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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF APPLIED AND  
SOCIAL SCIENCES



Foreign Policy of the Islamic Resistance Movement  
(HAMAS)

Master Thesis

By

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Nicosia 2003

**Hazem Balousha: Foreign Policy of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)**

Approval of the Director of the Graduate School of Applied  
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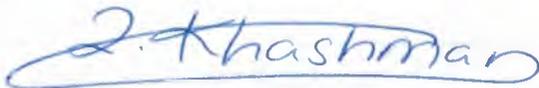
  
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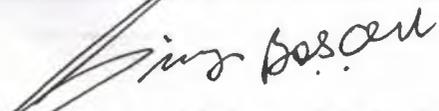
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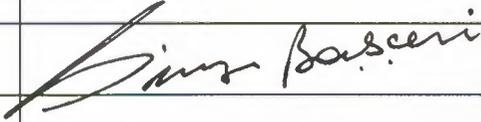
## THESIS

<b>Title</b>	Foreign Policy of The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)		
<b>DESCRIPTION</b> The aim of the thesis is to figure out the importance of foreign policy and relations with the regional and international community to Hamas Movement, and discover the relations between Hamas and Arabic and Islamic countries and also with West countries.			
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## JURY'S DECISION

The Jury has decided to accept the student's thesis.  
The decision was taken unanimously.

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## *To the Land of Palestine*

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# Introduction

Hamas as an organization was found during the First Intifada in the late of 1980s (see closer p. 4). As the Intifada continued from year to year and the press events reshuffled the deck of political cards in Palestinian and Arab affairs, Hamas became better established. Its influence spread due to its participation in the Intifada, the operations of its military wing, and its social work. The popular support that Hamas gained in this way molded it to a significant rival of the PLO in the period between 1988 and 1994, when the Palestinian Authority was established in accordance with the 1993 Oslo Accord. Popular support for Hamas found expression in electoral victories at training institutes, universities, associations, chambers of commerce, and municipal councils, as well as in its control over mosques and Islamic societies. During the first Intifada, and at a time when Hamas was at its peak, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the founder of Hamas and its current leader, claimed that the Israelis urged him to take over the administration of the Gaza Strip on their behalf. However, he turned down the offer, saying that "it would have been crazy for us to consent to be mere stand-ins for Israeli rule."<sup>1</sup>

Hamas's political importance stems from the public support it has gathered in excess of its potential membership base and outside its institutional structure. Its grass-root support goes beyond the deeply religious persons or those who subscribe its doctrinal position and ideology. In fact, some observers point out that hundreds of thousands of its Palestinian supporters "don't even know what the inside of a mosque looks like."<sup>2</sup> From the perspective of many Israelis, Hamas has moved beyond the stage of being a charitable society and has turned into a large movement with multiple roles, and it relies on the support and sympathy of the average Palestinian.<sup>3</sup> Israel itself, despite its fierce attack on Hamas—which it describes as a terrorist organization—and its effort to rally opposition to the movement in the Middle East and the world in general, is prepared in the final analysis to talk to Hamas, because of the influence and support it enjoys in the Arab and Islamic worlds.<sup>4</sup>

The leaders of Hamas have a more grandiose view of their base of support. Abdul Aziz Rantisi, one of the founders of the movement, says that "Hamas has the widest popular base in the world because Hamas' actions resonate with Muslims from South Africa to India, Pakistan, and China; and from Latin America to the United States and to Europe; all Muslims support what Hamas is doing."<sup>5</sup>

In brief, Hamas constitutes a new link in the chain of Palestinian struggle and thus needs to be studied, analyzed, and understood. The aim of this study is to constitute a qualitative addition to the list of indispensable readings for understanding this Palestinian and Islamic phenomenon and its relations with other actors inside or outside of Palestine. Hamas was formed more than one decade ago, yet the available studies about it (in term of foreign policy and its external relations) —whether in Arabic or in Western languages— and about Palestinian Islamists in general are neither sufficiently comprehensive nor detailed. Leaving aside partisan and rhetorical writings, academic literature in Arabic, although relying on original sources, remains

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Yassin, *Filastine al-Muslima* [Muslim Palestine], April 1998, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Gil Seden, "Taming the Monster," *The Jewish Journal*, 4-10 November 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Yaacov Biri (former head of Israeli secret police, Shabak), *World Witness*, 6 December 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Ezer Weizman (former President of Israel), *Al-Hayat* (London), 10 October 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Abdul Aziz Rantisi, *Al-Wasat* (London), 1 September 1997.

insufficient and not comprehensive, taking the form of articles and short to medium-length monographs.

Western literature, for its part, is of two types. The first does not rely on Arabic language sources, with the result that the relevant studies tend to be superficial and somewhat repetitious of journalistic coverage. The second type, which makes use of Arabic texts, includes better and more solid research but usually does not give a complete picture of the multifaceted phenomenon that Hamas represents. Moreover, both types are concerned with specific aspects of Hamas, such as its history, ideology, or political behavior, and do not provide a comprehensive view.

The Islamists did not enjoy a measure of popularity to rival that of the PLO because of their nonparticipation in the "resistance project." One can say that had it not been for the regional and international momentum behind the peace process, which began in Madrid in 1991 and resulted in the Oslo Agreement in 1993, the current balance of power among Palestinian forces would have been radically different.

This study is organized into four chapters. The first chapter provides the raise of Hamas, its beginning and first activities, its ties with Muslim Brotherhood, and its ideology. It also views the Hamas's understanding of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The structure of Hamas will be viewed too in this chapter, as well as the political and military wings, and the social and security units of Hamas. This chapter also tackles Hamas's political relations with Palestinian groups and Palestinian Authority; it is divided to ties with Fateh /PLO, secular and leftist fractions, and Islamic jihad, but the discussion is briefly because the main topic of the study is about foreign policy of Hamas.

The second chapter of the study offers details of Hamas's political relations with Arab and Islamic states. Especially Hamas's relations with specific countries such as, Jordan and Syria which have sponsored Hamas in their territories and allow it to work more freely than other Arab countries. This chapter views Hamas's relations with Sudan and Gulf states which have ties with Hamas because of its Islamic roots. The main support of Hamas financially comes from Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia. Iran is one of most important states maintaining good relations with Hamas, which are viewed in this chapter.

The third chapter concerns the development of Hamas's general politics toward Western regimes, and Hamas's relations with United States and Western countries, especially European States. Of particular importance are Hamas's relations with Israel, and the various stages in the relations between Hamas and Israel.

The fourth and last chapter tackles Hamas's relations with regional organizations especially Arab League and Islamic organization Conference, and talks about the Hamas's attention to those organizations. Then this chapter views the Hamas's relations with United Nations and its different bodies, and how Hamas deals with this international organization which released many resolutions tied with Palestinian cause. The position of Hamas toward these resolutions is discussed, too. The view on Hamas and contemporary international law is offered in this chapter, and also the question how Hamas believes in interim solution. Finally, Hamas's attitude of recent Road Map which includes the establishment of Palestine state on the Palestinian Territories that occupied since 1967 is discussed.

Three important points need to be made. The first is that this study does not contain a detailed account of Palestinian political events during the period that it covers, since the focus is on Hamas's positions and views and responses to these events. An effort was made to avoid unwieldy length, which would have happened if such details were included. The second point is that some extracts and texts are quoted more than some

others, particularly passages from the Hamas Charter, because the texts in question are relevant for several topics and fit under more than one heading. The third point concerns private interviews conducted by the author with Hamas leaders and prominent figures. My purpose was to ask questions relating to theoretical issues concerning general political perspectives rather than focus on specific events and Hamas's position on those events at the time of their occurrence. The movement's reactions, statements, and positions on those events were taken from releases at the time, such as numbered periodical statements or statements made by prominent figures in Hamas or published press interviews with them.

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## Chapter I

# *Hamas thought and structure*

### *The Roots of Hamas and its Ideology:*

The Hamas (a word meaning courage and bravery) is a Palestinian Islamic organization which became active in the early stages of the Intifada, operating primarily in the Gaza Strip but also in the West Bank. The movement was headed primarily by people identified with the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).

In the course of the Intifada, Hamas gained momentum, expanding its activity also in the West Bank, to become the dominant Islamic organization in the Occupied Territories. It defined its highest priority as Jihad (Holy War) for the liberation of Palestine and the establishment of an Islamic Palestine "from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River". By its participation in street resistance, it boosted its appeal in the eyes of the Palestinians, further enhancing its growth potential and enabling it to play a central role in the Intifada. As a result of its fight and attacks against Israelis, Hamas was outlawed in September 1989.

**Hamas** is the Arabic acronym for "The Islamic Resistance Movement" (*Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyya*). The organizational and ideological sources of Hamas can be found in the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) which was set up in the 1920s in Egypt and renewed and strengthened its activity in the 1960s and 1970s in the Arab world, mainly in Jordan and Egypt.

The Muslim Brothers were also active in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The cornerstone of the Muslim Brotherhood is the system of essentially social activity which they call *Da'wah*. In the twenty years preceding the Intifada, they built an impressive social, religious, educational and cultural infrastructure, which gave them a political stronghold, both in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. It was successful despite their lack of support for the nationalist policy of armed struggle.

A great part of the success of Hamas/Muslim Brotherhood is due to their influence in the Gaza Strip. The large numbers of refugees, the socio-economic hardships of the population in the refugee camps and the relatively low status of the nationalist elements there until recently, enabled Hamas to deepen its roots among the refugees. Its emphasis on a solution that would include the liberation of all Palestine is more attractive to Palestinians, beyond the social factors that nourish the Islamic influence in that area.

The Islamic infrastructure in the Palestine was separate but parallel to the nationalist institutions built by the PLO in the 1980s. Hamas was successful in forming a social system which has provided an alternative to the socio-political structure of the PLO. Hamas's prestige is based on both its ideological and practical capabilities, as a movement whose contribution to the daily life of the Palestinians is not less than its contribution to the struggle against Israel and the occupation.

The significant change in the Muslim Brotherhood movement was the transition from passivity towards the Israeli rule to militancy and large-scale resistance activity,

especially in and from the Gaza Strip. The movement changed its name to the Islamic Resistance Movement - Hamas, and emphasized its Palestinian character and patriotism. It professed to be not just a parallel force but an alternative to the almost absolute control of the PLO and its fractions over the Palestinians in the Palestinian territories.

The formation of Hamas almost coincided with outbreak of the Intifada. This is why Hamas made 8 December 1987 the official date for its emergence, although its first communiqué was released until several days later. This temporal coincidence really indicates a remarkable degree of prior causal interaction of two events. This is not to imply that the turn by Muslim Brotherhood to active resistance against the Israeli occupation precipitated the Intifada, but it was an auxiliary causal factor for popular rebellion. In a sense, the joint eruption of the Intifada and emergence of Hamas was culmination of two parallel, but not separate, curves of changes, one national and one partisan. While the first reflected the general Palestinian mood toward the deadlock that was facing their national cause, the second represented the increasing consciousness of resistance and confrontation among the Palestinian Islamists.

With regard to curve of changes at the national level, a number of major developments counted heavily in making the conditions ripe for the Intifada. Outside Palestine, several major and frustrating developments led to a general sense of despair among Palestinian under occupation. Foremost of these were the eviction of the PLO from Lebanon in 1982 and its shift from military to political action. The decreasing Arab interest in the Palestine cause was evident at the 1986 Arab summit in Amman. Within Palestine, the increasing socioeconomic and political pressures caused by the conditions of the Israeli occupation were tremendous and pushed situation of the boiling point.

On the eve of the outbreak of the Intifada, Israeli's policy regarding the Gaza Strip and West Bank was remarkably arrogant and highhanded, formulated in the full flush of victory, and indicating that Israel believed it had acquired a firm grip on Palestinian society in addition to its political and military control over the land of Palestine. However, as Palestinians sensed that their political options had been foreclosed and their economic situation had deteriorated quiet precipitously, there was a built-up sense of resentment awaiting the spark of revolution. In addition, a new generation had not directly experienced defeat as had their parents and was not cowed quite by it. These Palestinians constituted fertile soil for rebellion.

At the partisan level, the curve of changes encompassing the regional and domestic developments that accounted for the rise of the Palestinian Islamic tide and conditions conducive to embodiment of resistance was profoundly stretching upwards. In the wake of the Islamic awakening sweeping the region and the notable eclipse of leftist and secular nationalist movements, a wave of religiosity spread in the Occupied Territories, and an activist generation of "mosque youth" arose who were ready to enlist in any resistance activity. These young men, most of them born after the 1967 war, engaged in confrontations with Israeli authorities, blocked streets, and took part in Intifada activities.

The MB had ignited unrest in the mosques during 1982-83, which resulted in tempestuous demonstrations flowing out of the mosques in the wake of inflammatory Israeli actions, such as the incursion into al-Aqsa mosque. Sheikh Yassin put together an organization for military operation that was discovered in 1984. Islamic Jihad began operations in the mid-1980s, which created a new atmosphere in Gaza Strip and united the Islamic and nationalist dimensions of armed struggle. Then there was the decision of the MB in the summer of 1985 to revolutionize the masses and to create or

seize opportunities for a general popular uprising.<sup>1</sup> Other mass demonstrations followed in 1985-86. As the outbreak of Intifada drew nearer in 1987, the Muslim Brethren started issuing signed communiqués that exuded a new spirit of resistance and bore various signatures, such as *Haraket al-Kifah al-Islami* (the Islamic struggle movement), *Al-Murabitun 'ala Ard al-Isra'* (the vigilantes of the land of Prophet's midnight journey), or *Haraket al-Muqawmah al-Islamiyya* (the Islamic resistance movement).<sup>2</sup>

On December 1987 two days after several incidents, the political bureau of Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza met and agreed that it is the right moment to translate their new conviction into practice and assign top priority to the confrontation with the Israeli occupation.<sup>3</sup> At that meeting, the first communiqué of *Haraket al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyya* (the Islamic resistance movement, whose acronym is in Arabic Hamas) was written, and those present Sheikh Yassin, Abdul Aziz Al-Rantisi, Salah Shehada, Muhammad Sham'ah, Isa al-Nashar, Abdel Fattah Dukhan, and Ibrahim al-Yazuri became the founders of Hamas.

The communiqué was distributed in the Gaza strip on 11 and 12 December and in the West Bank on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. Hamas applied the term Intifada (uprising) to the mass demonstrations, saying that "the Intifada of our steadfast people in the occupied land constitutes a rejection of occupation and its oppression" and adding that the Intifada was a new beginning that would "prick the conscience of those who are panting after an emaciated peace and pointless international conferences." The communiqué declared that "our people know the right path-the path of sacrifice and martyrdom-and would inform the world that the Jews were committing Nazi-style crimes against our people and would drink from same cup."<sup>4</sup>

Several reasons seem to explain socio-economic makeup. Owing to the fact that many movement members grew up in villages or small towns, they tend to be most susceptible to promise of a better life afforded by processes of modernization in the city. The impoverishment by which they were surrounded in the village, continued socio-economic gaps they experience in their new environments, can cause considerable anger and bitterness.

This bitterness can be strengthened and deepened proportionately with the enhancement of education and the more educated members become, the more rejecting of the existing socio-economic order they tend to be. This is compounded by the fact that new migrants to a city, lacking the "sophistication" of city dwellers can often be subject to feelings of inferiority in their new surroundings.

This raises a related point which is that migration from villages to cities is often accompanied by social alienation in the new environment as well as by loss of identity. Since most of these particular migrants find themselves living in the impoverished outskirts of the cities, they are likely to resent excessive wealth, loss of identity and corruption. Hence they begin to organize under the rubric of religion as a safeguard against the unpredictable ills of their new environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Husam al-Nasir, *al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya (Hama): al-Intiqal wa mo'adalit al-Sira'* (Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas: the launching and plan of struggle) (London: Muslim Palestine Publications, 1990), p.4.

<sup>2</sup> Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising- Israel's Third Front* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), p. 221.

<sup>3</sup> Abdul Aziz al-Rantisi, interview about the decision of the Muslim Brotherhood to establish Hamas, *Filastin al-Muslima* (Muslim Palestine) (London), October 1990.

<sup>4</sup> The First Communiqué of Hamas, 14 December 1987.

Furthermore, many members are educated in the natural sciences and are familiar with the world of modern technology, but only as far as their academic training requires. Education is seen as being received in an academic vacuum which lacks any relation to the spiritual or humane. This in turn encourages a cold attitude towards modernity. The introduction to modernity through only technical means can also promote the view that modernity will lead to gradual "moral disintegration". A tendency has also been noted that members have rejected traditional religious organizations for being too passive or too subservient to the government and therefore too much a part of the existing social order to offer satisfactory refuge.<sup>1</sup>

The gap between people in such circumstances and dominant social order in the city contributes to further psychological, social, economic and political distance. Exclusion from prosperous strata that enjoy the benefits of modernity while they have to live in slums and pray in deterioration mosques increases the alienation which becomes the strong driving force for them to resent, reject and organize. Their objective is to preserve themselves as individuals, preserve their identity and their consciousness, even if this means coming into open clashes with those they perceive as their "alienators".

Protection of themselves means fighting against all that which is considered to contribute to the breakdown in society and in order to raise their own morale they reflect on a utopian past and reinstate this ideal as an offensive to the present.

