it seems that the number of Hamas adherents arrested in the *intifada* is considerably smaller than that of the followers of the UNC. In mid-1990, Hamas leaders themselves bandied the figure of 2,500 as the number of their adherents having been arrested; if that were so, it would make them approximately 4 percent of the *intifada* total. Former inmates of the largest detention center for Palestinians, Ketziot, estimated that Hamas did not constitute more than 12 percent of the prisoner population; former inmates of other prisons did not recall the Hamas contingents being more than 15-20 percent. Unless these figures reflect the polemical point often made by Hamas—namely, that the ranks of the PLO (unlike its own) are riddled with informers—they would suggest that the allegiance of the youth who are active in the *intifada* is still largely to the UNC and, by extension, to the PLO.

Polls conducted before and immediately following the Gulf War among 2,869 respondents in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem also support a more modest estimate of Hamas' strength. Its findings are particularly interesting in that the poll was not carried out under pro-PLO auspices; rather, its sponsors were the Jerusalem-based Arab Center for Research and Studies and the pro-Jordanian daily *al-Nahar*.[16] When asked which Palestinian group was likely to win the elections then being proposed by Israel, Hamas did no better than 18 percent in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, 19 percent in the Gaza Strip and 23 percent among refugees. Since the question was not specifically formulated to ascertain who the respondents actually supported, but rather who they thought would win, it is possible that some Hamas supporters merely stated an honest opinion that the PLO affiliates would win the elections, rendering the percentages cited insufficient indicators of Hamas' own strength. Whatever the case,

the figures by themselves do not suggest a groundswell of support for Hamas.

Finally, it is also difficult to determine from the available figures whether Hamas' present strength represents growth since the *intifada* or simply support enjoyed by the "Islamic stream" even before the *intifada*. Intuitively, many Palestinian observers perceive that Hamas has grown in recent years. It may be that, compared to the Muslim Brotherhood's previous absence from the political arena and its former low profile in overt political acts such as public disorders or guerilla operations, it is tempting to see in Hamas' new, conspicuous activism and militancy a rising popular trend in its favor. Impressions of Hamas' growth may also stem from the very perceptible degree to which Islamic precepts are increasingly being observed in daily life throughout the territories, even by persons who do not necessarily support Hamas. In any case, the perception of well-informed Palestinians that Hamas is growing should not be ignored.

THE HAMAS CHALLENGE TO THE PLO

In the summer of 1988, a decisive development took place within Hamas, when the movement opted to present itself as an alternative leadership to the PLO.

During the spring and summer of 1988, reports circulated to the effect that, at the forthcoming 19th Palestine National Council in Algiers, the PLO planned to adopt resolutions that would call for ending the conflict with Israel on the basis of partitioning the land between two states: Israel and Palestine.[18] This directly contradicted basic Hamas beliefs. Given that, in Hamas' view, Israel was not about to agree to any Palestinian political demands in the foreseeable future, and that compromise was not, in any case, a permissible position, Hamas took the opportunity to earn political capital at the PLO's expense.

By voicing its opposition to PLO moderation, Hamas was able to institutionalize its extreme and uncompromising position on the conflict and portray the PLO and its policies as a defeatist betrayal of its own principles. Eventually, Hamas assumed, when the Palestinian people despaired of hopes for partial solutions (such as partition of Palestine), they would understand that there is no path but *jihad* for liberating all the land—at that point Hamas believed it would inherit the mantle of Palestinian leadership.

This assertiveness manifested itself in three ways:

1) On August 18, 1988, Hamas published a Covenant which constituted a great challenge to the PLO, whose own Covenant, adopted in 1968, has been viewed as the basic document of Palestinian nationalism. While the PLO had long asserted its exclusive leadership of the Palestinian cause, Hamas, in its Covenant, assumed for itself the role of "spearhead of the struggle against international Zionism" (para. 32). By determining that *jihad* was the only way to liberate all of Palestine, it also appropriated from the PLO the exclusive right to determine the path of the Palestinian struggle.

2) As of August 21, 1988, Hamas began to use force against Arabs in the territories in order to compel them to fully observe the general strikes that it had been initiating, independently of the UNC, since June 18. Its activists burned cars and issued threats to burn gasoline stations and other businesses that stayed open. Since then, there has been

full compliance with the strikes that Hamas calls.

3) At the same time, in handbills and the media, Hamas began to publicly criticize the PLO (especially Yasser Arafat's Fatah) and its new advocacy of a political settlement. In September 1988, the leader of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Shaykh Yasin, spoke out in various media (including Israeli television) against the PLO's vision of a secular Palestinian state and against its expected declaration of independence for a Palestinian state, recognition of Israel, and formation of a government in exile. The tenor of Hamas' thought on the matter is well documented in its Handbill #28, of August 18:

> An independent Palestine? A Palestinian government? The scenario will be that the state will be declared, and Israel will announce its anger and threaten to destroy it. Then everyone will begin to think of how they can bring the leaders of the state-in-making to negotiations, and diplomatic activity will ensue over what is called "the Middle East problem." Then the turn will come of the political solution and negotiation at an international conference—and in this way they will force the Palestinian people to sign their agreement to the Jews' ownership of our ancestral land, something that will be a mark of shame on the forehead of the Muslim Palestinian people. . . A Palestinian state is more than some slogan added to a political program, and more than a notice to be distributed or positions to be awarded; it is the result of endless struggle and unlimited sacrifice.