They however, a product of modernity; a modern people who see themselves as enlightened but alienated from enlightenment. Consequently, Islamic principles seem more precious than ever before as adoption of an Islamic way of life relieves the suffering encountered in their modern lives. In particular, if this suffering is perceived as part of a history of persecution, they can liken themselves to the Muslims at the beginning of their empire who, though numerically disadvantaged, managed to successfully battle the Jahilites or unenlightened ones.<sup>2</sup>

Although this is a scenario for composition of Islamic movements in general, and particularly the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, it provides an excellent illustration of the socio-economic characteristics which are evident within the Hamas movement.

Palestinian political leaders and spokespersons for the mainstream tend to come from cities or at least large towns and, more often than not, from the richer West Bank. Most would be considered members of the middle class and have a relatively comfortable family background. Members of the secular leftist groups although having a wider base of origin also tend to members of the middle class. Hamas members on the other hand tend to be from either smaller towns or villages or from areas hit most heavily by occupation. Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the spiritual head of Hamas, for example, was one of the many whose families were made refugees in 1948 and he grew up in Gaza.

Educationally, Hamas members tend to fit the characterization outlined above and many engineers and doctors in West Bank and Gaza, claim allegiance to Movement.

Consistent with socio-economic conditions outlined above, it is in Gaza in particular where the movement is at its strongest. Although the occupation obviously affects the whole region, Gaza is so impoverished and seemingly forgotten by outside world that it is a million miles away from cities elsewhere in terms of wealth and lifestyle. The fact that the Movement began under military occupation lends further support to claim of righteousness and use of historical reference is evident in many Hamas leaflets.

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<sup>1</sup> Ghassan Salame. "Islam and the West" *Foreign Policy*, no. 90 (spring 1993), p.24.

<sup>2</sup> Azmi Bishara. "Islamic Movement and Arab Nationalism." *News From Within*, vol. VIII, no. 8 (August 5<sup>th</sup> 1992), pp. 3-6.

Frequent references are made to: the Battle of Yarmuk, the hero of which Khalid Ibn al-Walid, was referred to as the sword of Allah y the prophet Mohammad; Salah al-Din who defeated the Crusaders in 1187; Bibars who fought the Crusaders in 1260; and Jaf'r Ibn abu Talib who fought against the Byzantines.

The fact of displacement alone can therefore be sufficient reason for joining a movement which aims to redress this wrong-doing. Even without the religious connotation of alienation from the homeland, there is a loss of livelihood, property and heritage which are sufficient in themselves to make the Hamas movement attractive to those who have suffered them.

In the months immediately after Hamas founding, its leaders set out upon an intensive program to mobilize the Palestinian masses. The main vehicle for disseminating their ideas was distributing of leaflets throughout Palestine. The Hamas Covenant was drawn up, explaining the organization's ideological sources, its ideas on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its approach as a Muslim – Palestinian movement, and its attitude toward the PLO. Indeed, the Covenant, in large measure a response to the world-view of the Palestinian nationalist camp, establishes the conceptual foundation on which the Movement has been built; its principles have remained in force even after the commencement of the Middle East peace process, which dramatically changed frames of reference for the Israeli- Palestinian conflict. The covenant focuses on several issues: the bond between Islam and Palestinian nationalism, attitudes toward the PLO, the strategy for conducting the struggle, the vision of a Palestinian state, and the attitude towards Jews and the state of Israel.

### *Hamas Understanding of Conflict:*

The general interpretation (among others) in these studies is that Hamas's principal motivation for declaring war on the Zionist colonial project in Palestine is because it is a Jewish enterprise in conflict with Islamic society in Palestine. The inference drawn from this view is that the struggle is in fact an ideological conflict between Islam and Judaism. However, a study of literature produced by Hamas pertaining to its perspective on the struggle reveals that Hamas's position is more multidimensional than this narrow interpretation would indicate.

There is no denying that most important documents of Hamas- its Charter, political memoranda, and communiqués- have a doctrinaire flavor. The Movement uses Islamic discourse to mobilize and energize the masses and criticize official Palestinian and Arab organizations for their positions on negotiations with Israel. However, taken as a whole and over time, the pronouncements of Hamas have vacillated between depicting the struggle as a purely ideological one and portraying it as resistance to a foreign occupying power and thus a means of combating tyranny and driving out the occupier. This vacillation was seen in another way as a dilemma that faced Hamas: either it had to give precedence to "Islamicizing Palestine or Palestinianizing Islam."<sup>1</sup> If one looks at the Hamas Charter, its original and most basic document, one finds that religious discourse is dominant. Although one also sees a focus on fighting for one's rights, land, values, and justice, the document relies on the spirit of Islamic Jihad and its considerable potential to galvanize support. Jihad, as set forth in the Hamas Charter, is designed to prevent the infidels from ruling over the land of Islam.

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<sup>1</sup> Menachem Llein, "Competing Brothers: The Web of Hamas-PLO Relations" in Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Efraim Inbar, eds., *Religious Radicalism in the Greater Middle East* (London: Frank Cass, 1997).

Thus, the issue is not Jihad against the infidel per se. The intent of another passage of the Charter, which refers to the sacred Islamic nature of the cause, is to appeal to the broader population of Palestine. In quest of support, "We must instill in the minds of Muslim generations that Palestinian cause is a religious cause. It must be solved on this basis because Palestine contains the Islamic holy sanctuaries."<sup>1</sup> In the final analysis, and as noted by Rashid Khalidi, Hamas and other Palestinian Islamist organizations "subsume Palestinian nationalism within one or another form of Islamic identity."<sup>2</sup>

While such passages indicate the centrality of the doctrinal basis of the struggle, one must not subsume the entire struggle under that rubric. In fact, Hamas's doctrinal discourse has diminished in intensity since the mid 1990s, and references to its Charter by its leaders have been made rarely, if at all. The literature, statements, and symbols used by Hamas have come to focus more and more on the idea that core problem is the multidimensional issue of usurpation of Palestinian land, and the basic question is how to end the occupation. The notion of liberating Palestine has assumed greater importance than the general Islamic aspect.<sup>3</sup> Hamas's view of the conflict has evolved to where it now perceives the conflict as "a struggle against the alliance of hegemonic colonialism and Zionism directed against our entire nation ... which finds multifarious expressions in the mechanisms of domination."<sup>4</sup>

There are several instances in which the doctrinal dimension of Hamas's discourse has assumed prominence, occasions when an emotional response and escalating tensions may have overpowered calm, theoretical reflection. Virtually all of these instances have been reactions to Israeli assaults on Islamic holy shrines or against worshippers engaged in prayer in the holy places.

Seen from this perspective, the conflict with Israel is due to acts of aggression, not to differences in religious ideology. In this connection and in its discussion of Judaism as a faith, Hamas affirms that "in practice, it does not adopt belligerent positions against anyone on the basis of his creed or ideology. Hamas does adopt a belligerent position, however, once that creed or ideology is translated into aggressive or destructive actions against our *umma* and nation."<sup>5</sup>

In another theoretical explanation of the struggle, Hamas has stated that "the struggle that is in progress between Arabs/Muslims and Zionists in Palestine is a cultural struggle for destiny that only can end when its cause, Zionist settlement in Palestine, stops. The belligerent Zionist settler movement complements the Western design to separate the Islamic *umma* from its cultural roots and impose Zionist-Western hegemony over it through the realization of Greater Israel plan, so that it then can dominate the entire *umma* politically and economically. That would consolidate the divisiveness, underdevelopment, and dependency plaguing the Arab and Islamic *umma*."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Hamas Charter, Article 15; see Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction and Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 148-49.

<sup>3</sup> Abdl Sattar Qasem, "Al-Fikr al-Siyasi li harakat Hamas" (the political thought of Hamas), *Al-Siyasa al-Filastiniyya*, Vol. 3, No. 9 (1995), pp. 112-28.

<sup>4</sup> Musa Abu Marzouq, former head of Hamas's political Bureau, interview with author via phone, 21 May 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with the Leadership of Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), *Filastin al-Muslima* (Muslim Palestine), April 1990, pp. 24-27; see also the interview with Sheikh Bassam Jarrar in *Al-Nahar*, 25 December 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Hamas, "Introductory Memorandum".

In Hamas's view the Zionist-Western alliance is based on a mutuality of interests that emerged "when the leaders of Western imperialism discussed the affairs of our *umma* and our region and discovered that the object of their long cherished wish would be served by supporting the Zionist entity. The latter could be instrumental in the service of their interests, which are based on stealing our resources and depriving us of the bases for unity, pride and dignity."<sup>1</sup> The strategy that Zionism and imperialism use to secure this objective, contends Hamas, is to single out each Arab country sequentially. That is, "would Zionism and forces of imperialism cleverly are causing one Arab country after the other to drop out of the battle with Zionism so that in the end the Palestinian people will be isolated from their allies, Egypt, to a very large extent, dropped out of the struggle when it concluded the treasonous Camp David agreements. Now they are trying to entice other countries to conclude similar agreements and drop out as well."<sup>2</sup>

Such theorizing about the instrumental relationship between the Zionism movement (and its goal of establishing a Jewish entity in Palestine) and the objectives of western imperialism led Hamas to explore the question of the functional division of responsibilities among those who must bear the costs of Zionist and imperialist projects. Some writings that convey Hamas's perspectives offer a romanticized account of the complementarity of the Palestinian, Arab, and Islamic roles in standing up to Zionist and Western plans, as can be seen in the following quotation:

"Based on an understanding of the organic relationship between the two projects, which amounts to the fact that the conflict in its general context is one between the entire Islamic *umma* with its Islamic cultural program and forces of world imperialism with its agenda of Westernization, the Islamists in Palestine took their point of departure from this dichotomy and used it to define their *raison d'ete*, their purpose, function, and goals: placing themselves in the service of Jihad against the whole imperialist project. The Islamists considered themselves... and those who worked with them on the basis of this shared understanding as the vanguard of the force that seeks to destroy world imperialism. This is to be achieved by attacking the Zionist entity, which is the bridgehead of imperialism in the region, while drawing external support from the main body of Jihad forces, the entire *umma*..."<sup>3</sup>

The theory of linking the struggle for liberation of Palestine and the *umma* indicates that this struggle

"Should be done in tandem with the liberation of neighboring parts of the Islamic *umma* from either direct or indirect imperialism (in the sense of dependency on the West). Thus, the end result of liberation of such countries will be the establishment of states based on Islam; these will place themselves in the service of the goals of Islam and automatically will become part of struggle with the Zionist/ colonialist enemy in Palestine. Parallel to that, progress should be made toward the unity of Arab and Islamic countries by uniting those countries that have become truly Islamic."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no 107, 5 February 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Husam al-Nasir, *Harakat al-muqawama al-Islamiyya (Hamas): Al-intilaq wa mu'adalat al-sira'* (Islamic resistance movement (Hamas): The launching and plan of struggle) (London: Muslim Palestine Publications, 1990), pp. 18-22.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Following this portrayal of the distribution of tasks for the "the liberation of Palestine," the theory takes up tactical details of activities by Islamic countries in connection with "liberation," from the perspective of a comprehensive Jihad.

"To be more specific about the distribution of roles and the dimensions of the battle, the parallel and comprehensive Jihad should be concentrated on several fronts. This Jihad... should be understood in the broad sense of encompassing...armed struggle, operations and combat, social science, the triumph of truth and social justice, the achievement of unity, etc. there should be a broad understanding of the changes desired in all fields, as these are all necessary for multi-dimensional and multi-goal oriented military, political, ideological and social jihad in the service of the common goals of liberating the *umma*, and its heart, Palestine, and of achieving the unity and resistance of the *umma*."<sup>1</sup>

The pan-Arab and Islamic dimensions of the Palestine problem were central factors in Hamas's political vision of the struggle and evolution. This was reflected clearly in the Movement's political discourse and in repeated calls for adopting the Palestinian cause as the foremost cause for Muslims throughout the world because of Palestine's unique sanctity and the special status it has in Islam. It also is reflected in the constant emphasis placed on the fact that burden of liberation cannot be borne by a Palestinian resistance that is denied real Arab and Islamic support. In this regard, one finds evidence of the line of thinking that originated in the 1970s and which maintained that liberation should attend change, that is, an Islamic state first should be established outside (Palestine), and such a state should take on the lion's share of the responsibility for liberation. Even after the Palestinian Intifada broke out and Hamas engaged in it wholeheartedly, the limitations on how far it could take the process were well understood. According to a statement by the Movement's leaders, "Hamas never expected the Intifada to lead to the liberation of Palestine. We are well aware that fundamental historic conditions must be met for liberation to occur. These are linked organically to the level of political development and the cultural resurgence of the *umma* as whole, not just in Palestine. The role of the Intifada was to bring us few steps closer to the satisfaction of those conditions and to speed progress toward the realization of power and resurgence."<sup>2</sup>

The literature produced by Hamas reveals the broad lines of the Movement's strategy for conducting the struggle. The lengthy extract below from that literature offers a direct description of such a strategy.

Based on our understanding of the struggle with the Zionist enemy, who is associated with the Western project to bring the Arab Islamic *umma* under the domination of Western culture, to make it dependent on the West, and to perpetuate its underdevelopment, and being aware of the complexities of the international and regional environment with the clear imbalance of power favoring the Zionist-American alliance, the Islamic Resistance movement (Hamas) bases its strategy of resisting the Zionist settler occupation of Palestine on the following:

1. The Palestinian people are direct target of the Zionist settler occupation. Therefore, they must bear the main burden of resisting the unjust occupation. This is why Hamas seeks to mobilize the full potential of the Palestinian people and channel it into steadfast resistance against the usurper.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Abu Marzouq, interview with author, 21 May 2003.

2. Palestine is the terrain for confrontation with the enemy. The Arab and Islamic countries are regions from which our Palestinian people can draw support, particularly political, informational, and financial support; but the bloody confrontation with our Zionist enemy must take place on the sacred soil of Palestine...
3. There must be incessant resistance to and confrontation with the enemy in Palestine until we achieve victory and liberation. Jihad for the cause of God is our objective in that confrontation. The best method of resistance is to do battle with the soldiers of the enemy and destroy their armor.
4. It is our view that political action is one of the means for pursuing jihad against the Zionist enemy. Its objective should be to strengthen the endurance of our people in their jihad against the occupation; to mobilize the forces of our people and our *umma* in defense of our cause; to defend the rights of our people; and to present their just cause to the international community.<sup>1</sup>

In the first two years of Hamas's existence (1987-89), the preliminary identification of friends and foes presented no great difficulty; the picture was rather oversimplified. In subsequent years, Hamas's discourse reflected a new sensitivity to the idea that it was unwise to expand the list of one's enemies; and thus the Movement became aware of the virtue of trimming down their number and neutralizing its enemies wherever possible. In its presentation of the identity of the parties to the conflict, the Hamas charter is a good example of the earlier phase, which was influenced by the traditional stereotype of a Crusader-style world Jewish conspiracy against Islam. This phase coincided with unrestrained analyses of Jewish control of the world through money, influence, and organizations. For example, under the heading "Forces Abetting the Enemy," the Charter mentions "enemies" with all generality and vagueness implicit in the term, although the subject concerns Jews who "have planned well to get where they are (And) have amassed huge fortunes that gave them influence, which they have devoted to the realization of their goals. Through money they gained control over the world media ...and ... financed revolutions throughout the world in pursuit of their objectives."<sup>2</sup>

Free rein is given to the imagination to discover Jews behind every great event in world history. Jews are cited as having been behind the French revolution, the Russian/ Communist revolution, and most other revelations. In addition, Jews are said to be able, through the use of money, to establish "clandestine organizations, such as the Masons, the Rotary and Lion's clubs, etc., to destroy societies and promote the interests of Zionism." The Charter even accuses Jews of establishing "the League of Nations through which they could rule the world. They were behind the Second World War, in which they grew fabulously wealthy through the arms trade. They prepared for establishment of their state; they ordered that the United Nations be formed, along with the Security Council, in place of the League of Nations, so that they could rule the world through them."<sup>3</sup>

After the first two years, Hamas's thought and practices transcended the uncompromising positions that had led to a mythical account of "Jewish influence in the world." Such language vanished from the Movement's literature and political discourse, and its dealing at the international level ceased to reflect such positions. Since the early 1990s, this change can be attributed to the input of Hamas's "outside" leadership. A number of leading personalities who have lived abroad and been exposed to wider experiences than their counterparts in the Gaza Strip (who

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas, "Introductory Memorandum;".

<sup>2</sup> The Hamas charter, Article 22; see Appendix.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

formulated the Hamas Charter) have re-oriented Hamas's political thinking and influenced the formulation of its discourse. The new attitudes have been reflected in Hamas's practice, such as its establishment of contacts with Western states and international bodies. Examples of such contacts include, in humanitarian matters, the case of the arrest of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, and in political matters, the case of the deportees to south Lebanon, whom the UN Security Council ruled should be allowed to return.

In the years that followed, Hamas's political view of the "enemy" and of Israel's supporters became more sophisticated. Concerning the "principal enemy," Hamas's perspective evolved to differentiate clearly between Judaism as a religion and Zionism as a political movement. It based its policy on the premise "that the primary enemy of Palestinian people as well as the Arab and Islamic *umma* is the Zionist movement"<sup>1</sup> Enmity is directed at the Zionist movement because it is an "aggressor" rather than because of its religious beliefs. The following text, which is attributed to the leadership of Hamas, concisely outlines Hamas's view of the distinction between Judaism and Zionism and goes beyond the generalities of the Movement's original opinions:

The non-Zionist Jew is one who belongs to the Jewish faith, whether as a believer or due to accident of birth, but does not relate to the above ideas and takes no part in aggressive actions against our land and our *umma*. The Zionist, on the other hand, is one who embraces the aggressive Jewish ideology and becomes an instrument for the realization of those ideas on our land and against our *umma*. On this basis, Hamas will not adopt a hostile position in practice against anyone because of his ideas or his creed but will adopt such a position if those ideas and creed are translated into hostile or damaging actions against our *umma* and our nation.<sup>2</sup>

Hamas's view of international politics and alliances also became more sophisticated. By the early 1990s, it no longer sought to antagonize others as readily as in the past. It adopted a policy whereby "the Movement has no quarrel with the foreign nation. It is not the policy of Hamas to attack or undermine the interests or possessions of various states."<sup>3</sup> It softened its positions with regard to international organizations, adopting a much more rational and diplomatic approach. It stressed that it "respects resolutions issued by international organizations and bodies unless they usurp or contradict the legitimate rights of our people to their homeland, their property, and their right to jihad until they are free and enjoy self-determination."<sup>4</sup> In making this transition, Hamas's discourse came to differentiate between "the principal enemy"-Israel- and the Western forces allied with it or supporting it. The purpose was, to reduce the number of Hamas's enemies.

For the confrontation with the enemy, Hamas envisions a broad front, which has the responsibility of liberating Palestine. This front consists of three concentric circles of resistance to the Zionist-Western aggression against Palestine and the entire Arab and Islamic region. Specifically, these are" the Palestinian circle, the Arab circle, and the Islamic circle. Each of these circles plays a role in the struggle against Zionism, and each one has its own responsibilities. It would be an unmitigated error and sheer

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<sup>1</sup> "Siyasat Hamas al-marhaliyya fil alaqat al-siyasiyya" (Hamas's interim policies in political relations), an internal Hamas memo.

<sup>2</sup> Hamas leadership interview, *Filatin al-Muslima*, April 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Hamas, "Siyasat Hamas al-marhaliyya."

<sup>4</sup> Hamas, "Introductory Memorandum."

ignorance to neglect a single one of these circles."<sup>1</sup> The Palestinian circle includes Hamas, of course, and the Palestine Liberation Organization, with its leftist and secular guerrilla organization and which is "closer than any other group to the Islamic Resistance Movement, it includes the fathers, brothers, relatives, and friends (of our members)."<sup>2</sup> Within the Arab and Islamic circles, Hamas drew a distinction between the governments and the people. It focused on the popular dimension, and particularly on Islamic movements.

By way of introduction of how Hamas views the nature of its struggle against Zionism, one can examine three dimensions of its thought and praxis. The first dimension pertains to the regional and international environment and influence on the Palestinian problem at the time of the emergence of Hamas and extending to the mid-1990s. The second dimension concerns the theoretical complexities challenging the Islamic movement in general, such as the dialectic of religion, politics, and social change, and the extent to which the behavior of the Movement should be determined by political considerations or by religious values and principles. The third dimension relates to the administrative and organizational context of decision making by Hamas.

A series of important changes at the international and regional levels have had an impact on the Palestinian problem since the birth of Hamas in 1987. These include the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc at the end of the 1980s and subsequent preponderant shift in the balance of power in the favor of the United States could deal as it pleased with the problem without fear of any significant opposition to its policy, which was biased toward Israel.

The Palestinian cause also lost ground on several fronts where progress had been achieved during the Cold War. For example, the Movement of Non-aligned Nations and General Assembly of the United Nations had represented supportive for a where scores of states could be found that opposed U.S. policies and backed Third World causes, including the Palestinian cause. However, these organizations also lost their significance when the Eastern bloc collapsed; the Movement of Non-aligned Nations no longer has a role to play or influence to exercise. The moral and political victories won in the General Assembly, including condemnations of Israel's expansionist and aggressive policies and the dozens of resolutions support the Palestinian cause, all became empty shells. In the General Assembly in particular, a major defeat was the November 1992 abrogation of the resolution equating Zionism with racism. Many countries that had supported the Palestinian cause in the past under the protection of the Soviet Union could not withstand the political and economic pressures that the United States brought to bear on them to alter their position on Israel.

As the bipolar international system collapse, Israel was able to improve its foreign relations, particularly with African and Asian countries, the nations of Eastern Europe, and the new Turkic republics in the former Soviet Central Asia; all of these states had been traditional supporters of the Palestinian cause. American and western pressures, Israeli diplomacy, and Israel's offers of technical aid, especially to developing countries—all this in absence of any Arab or Islamic counteroffensive to halt the slide—had their effect. These changes not only undermined support for the PLO but also created an environment that was hostile to acceptance of a new Palestinian "fundamentalist" organization, such as Hamas, which was seeking to become a spokesman for the same cause.

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<sup>1</sup> The Hamas charter, Article 14; see Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

This new imbalance of power, favoring Israel, undermined the great surge of international support for the Palestinian cause resulting from the Intifada of 1987 and after. The Intifada had shown the world the brutal face of Israeli occupation, and it demonstrated the sweeping resistance to the occupation by the Palestinian people. However, the above-mentioned changes in the balance of power kept the leverage that could be gained from world sympathy to a minimum. Furthermore, the impact of the new balance of power on the Middle East was a weakening of the influence of regimes that had been dependent on the Soviet Union and a corresponding increase in the influence of the United States and its allies. All talk about an Arab military option in the struggle with Israel ceased, while plans for a peaceful or negotiated solution proliferated. The Gulf War later destroyed the most significant Arab military power, Iraq, and created new Arab divisions that had very negative consequences for the Palestinian cause. In the wake of the war, with the Arab world at its weakest, the Madrid conference opened in 1991.

The strength of Hamas and its political clout increased just as international state support for the Palestinian cause was ebbing and the Arab military option in the battle with Israel had virtually been eliminated. This state of affairs led to a sense of almost total political isolation on the part of Hamas, just a few years after its birth. Not only was there no influential ally for the Palestinians- or for Hamas- at the level of major powers, but also for Hamas there was no regional ally with any real influence over the fate of the Palestinian cause. Even those countries that had severe differences with the PLO were reluctant to develop an alliance with Hamas due to the new international realities, especially the dominant position of the United States. The latter country championed a peace settlement in the Middle East that was perceived by Hamas as virtually identical to the Israeli perspective.

These international factors had a clear impact on Hamas's conduct of the struggle. The Movement was well aware that it could not follow a path modeled on the Palestinian resistance of the 1970s, when there was a Third World movement supported by the Soviet Union that opposed American policies in many parts of the world. The only factor partially to offset what Hamas perceived as a gloomy international outlook was the growing Islamic tide in the region. Hamas hoped that this wave would lead to the adoption of choices that were at variance with the international balance of power, dampen its negative impact on the Middle East, stiffen resistance to Israel, and mobilize (Islamic) potential for the battle of liberation. The second point that needs to be stressed in this introduction to Hamas's understanding and conduct of the struggle (which is equally valid for any other Islamic movement) concerns the theoretical challenges facing political action by Islamist movements in the modern world. This leads to the dialectic of interests and ethical principles, morality, and politics, the propriety of establishing alliances with non-Islamic parties, and adherence to the constraints imposed by Islamic law on the political behavior of groups and individuals. In the most general sense, one can detect an attempt by many Islamic movements, whether conscious or not, to transfer individual morality (which is consistent with Islamic values) to the political activities of groups, states, and international organizations without regard for the huge differences between ordinary individual and group political behavior. For example, Hamas generally rejects saying such as "there is no morality in politics" and "interests come before principles." Islamic thought addresses this unyielding political reality from the perspective of the "model" of ethics, virtue, and truth.

One can read in the behavior of Hamas and other Islamic movements that, as they acquire experience, the scales begin to tip in favor of interests. However, in general

Hamas's conduct seems to be haunted by the ghost of individual morality and belief that the Movement can engage in politics based on principles. The "nature" of Hamas's dealing with the Palestinian authority (PA) following its establishment in Gaza strip is informative. Despite the political conflict with the PLO and the intense struggle with it for control of the Palestinian street (ongoing since the beginning of the Intifada), Hamas received the first contingents of Palestinian police officers in Gaza strip and Jericho in May 1994 in a fraternal and benevolent spirit, "because they are part of the people, they are our brothers."<sup>1</sup> Hamas seemed to be undeterred by the common knowledge in its grass-roots that the principal task of the police force would be to prevent any military operations against Israel, a function that created ambiguity about the prospects of a clash between the police and Hamas. The PA set down roots, expanding its police and security forces gradually and establishing its presence.

Hamas, which strongly opposed the Oslo agreements, hoped that its fraternal attitude toward the police would allow it to establish a cozy relationship with the force, without asking on what foundations such a relationship could be based. It was clear that there could not be two parallel authorities ruling over Gaza and that power, not love, would decide the issue in favor of one or the other.

Once it had consolidated its position, the PA carried out series of sweeping arrests within the ranks of Hamas. It established a state security court that passed long and severe sentences on leading figures in the Movement despite Hamas's policy of not turning its guns on the PA. In fact, Hamas protected the PA from public anger on extraordinary occasions, such as during the Palestine mosque incident in November 1994, when the police shot and killed 14 Palestinians. In an outpouring of anger, the crowd wanted to tear down Gaza Prison, but leading figures in Hamas calmed the people. In another well-known incident, when Yasir Arafat came to pay his condolences to the family of Hani Abed, an Islamic Jihad leader whom Israel had assassinated in November 1994, the assembled crowd began to shout anti-Arafat slogans. Once again, Hamas leaders calmed down the crowd and prevented an attack on Arafat's motorcade.

Arafat exploited this tendency in Hamas. He became increasingly confident that Hamas had placed restraints on itself and had drawn red lined it would not cross as a barrier to civil war. Indeed, Hamas seems to have forgotten that red lines are drawn to deter the enemy, not to immobilize oneself. The repeated assertion by Hamas, that "we will not cross the red line to civil war," in fact gave the PA a green light to go as far as it pleased in chasing down members, particularly those in the Hamas armed wing (the Qassam Brigades), putting them on trial, and restricting Hamas's influence, whether in mosques, charitable societies, or in the media. As a result, Hamas's idealistic method of dealing with the PA came into conflict with the PA's realist approach to Hamas, realism that consistently followed the prescription: amass as much power as possible and use it decisively.

Other examples that illustrate this conflict between morality and expediency – principles on the one side and political interests on the other – can be traced in the history of relations between Hamas and Fateh during the Intifada and the occasional clashes between them. During the very stiff competition, Hamas's Islamic restraints constituted red lines that the Movement would not cross, including the prohibition on the use of deadly force even in the event that Hamas members were killed. In fact, four members of Hamas died in sporadic clashes with Fateh, but no member of Fateh fell to the bullets of Hamas. The main reason for this is that it was extremely difficult,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibrahim Ghosheh, *Al-Sabeel*, 23 August 1994.

if not impossible, to determine who had fired the fatal bullets in these clashes and there had been no fatwa (religious opinion) permitting Hamas to kill anyone other than the actual person directly responsible for the killing.

At another and intimately related level, some *fatwas* issued by Islamic *'ulama* (clergy) close to the Palestinian Islamic movement illustrate the depth of complexity that still needs to be resolved concerning the relationship between religion and politics and the interaction between the two.

In brief, Hamas ran up against the poverty of contemporary Islamic *fiqh* (jurisprudence) in relation to political issues. An internal Hamas memorandum refers to this quite clearly: "political relations normally are governed by shifting pragmatic interests rather than by enduring abstract theoretical positions based on principle. Most people perhaps still need to be informed about the perspective of the tradition of Islamic *fiqh* regarding acting according to one's interests in the general context of *shariah*. This is still unplugged territory. Many young men with a committed Islamic conscience were shocked when the Muslim brotherhood in Syria struck an alliance with other (non-Islamic) political forces. This only demonstrates the need for greater public awareness on this issue."<sup>1</sup> Along with acquiring more experience, Hamas has shown more ability to disentangle the dilemma of principles versus interests. As noted by Jerbawi, "Hamas has demonstrated a significant amount of pragmatism, particularly in finding balance between the Movement's principles and its interests."<sup>2</sup>

By virtue of the Movement's history, the main group of Hamas members is in the Occupied Territories. Consequently, its commanders in the field also are there. The Movement's principal leaders, however, are divided between the Occupied Territories and the outside. These two components of the leadership share responsibility for decision making, whether at the top level of the Unified Consultative Council (*majlis al-shoura al-muwahad*) and the Political Bureau, or at the next level of the planning and information agencies. Decision making is undertaken through a complicated mechanism, due to the vulnerability of Hamas leaders in the Occupied Territories to arrest.<sup>3</sup>

There appears to be a considerable degree of commitment to the principle of consultation in decision making. It would be difficult to single out an individual Hamas leader who could monopolize the decision making process or impose his views on the others. This state of affairs has tended to become well established because of the constant emphasis placed on consultation by the founder and spiritual leader of the Movement, Sheikh Yassin. He is the only individual in the Movement who has the power to impose his personal views on others.

Another distinctive feature in the case of Hamas is the considerable contribution of the Movement's branch in the Occupied Territories to the decision making process. This contrasts with the case of the various Palestinian guerrilla organizations, whose leadership outside the Occupied Territories used to monopolize decision making in practice. Decisions by Hamas, despite the repeated blows suffered by the Movement, have continued to carry a domestic flavor and remain linked to the pulse of the man in the street to a reasonable degree. This linkage prompts some observers to speak of a "pragmatic" or vacillating tendency in Hamas, when in fact it propels Hamas to be politically realistic within the constraints of the possible and to limit the use of

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from an internal Hamas document, untitled and undated, dealing with interaction with others.

<sup>2</sup> Ali Jerbawi, *Hamas Bid to Lead the Palestinian People* (Annandale, Virginia: United Association for Studies and Research, 1994), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Abu Narzouq interview, 21 May 2003.

grandiose and ill-fitting slogans such as those manufactured outside the Occupied Territories.

In this regard, one ought to contrast the moderation of the views of the Hamas leadership inside the Occupied Territories compared with those of its leadership on the outside, particularly with respect to Hamas's relationship with the PA. This difference can be attributed to the fact that such decisions, when taken by the outside leadership, do not involve them in a direct clash with the PA, as opposed to the inside leaders who must cope with the Movement's day-to-day affairs. Occasionally, the difference between the two sets of leaders becomes very visible, as happened in the case of the decision to participate in the January 1996 elections for the Legislative Council, and the decision of truce (cease-fire agreement with Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas) in June 2003. Hamas tends to play down the significance of these differences, arguing that they are natural consequences of the difficulty of communicating with each other as well as the differences in location and perspective.<sup>1</sup>

At any rate, this division in Hamas between the inside and the outside tends to slow down the decision making process. This occasionally is harmful to the Movement, because it reduces its mobility and initiative. However, it is useful to Hamas at other times, because it protects the Movement from the consequences of ad-hoc and ill-considered decisions. This state of affairs affects the conduct of the struggle in various ways, as does the international context and the conflict between Islamic principles and political expediency discussed above.

Against the background of the three premises on the nature of the struggle outlined above, one could underline a set of principal characteristics that dominated Hamas's conduct of the struggle. Here are five such characteristics, each of which is discussed below.

#### *Trying to Strike a Balance between an Interim and a Historic Solution*

An intractable dilemma that always has faced Palestinian political thought was how to reconcile the "historic solution" of liberating the entire land of Palestine with the notion of an interim solution of establishing a Palestinian state on only part of Palestine, i.e., the West bank and Gaza strip. Hamas's thought was not exceptional in this respect and got caught in this dilemma. Thus, the organization attempted to find its own formula for combining both solutions, to preserve its principles, and to maintain a firm foot in reality.

Hamas views the struggle with Israel as a long-term and historic one. Victory in the struggle has many objective and historic requirements, and it is connected integrally, with deeply rooted variables relating to the dominant political, economic, and social structures in the region. According to contemporary Islamist movements, the condition for victory requires the supremacy of Islam in government and politics, leading to the emergence of an Islamic state and an Islamic renaissance, which can stand up to the Western strategic depth of the Zionist project.