On November 17, 1988, the 19th Palestine National Council announced the independence of the State of Palestine. While the UNC in the territories issued Handbill #29, titled "The Handbill of Joy over the Independent Palestinian State," the handbills of Hamas ignored the event entirely. It bears remembering that the PLO's own Covenant declares that all of Palestine must be liberated, and that armed struggle is the only way to do it. For this reason, Hamas depicts the PLO leaders as deviating from their own principles in their readiness to compromise on Palestine, i.e., dividing the land between the State of Israel and a Palestinian state, and worse, by means of a political solution. Hence, Hamas portrays the PLO leaders as defeatists willing to partition the country in the context of a political—as opposed to military—solution. In their stead, Hamas nominates itself as the bearer of the authentic nationalist line.

In essence, the true difference between Hamas' positions and those presented in the PLO Covenant is that rather than portraying the Palestinian struggle as a political contest between the Palestinian people (including Christians) and the State of Israel, Hamas defines the conflict as a religious struggle between Islam and Judaism. Hamas casts the PLO's original principle of non-partition of the country in a religious dimension. As its Covenant (para. 11) states: "The land of Palestine is untransferable, Islamic land (*waqf*), endowed to future generations of Muslims until the Day of Resurrection. It is forbidden to cede it or any part of it. . . This endowment will remain valid so long as there is heaven and earth."

Interestingly, in its direct reference to the PLO, Hamas' Covenant is more moderate than either its handbills or the public statements of its leaders. Instead of attacking the PLO for deserting the struggle or for defeatism, the Hamas Covenant attacks the PLO for its envisioned "secular democratic state:"

"secularism is in total contradiction to religious ideology. Positions, behavior and decisions stem from ideology. . . We cannot exchange an Islamic Palestine, in the present or future, for a secular concept" (para. 27). Nonetheless, Hamas portrays the secular flaw of the PLO as something from which it can redeem itself by returning to the Islamic fold; and if the PLO indeed "adopted Islam as its way in life," Hamas would even fight under its banner. For the time being, however, Hamas adamantly presents itself as a movement independent of the PLO.

Since the summer of 1988, and especially since early 1990, Hamas has abandoned any deference to the PLO, and has unambiguously expressed its ambition to lead the Palestinians. While its Covenant of 1988 professed not to "minimize the role of the PLO in the Arab-Israeli conflict" (para. 27) nor to "intend to compete with anyone of our people or take its place" (para. 36), its actions, slogans, and statements indicate the contrary. In late January 1990, Hamas published a 78-page pamphlet, "Hamas' Approach to the Palestine Problem," stating the principle that: "There is no leadership for the Palestinian people other than the Islamic religious leadership." In another booklet, issued in spring 1990, Hamas described itself as the political force most "culturally, socially, and practically qualified to fuse the sons of our people in one crucible, in order to bring justice and peace to the land of Palestine." Since early 1990, too, the movement's rhymed slogan, *Hamas huwa-l-asas* ("Hamas is the bedrock"), has appeared in wall-graffiti throughout the territories. When Hamas was invited to participate in the 1990 Palestine National Council, the "parliament" of the PLO, it demurred, demanding 40 percent of the seats or nothing at all.

From September through November 1990 Hamas street gangs openly clashed with those of Fatah, struggling for turf in the northern West Bank and elsewhere in the territories. While the Hamas activists rarely came out on top in these clashes, their daring and determination led Fatah, in November 1990, to sign a "Pact of Honor" *(mithaq sharaf)* with them, recognizing their right to operate as a separate organization and addressing some of their grievances.[19] The significance of the Pact was underscored in November 1991, when Fatah supporter Dr. Faiz Abu Rahmah named the members of a proposed municipal council for Gaza City allotting 30 percent of the seats to Hamas.[17]

During the Gulf crisis of 1990-1991, Hamas was restrained in its support for Iraq, largely out of fear of alienating its Saudi benefactors. Although its handbills hurled much extremist incentive at the United States and Israel, they generally refrained from voicing support for Saddam Hussein, confining themselves to more general support for the Iraqi people. Standing thus in contrast to the PLO, whose chairman, Yasser Arafat, gave unqualified support to the Iraqi leader, Hamas became the beneficiary of Saudi anger with Arafat and the recipient of reportedly enormous grants that had previously been earmarked for the PLO.[20] Thus enabled to finance its *intifada* activities, support families of imprisoned activists, and maintain payments to the families of "martyrs" of the uprising, Hamas' ability to make political headway at the expense of the squeezed PLO increased.

In the wake of the Gulf War, Hamas was vociferous in its opposition to the U.S.-led efforts to promote Arab-Israeli peace talks and was critical of the pro-PLO Palestinians in the territories who agreed to meet with

Secretary of State James Baker III. Hamas portrays the proposed peace process as. . .

> an unjust solution, based on the Arabization of Camp David, exercising all possible pressures on the Arabs to agree to a regional conference, the object of which is to consecrate the Zionist entity on our land, to recognize the legitimacy of its occupation, and its right to what it has stolen from us by force. (Hamas Handbill #76, July 1, 1991: *How Can America, the Source of Injustice, be a Symbol of Peace?*)

When the peace process was finally launched at the Madrid conference, on October 30, 1991, Hamas called for a three-day strike, which was widely observed, despite the vocal opposition of the UNC.

PLO RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGE OF HAMAS

The emergence of Hamas as a movement that competes with the PLO in the territories and undermines its claim to be the exclusive representative of the Palestinian people has disturbed and worried the PLO. This concern has manifested itself in various efforts of the UNC to take on a more religious appearance. This includes prefacing, for example, most of its handbills with the traditional *basmallah* ("In the name of Allah") and adopting the religious term *jihad* in many of its documents, instead of "armed struggle," which has been the PLO's accepted, secular definition for the confrontation with Israel. More to the point, PLO concern manifests itself in efforts by the PLO to co-opt Hamas, in the polemic it wages against that religious organization and in efforts to obstruct the development and activity of Hamas on the ground.

Efforts to Co-opt Hamas

Efforts to co-opt Islamic fundamentalists began when the founders of the UNC invited the Muslim Brotherhood to join them. Already aware that this "Islamic Stream" (*al-tiyar al-islami*, as the fundamentalist camp is called) was attractive to many Palestinians in the territories, the UNC leadership preferred to join hands rather than let the *intifada* proceed on a separate and competitive basis. Yet, as noted above, the Brotherhood refused to operate under the aegis of the PLO, deciding instead to unify various religious forces in the territories in a separate context of their own and establish Hamas.

After the death in April 1988 of Abu Jihad (the *nom de guerre* of Khalil al-Wazir), the military leader of the PLO, Fatah offered his vacant seat in the Palestine National Council to Hamas; Hamas ignored the offer. Hamas was also offered a seat in the Workers Union of the PLO, despite its not being represented in any Palestinian workers committee. Hamas also refused this offer, demanding two seats or none at all.[21] By the fall of 1988, the appearance of the Hamas Covenant, the success of Hamas in mounting separate strikes, and the increasingly open criticism of the new diplomatic path of the PLO, prompted the PLO to initiate a number of moves to bridge differences of position and to coordinate action. Sources close to the PLO reported that Yasser Arafat met with a senior member of Hamas in the Arabian Peninsula, but without any positive results. During the same period, UNC leaders initiated meetings with members of Hamas in the West Bank in order to coordinate positions, but again to no avail.

In December 1989, Abu Iyad (the *nom de guerre* of Salah Khalaf), then deputy chair-

man of the PLO, attempted to foster the impression that Hamas really was a part of the UNC. In an interview with the Jordanian paper *al-Ra'i* (December 8) Khalaf claimed that. . .

> Hamas is a part of the PLO. The leaderships [sic] of Hamas albeit tried to act separately, but they have come back to operate in complete coordination with the *intifada* leadership through the intermediary of the Fatah movement. A few of the leaderships of Hamas wished to become an alternative to the PLO, but their influence is negligible.

In private conversations, Muslim Brotherhood activists in the West Bank completely rejected these assertions. Also, on January 23, 1990, a member of the executive committee of the PLO, Abdallah al-Hurani, declared that "a democratic-nationalist dialogue has taken place between the Hamas and Fatah movements, and it was decided, as a result, to append a number of leading people of Hamas to the UNC." And again people close to Hamas totally denied these assertions.

In April 1990, Shaykh Abd al-Hamid al-Sayih, President of the Palestine National Council, extended an invitation to Hamas to participate in the preparations for a new session of the PLO's "parliament." Hamas declined the invitation, reportedly demanding that the PLO first rescind the resolutions of the 19th PNC conference in Algiers, which implied recognition of Israel and the partition of Palestine. Hamas also wanted the PLO to allocate to them some 40-50 percent of the seats. Subsequently, it was reported that Yasser Arafat was willing to grant Hamas 30 percent of the seats.[22] Whether or not this was true, an apparently confident Hamas rejected a new invitation extended by al-Sayih in late June 1991 to take part in a preparatory committee that would allot the distribution of council seats to Palestinian organizations, insisting that the distribution be determined by popular elections.[23] Ultimately, Hamas did not participate in the 20th PNC conference held in Algiers, in September 1991.

The Political and Ideological Polemic with Hamas

The PLO's main grievance toward Hamas is that its separate and competitive activity breaks the ranks, weakens the *intifada* and dilutes the overall strength of Palestinian nationalism. After Hamas' attempt in August 1988 to forcibly impose general strikes, the UNC published Handbill #25, declaring:

> The national arena has witnessed in the last few days the attempts by Hamas, a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, to impose its control over the national street and to determine a strike for Sunday, the 21st of August. Our nation's masses, with their own sensibilities, have seen this as a step that contradicts the nationalist platform that was certified by our nationalist UNC, which unites the will of the nation as a whole against the enemy. The UNC asserts that any blow to the unity of ranks is a notable service to the enemy and a blow to the *intifada*.
>
> We have extended, and continue to extend, our hand to any force that wishes to take part in the national enterprise, and we do not exclude the Hamas movement from our efforts to unify the fighting position. But attempts to impose another position on our masses by force, and the reaction to these attempts in the form of struggle and clashes, serve the interests of the enemy and his plans to harm the *intifada*.