Final victory is therefore far away. The Arab-Israeli wars and the different rounds in the conflict over the past half-century have been interim, not decisive, engagements. They could not have been otherwise, because the objective historic conditions required for victory had not yet materialized. Nevertheless, these rounds are part of the general battle and indications of the conditions necessary for victory. These views

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<sup>1</sup> Sheikh Yassin, interview, *Filastin al-Muslima*, April 1997, p. 18.

form the basis of the Hamas position: "the best way to conduct the struggle with the Zionist enemy is to mobilize the potential of the Palestinian people and use all means available to keep the jihad and the issue alive until such time as the requirements for victory materialize, the Arab and Islamic renaissance takes place, the will and the political purpose of the *umma* are united, and its full potential can be tapped to provide the necessary power."<sup>1</sup>

This perspective expands the time horizon of the struggle and is based on the certainty that victory will come to the *umma* in the future. For this reason Hamas "seeks to escape the tyranny of the moment, because no matter how important an event may seem, no matter how unforeseen it may be, and even if it should take up the entire political horizon for the moment, in Hamas's historic perspective that event remains limited and definite in scope."<sup>2</sup> This perspective means that Hamas is not overpowered by any particular phase of the struggle, nor is it totally engrossed by it, seeing as it is not the decisive final phase. For example, the Intifada "is not the final stage of confrontation with Israel but only a phase. We therefore do not wish to invest our entire capital in a stone throwing war, or in any war that we know will not lead to the overthrow of Israel."<sup>3</sup> Hamas, which determines how much effort to put into any confrontation on the basis of its overall significance, does not regard any struggle as "the battle" to which everything must be dedicated with total disregard for the consequences; nor is any battle worth sacrificing the entire Movement.<sup>4</sup>

For example, Hamas's position on the Oslo agreement can be seen as a reasonable balance between the present stage and the long term historic view. Despite the danger posed by the agreement, the exaggerated statements by Hamas concerning it, and its declared intention of trying to abort it, Hamas has not declared war against it or said that the agreement only will pass "over our dead bodies". Hamas could have sent out thousands of its followers and supporters in powerful waves of demonstrations against the agreement, but it did not do so. That should not be surprising since the type of confrontation Hamas has chosen from the beginning can be described as "a dualistic approach based on maximum protest realizable through minimum of contact."<sup>5</sup>

Yet this act of balancing the long term historic perspective against the demands of the evanescent present sometimes favored one over the other. Occasionally, the broad historic view overshadowed practical politics. At other times pragmatism triumphed at the expense of the long term vision. This vacillation could be observed in relation to the Oslo *accord*. Some interpreted the vacillation as Hamas's way of striking a balance, but often it masked simple confusion.<sup>6</sup>

### *Moderating the Tone and Behavior of Hamas*

In view of the changing international circumstances and their effect on the region, the peace process gained momentum, and Hamas's radical opposition to it appeared to be a clear aberration. It went beyond the opposition of those who objected to the

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas, "Introductory Memorandum."

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Nazzal in Khaled Hroub, *Al-Islamiyoon fi filastin: Qira'at, mawaqif wa qadhya ukhra* (The Islamists of Palestine: Readings, positions, and other matters) (Amman: Dar al-Bashir, 1994), p.8.

<sup>3</sup> Khalid al-Qawqa, interview, *Al-Anba'* (Kuwait), 8 October 1988.

<sup>4</sup> Nazzal, in Hroub, op. cit., p.9.

<sup>5</sup> Rab'i al-Madhoon, *Al-Hayat*, 16 September 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Ali Jerbawi thinks that the position of Hamas on Oslo is a balanced one: The movement kept all its options open while simultaneously protecting its principles and interests; see Jerbawi, op. cit., 19-26

Madrid- Oslo formula on the basis of peaceful settlement per se, and Hamas was the most prominent among them. This position particular provisions of the agreement while accepting the principle of being the odd man out affected the manner in which Hamas chose to express itself. Hamas moderated its political discourse as well as its behavior.

It is noteworthy, for instance, that the mode of expression chosen by Sheikh Yassin in making known his rejection of the Oslo Accord was calm and moderate. He wrote in a letter from prison:

No doubt our Palestinian people are agitated and unhappy today. They are saddened and pained by the ignominy, capitulation, and abasement of the Palestinian cause at the hands of a group of our own people who signed (documents) recognizing the state of Israel, thereby relinquishing all our lands, traditions, holy places, and culture which Israel has usurped. To put the best face on it, let us say that they tried and failed, but let them not saddle us with this error and its attendant calamities.<sup>1</sup>

Hamas clearly refrained from accusing the individuals who signed the agreement of treason. Instead, the organization focused on the capitulation embodied in the agreement.

An internally circulating memorandum by Hamas defines the limits of political discourse and warns members on three issues: "discourse should not be simply for posturing; it should not be a form of flexing our muscles in competition; it should not breed new enemies and disputes."<sup>2</sup> The memorandum emphasize that Zionists are still the enemy, even after the signing of the Oslo agreement:

We are a people under occupation. All the visible catastrophes we have suffered are due to the occupation. It sometimes may seem to us that some of our own people are the cause of some of the tragedies that have befallen us ... but the truth is the truth. The Zionist enemy is the root and the basis of all the suffering of our people, whether this concerns those who remain residents of our sacred land, or those who have been dispersed far from the precious soil of our homeland. Our political and informational discourse must focus on the fact that the Zionists are both our foremost and our only enemies that the central purpose of our people is to resist the Zionist occupation. This is extremely important, because it focuses attention on the truth, so that one does not stray away from it, and it spares us from becoming embroiled in marginal battles and conflicts that will divert us from our primary task, which is liberation from occupation.<sup>3</sup>

As for the practical positions adopted by Hamas, the mode of expression was also moderate and nonviolent. Hamas did not react to the Oslo Accord by organizing demonstrations, turning its weapons against the PA, or resorting to the assassination of officials. To its credit, it kept its pledge, since the date it was established, to stay away from political assassinations.<sup>4</sup>

This conscious attempt to appear moderate even while declaring its opposition to the settlement with Israel is the same attitude that Hamas adopted toward various Arab-Israeli agreements and the multilateral and bilateral tracks in the peace talks. It made an effort to couch condemnation in principle in no inflammatory language and to find

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<sup>1</sup> Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, "Letters," *Al-Wasat*, 11 November 1993.

<sup>2</sup> "Al-Risala" (the epistle), an internal Hamas document dated 6 April 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> This pledge was reaffirmed in the Hamas leaflet, "La lil-ightiyal al-siyasi" (No to political assassination), dated 22 September 1993.

more acceptable formulations. It is noteworthy in this respect that there is an important difference between Hamas's mode of expression in relation to the Oslo Accord and to the Arab-Israeli agreements. Hamas was much more openly critical, outspoken, and condemnatory with respect to the former than to the latter. In the case of the Arab-Israeli agreements, Hamas was more calculating and tried to avoid the inevitable backlash that would have followed a more verbally violent position on the Jordanian-Israeli agreement or Syria's participation in the Madrid and Washington talks.

### *Not Antagonizing States In or Outside the Region*

Hamas has chosen to avoid antagonizing Arab or western states through its statements or behavior. Its recent discourse has tended to minimize the number of its antagonists. It is aware that the mere declaration of its position was sufficient to create reservations among most parties. Its actions also have been consistent with the policy of not carrying the battle with Israel beyond the occupied land. It has refrained from forming local affiliate organizations in various countries so as to avoid being dragged into side battles. Writing about Palestinian-Jordanian Islamic movements, Musa al-Kilani, who enjoys close ties to Jordan's establishment, states that "the thing that set Hamas apart from other Palestinian nationalist organizations is that it has avoided involvement in the internal affairs of host Arab countries ... this has gained it a lot of credibility, and made it difficult for Arab states to pick a fight with the Movement, seeing as it had been conciliatory towards their policies."<sup>1</sup>

Hamas considers its battle to be with Israel and Zionism and has declared its policy of not picking fights with regional and international powers. Hamas has learned from the lessons of the revolutionary Palestinian left in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, it has not declared open war on the West attempted to strike at Western interests in the region; and it has avoided actions abroad such as the hijacking of planes, the taking of hostages, or the assassination of Israelis in European or other foreign cities. This policy has been productive to the extent that many Western and other countries did not follow the example of America, which in 1993, under pressure from the pro-Israel lobby; put Hamas on its list of international terrorist organizations. The more common attitude among many Western nations has been to classify some actions by Hamas as terrorist but to avoid classifying the whole organization as a terrorist movement.<sup>2</sup>

### *Avoiding Political Isolation*

Being isolated politically was a clear concern for Hamas in its conduct of the struggle. The specter of being the odd man out politically and of rowing against the official tide in favor of a settlement that was sweeping most of the region caused Hamas to be wary of being forced into political isolation. This was particularly so during the period when there were rising hopes for a settlement, and political and media campaigns were underway to promote the peace process. Hamas tried therefore to expand its base of support. At the Palestinian level, it collaborated with those guerrilla organizations within the PLO that were opposed to the settlement; this

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<sup>1</sup> Musa Ziad al-Keylani, *Al-Harakat al-Islamiyya fil urdun wa filastin* (Islamic Movements un Jordan and Palestine) (Amman: Al-Risala Press, 1995), pp. 205-206.

<sup>2</sup> A European diplomat interview in Khaled Hroub, "Hamas al-Fikr wa al-Momarsa al-Siyasiyya" (Hamas: Political Thought and Practice) (Washington: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1996).

collaboration later developed into the Alliance of Palestinian forces. At the Arab and Islamic levels, it tried to mobilize popular forces into opposition to a settlement with Israel, so that it would not become politically isolated and rendered marginal. This attitude furthermore was consistent with Hamas's general policy of mobilizing Arab and Islamic resources. One Hamas leader explained:

We are not advocates of isolationism from reality. Our policy is to react with and influence reality ... That does not mean, however, that we are going to be preoccupied by any fait accompli manufactured by others; nor are we going to follow in their footsteps wherever they may lead, not deviating from their path while forgetting the true path to our goal. Excessive preoccupation with realism has led the Palestinian cause to where it is now. On the other hand, idealism may not advance us a single demands a strategic vision on our vision should become to myopic that we are unable to see beyond our feet. We should keep a foot in reality to launch ourselves toward our strategic objective with firm steps.<sup>1</sup>

Sheikh Yassin, the spiritual guide of Hamas, may be regarded as the principal theorist of non-isolationism in the Movement. In this letters from prison cited above, he addressed the gradual debate about participation in elections and came out in favor of participation; "if the council shall have the authority to legislate, why should we not practice opposition within this council as we do in the street? We can demonstrate that Islam has a presence which must be reckoned with and not leave our foes an unchallenged opportunity to do as they please."<sup>2</sup> Non isolation was the argument put forward by a powerful trend within the Movement to justify participating in the elections for self-governing institutions in January 1996.

Ismail Haniyah, the director of Sheikh Yassin office in Gaza, justified participation: "taking part in the elections will guarantee us a legitimate political presence when the elections are over. We will be sure to be informed about and participate in the making of laws by the elected council under which civil society will be governed."<sup>3</sup>

### *Betting on popular participation*

The literature of Hamas stresses the popular dimension of the battle. Its vision of the struggle assigns popular participation the most important role in the future, when the issue is expected to be resolved. Below is the position of Hamas on the role of popular participation:

Despite the capitulation by Arab governments, the Palestinian cause has been fortunate to attract the participation of Arab peoples and has benefited from their initiative during the decades of struggle with the Jewish enemy. Truthfully, the bright pages of our struggle in the land of Palestine are part of history of the Arab and Islamic peoples; it is not the history of governments and regimes. While the *umma* can be considered the strategic depth of the Palestinian cause and of Hamas as a movement, the popular forces within the *umma* are the core of that depth. They are the real reservoir of strength of our movement in its long struggle with the Zionist enemy. For this reason, Hamas believes it is imperative to consolidate its ties with popular forces and institutions in the Islamic Arab *umma* and appeal to their goodness, pride, and

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<sup>1</sup> Khaled Masha'al (head of Hamas's Political Bureau), "Shurout wa ihtimalat qiyam intikhabat naziha" (Conditions and possibilities of conducting fair elections), a working paper for a conference entitled "Palestinian Self-Rule Elections," published by the Center of Middle East Studies, Amman, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Yassin letter, dated 3 October 1993, and included in *Al-Wasat*, 11 November 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Ismail Haniyah interview with author, 15 June 2003.

generosity. It also seeks to establish a solid basis of understanding, awareness, and broad vision that will be a common denominator in the *umma's* strategic battle of destiny against the destructive Zionist project.<sup>1</sup>

Hamas always has been keen to pursue the popular option and to work with Islamic and mass movements in the region to counter the consequences of the Oslo Agreement and other probable treaties. Hamas is betting on those movements and sees them as an important part of the future of the region in the coming decades. The outstanding questions are whether Hamas's wager is a winning one, and how popular choice will evolve in the future.

Part of Hamas's direction of the struggle has to do with safeguarding the Movement's achievements. Hamas always has been concerned about the institutions and social and cultural infrastructure it has established in the Occupied Territories. Charitable societies, schools, and *zakat* (religious tax) committees have contributed greatly to expanding the movement's grass-roots base, not to mention Hamas's presence at and control over a large number of mosques, which are strongholds for the Movement. Hamas's policy has been to isolate this infrastructure from the front line of the conflict and to use it as a source of support and supply in the rear lines. Following the signing of the Oslo Agreement and the establishment of the PA in the Gaza Strip, Hamas took the position that any attempt by the PA to dismantle that infrastructure would lead to a violent struggle.

Seeking to define the nature of Hamas's relationship with the PA, Sheikh Yassin warned in October 1993 that the PA should not attempt to "lay its hands on the Islamic institutions and mosques, or Islamic bookstores ... We have declared our rejection of self-rule in civilized and nonviolent ways. In the event (the authority is formed) we shall represent the opposition, which has a right to its own institutions, and if there is, it will not be a simple matter, in my opinion, and should be resisted violently."<sup>2</sup>

However, in reality, the PA has crossed the red line, and Hamas's response has not been proportionate to threats it had made. Sheikh Yassin himself, after four years of maintaining the old position, simply erased the red line: "We never shall clash with the authority, even if they torture us, even if they shut down our institutions, arrest us, even if they kill us. I uphold the principle embodied in the word of God, if you reach your hand out to kill me, I shall not reach out my hand to kill you, for I fear God, the Lord of the universe."<sup>3</sup>

Hamas's policy of safeguarding past gains, which limited the extent to and manner in which it could express its opposition, impacted its relationship with other Palestinian organizations. Many of these organizations were more radical than Hamas in term of their political discourse against the PA. They called for stronger actions, either collectively through the alliance of the "Ten Resistance Organizations" or at the individual level of each faction. Hamas, however, has shown reluctance and carefully calculated potential gains and losses. Because Hamas's main organization is located primarily inside the Occupied Territories, its leaders, unlike those of the other fractions, believe that their movement "bears the consequences of any collective decision by the ten organizations, whereas the impact of a such a decision on the other organizations is limited ... We therefore are compelled to consider carefully the impact of any decision on our movement to ensure that the decision will multiply our

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<sup>1</sup> "Siyasat Hamas al-marhaliyya fil 'alaqat al-siyasiyya."

<sup>2</sup> Yassin letter, 3 October 1993, *Al-Wasat*, 11 November 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Sheikh Yassin, quoted in *Filastin al-Muslima*, November 1997, p.21.

influence in the field, not diminish it."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, one can say that the previous achievements of Hamas constituted a liability, while the scope of the Movement and the large number of its followers slowed it down and deprived it of a measure of flexibility. Referring to this factor, Ali Jerbawi argued that "the Movement tried to keep its options open. Being a large political force, it had a sense of being responsible for protecting its varied interests, and it moved cautiously in taking any decision."<sup>2</sup> Although acting slowly in taking decisions benefited the Movement in many instances, it represented an important opportunity cost in other instances.

In addition, Hamas tried to set a new example for Palestinian political action in the context of the historical development of the Palestinian national Movement. This new model, according to Hamas's leaders, could be characterized by its Islamic dimension and "political integrity and adherence to principle in one's actions." This model was motivated by what Hamas had "discovered" in terms of "the prevalence of prevarication, to the extent of being dishonest in one's dealing with others, not living up to one's commitments to one's charter and contractual agreements, giving priority to interest over principle in a blatant manner, and the past hegemony of certain factions within the PLO over other organizations, as well as the triumph of individualism and self-interest in government and monopoly of authority, and the pursuit of personal gain and selfishness."<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, Hamas tried to put forward an "Islamic model," particularly with respect to ethical conduct, keeping one's word, and not setting oneself above others. In practice Hamas respected agreements with others. During the years of the Intifada, when Hamas and Fateh were engaged in intense competition that led to clashes, a number of agreements had to be concluded between them. The agreements did not last very long, but Hamas was not the party that violated them. However, Hamas's success in putting forward a new model was limited, particularly in dealing with Palestinian guerrilla organizations.

### *The structure of Hamas*<sup>4</sup>

The structure of Hamas in Gaza and in the West Bank is based on a combination of regional and functional organization. In this framework, several identical, parallel frameworks operate in each region:

- a. Infrastructure (*Da'wah*), literally "sermonizing", which engages in recruitment, distribution of funds, and appointments.
- b. Popular body in the framework of the Intifada.
- c. Security (*Majid*) - the gathering of information on suspected collaborators with the Israeli authorities. This information is passed on to the "shock committees", who interrogate and then kill the suspects.
- d. Publications (*Al-'Alam*) - leaflets, propaganda, press offices.

Hamas tries to maintain a clear distinction between the covert activity of its various sections and its overt activity, which serves primarily to broaden the ranks of the

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<sup>1</sup> Nazzal, quoted in Hroub, *Al-Islamiyyoon fi filastin*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Jerbawi, *Hamas Bid to Lead the Palestinian People*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> All quotes in the paragraph are from Marzouq interview with author, 21 May 2003.