> In this regard, we condemn the attacks by arson and the damage and destruction of a number of shops and other properties belonging to inhabitants, because of their non-compliance with Hamas' call for a strike. At the same time, we are calling for the strengthening of the unity of position, for non-violation of the consensus, and for an effort to share in the general national position by drawing certain minimum lines of coordination with the various parties in the UNC and their active forces.

In light of the criticism of the decisions taken at the 19th PNC in Algiers, and especially the declaration of an independent Palestinian state, Handbill #28 of the UNC called on "a number of fundamental elements" to "prefer the general national interest of our nation to their own hypotheses and sectarian interests, and stop their presentation of negative positions and revelations. If not, they will be serving the enemy, if they want to or not." The PLO has also accused Hamas of dividing Palestinian ranks by its treatment of Palestinian Christians. The attitude of Hamas toward Christians, not unlike that of the Muslim Brotherhood toward Christians in other countries, is a mixture of hostility and contempt. This negative posture stems from their view that Christians have introduced disruptive influences and values from the West into the Muslim world; its Covenant, for example, places blame for the PLO's much denigrated "secular state" idea on the influence of missionaries (para. 27). Owing to the Christian community's relatively affluent economic condition, Hamas also bears them enmity for "enjoying undue privilege."[24]

Hamas views Christians through the prism of their traditional status according to Islam—as people to be protected by the Muslims (*ahl al-dhimma*), but not as equals. Its Covenant (para. 31) guarantees the Christians "peace and quiet," but only "under the wings (i.e., government) of Islam." These feelings of superiority *vis-a-vis* Christians find expression in the term which Hamas refers to them: *Nasara*. This appellation, meaning "followers of the man from Nazareth," as it appears in the Koran, is seen by the Christians as an insult; in their eyes, the respectful term for them is *Masiheyun*, "followers of the Messiah." An event reflecting the contempt in which Christians are held by Hamas (and which may have been a deliberate attempt to assert Muslim superiority) was Hamas' designating Christmas Day 1989 as a general strike day (Handbill #51, December 17). After considerable public uproar, Hamas grudgingly agreed to postpone the strike by two days (until December 27), but manifestly did not do so as a concession to neighbors with equal rights. To the contrary, it specifically "allowed" the Christians to celebrate their holiday "in freedom" (according to the rights of a protected people)—citing the Koran and the Islamic tradition as authorities (Correction to Handbill #51, December 22). A Hamas leader, when asked about this affair, replied with contempt: "The Christians, like any minority, feel deprived; that's their privilege."

Religion aside, Hamas also raises the subject of Christianity as a means of arousing public opinion against the PLO. Hamas not only underscores the fact that certain prominent PLO leaders—such as George Habash, head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Na'if Hawatma, head of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine—are Christians, but that they are leftists and atheists as well. That the concept of a "secular democratic state" was initially introduced by Hawatma has been cited in

support of Hamas' assertion that Christians are the source of destructive ideas. Hamas leaders also point to the fact that Hanna Siniora, the pro-PLO activist and editor of the East Jerusalem daily *al-Fajr,* is a Christian as a means of undermining the PLO's credibility as a representative of Muslim interests.

The PLO has tried to counter these charges. In the summer of 1990 the official organ of the PLO rhetorically asked Hamas:

> Is it a patriotic act, this attempt to split the national ranks by arousing an intercommunal clamor; or your declaration of war against the Palestinian Christians on some flimsy pretext of their using and selling wine [in violation of Islamic law]?[25]

To counter stinging Hamas' claims that the *intifada* is its own doing and that the PLO has become a defeatist organization, PLO spokesmen ridicule Hamas by alluding to its parent organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, as having no tradition of fighting on behalf of the Palestinian cause. The PLO purports that, other than two exceptional cases in the history of the Arab-Zionist conflict—the activity of the religious leader, Shaykh Izz al-Din al-Qassam, in the early 1930s and the fighting in which Muslim Brothers from Egypt took part as volunteers in the Arab-Israeli war of 1948—the Brotherhood always preached the postponement of *jihad* until the perfection of Muslim society, the end of "the cultural invasion" of the West, and the establishment of an Islamic state. The PLO asks:

> Where were you when the blood of our innocent martyrs and wounded was flowing profusely? Weren't your movements, existence, financing, publications, and educational activities permitted under the occupation, at a time when we engaged [the Israelis] in battles and confrontations and sat in their prisons?[26]

Hamas operatives often argue that Shaykh Ahmad Yasin's departure from Hamas' policy against "hot weapon" attacks against Israeli soldiers (as counterproductive in the absence of an "external front"),[27] in his ordering the kidnapping and murder of two soldiers in February and May 1989, was an effort to erase this stain of the traditional Muslim Brotherhood quiescence often highlighted by PLO organs. Ironically, this bid for militant legitimacy led to the outlawing of the movement in September 1989 and the arrest of almost its entire leadership in the Gaza Strip.

The PLO also argues that Hamas' extremism and uncompromising positions harm the Palestinian cause. For example, the organ of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine characterized Hamas' belief in all of Palestine as consecrated land as performing a service for Israel "who wants to continue the conquest. This position enables the conquest to go on indefinitely. Hamas gives Israel only two options: its total dismemberment or its remaining in all of the Palestinian homeland."[28] A Fatah article accused Hamas of enabling Israel to rally world public opinion against the Palestinians by prefacing its handbills with extremist slogans like "*Khaibar, Khaibar, ya Yahud; Jaysh Muhammad saya'ud*" (Remember Khaibar, O Jews; Muhammad's army is coming back!).[29]

A frequent theme of polemics between the PLO and Hamas concerns the relative permeability of the two organizations to Israel's security services. Hamas, sensitive to the fact that Palestinian informers have fa-

cilitated Israel's control of the territories, issued a circular in February 1988 instructing its followers how to guard against disclosing harmful information under interrogation. In a January 1990 pamphlet, Hamas professed as its reason for not joining the UNC the ease with which that group could be infiltrated by "the enemy's intelligence services," claiming that it was Hamas' narrow cooperation with Fatah that led to the arrest of its Gaza Strip leadership in May 1989.[30]

A careful reading of Hamas circulars[31] yields the conclusion that the PLO activists, for their part, are also not remiss in leveling similar accusations against Hamas when activists of the two groups meet on the streets or in prison. Fatah has its own version of the arrest of the Gaza Strip leadership, which lays the blame on Hamas leader Shaykh Ahmad Yasin himself:

> Our brother, the Shaykh—the "fighter"—was arrested after coming to buy parts for his weapons from a known collaborator. It is he who revealed the names of all the members of Hamas that he knew—the exact number was 173—as well as the organizational responsibility of each of them. Then he repeated all that for the radio, the television and the newspapers.[32]

After Hamas published a booklet entitled *The Islamic Resistance Movement—Hamas—Between Present Pain and Future Hopes*, arguing its qualifications for leadership of the Palestinians, the PLO (apparently Fatah) felt sufficiently threatened to devote eight pages of the July 8, 1990 issue of its official magazine, *Filastin al-Thawra*, to a refutation of Hamas' insinuations and to level charges of its own.[33] In addition to reiterating its familiar charge that Hamas was dividing the ranks and aiding the enemy, and again ridiculing Hamas for the quiescence of the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the years, the PLO raised the stakes with the new claim that attacking, criticizing, and challenging the PLO was apostasy. Since the declaration of independence of the State of Palestine (November 1988), it argued, the PLO is a state; not just a political party or organization, it is the focus and embodiment of Palestinian sovereignty. It is also "the homeland of all the Palestinians until the flag of Palestine flies over the hills and walls of Jerusalem. This is the formula that these newborn enthusiasts (*mutahammas*, a pun on Hamas) must get to know; those who, having been born boiling think they are the alternative to water already hot." By these terms, Hamas may, if it wants, criticize one of the components of the PLO, such as Fatah or the DFLP; but Hamas must join the ranks so that the quarrel will be intramural, not an attack on the PLO from outside.

Using Islamic imagery, the article calls the Hamas critics of the PLO *murtaddin*, the traditional term applied to apostates who withdrew from Islam upon the death of Muhammad. Hamas' quarrel with the legitimacy and exclusivity of PLO leadership is depicted as "blasphemy," for. . .

> the nation has fought, over a long period of time, to realize, achieve, and consolidate this legitimacy and the exclusive PLO representation, in the Palestinian, Arab, and international spheres. An attack on the PLO must therefore be considered blasphemy and apostasy, for it is an attack on the Islamic canonical law, the faith, and the religion, no less than on the homeland and its Arab character; it is an attack on our total legitimacy and our State of Palestine and our right to belong to it. It is sedition. And sedition is worse than murder.

Obstructing the Development and Activity of Hamas

The PLO and the member groups of the UNC in the Occupied Territories, challenged by the separate activities, strength, and apparent appeal of Hamas, have resorted to a number of means to obstruct the activity of Hamas and antagonize its members.