<sup>4</sup> For more details about the structure of Hamas, see Ahmad bin Yusef, *Harakat al-muqawama al-Islamiyya (Hamas)*, Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: al-fikr wa al-mumarsa al-siyasiyya*, Jawad al-Hamad, Eyad al-Barghothi: *derasa fi al-fikr al-siyassy li harakat Hamas (A study of Hamas's political thought)* (Amman: Dar al-Bashir 1997), p. 31.

Movement. The major reason for this is Hamas' desire to increase compartmentation and secrecy, by not identifying itself directly with its public activity.

The term generally used by Hamas to define its overt activity is *Da'wah*. This term is also the name given to the Hamas section whose function is to broaden the Movement's infrastructure, to distribute funds and make appointments. In fact, there is a large degree of overlapping (if not total identity) between the two.

Thus, Hamas is an organization composed of several interdependent levels. The popular-social base is maintained materially by the charity committees and ideologically through instruction, propaganda and incitement delivered in the mosques and other institutions and through leaflets. This base is the source for the recruitment of members into the units which engage in riots and popular violence.

Those who distinguish themselves in riots and popular violence sooner or later find their way into the military apparatus, which carries out brutal and violent attacks against Israelis and Palestinians alike. The militants (and, if they are arrested or killed, their families and relatives) enjoy the moral and economic backing of the preachers in the mosques, the directors of Hamas-affiliated institutions, and the charity committees.

### *Al-Majahadoun Al-Falestinioun*

The groundwork for the founding of *Al-Majahadoun Al-Falestinioun* was laid in 1982 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, together with several operatives of *Al-Mujama*. This included arms procurement and laying the groundwork for the struggle against Israel. This activity was uncovered in 1984, and Yassin was sentenced to 13 years in prison but was released shortly afterwards as part of the Jibril prisoner exchange (May 1985).

Upon his release, Yassin resumed his work of setting up a military apparatus. At first, emphasis was placed on the struggle against 'heretics' and collaborators; in accordance with the view of the Muslim Brotherhood that Jihad should come only after the purging of rivals from within. At the same time, a military infrastructure was prepared, including the stockpiling of weapons for the war against Israel. Shortly before the outbreak of the Intifada, operatives were recruited to carry out the military Jihad. Organized military activity by this group, including regular terrorist attacks, became manifest only after the beginning of the Intifada.

Following the outbreak of the Intifada, the military apparatus carried out a large number of attacks of various kinds, including bombings and gunfire, mostly in the northern part of the Gaza District. These attacks reached their climax with the kidnapping and killing of IDF soldiers Avi Sasportas (February 1989) and Ilan Sa'adon (May 1989).

### *The Security Section and the Majd Units*

The Security Section (*Jehaz Aman*) was established in early 1986 by Sheikh Yassin together with two of his associates, who were also active in *Al-Mujama*. The role of the section was to conduct surveillance of suspected collaborators and other Palestinians who acted in a manner which ran counter to the principles of Islam (drug dealers, sellers of pornography, etc.). In late 1986 - early 1987, on the recommendation of the two heads of the security section, Yassin decided to set up hit Brigades, known as *Majd*, whose purpose was to kill 'heretics' and collaborators. Yassin instructed the leaders that they must kill anyone who admitted under

interrogation to being a collaborator, and reinforced this instruction with a religious ruling.

This mode of action continued until the outbreak of the Intifada, when Hamas approach underwent significant changes, leading to the beginning of organized military action against Israeli targets as well. The *Majd* units then became part of the *Al-Majahadoun* network.

### *The Izzdin al-Qassam Brigades*

The military apparatus of Hamas underwent several changes in the course of the Intifada, as a result of preventive measures and exposure by the Israeli forces following major attacks carried out by Hamas operatives. The last form which this apparatus has taken is the Izzdin al-Qassam Brigades, which is responsible for most of the serious attacks carried out by Hamas since January 1, 1992. These Brigades include dozens of wanted suspects from Gaza. Some of these suspects began to operate in the West Bank as well, while recruiting Palestinians from this area to carry out attacks inside Israel. Some members of these Brigades have been apprehended or killed, and some have fled to Egypt. Several dozen Hamas operatives remain active in the Territories, most of them members of the Izzdin al-Qassam Brigades.

### *The Political Relations between Hamas and Palestinian Groups*

#### *HAMAS AND PLO/AL-FATAH*

Hamas's options with respect to its relations with the PLO and Fateh have been limited and laden with political pitfalls. With respect to the PLO, three principal options were available; to join the PLO and work from within the organization, in hope eventually of taking it over; to work outside the PLO in the expectation of creating a credible alternative and replacing the organization in the long run; or to remain outside the PLO but not set itself up as a viable alternative, in effect to remain torn between the first two alternative. With respect to Fatah, the general tenor of relations from the beginning of Hamas's existence - and even before Hamas was formed as a distinct organization - has been virtually continuous competition and a high degree of tension. This characteristic is present even in professional associations and universities, where intense competition surfaces during electoral campaigns for office. It also applies in the domain of politics and resistance and was especially visible during the Intifada and resistance to occupation. The competition has historic roots dating back to the 1950s when Fatah split from the Muslim brotherhood; that split created a bitter feeling among both the leadership and rank and file members of the Brotherhood.

The position of Hamas with respect to recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people has passed through various stages in keeping with political developments, the peace process in particular. Hamas initially expressed some reservations in its Charter about recognition of the PLO. These reservations deepened with the convening of the Madrid peace conference, leading to the Movement's shelving of the recognition issue. In the wake of the Oslo and Cairo agreements, these reservations culminated in accusations of a total sellout on the part of the PLO and a Hamas declaration that the PLO no longer represented the

Palestinian people or its aspirations. Hamas made clear, however, that its attacks on the PLO and its charges about the PLO having sold out the Palestinian people were leveled not at the organization as a whole but rather at its "power-usurping" leadership. Thereby the door was left open either for the implementation of the reforms that Hamas repeatedly advocated or for Hamas's participation in the PLO. It also is noteworthy that once the PA took control of the self-rule areas in mid-1994, the intensity of Hamas criticism of the PLO declined significantly. In fact, references to the PLO dropped out of Hamas's statements, and criticism came to be directed against the PA.

The initial position, which is made explicit in the Hamas Charter, was an amicable one: The PLO was spoken of in glowing and positive terms, and its departure from the Islamic position was treated with delicacy. The Charter described the PLO as being "as close as it could be to the Islamic Resistance Movement. After all, did it not include among its membership the fathers, brothers, relatives and friends of Hamas members? How could a good Muslim turn a cold shoulder to his father, brother, relative or friend? We have but one homeland, one affliction, one shared destiny, and one shared enemy." The Charter then addressed the PLO's "secularist line," criticizing it severely while attempting to leave the door ajar for some future development. "The day that the PLO shall adopt Islam as a way of life, we shall be its soldiers and fodder for the flame with which it shall consume the enemy."<sup>1</sup>

Despite the lengthy discussion of the PLO, the text of the Charter does not offer a true and clear position concerning the legitimacy attached to the PLO's representation of the Palestinian people. Hamas's position on that issue is portrayed more accurately elsewhere, particularly in the "Interview with Hamas leader," published in *Muslim Palestine* magazine (in Arabic) less than a year after the publication of the Charter. The response to the magazine's query whether Hamas recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people proved to be an attempt to strike a precarious balance. The answer offered a clear endorsement of the PLO as "a nationalist framework for integrating the members of the Palestinian people, with their various leanings, and leading them to the total liberation of Palestine, as is stated in the Palestine National Charter." However, Hamas did not endorse the PLO's current political line, which it saw as a readiness to recognize Israel in return for the establishment of an independent state on part of the territory of Palestine.<sup>2</sup>

Hamas's "Introductory Memorandum" is consistent with the position of reserved recognition for the PLO. In it, Hamas stresses that it is not setting itself up as a substitute for any one and expresses the view that the PLO represents a nationalist achievement that should be safeguarded. More significantly, Hamas declares that it has no objection to integrating itself into the PLO framework as long as the PLO remains committed to the liberation of Palestine and to non-recognition of Israel.<sup>3</sup> It is significant that the three positions outlined above were very carefully formulated and fall into a different category than the impromptu statement by Hamas leaders and prominent figures, which are subject to the pressures of the need to issue a statement or to the pressures of the moment.

When the Madrid Conference convened with the participation of the PLO in 1991, Hamas stressed its reservations regarding the legitimacy of PLO representative and ignored its earlier recognition of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. Hamas repeatedly declared that the PLO delegation, which had met with U.S.

<sup>1</sup> The Hamas Charter, see Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> *Filastin al-Muslima*, May 1990, pp. 24-27.

<sup>3</sup> Hamas, "Introductory Memorandum" (ca. 1993).

Secretary of State James Baker in preparation for the conference, "lacked legitimacy."<sup>1</sup> Hamas subsequently refused to recognize the legitimacy of the resolutions of the Palestine National Council (PNC) meeting in Algeria in September 1991; those resolutions endorsed participation in the Madrid Conference. Hamas's position was that the PNC, as it was constituted at the time it made the endorsement, did not have the authority to adopt such a fateful decision on behalf of the Palestinian people. Consequently, Hamas held that any delegation formed on the basis of the resolutions from the Algeria conference was illegitimate and did not represent the Palestinian people.<sup>2</sup>

Non-recognition of the legitimacy of the delegation to the Madrid Conference developed into reservations concerning the legitimacy of the PLO and its role as sole representative of the Palestinian people. These reservations clearly and prominently came out into the open at the January 1993 meeting between Hamas and the PLO arranged by Hassan al-Turabi in Khartoum, capital of Sudan. The Hamas position irritated Yasir Arafat, who was taking part in the meeting, and was one of reasons why the meeting failed.<sup>3</sup> Between the Madrid Conference in October 1991 and the Oslo Agreement in September 1993, Hamas's reservations concerning recognition of the legitimacy of the PLO strengthened. Following announcement of the Oslo accord, Hamas virtually denied the PLO any representative legitimacy, declaring that the PLO did not have a right to claim to represent the Palestinian because it had "abandoned Palestinian fundamentals."<sup>4</sup> Later, after the PLO signed a second agreement with Israel at Cairo, the head of Hamas Political Bureau at that time elaborated on the organization's views on this issue:

In the past, the legitimacy of the PLO and its right of representation stemmed from its close adherence to the unchanging national rights of our people and its defense of those rights. That legitimacy never was based on an electoral mandate or the free selection of the leadership for the people. Nevertheless, it had been acceptable to regard the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the people due to its close adherence in the past to the fundamental national aspirations of the Palestinian people and due to its well appreciated struggle for liberation, self-determination, and the expulsion of the occupiers. However, now that the PLO has distanced itself permanently from those objectives –selling them out completely by signing the Oslo and Cairo agreements- and considering that new forces have appeared on the scene, mainly Islamic ones, which are more committed to our people's national aspirations, it is no longer reasonable or rational to adhere to the image of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative, particularly in the case of the clique that now exercises hegemony over the organization. This is particularly true because the PLO never enjoyed a prior electoral mandate; had there been such a popular mandate stemming from free and democratic legislative elections to give it legitimacy, the evaluation of this matter would have differed.<sup>5</sup>

The PLO's view of Hamas has to be deciphered from a number of positions - some of which complement each other, and others which are directly contradictory - that were formulated at different stages. There is considerable diversity in these positions,

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Hamas, Periodic statement no. 77 of 3 August 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 79 of 7 October 1991.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Safir* (Beirut), 20 February 1993.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Hamas's special statement issued after the announcement of the Oslo Declaration (Gaza-Jericho First Agreement) entitled "Al-Islah al-watani al-shamil huwa al-hal" (Comprehensive national reform is the solution), 28 August 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Musa Abu Marzouq, interview with the author, 21 May 2003.

which range from pretending that Hamas does not exist (particularly true right after Hamas's founding at the beginning of the Intifada) to accusing it of operating outside the sphere of legitimate Palestinian action, and thereby serving the Israeli occupation in one way or the other. The PLO has acknowledged the power of Hamas and officially invited it to join the PLO and the PNC. It also has attempted to co-opt and weaken Hamas by promoting divisions within it or even attacking it.

These different attitudes on the part of the PLO toward Hamas sometimes overlapped; which one dominated depended on the circumstances and the dictates of changing policy. Thus, the simultaneous maintenance of disparate positions, encountered earlier with respect to the historic and interim solutions for the Palestinian problem propounded by Hamas, has an analogue here in the case of the PLO and its positions on Hamas. For example, Arafat has charged that Hamas was established with the direct or indirect support of Israel and has reiterated this accusation since the formation of Hamas, although the occurrence of such accusations seems to correlate with the amount of tension between Hamas and the PLO at any given time. Parallel to this, from the first appearance of Hamas in December 1987 to the holding of Palestinian elections in January 1996 and the subsequent formation of a Palestinian cabinet, the PLO has recognized Hamas as a force to be reckoned with and as having Palestinian grass-roots support. It has invited Hamas to join PLO organizations or the PA, both inside and outside the Occupied Territories. First, during the Palestinian uprising, the PLO invited Hamas to join the Unified National leadership of the Intifada; later, in the post-Oslo phase, the PLO invited it to join the first Palestinian cabinet or subsequent cabinets at the time of reshuffles. Outside the Occupied Territories Hamas has been invited to join the PNC.

One crucial juncture that demonstrates how these positions intertwined was the period during which PLO invited Hamas to practice in the April 1990 meetings of the preparatory committee working on reconstituting the PNC. This invitation was envisaged as a preliminary step to Hamas's admission to the PNC and constituted the first official recognition by the PLO of Hamas as a nationalist Palestinian group that was due respect and had to be dealt with in that capacity. Hamas, however, declined this invitation. Three months later the PLO recognition was overtaken by a viperous campaign, launched in *Filastin al-Thawra* (the official organ of the PLO), that accused Hamas of deserting the unity of nationalist ranks and of trying to deviate from "the commandments, the organic structure and the laws of the Palestinian family."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the PLO's statements focused on the idea that Hamas had been established to satisfy an Israeli aim, or at least that it had been established with the consent of Israel in order to weaken the PLO. This charge would evolve as Hamas's relations with Islamic parties- notably Iran- developed, and the PLO's statements, particularly those by Arafat, came to center on the accusation that foreign parties were meddling in Palestinian affairs through Hamas, which owed loyalty to foreigners.<sup>2</sup>

However, prior to the Madrid-Oslo process, the PLO did extend recognition to Hamas and credited it with a role in the national struggle. Statements indicative of this position were made in tandem with other statements supporting the charges and allegations mentioned above, for example, Arafat expressed the view that Hamas has the right to adopt whatever opinion it chooses because that is consistent with

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the extended lead editorial in *Filastin al-Thawra*, "Likai la tadhi al-haqiqa: radduna 'ala Hamas" (That the truth not be lost: Our reply to Hamas), 8 July 1990. This editorial was especially important because it expressed the official PLO position in its official publication.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Arafat's statement in *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 24 September 1992; *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 28 February 1993; and *Al-Hayat*, 5 March 1996.

"pluralism and the freedom of opinion."<sup>1</sup> Salah Khalaf (Abu Eyad) went even further, praising Hamas because "its base (of support) is among the purest of bases supporting the armed struggle."<sup>2</sup>

With respect to the method used to co-opt Hamas, a number of statements by the PLO, and by Arafat in particular, prior to the Madrid Conference asserted that Hamas was part of the PLO and that it was represented by a number of PNC delegates, who had attended the 1988 PNC session in Algeria, at which the Palestinian peace program was adopted.<sup>3</sup> Later, when the PA was formed and elections were held for the Palestinian council, Arafat said that Hamas had participated in the elections and had won five seats,<sup>4</sup> despite vehement denials of this by Hamas and its reiteration of its boycott of those elections. In addition, the PLO maintained constant contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, in an effort by Arafat to convince the Egyptian Brotherhood to bring pressure to bear on Hamas either to ease up on its opposition or to rally to the banner of the PLO. Following the establishment of the PA in May 1994, the tactics of co-optation changed from offering to share power with Hamas – by giving it a number of seats in the PLO - to creating divisions within Hamas by encouraging some of its prominent figures and rank and file to split off from the Movement and establish a separate Islamic party.

Mention should be made of allegations by Hamas that there have been attempts to weaken it and to exile and sometimes to liquidate its members.<sup>5</sup> For example, there were fights between PLO and Hamas members inside the prisons of the Occupied Territories during the first three years of the Intifada. Because Hamas and the PLO each refrained from recognizing the other during this period, newly arrested Hamas members were deprived of an opportunity of joining a Hamas group in the prisons and detention centers, which were recognized in the prisons, and each new inmate was required to join one of these organizations. Hamas and Islamic Jihad prisoners generally chose to join the cell blocs containing inmates affiliated with Fateh because this group was perceived as being ideologically closest to Hamas. Even though they had joined voluntarily, once in the Fateh cell blocs they were expected to participate in cultural and political programs for Fateh members and to adhere to instructions from Fateh leaders. Islamist prisoners refused to obey those instructions that they considered inconsistent with religious beliefs. Consequently, Fateh leaders imposed the same penalties on them that they imposed on others who violated the rules. This situation led to bitter struggle between prisoners loyal to Fateh and those loyal to Hamas.