One means of hindering Hamas activity is to physically attack Hamas activists, and reports of such Fatah-initiated assaults are commonplace throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the Rafah district, for example, Hamas issued a local handbill, titled *The Civil War is Still Dormant; God Curse Him Who Incites It* (July 18, 1990); in it, Hamas listed a series of incidents involving Fatah members claiming that Fatah supporters had attacked and wounded masked Hamas activists while they were writing wall-slogans, amid curses of cowardice and collaboration; that masked Fatah people broke into the house of a mosque preacher active in Hamas, and threatened him, wielding axes and pistols; that Fatah activists attacked Hamas activists in the Shabura neighborhood, threatening to reveal their identity to the Israelis; that Fatah activists attacked two religious boys threatening them with pistols; and that a group of Fatah youths went about ripping down and erasing Hamas slogans. Although the November 1990 "Pact of Honor" was supposed to put an end to such attacks, they have continued.[34]

Prior to the Gulf crisis, the PLO apparently also used economic tools to hinder Hamas activity. In the July 13, 1990 edition of the magazine of the Muslim Brotherhood inside Israel, *al-Sirat*, the PLO-affiliated board of directors of the Islamic University in Gaza was accused of having withheld salaries for four months in order to destabilize the university administration, which is largely in the hands of Hamas. Similarly, it is widely believed in the Gaza Strip that one reason for the relative lack of support for Hamas candidates in the elections to the Doctors Association in January 1990 was the fact that the head of the Fatah list, Dr. Zakarya al-Agha, controlled PLO funds that went to unemployed physicians and to doctors who treated *intifada* victims without charge.

Another means of countering Hamas is the harassment of its members inside the prisons. This has often been indicated by Hamas handbills, such as one distributed in Gaza on May 4, 1990, and signed by Hamas inmates in Israeli jails, complaining of "suffering at the hands of their Fatah prison mates." The inmates specifically cite anti-Islamic behavior, such as cursing, disturbing prayers, and overt eating during Ramadan; the preventing of new Hamas inmates from residing with their fellow-partisans (via the Fatah controlled General National Committee which determines the placement of new inmates); brutal beating of Hamas inmates of all ages; repeated accusations of Hamas committing treason and collaboration; the blocking of Hamas preachers from delivering Friday sermons; the deprivation of Hamas inmates of canteen services such as cigarettes and soft drinks; and the divestiture of Hamas inmates of winter clothes and writing materials.

A later Hamas handbill, composed in a Negev prison and distributed in Hebron on April 28, 1991, added the following to the list of complaints against Fatah: preventing members of Hamas from representation on the "revolutionary committees" or participating in the drafting of operative decisions that bear upon conditions in the prison

compounds; preventing Hamas inmates from participating in the General National Committees, (called "*shawishiyya*" or "distribution" committees by the inmates) which represent the inmates before the prison authorities; preventing Hamas inmates from participating in the "work committees" that supervise activities related to the kitchen, work, book distribution, and sanitation; and reading vituperative anti-Hamas circulars out loud to the inmates. All these alleged abuses, Hamas argued, indicate that Fatah had violated the "Pact of Honor" in which it pledged to refrain from harassing Hamas people in the prisons.

THE HAMAS-JORDAN CONNECTION

A more subtle and indirect facet of the Hamas challenge to the PLO is Hamas' special relationship with Jordan. The Jordan-Hamas relationship is marked by a certain interdependence that is manifest in the subtle support that each affords the other. Simply put, Hamas helps to maintain Jordanian influence in the occupied territories at the expense of the PLO's exclusivity there.

Jordanian support of Hamas has been mainly financial. Funds reach Hamas from the Jordanian government via its *Waqf* Ministry in Jordan. That ministry is responsible for financing a large part of the *Waqf* Administration in the West Bank, which in turn maintains most West Bank mosques and the salaries of some 4,000 religious functionaries, including preachers. Since many employees of the *Waqf* are active in the Muslim Brotherhood—and thus in Hamas as well—many Hamas activists are maintained by salaries they receive from Jordan. In addition, the department of *Zakat* (ritual charity) in the *Waqf* Administration channels contributions from the Jordanian government and other groups, outside of Jordan, to Hamas.

The Jordanian government has also extended political support to Hamas in the guise of humanitarian aid. In April 1989, for example, in response to an appeal from Shaykh Yasin, it eased bureaucratic rules for people and goods moving from the Gaza Strip to Jordan. In January 1990, Jordan again extended aid to Shaykh Yasin following a parliamentary decision to instruct the Foreign Ministry to appeal to governments and international organizations throughout the world to intervene on behalf of the Shaykh at the opening of his trial before an Israeli military court. Although this initiative did not formally originate with a government decision, but rather in Amman's parliament where Islamic representation is considerable, it nonetheless amounted to official Jordanian support—with the added advantage of shielding the regime from accusations of undermining the PLO's position in the occupied territories.

Jordan's interest in Hamas stems from the following considerations:

Hamas weakens the status of the PLO in the occupied territories. So long as the PLO continues to enjoy recognition as the exclusive representative of the Palestinians in the occupied territories, Jordan's chances for playing a role in a solution of the Palestinian problem that will serve Jordanian interest diminishes accordingly. By contrast, as Hamas' strength in the territories grows at the expense of the PLO, chances may improve for non-PLO elements, including Jordan, to have a say in the future disposition of the territories.

Hamas can represent Jordanian interests in the occupied territories. On certain occasions, when the possibility of a political initiative on the West Bank and Gaza arose, Jordan urged Hamas to participate alongside the PLO in local political bodies and thus further Jordanian interests from within. Thus, in the fall of 1988, when the convening of an international conference seemed a real possibility, Jordan reportedly urged Hamas to join the UNC and to participate in the delegation from the occupied territories to the expected conference (either as a separate delegation or as a part of the Jordanian delegation).[35] It is not unlikely that the public statements of Gazan Hamas leader Dr. Mahmud Zahar advocating a commensurate representation for Hamas in the delegation that was then expected to negotiate shortly with Israel originated in Jordan's suggestion and urgings.[36] Also, despite Hamas' public opposition to the Madrid conference, it specifically refrained from condemning Jordan's participation.