The Hamas Charter set as a condition for its participation in any organization belonging to the PLO that the latter abandons its secular line as well as its political agenda for a peaceful settlement with Israel. However, as Hamas gained experience and its political through evolved, it began to focus solely on rejection of the PLO's political agenda and what such a position required. Thus, Hamas tacitly acknowledged (although it never said as much verbally or in writing) that it had transcended its insistence that the PLO abandons secularism in order to be consistent with its own declared commitment to democracy and pluralism. This condition was conspicuously absent from the list of four Hamas conditions for joining the PNC. These conditions were that the PLO had to stop making one concession after another

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 2 March 1990.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-watan al-Arabi* (Paris), 31 April 1989.

<sup>3</sup> Interview, *Filastin al-Muslima*, August 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Interview, *Al-Hayat*, 6 February 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Ibrahim Gosheh, interview in Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Al-Fikr wa al-mumarsa al-Siyasiyya*.

to Israel; that there should be no legitimization of the Zionist presence in any part of Palestine; that Palestinian organizations be allocated seats commensurate with the actual size of their membership; and that real democracy should be practiced with respect to freedom of expression for the leadership in the discharge of its responsibilities.<sup>1</sup>

Reality was, in fact, more complex than simply putting forward a set of conditions that, if satisfied, would have led to Hamas's automatic participation in the PNC and PLO. In actuality, the precise nature of the appropriate form of relations with the PLO has been subject of major contention within Hamas and has given rise to a number of perspectives, each of which assumes different requirements. By monitoring the discourse and the practice of Hamas in this regard, it is possible to group these perspectives under the three major choices mentioned earlier: set itself up as an alternative to the PLO, work from within the PLO, or do nothing.<sup>2</sup>

### *HAMAS AND THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY*

Hamas's position on the Oslo Agreement, which provided for the establishment of the PA, was only verbally violent; Hamas did not use physical violence against the newly created PA in the Gaza Strip, nor did it exploit the weakness of the PA in its early days to undermine or impose its own conditions on it. It is true that the statements and releases by Hamas were accusatory and hostile in tone, but the translation of such positions into action remained ineffectual.

In the first year of the PA's existence, Hamas frequently approached the PA with verbal toughness. Many statements by the leaders of Hamas both inside and outside the Occupied Territories lay out the essence of this position. In brief, Hamas undertook not to use violence against the self-governing authority but instead to engage in opposition through peaceful means and to direct its military effort against Israel. Hamas did not deviate from this position even as tensions between it and the PA increased following the guerrilla operations launched from the Gaza Strip by the Izzidin al-Qassam Brigades against Israeli targets.<sup>3</sup> Hamas-PA tensions reached a critical point on several occasions, particularly after wide scale arrests of Hamas members.

A second approach toward the PA was specific to the period of the arrival of the Palestinian police in the Gaza Strip. Hamas extended a warm welcome to the police officers and, because the PA had failed to make preparations for their housing and basic necessities, providing accommodations for them at its own school buildings and charitable societies. In that short "honeymoon," Hamas leaders heaped praise on the police, in the hope that this unexpected welcome would establish good will among the rank and file of security forces whose first task was expected to be to check Hamas's policy of armed attacks. Despite the tensions that arose between Hamas and the police a few months after their arrival into the area administered by the PA, Hamas continued to refer to the Palestinian police as comprising nationalist and honorable men who, in the final analysis, would take a stand alongside Hamas's fighters to

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas Memorandum to the PNC, dated 6 April 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Khaled Hroub, "Hamas wa monazzamt al-tahrir: faradhiyyat al'alaqa" (Hamas and the PLO: Premises of the relationship), *Filastin al-Muslima* (September 1990): 24-26.

<sup>3</sup> Ibrahim Ghosheh, interview, *Al-Sabeel* (Jordan), 23 August 1994; see also the Hamas statement addressed to the Palestinian police after the 1995 Beit Hanoun incident, during which four Palestinian policemen were killed by Israeli soldiers, "Hawla al-majzarah al-sohyouniyya bihaq al-shurtah al-filastiniyya" (On the Zionist massacre of the Palestinian police), dated 3 October 1995.

defend the people from Israel. Hamas continued to differentiate in this way between policemen as individuals and the police as an institution with a command structure, blame the political leaders for the repression of and the campaign against Hamas.

The third approach was at the level of official contacts with the PA in order to deal with the numerous conflict situations in the field. In the initial months following the establishment of the PA, Hamas went to some lengths to emphasize that the purpose of those contacts, as well as the occasional talks with Arafat, was to defuse situations and resolve unresolved issues, not to pursue a political dialogue.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, as isolated incidents proliferated in the Gaza Strip, or parties became involved, and these contacts gradually took on a political character. The visit by Arafat to the Islamic University in Gaza in April 1994, where he met with a number of prominent leaders of Hamas (albeit in their occupational rather than political capacities), was considered at the time an important turning point in relations between Hamas and the PA. In fact, the PA, in response to instructions from Arafat, had granted a publishing license to "Imad al-Faluji, a prominent Hamas figure, to issue a weekly paper as the official organ for Hamas.

The fourth approach was to bring matters to the brink of civil war and to allow a variety of clashes to occur. This was a unilateral strategy employed by the PA against Hamas. The PA initiated numerous incidents in the form of campaigns of arrest, the closure of institutions belonging to Hamas, and the humiliation of some Hamas leaders, such as Mahmoud al-Zahhar; there were strong suspicions that security forces were involved in the assassination of members and commanders of the Izzidin al-Qassam Brigades, such as Muhyiddine al-Sharif. These incidents heated up the situation.

With time, Hamas felt a need for a dialogue to defuse the situation, particularly in the wake of each operation carried out by Qassam Brigades inside Israel. Immediately after each incident, the Israeli authorities vented their fury at the PA, accusing it of allowing Hamas elements to plan and prepare for their operations from within the area controlled by the PA. As its operations began to require greater sophistication, Hamas's four approaches for dealing with the PA became conflated. It retained verbal attacks while attempting to neutralize the Palestinian police and it liaised with the PA to resolve problems in the field even as its activities verged on the brink of the civil conflict. It became obvious that Israeli pressure on the PA made it impossible to avoid the need for a political dialogue to deal with the central problem facing both Hamas and the PA: the continuation of Hamas's operations against Israel and their effect on the PA and Hamas. Hamas announced its readiness to conduct with the PA a comprehensive dialogue with an open agenda.<sup>2</sup> In fact, even as tensions reached a zenith, Hamas kept open its lines to the PA through the mediation of Sheikh Sayyed Abu Musameh and Imad al-Faluji, who ceased to represent Hamas policies after being expelled from the organization in December 1995 due to his political position that Hamas has to participate in the PA's power structure.<sup>3</sup>

The second half of 1995 passed somewhat peacefully, particularly because operational activities by Hamas virtually ceased, due either to technical reasons –as Hamas claimed- or to an unwritten agreement between Hamas and the PA. The understanding was meant to calm the situation and allow time for the PA to develop and to propose a plan for normalizing bilateral relations. This exceptional period of

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<sup>1</sup> See the clarification issued by the Hamas Political Bureau about a meeting between its leaders and the PA, dated 21-22 September 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Ibrahim Ghosheh, *Al-Destour* (Jordan), 23 April 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Hamas, Press statement, 10 December 1995.

quiet and the continuation of the dialogue led to a major reconciliation effort between the PA and Hamas in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum at the beginning of October and to a major round of talks in Cairo at the end of December.

The talks in Cairo, at which Arafat personally headed the PA's delegation and to which Hamas sent an enlarged delegation representing the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and communities abroad, were a truly extraordinary event. They occurred at a very sensitive juncture for Hamas and Palestine as a whole: the redeployment of the Israeli army in the West Bank outside of the cities, villages, and refugee camps had begun; and elections for the Legislative Council of the PA had been set for 20 January 1996. Furthermore, the venue of the meeting had regional significance, was indicative of Hamas's importance, and boosted its prestige. While the PA came to Cairo in the hope of convincing Hamas to halt, or at least to freeze, its guerrilla operations and to practice in the election, Hamas hoped that the dialogue in Cairo would be the beginning of a "sound" relationship between itself and the PLO.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, Hamas did not bring to the table a clear and specific political agenda, apart from demanding the release of Hamas detainees and a condemnation of repressive measures used by Palestinian security forces.

The Cairo meeting did not fulfill the expectations it had created. It produced a few general declarations expressing support for national solidarity, condemning internecine fighting, urging the use of dialogue for dealing with each other, and encouraging all efforts to be directed at securing the release of prisoners in Israeli jails; a joint committee was formed to deal with emergencies.<sup>2</sup> Apart from these generalities, both sides made a few commitments. The PA promised to release detainees, let up the pressure on Hamas, and resort to dialogue; Hamas promised not to campaign for a boycott of the coming elections, declaring that "its aim was not to place the Authority in an embarrassing position."<sup>3</sup> The PA interpreted this declaration as a temporary commitment to freeze guerrilla operations.

Hamas kept its word during the January 1996 elections, although it boycotted the voting itself. Nor did it carry out any operations before or during the elections, despite the assassination of the head of its military arm, Yahya Ayyash, two weeks before the elections. Although the assassination produced a charged atmosphere once again, and unknown dangers loomed, it seemed briefly that developments were headed in a new direction.

The situation changed once again when Hamas carried out its promise to seek revenge for the assassination of Ayyash by carrying out a number of suicide bombings in Jerusalem, Asqalan, and Tel Aviv only ten days after the elections. Hamas and the PLO were back to square their nadir. The PA mounted a large-scale campaign arresting Hamas members; 900 were jailed, including some of its important leaders. Hamas was harassed, several charitable institutions belonging to the Movement were closed, and Hamas's activities were restricted. The campaign spread in the West bank and Gaza Strip, particularly after the March 1996 Sharm al-Sheikh Conference. In brief, 1996 was very bad year for Hamas in view of the blows it received from Israel and the PA.

At this stage the dialogue broke down, but it resumed in 1997 and took on new life after the peace process ran into trouble due to the intransigence of the Benyamin

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas leaflet, "Tastih sahafi howl al-hiwar ma'al-sulta al-filastiniyya" (Press release about the dialogue with the Palestinian Authority), 12 December 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Final Communique of the Cairo dialogue Meeting, dated 21 December 1995; it was signed by Salim Za'noun, head of the PA selegation, and Khaled Mash'al, head of the Hamas delegation.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Netanyahu government and its refusal to carry out Israeli obligations under the Oslo agreement. The PA met in so-called national dialogue sessions with guerrilla groups opposing the peace agreement, notably in Nablus in April 1997 and in Ramallah in August of the same year. Hamas boycotted the first session, demanding the release of its detainees as a precondition for participation, but it sent a large delegation to the second one. These talks did not yield tangible results. The PA wanted to use them to demonstrate to Netanyahu that it had other options, while Hamas saw them as yet another opportunity to express its rejection of the Oslo Agreement.

Having examined Hamas's views and how it conducted relations with the PA, it now appropriate to review the perspective of the PA, particularly the evolution of its position on Hamas. In the first year of its existence, the PA proceeded cautiously and cunningly to build a firm base for itself. The first two months were spent in getting acclimatized to the homeland and taking the pulse of the opposition. As the security forces consolidated their presence, the PA gradually arrested its authority over the opposition. It adopted an increasingly hard line, particularly on such issues as confiscating arms and tracking down military cells belonging to the opposition, although it avoided addressing these subjects publicly. In tandem with this line, the PA sought to co-opt the opposition. It offered Hamas four positions in the leadership of the PA, which was the same number of seats held by Fatah, and sought to persuade it to accept this offer; Hamas refused.<sup>1</sup> The PA nevertheless opened lines of communication with prominent figures in Hamas, seeking to soften the Movement's position on participation in power and in the forthcoming elections. On occasion, to promote the same objective, the PA waged a media campaign against Hamas, questioning its loyalty by accusing it of cultivating relations with Iran and owing allegiance to a foreign power. This increasing pressure on Hamas forced the latter to retreat. The PA scored points against Hamas by capitalizing on the very real dilemma in which the Movement found itself. Either Hamas could pursue guerrilla activities, risking a clash with the PA that might lead to civil war, or it could freeze such activities, which would undermine its credibility in pursuing a resistance alternative. This was a bitter choice for Hamas, particularly because – at least in the short term - time worked to the advantage of the PA, which proceeded to consolidate and multiply its security forces and to sink its roots into Palestinian society.

When the second Intifada has started the Hamas's relations with PA got differences, the PA could not make a step to prevent Hamas to take place in the Occupied Territories, because of the situation and the Israeli aggressions against the Palestinian people, and the heavy fighting between each other, and the PA itself was a target at the beginning of the Intifada for Israel, most of the Palestinian security forces have weaken.

Hamas got a new position in al-Aqsa Intifada, and expanded its popularity among the Palestinian people; actually, Hamas has reached a highest popularity ever and the PA asked it to reduce its attacks against Israelis.<sup>2</sup>

Hamas and PA hold new talks to reach a united attitude of the way of struggle, and they tried again in Cairo sponsored by Egypt and European Union, to prepare the way of Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) to implement the cease-fire and start talks with Israel to follow the road map up.

The talks under way in Cairo between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority (PA) hold rare opportunities but also terrible risks. They offer the Palestinians a chance to affect

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 1 June 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Hazem Balousha, *Hamas qwa tafred nafsoha* (Hamas is a power imposed itself), *al-Haqaeq* (London), 20 June 2003.

their own destiny in a manner that has been far too infrequent. They also carry the potential, however, to do serious damage to Palestinian aspirations. It is unfortunate that the parties involved felt the need to meet on "neutral ground" in Egypt instead of hashing out their differences on their own land in Ramallah or Gaza City. Both sides should therefore spare no effort in seeking the kind of accommodation that by its sheer historicity reduces the venue of their negotiations to a mere footnote.

The two sides believed at that time that, events are moving at a torrid pace across the Middle East, imposing on both Hamas and the PA a need to recognize the ease with which developments outside their control can and will make a shambles of their plans unless these are formulated with tremendous care and foresight.

Hamas and the PA after long talks inside Palestinian Territories has reached an agreement for cease-fire for three months and stop the attacks against Israeli targets to allow the road map to take place, which was presented by the international society as a peace proposal to establish the independent Palestinian state at 2005. Unfortunately, the cease-fire had broken off after the continuous Israeli aggressions against Palestinian people, and the reaction of Hamas, especially after Jerusalem suicide bombing which killed 23 Israelis.

The red line that Hamas had drawn for itself in order to avoid a civil war at any cost encouraged the PA to continue along the same line of policy, confident that Hamas would not retaliate through violent means no matter how far the PA went, which was in fact an accurate assessment.

No one expects a honeymoon between Hamas, an Islamic movement, and *Fatah*, the secular fraction that dominates the PA. They emphatically do not have to adore one another; they just have to love their people enough to take the right decision. In brief, the PA's strategy of gradually tightening the noose around Hamas at all levels was meant to weaken the Movement militarily and politically and to undermine its grass-roots support, as well as to contain its influence.

#### *HAMAS AND THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS*

Coordination between Hamas and the leftist and nationalist organizations began with the declaration of the formation of the Ten Resistance Organizations (TRO), just before the convening of the Madrid Conference in October 1991. The birth of this alliance was announced by the leaders of eleven organizations,<sup>1</sup> who met concurrently with the World Conference in Support of the Islamic Revolution in Palestine, which was convened in Tehran, Iran, on 22-24 October 1991. Opposition to the Madrid Conference was the common denominator among these organizations and the subject of the first communiqué released by the TRO. The TRO did not form a joint organizational or command structure, a situation that continued until the formation of the Alliance of Palestinian forces in January 1994, which will be discussed below. The absence of any organizational structure undermined the effectiveness of the TRO; coordination among the members remained minimal and

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<sup>1</sup> The "ten" organizations that initially joined together at Tehran included the following: Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Islamic Jihad, the Movement for Palestinian National Liberation-Fateh /Al-Intifada, the Movement for Palestinian National Liberation-Fateh /Revolutionary Council, Vanguard of the War of Popular Liberation, Al-Sa'iqa, the Popular struggle Front, and the Revolutionary Palestinian Communist Party, on 29 September 1992. By the date, the Palestinian Revolutionary Front had replaced the Movement for Palestinian National Liberation-al-Fatah/Revolutionary Council.

was limited to issuing joint communiqués. From the beginning, the participation of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in this alliance of opposition forces had a noticeable impact on the TRO's political discourse. The language in a significant number of alliance releases had a distinct Islamic tone and expressed the ideas of Hamas. This is particularly apparent in the emphasis placed on the borders of historic Palestine, the rejection of any peace settlement whatever, and the references to the Islamic dimension of the problem.

The loose structure of the TRO, which allowed for only minimal coordination among the *fasail*, made it ineffectual in coping with the situation as the peace talks moved from Madrid to Washington. The peace talks were propelled by the momentum of international and regional support, as well as by the disarray of Arab power in the wake of the Gulf War. The resistance organizations felt the need to turn themselves into a united front or alliance. However, rather than going into the political history of such formulas, this study reviews the proposals presented by Hamas to the TRO for advancing its cause and improving its organization. These proposals reflect Hamas's position toward the leftist and nationalist Palestinian resistance organization.

The first idea for the TRO was a Hamas proposal for a higher Palestinian Coordination Committee, submitted in April 1992, that is to say, six months after the convening of the Madrid Conference and the first meeting of the TRO. The introduction stated that the proposal was for the establishment of a TRO coordination committee which would formulate a united political position in Palestine directed against the proposals for a peaceful settlement. This proposal did not receive serious consideration, perhaps because of the short duration of the relationship between Hamas and the other organizations and because of some doubts concerning Hamas's motive, especially on the part of those organizations that were concerned that Hamas might be setting itself up as an alternative to the PLO.

The other ideas were submitted by Hamas to the TRO in the wake of the signing of the Oslo Agreement, which caught the Palestinians as a whole (and specifically the organizations opposed to a settlement) off guard. Particularly because the negotiations being conducted in Washington (following the Madrid Conference and continuing until the Oslo Agreement) appeared to be going nowhere, the Palestinian opposition had been encouraged to relax its attitude. After the Oslo Agreement, Hamas proposed the creation of an Alliance of Palestinian Forces as a new formula for organizing the TRO; the other organizations submitted similar proposals. With respect to the suggested political position of the alliance, the Hamas proposal was in line with those of the other organizations. What differentiated Hamas's proposal was its new perspective on the PLO as an institution: it proposed "rebuilding the institution of the Palestinian people, first and foremost the PLO, on a fair and democratic basis." A noteworthy change in Hamas's point of view was expressed in this proposal, which moved beyond setting up the Movement as an alternative to the PLO: it envisaged taking over the PLO and reforming it from within. That is to say, there was a shift from option one to option two, which are fundamentally different positions.

The Hamas proposal contained contentious recommendations for the structure of the leadership of the alliance, and these led to its rejection. Hamas proposed creating a central committee that would consist of 40 delegates representing the TRO plus some independents. Hamas would have 40 percent of the delegates, while the other organizations combined would be represented by 40 percent; independents would have the remaining 20 percent. Most of the leftist and nationalist *fasail* rejected this proposal, not on political grounds but rather for organizational reasons. They thought it would repeat their experience with Fatah, which used to dominate Palestinian

organizations proportionate to the size of its membership. Hamas amended its original proposal in view of this rejection, abandoning the idea of proportional representation in the central committee and adopting the demands of the *fasail*. It put forward a formula whereby each organization would have two delegates; this proposal, presented in December 1993, was accepted and became the basis for the Alliance of Palestinian Forces.

Proposals for the political positions that the alliance should adopt in the post-Oslo period included the following: rejecting the agreement; boycotting the elections for the PA council (or participation in the council by appointment); boycotting all organizations derived from the Oslo Agreement or charged with its implementations; affirming the inalienable, historic rights of the Palestinian people to liberate its land, return to its homeland, and practice full national self-determination; and adhering to armed struggle as the principal means of liberation. The *fasail* approved the general text of the proposal unanimously and approved the final amendments. Thus, as of the founding session in Damascus on 5 January 1994, the alliance of Palestinian Forces replaces the TRO. In its first declaration, issued the following day, the alliance condemned the Oslo Agreement and the letter from Arafat to Rabin recognizing Israel as acts of "national treason" that had to be abrogated by all means, and it declared them to be non-binding on the Palestinian people. The leadership of the PLO, but not the organization itself, was condemned: "The current leadership of the PLO does not represent the Palestinian people, nor does it express its views or aspirations."<sup>1</sup>

In practical terms, due to the major dispute over the leadership structure of the alliance, the original formula for representation that had been in force under the TRO survived unchanged. All organizations had an equal number of delegates to the central committee of the alliance, irrespective of their actual size. Consequently, the change from the TRO to the Alliance of Palestinian forces was little more than a name change, particularly because no common political agenda was agreed upon, just a set of "political tasks" for the alliance. Later, in December 1996, Hamas submitted a new proposal to the *fasail* for the creation of a group to be called the National Independence Front. It tried to avoid the pitfalls that had led to the failure of previous proposals and focused this time on including a large number of independent Palestinian personalities. However, this proposal did not succeed either.

As far as the joint effort was concerned - whether under the TRO or the Alliance of Palestinian Forces formula - the most important issue was coordinating political positions toward Oslo and the PA, especially the boycott of elections and of institutions resulting from the agreement. With respect to efforts to gain grass-roots Palestinian support, no major achievements were scored, although there were numerous scattered but significant successes, most notably the organizing of a general strike during the Madrid Conference on 28-30 October 1991 to protest and condemn that meeting. The success of the strike was remarkable and worrying to the PLO leadership. The victory of the joint electoral list supporting the projectionist *fasail* in the Birzeit University elections also can be counted a success. The victory - at a traditional PLO stronghold - was considered an important referendum on the peace process and showed what the *fasail* could achieve by coordinating their activities.

Aside from a limited number of successes, the coordinated efforts of the alliance amounted to little more than the issuing of joint communiqués concerning significant developments pertaining to the Madrid Conference and the Oslo Agreement or issuing releases expressing solidarity with each other.

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<sup>1</sup> "Declaration of the Alliance of Palestinian Forces" (in Arabic), Damascus, 6 January 1994.

In the absence of military coordination among these organizations inside the Occupied Territories, there was only one communiqué from the Izzidin al-Qassam Brigades, issued after the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier in October 1994. This demanded the release of more than 150 prisoners affiliated with the fail and who were serving long jail terms in return for the release of the soldier. In addition to demanding the release of prisoners - 50 belonging to Hamas, 25 to Islamic Jihad, 50 to Fateh , 20 to the PFLP, 10 to the DFLP, 20 to Hizbullah, and 15 to the PFLP/GC - Hamas demanded the release of Sheikh Yassin and all Palestinian female detainees.<sup>1</sup> Israel didn't release any of them.

Neither as the TRO nor as the Alliance of Popular Forces did the *fasail* succeed in overcoming a number of problems that retarded their progress. This first of these was their inability to work together to win elections in the Occupied Territories. Despite agreements they had reached abroad, suspicions and lack of trust characterized their relations inside the Occupied Territories. This was reflected in the results of student union, professional association, and trade union elections. Apart from one cease in Birzeit, these organizations put up detailed lists of candidates who competed with each other as well as with Fateh's strong candidates. As a result, opposition votes were divided, and the Fateh list invariably won.

This lack of trust among the resistance organizations characterized relations in general, not just during elections. They accused each other of not keeping promises and of withholding support, particularly on those occasions when Hamas clashed with Fateh publicly, because the clashes were an attempt by Fateh to crush the power of Hamas. Some *fasail*, however, did not comply but rather condemned internecine fighting in general.

Outside the Occupied Territories, the level of cooperation was better, but a number of fundamental issues continued to be contentious between Hamas and the *fasail*. Notably, Hamas objected to the introduction of any amendments to the program of the Alliance that involved acceptance of international legitimacy -such as implicit recognition of UN resolutions 242 and 338- as a basis for solving the Palestine problem. It also opposed acceptance of an interim solution to the Palestine problem. Hamas viewed such amendments as entailing recognition of Israel, which it found unacceptable.<sup>2</sup> Other differences concerned the holding of popular conventions in Arab countries where Palestinian communities resided. The conventions were held to choose representatives for those communities, and they culminated in national congresses attended by the previously chosen representatives, who then elected leaders from among themselves for the Palestinian people; these leaders subsequently claimed legitimacy on the basis of having been elected. Hamas disliked this method because it believed the only winners would be prominent figures in the *fasail* who were active in areas such as Syria and Lebanon, while Hamas, which lacked an organized presence in these states, would be marginalized. Therefore, Hamas insisted that the activities of these popular conventions be limited to mobilizing opposition to the Oslo and Cairo agreements, and that they not choose leaders to represent the Palestinians. It also demanded that the mechanism of direct elections be used to choose any legitimate Palestinian leadership.<sup>3</sup>

Hamas's experience in working with leftist and nationalist Palestinian resistance organizations is summarized in the lengthy excerpt below that identifies the "pillars" on which Hamas based its proposals for alliance formation following the Oslo

<sup>1</sup> "Military communiqué of the Martyr Izzidin al-Qassam Brigades" (in Arabic), 11 October 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Ibrahim Ghosheh, interview, *Al-Destour* (Jordan), 3 January 1994.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 February 1994.

Agreement. Hamas advocated the establishment of an abroad Islamic/national alliance with a united political program aimed at abrogating the Oslo Agreement but did not openly declare war on the PLO over the question of legitimacy. From the perspective of Hamas, these proposals represented a compromise between those *fasail* in the rejection front that wanted an alternative to the PLO in the form of a different national liberation organization and those such as the PFLP and the DFLP that wanted alternative leaders for the PLO while keeping the organization as a national institution. According to Nazzal, a member of Hamas's political Bureau these "pillars" are as follows:

The First Pillar: the front or alliance should be able gradually and naturally to evolve into a real alternative leadership. It should not attempt to leap over the intervening stages. In this way, it will gain support from prominent figures, whether for its declared or undeclared positions.

The Second Pillar: one does not acquire legitimacy by declaring that one has it, as much as it comes about through a process of natural evolution. It is possible, in the event of the failure of the Gaza-Jericho First Agreement and of plans for a political settlement in general –which is what we are seeking– that the alliance formula will turn into a formula for the collective leadership of the Palestinian people, which is truly representative of the people and its aspirations. However, going about it the other way around would be impractical and pernicious. Should an organization that sets itself up as an alternative degenerate into a mere opposition front, its members then would lose their credibility and their flexibility.

The Third Pillar: the declaration on the formation of an alternative organization at this time depends on local, regional, and global circumstances, most of which are not propitious. In addition, such a declaration would result in a grueling fight with Yasir Arafat himself. On that case, Hamas would bear the lion's share of the cost of such a battle, which would sap our efforts and divert them from the battle with the enemy.

The Fourth Pillar: we in Hamas, because of our powerful presence inside the Occupied Territories, must bear the consequences of any collective decision by the ten *fasail* (TRO), whereas the effect of such a decision on the other *fasail* would be of a limited nature of their presence and influence in the Occupied Territories. Therefore, we are bound to examine closely the repercussions any decision will have on our movement, as we would like it to augment our influence, not diminish it.<sup>1</sup>

## RELATIONS WITH ISLAMIC JIHAD

The relationship between Hamas and Islamic Jihad warrants a separate section because of the close identity of ideologies and political agendas of the two organizations, as well as their common Islamic basis. Throughout the 1990s, there were no real political or ideological differences between them.<sup>2</sup> This proximity of views raises the question, which has been asked repeatedly since both movements arose and developed during the Intifada: why do they not merge, or at least coordinate their activities more closely? Furthermore, why has the relationship between them remained limited to the ordinary relations prevailing among the various resistance organizations, and why are there no bilateral programs to set them apart?

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<sup>1</sup> Khaled Hroub, "Hamas wa itifaq ghazza-ariha awwalan: al-mawaqif walmumarasa" (Hamas and the Gaza-Jericho First Agreement: The stance and the practice), *Majallat al-dirasat al-filastiniyya*, No. 16 (Fall 1993):35.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the interview with Islamic Jihad's former secretary general, Fathi al-Shikaki, in *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 17 March 1995.

From a purely theoretical perspective, the Hamas Charter contains an article devoted solely to Islamic movements; most probably this was drafted with Islamic Jihad in mind. The Charter describes the relations of Hamas with Islamic movements in general as follows: "The Islamic Resistance Movement regards the other Islamic movements with respect and appreciation. Even if differences arise in one perspective or viewpoint, there is agreement between them on several other perspective and viewpoints. If their intentions are pure, and they are true to God, Hamas regards these movements as an exercise of independent judgment in theological matters, provided that their conduct remains within the confines of Islam. Each person who uses independent judgment shall have his share of truth. The Islamic Resistance Movement considers these movements as reserve fund on which it can draw. It asks God to give His guidance to everyone, and Hamas shall lose no opportunity to call on others to rally to the banner of unity, which it shall seek to forge on the basis of the Quran and the *Sunnah*."<sup>1</sup>

Despite this theoretical tolerance, in practice aloofness characterized the political relationship between the two movements. This is difficult to understand without reviewing the historical roots of the relationship. The nucleus of the Islamic Jihad movement emerged out of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Gaza Strip among members who refused to accept the Brotherhood's post-1967 quiescent policy of not resisting the Israeli occupation. When this faction, having lost faith in the Brotherhood, split in early 1980s to form Islamic Jihad and declared its own agenda, an inimical relationship between it and the Brotherhood developed. The Brotherhood perceived Jihad as a splinter group from the parent organization, while Jihad viewed the Brotherhood as a large group that was hesitant to take up armed struggle against the Israeli occupation.

Following a series of daring and successful operations against Israeli targets in the mid-1980s, Islamic Jihad's popularity continued to grow until the formation of Hamas at the outset of the Intifada. Most of the Muslim Brotherhood was absorbed into the new movement, and the new/old organization embarked on resistance activity. As the organizational base of the Movement grew, it managed in a few months to capture the Islamic spirit of the Intifada, abetted by the fact that Islamic Jihad was the target of a wave of arrests that undermined its infrastructure and its effectiveness during the initial months of the Intifada. Meanwhile, an inimical atmosphere and political aloofness continued and characterize relations between the two organizations. Islamic Jihad considered Hamas a latecomer who was harvesting the fruit of the military operations that it had sown several years before the Intifada began. For its part, Hamas felt that it was appropriate to recapture the Islamic grass-roots support that the Brotherhood had cultivated for more than three decades. This inimical attitude was manifested in each movement's evaluation of its role in launching and carrying on the Intifada, and the two movements produced two different readings of the progress of the Intifada itself. The early literature of both Hamas and Islamic Jihad ignored the contribution of the other both prior to and at the start of the uprising.<sup>2</sup>

The political aloofness soon deteriorated into clashes and fistfights, as evident in the dispute over a mosque in the Gaza Strip in April 1992. In the wake of that incident the two movements were compelled to issue a joint release to quell public anxiety.

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<sup>1</sup> The Hamas Charter, see Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> For example, neither Ghassan Hamdan, *Al-intifada al-intifada al-mubarakah: waqa' wa ahdaith* (The blessed Intifada: events and repercussions) (Kuwait: Al-Falah Publishing House, 1988) nor Jihad Mohammad Jihad, *Al-intifada al-mubarakah wa mustaqbaluha* (The blessed Intifada and its future) (Kuwait: Al-Falah Publishing House, 1988).

Although the clash ended, it left an uneasy feeling among both the Islamist and secular resistance organizations as being repeated by the Islamic ones, including the infighting, the only difference being in the names of the parties involved.

Eight months after that incident, Israel exiled 413 Palestinians - all of the supporters of either Hamas or Islamic Jihad - to south Lebanon. About 40 deportees belonged to Islamic Jihad, and they set up a separate camp for themselves. The political antagonism deteriorated on occasion into hostile verbal exchanges between the deportees belonging to Hamas and Islamic Jihad and was reflected in the media.

As years passed, Hamas grew more powerful and extended its influence over Islamic public. As the old charge against the Muslim Brotherhood (Hamas's parent organization) of failing to do its part in resisting the occupation lost its relevancy, Hamas felt that the *raison d'être* for Islamic Jihad had become tenuous. The positive counterexample that Islamic Jihad had provided in the 1980s by taking up armed struggle no longer was relevant. Fundamental differences had been erased, despite a number of subsequent attempts to manufacture some arbitrary differences and create new disputes. Sheikh Abdullah al-Shami, a prominent figure in Islamic Jihad and spokesman for the deportees in south Lebanon during their exile, said in reply to a question about the difference between Hamas and Islamic Jihad: "Contrary to Hamas, our priority is not indoctrinating the masses but direct action... (Another point of difference) concerns the question of whether the Islamists should take part in parliamentary and other elections."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, such comments did not represent the official position of Islamic Jihad.

For its part, Hamas viewed Islamic Jihad with a sense of arrogance, looking down on it as though it were a little brother. Consequently, Hamas began to feel that the "splinter group" should rejoin the parent organization because the reason for the split had disappeared. This attitude was at the root of bilateral discussions between the two movements, discussions that examined the moral and ethical ambiguities posed by the presence of two Islamic movements sharing the same ideology and policies, working for the same objective, and using the same method. This issue was urgent, considering that the question of Islamic unity was being debated at Islamic movement seminars throughout the Arab world, and there was a crescendo of calls for unity.

Since 1993, the two organizations have talked seriously about unity and coordination and have put forward different proposals. Hamas has called for full unity and the total absorption of Islamic Jihad in Hamas, whereas Islamic Jihad proposed gradually increasing coordination, which would lead to the creation of something along the lines of a common front. Subsequently, Islamic Jihad leaders have issued statements suggesting that it is possible to realize just about any kind of union between the two movements, however, the two proposals and all other recommendations have remained on paper only, and actual bilateral relations have continued to be characterized by political coolness.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 6 January 1993.