A positive attitude to Hamas enhances good relations with the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. Prior to the cooling of relations between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan following the 1991 Gulf War, it was natural that Jordanian authorities would extend aid to, and demonstrate a positive attitude toward, Hamas, given that its ultimate parent organization was the Jordanian branch of the Brotherhood.[37]

The foregoing notwithstanding, Jordan's aid to Hamas has been cautious and limited for a number of reasons:

a) Jordan does not wish to be accused by the PLO of undermining its position in the occupied territories.

b) The Jordanian regime fears that the strengthening of Hamas and the spread of its extremist ideas may lead to the heightened influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in the East Bank, a development that might endanger the regime. Moreover, a dominant and extreme Hamas could prove an encumbrance to Jordan in the event that she assumes responsibility for the territories in the future.

c) Amman also fears that a strong Hamas could limit its latitude for negotiating with Israel.

Hamas' positive approach to the Jordanian regime is manifested on a number of levels:

a) Hamas circulars, as well as the sermons delivered by the preachers associated with Hamas, refrain from criticizing King Hussein or his policies, which include the acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 242, the advocacy of an international conference and participation in the Madrid Peace Conference. (By contrast, these Hamas organs express bitter criticism of the PLO for the same policies).

b) In handbills, sermons, and public interviews, Hamas supporters reiterate the demand that Jordan restore the ties with the West Bank she severed at the end of July 1988. Since Jordan has left itself an opening through which it could return to the West Bank by explaining that the King severed his ties "in response to the request by Yasser Arafat to assume responsibility for the population of the West Bank," this very demand by Hamas—as a rising power in the territories—may confer legitimacy upon the King's future return to the West Bank, in the event

that circumstances favorable to such a development arise.

c) In this connection, many Hamas leaders and the rank and file alike privately express a preference for Jordan over the PLO to negotiate an end to Israel's occupation and support the idea of confederation with Jordan over an independent Palestinian state.

HAMAS AND THE PEACE PROCESS

When the Arab-Israeli Peace Conference was about to convene in Madrid on October 30, 1991, Hamas, together with the PFLP and the DFLP, called a three-day strike to protest Palestinian participation. In adopting a policy of opposition to the peace process, which was supported by Fatah and a significantly large section of the population, the Islamic leadership was acting on its own view that the process would produce nothing tangible, owing to Israel's unwillingness to cede land. Accordingly, even if its position proved unpopular for a time, it would ultimately be vindicated and bring credit to Hamas for pursuing a consistent policy.

Hamas' strike was, indeed, only partially successful. Where it succeeded it was due to the popular perception that Hamas had become a force not to be flouted with impunity, and that adherence to Fatah's counter-call not to strike conferred no immunity from harm. Where the strike was violated, it reflected a widespread determination to express support for a possible resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict that might end the occupation, despite the dangers of rebuking Hamas. This trend was manifested even more poignantly when, in the euphoric atmosphere that followed the Palestinian delegation's warm reception in Madrid, Hamas made a poor showing in the elections to the Council of the Gaza Chamber of Commerce in mid-November 1991, winning only three out of thirteen seats.

However, in the wake of the second round of peace talks held in Washington in December, the tables in the territories seemed to turn once more in Hamas' favor. The humiliating inability of the Palestinians to win recognition as a separate delegation fostered an atmosphere of despair, more receptive to the position taken by Hamas and other opponents of the peace process. On December 30, 1991, Hamas activists were able to break up a pro-peace rally in Tulkarm, harassing and preventing Faisal Husseini, the leading Fatah representative in the territories, from speaking. Then on March 4, 1992, Hamas scored a stunning victory in the Ramallah Chamber of Commerce elections, nearly scoring a clean sweep in the nationalist heartland of the West Bank. There is little doubt that a breakdown of the peace process will vindicate Hamas' claim that peace with Israel is impossible, allowing it to make some political gains at the expense of Fatah and to further radicalize Palestinian politics in the territories.

What, however, can Hamas be expected to do if the peace process succeeds, leading to an end of the occupation on the basis of territorial compromise?

1. Rather than automatically engage in subversive activity against a peace that leaves parts of Palestine in Israeli hands—as its ideology might portend—Hamas' strategy will most likely be guided by the degree to which the West Bank and Gazan Palestinians, at large, accept the terms of the peace agreement. Islamic fundamentalists are fundamentally cautious. Since their ultimate

mission is to indoctrinate Muslims toward the goal of creating a devout Islamic society, they deem their political survival essential. Accordingly, fundamentalists normally stop short of totally alienating Muslim public opinion or strong governments.

2. Furthermore, should most Palestinians find themselves in accord with the terms of peace, Hamas will be able to pursue a policy whereby it publicly denigrates the peace, but actually refrains from taking actions to thwart its implementation. That ability to do so stems from one of the movement's unwritten positions, namely that the restoration of some Muslim territory in Palestine is preferable to restoring none—providing, of course, that efforts to regain Palestine continue.[38]

3. Finally, Hamas will try to secure a role in Palestinian political bodies that would be established at the end of the occupation. In light of the friction prevailing between itself and the secular/leftist branches of the PLO, Hamas is unlikely to cede its political destiny to their absolute control.

NOTES

1. Educational Officer. Civil Administration, West Bank, May 1988.

2. For the PLO-operated Islamic Jihad group, see Robert Satloff, "Islam in the Palestinian Uprising" (Washington D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1988), pp. 3-7. Also, Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Yaari, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising—Israel's Third Front* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), pp. 51-8.

3. Hamas itself takes credit for this consciousness. See interview with Shaykh Ahmad Yasin in Hamas' monthly magazine (published in England), *Filastin al-Muslima,* October 1988.

4. Hamas claims that the first six fatalities of the *intifada* were its adherents. See interview with unnamed Hamas leaders, *Filastin-al Muslima,* May 1990.

5. Details regarding the origins of Hamas may be found in the "Writ of Indictment" against Shaykh Ahmad Yasin (Israeli Military Court, Gaza, Prosecutor's File 1996/89, in Hebrew).

6. On the establishment of the Unified National Command, see Schiff and Yaari, *op. cit.*, pp. 188-219.

7. Previous disorders in the occupied territories in 1974-75, 1976, 1977 and 1981, had also been termed *intifada.* See "Attributes of the Intifada of Autumn 1981," *Filastin al-Thawra* (special edition) 1982, pp. 152-59.

8. *Covenant of Hamas,* paragraph 11.

9. *Ibid.*, paragraph 22.

10. E.g., Hamas Handbill #16, May 13, 1988.

11. E.g., Hamas Handbill, #31, November 27, 1988.

12. The following discussion derives primarily from conversations in August of 1990 with anonymous sources active in these associations and in UNRWA.

13. Oral communication, Gaza Strip, August 1990.

14. *The Jerusalem Post*, June 20, 1991.

15. *The New York Times*, November 6, 1991.

16. *al-Nahar*, April 14, 1991.

17. United Press International (UPI) Wire Report, November 19, 1991.

18. These speculations began with the publication of a document by Bassam Abu Sharif, Arafat's spokesman, in June of that year, which spoke, for the first time, of Palestinian co-existence with Israel. (See Satloff, *op. cit.*, p. 13).

19. For the 1990 clashes, in which 83 persons were wounded, and details on the Pact, see *Jerusalem Report*, November 29, 1990, pp. 39-40.

20. *Jerusalem Report*, May 23, 1991.

21. *Filastin al-Thawra*, July 8, 1990, p. 8.

22. *Jerusalem Report*, November 29, 1990.

23. *al-Quds*, July 16, 1991; *al-Anwar* (Beirut), August 10, 1991.

24. In January 1990 Hamas distributed, in Christian neighborhoods of Bethlehem and East Jerusalem, a circular issued by the Muslim Brotherhood of Jordan containing a list of wealthy and prominent Christians in that country and protesting their stature.

25. *Filastin al-Thawra*, July 8, 1990, p. 7.

26. *Ibid.*

27. See interview with Ahmad Yasin, in *Filastin al-Muslima*, May 1990.

28. *al-Hurriyya*, September 18, 1988.

29. *Filastin al-Thawra*, July 8, 1990. At Khaibar, the Prophet's supporters massacred and banished the Jewish inhabitants in the year 628.

30. Discussed in *Ha'aretz*, January 12, 1990.

31. E.g., local handbill, Rafah, July 18, 1990 and Hamas prisoners' handbill, May 4, 1990.

32. *Filastin al-Thawra*, July 8, 1990, p. 7.

33. The article not only refers to Fatah in the first person plural, but also accuses Hamas of trying to form an anti-Fatah front with the PFLP when the latter began to criticize Arafat's policies, in winter 1989-90. Confirmation of these Hamas-PFLP contacts may be found in interviews with the Hamas leaders in *Filastin al-Muslima*, May 1990.

34. E.g., Hamas prisoners handbill, April 20, 1991, detailing Fatah's violations of the Pact.

35. Conversations with sources close to Hamas, Autumn 1988.

36. Dr. al-Zahar's statements of January 12, 1989 were reported in *The Jerusalem Post* (December 14, 1989) and *al-Nahar* (December 17, 1989.) A Hamas disavowal of these statements (for indicating a willingness to negotiate with Israel) was published in *Filastin al-Muslima*, May 1990.

37. A highly-placed PLO official expressed the PLO's concern lest the strong Islamic fundamentalist performance in the November 1989 elections in Jordan (they won 40 percent of the seats in the House of Representatives) strengthen Hamas in the occupied territories (*al-Qabas*, November 30, 1989).

38. For more on Hamas' unwritten positions, see Clinton Bailey, "An Alternative to the PLO: Fundamentalists," *The New York Times*, September 9, 1989.

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