## Chapter II

# *Hamas Relations with Arab and Islamic States*

Once Hamas named an official spokesman, it became possible to establish direct contact and to communicate with the Movement. Hamas could meet with Arab, Islamic, and Western officials. Moreover, the very process of dealing with Arab officials revealed to Hamas practical as well as ideological complications and constraints, none of which it had been aware in the first stage when its political discourse had been untroubled by considerations of diplomacy or the need to take Arab interests into account. Even when these constraints became apparent, Hamas did not feel obliged to assign high priority to them. As its popular appeal, political clout, and guerrilla operations expanded, Hamas realized that the interest of Arabs and others in the Movement was increasing. As Hamas's influence and weight in Palestinian affairs grew, the need for Arabs and others in the region to establish relations with the Movement became more pressing. Consequently, the historical, ideological, and political obstacles that had impeded the establishment of working relations became conspicuous and had to be overcome.

The first obstacle that Hamas had to surmount in forging its ties with Arab regimes was the political and historical legacy of relations – most often hostile – between the Muslim Brotherhood and those regimes. Because Hamas is considered similar to the Brotherhood for ideological and genealogical reasons (which are acknowledged in the Movement's Charter),<sup>1</sup> two difficulties stood in the way of Hamas overcoming this categorization and establishing working relations with Arab governments free of the legacy of old positions. The first difficulty was on the part of the Movement itself; Hamas had trouble transcending the heritage of hostile relations between the branches of its mother organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Arab regimes. The second difficulty was the uncertainty in the minds of Arab regimes with regard to the precise nature of the relationship between Hamas and the Brotherhood and the extent to which Hamas's position would be based on that of the Brotherhood.

Hamas's difficulty in liberating itself from the legacy of the Brotherhood's relationship with Arab regimes was more of a psychological than a practical impediment. Hamas tried to reduce the hostility from beginning, particularly in its relations with the Syrian regime, with which the Brotherhood had engaged in bloody clashes during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Nevertheless, that legacy continued to cast a shadow on the development of more healthy relations with the states neighboring Palestine, and it continued to exacerbate the fears of the regimes themselves concerning Hamas's ties to the Brotherhood. The Arab regimes were concerned that openly allowing Hamas freedom of action on their territory indirectly could help local Islamic movements whose agendas often clashed with regimes own goals and interests. Weighing various possibilities, most of the Arab governments found it difficult to allow Hamas

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<sup>1</sup> This connection is stated clearly in the Hamas Charter, which was issued on 18 August 1998. The first reference to it prior to the release of the Charter appeared in Hamas, Periodic statement no. 6 of 11 February 1988, just two months after the movement was founded.

unfettered freedom of action, despite the Movement's open pledge that it would not interfere in their internal affairs.

The second obstacle Hamas had to surmount in its relations with the Arab world was the widespread and unshakable Arab recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Even though Hamas did not declare openly to the Palestinian people that it was an alternative to the PLO, its discourse placed it in an intense competition with the PLO for the right of representation. In addition, Hamas also refrained from unambiguously recognizing the PLO's status as the representative of the Palestinian people. Thus, the firm Arab recognition of the PLO as the exclusive holder of the legitimate right to represent the Palestinian proved to be a hindrance to the establishment of relations with Arab regimes. In this respect, some regimes may have believed that they could manage relations with a number of relatively minor Palestinian organizations far more easily than they could manage ties with Hamas, which had significant clout and was a rival to the PLO itself. Furthermore, Arab regimes were unlikely to be accused of trying to create an alternative to the PLO or trying to strip it of its legitimacy if they dealt with the *fasail*, whatever their reasons for doing so. However, by cultivating relations with a potential rival to the PLO like Hamas, their actions could be interpreted as supporting the creation of that alternative. This certainly would irritate many international players and could trigger unwanted pressures on those regimes.

This was no mean obstacle, as Hamas discovered, because the years in which the Palestinian Islamists had been absent from the arena of political and military action had enabled the PLO to take command of the Palestinian national struggle. The PLO had taken root in the Arab and Islamic worlds and consolidated its position internationally. Musa Abu Marzouq believes Arab non-recognition of the legitimacy of the PLO to be the *sine qua non* for setting up an alternative to the organization.<sup>1</sup> But Hamas encountered the hard political reality that no Arab state, no matter how close its relations with the Movement, was about to endorse Hamas setting itself up as alternative to the PLO or aid it in that effort. Even the government of Sudan, which is the closest Arab state to Hamas in political and ideological terms, has suggested repeatedly that Hamas join the PLO in order to change it from within.

The third obstacle to Hamas developing relations with Arab regimes has been the general Arab consensus to accept a peace settlement, which Hamas has refused to do. Only a few months after the Intifada began and the Movement was founded at the end of 1987, settlement proposals proliferated. After the Gulf War, the Madrid Conference was held in 1991; then came the Oslo Agreement between the PLO and Israel in 1993 and the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty in 1994. In addition, the informal ties between Israel and more than one Arab country since have multiplied and become more extensive; tangible progress has been made toward a peace settlement on the ground, and Arab commitment to such an outcome has grown. Even during the years of the first Intifada, Palestinian recognition of Israel had taken the form of PNC resolutions, Arab and international pressures to bring about a peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli dispute had intensified, and the Arab and regional mood gradually had shifted away from the military option for which Hamas was mobilizing support. Thus, as Hamas tried to breathe new life into the military course of action and to make it the foundation of its relations with official Arab bodies, it found itself swimming against

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<sup>1</sup> Musa Abu Marzouq, interview with author, 21 May 2003.

the tide. One of the Movement's leaders summed up Hamas's efforts: it was calling for war while everyone was marching toward peace."<sup>1</sup>

Hamas also was hampered in developing relations with the Arab states by the U.S. and western campaign against "Islamic fundamentalism," whose activities were classified as terrorism and were targeted. On the one hand, this anti-Islamist campaign escalated just as Hamas influence and power were expanding. On the other hand, it was the increasing power of Hamas that helped to trigger the American campaign. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of the Eastern bloc, new theories were put forward that substituted the "Islamic threat" for the vanquished "Communist threat."<sup>2</sup> Although the official position of Western nations is that this danger does not represent a direct threat to the West to the same magnitude as that of the Soviet Union, those nations are treating it at least as an international threat that needs to be taken seriously. This has led to the expansion of the definition of "terrorism" so that it includes the activities of Islamist groups that engage in guerrilla operations and resistance activities. Hamas thus was placed on the U.S. and Western lists of "terrorist organizations." That classification was sufficient to deter many states and institutions from developing a relationship with Hamas. Even meeting with Hamas at an official level became a cause for embarrassment: questions were raised, following by direct or indirect pressure. Furthermore, failure to condemn Hamas's armed attacks inside Occupied Territories or Israel proper put Arab governments in an embarrassing position with the West, particularly the United States.

Hamas also contributed to the list of obstacles impeding development of its relations with Arab states. Shortcomings in Hamas's political confidence building measures and its public relations effort, particularly in the Arab world, are painfully obvious. Visits by Hamas's official delegations to Arab states, whether to meet with officials or the public, were rare. The paucity of visits also highlights the limited capabilities of Hamas's administrative and political staff outside the Occupied Territories. These tasks are carried out by a small group of prominent Hamas figures, who are involved repeatedly in most of these official visits or encounters with the public. Quite often the public relations shortcomings of Hamas have been due to the Movement's refusal to create an organizational infrastructure outside Palestine. Instead, it relied on select political and information cadres whose role was to provide support services for the essential activities of the Movement that take place inside the Occupied Territories. As a result, there was no normal organizational base from which new cadres routinely could be chosen to serve the political, informational, and public relations functions for which there was growing demand. Consequently, the demand in these areas was not met, the administrative pressures increased, and the limited cadres available could not cope adequately.

In fact, Hamas's policy of not establishing its own organizations in the Arab countries was a constant subject of contention. The basic reasoning behind this policy was that Hamas should not repeat the mistake of the Palestinian forces by organizing and mobilizing Palestinian in their places of residence, a practice that had precipitated clashes between those fractions and the regimes of the countries hosting Palestinian refugees. The lessons learned from the clashes in Jordan in 1970 and in Lebanon during the second half of the 1970s were clear. In addition, Hamas argues that the real arena of struggle is inside Palestine and that the Movement should concentrate on

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with an unidentified Hamas military commander, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 28 October 1994.

<sup>2</sup> See further John L. Esposito, *The Islamic threat: Myth or reality?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Fawaz A. Gerges, *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

ensuring the success of the resistance there, rather than squandering time and effort on setting up bureaucratic structure outside. This does not mean, however, that concentrations of Palestinian outside the occupied Territories should be ignored, that Hamas should avoid establishing relations with them, or that efforts to mobilize them should slacken. Nevertheless, Hamas's view is that Islamic movements in those countries should conduct such mobilization.

The counterargument is that in the absence of an organizational infrastructure, Hamas will continue to face a number of difficulties. These include the huge disparity between the diverse tasks that need to be performed outside the Occupied Territories and the limited human resources available for that purpose; and the slow growth of resources due to the fear of bureaucratization, complex administrative structures, and high costs. Furthermore, the argument goes, there is a pressing need for Hamas to step in and fill the vacuum created in the political and information area when the PLO vacated a number of positions it used to hold following its agreements with Israel. Also, there is a pressing need to increase contacts with the millions of Palestinian outside who have been virtually forgotten at the official level, not to mention the hundreds of millions of Arabs and Muslims.

### *Hamas's Arab Relations Policy*

According to Hamas leaders, the general principle on which the Movement bases its Arab relations, in addition to highlighting the positive and playing down the negative, is not to alienate anyone and not to get drawn into a conflict with any Arab party.<sup>1</sup> The former head of Hamas's political Bureau, Abu Marzouq, adds that Hamas has learned several lessons from the PLO's experience in forging relations with Arab partners. "Contrary to Fateh's policy of dragging Arab regimes into the battle for the liberation of Palestine, we believe that one must be fully aware of what one is doing when one gets involved in battle. The absence of adequate awareness leads to defeat, which has been the outcome of our wars with Israel."<sup>2</sup>

An indication that Hamas has heeded the lessons of the PLO's past in this regard is the Movement's avoidance of radical slogans concerning Arab regimes. Slogans such as "the liberation train passes through" in this or that Arab capital have filled the air during the heyday of Palestinian revolutionary zeal, the late 1960s and early 1970s. Hamas believes that fighting Arab regimes in this manner only exacerbates their weaknesses while making Israel even stronger, which would be a gratuitous service to Israel. "Hamas's guideline is strengthen Arab states, not weaken them, and this is also the basis for its actions."<sup>3</sup>

According to its internal documents, Hamas's dealing with Arab and Islamic parties are based on the following six political principles.<sup>4</sup> First, Hamas seeks to establish positive relations with all Arab and Islamic parties (states, organizations, forces, political parties, or individuals), irrespective of their ideological and political orientations or their sectarian and radical origins. Second, Hamas does not interfere in the internal affairs of Arab or Islamic states; it also rejects the involvement of those states in its own politics, positions, and internal affairs. Third, Hamas is not at war with any Arab or Islamic party; therefore, its policy is not to attack any Arab or

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<sup>1</sup> Maezouq interview, 21 May 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "Siyasat Hamas al-marhaliyya."

Islamic party. Fourth, Hamas considers Palestine to be the proper arena for struggle with the enemy. The Movement is careful not to transfer the struggle outside the territory of occupied Palestine. However, Hamas does not condemn any act of jihad outside Palestine directed at the Zionist occupation. Fifth, Hamas makes it clear to all sides that the purpose of its establishing relations with any party is to gain support for the Movement's resistance to Israeli occupation. Such relations are not directed against any regime or organization. Sixth, Hamas will not allow its relations with any Arab or Islamic party to be at the expense of another.

Based on these principles, the Movement tried to establish a network of official relations with Arab countries. It established a presence in the countries surrounding Israel as well as in the Gulf area and opened talks with officials in those countries. It sent representatives to Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen, and they met with Arab rulers and officials. The most intensive period of meeting followed the release from prison of Sheikh Yassin, who then embarked on a major tour of Arab countries from February to June 1998. The tour took him to Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, where he met with the leaders of these countries. The tour represented the most significant inroad by Hamas into the Arab establishment since the Sharm al Sheikh Conference in March 1996, and it was the most important public relations exercise in its history. The United States criticized the tour on the grounds that the high-level official reception given to Sheikh Yassin sent an indirect message of support for what Washington perceives to be Hamas's terrorist activities.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the obstacles discussed above placed limits on how far those relations could develop. Furthermore, the PLO put indirect pressure on a number of Arab states to restrict any future ties with Hamas.

Apart from Libya, the countries of the Maghreb (Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia) remained closed to Hamas and were not on the list of countries visited, which might work to the disadvantage of Hamas. Clearly, the relations between the regimes of Algeria and Tunisia and the Islamists in those countries made it very difficult to establish anything resembling acceptable relations.

### *Hamas's View of Arab Positions*

The above mentioned policies began to take shape after the Gulf War (1990-91), but the spirit of those policies actually had been guiding Hamas's political practices even earlier. Hamas's political discourse in the postwar period also evolved in the direction of further moderation. This becomes apparent by examining Hamas's views on a number of Arab positions and outstanding issues. The following discussion shall examine in particular Hamas's view of Arab positions that pertain to the conflict with Israel; these have been analyzed at length in the Movement's literature.

In its political discourse, Hamas continued to assign special importance to various aspects of Arab positions on the Intifada (1987-93) and resistance to the occupation. It highlighted the need for solidarity, support, and the provision of moral and material aid to "the jihad of the Palestinian people inside the occupied land" and warned against using the Intifada in the service of peace agreements, as a bridge to self-rule,

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<sup>1</sup> The Foreign Minister of Kuwait, Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber as-Sabas, said there was U.S. pressure on Kuwait not to meet with Sheikh Yassin, *Al-Hayat*, 28 May 1998; concerning U.S. chagrin with the Arabs for hosting Sheikh Yassin, see Henry Siegman, "Peacemaking Needs Help from Arab Governments, too," *International Herald Tribune*, 8 June 1998.

or for the convening of an international conference that would "liquidate the Muslim Palestinian cause."<sup>1</sup> It repeated the pattern observed in the first period from the outbreak of the Intifada to the Gulf War, when Hamas's discourse gradually toned down from initial zealotry to moderation and less condemnation. Hamas's view of Arab positions on the Intifada and the resistance of occupation also underwent moderation.

Hamas realized shortly after the outbreak of the Intifada that the uprising was not going to amount to anything more than a vehicle which a Palestinian negotiator could use to arrive at a peace settlement. No matter how much the uprising spread or how important it became, it had to end, and it was inevitable that it would be exploited. Consequently, Hamas faced the question: What comes after the Intifada? This was a question for which it did not have an answer. In fact, the question had only one answer in the light of the inauspicious Arab and Islamic situation: it would be exploited for political gain, which Hamas has condemned repeatedly. Hamas got a hint of what was to come only one month after leaders' to create "surrender solutions" by the convening of international conferences.<sup>2</sup> It was apparent even then that Arab interest in the uprising was limited to how it could contribute to a peace settlement and to the realization of the maximal attainable extent of Palestinian rights. Certain neighboring countries became concerned that the Intifada might spread or be imitated. In this context, incidents in southern Jordan in April 1989 served as the primary spur for the transition to democracy at the end of the same year. Such events raised the question of how much they might have been influenced by the uprising in the Occupied Territories.

Hamas had little confidence in the collective Arab offers of material support or expressions of moral support for the Intifada emanating from the Arab league or the Arab foreign ministers meetings. The Movement dismissed this support as serving the predetermined aim of fostering the peace process. More significantly, all material aid was distributed through PLO channels, which ignored Hamas.

The position of Arab regimes on the Intifada and resistance to the occupation, which was tires to the goal of a peace settlement, was consolidated following the convening of the Madrid Conference in October 1991. This position became quite apparent following the December 1992 expulsion of Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders, supporters, and prominent figures to south Lebanon, where they set up camp under harsh winter conditions. The deportation led to the Arab delegations suspending their meetings with the Israeli delegation at the Washington peace talks. It appeared momentarily as if Hamas had succeeded, albeit indirectly, in derailing the peace process. The Hamas deportees gained widespread sympathy in the Arab and Islamic worlds and even internationally. The issue of the deportees continued to occupy the parties to the peace talks for about four months. After that, most of the statements by the Arab side shifted to an emphasis on making the peace talks succeed, and this aim was declared to be more important than the deportees.

The modest Arab protests against the deportation and the subsequent shift in the Arab position in the absence of any concessions on the issue made Hamas more realistic and aware of just how weak the Arabs were. That incident was responsible for yet another period of quiescence in Hamas's discourse, and it lowered the Movement's expectation of a tough Arab stand. Consequently, Hamas's call for an Arab summit following the massacre of 36 worshipers and the wounding of many others at the

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 8 of 23 February 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 4 of late December 1987.

Abraham Mosque in Hebron by Israeli settler Baruch Goldstein in February 1994 was little more than a cry in the wilderness.<sup>1</sup> Hamas displayed a more pragmatic attitude a week later, when it welcomed the decision by the Arab participants in the Washington talks to suspend the negotiations in protest against the massacre. Hamas described that decision as "a serious step that an adequate response to the Zionist massacre."<sup>2</sup>

The official Arab position toward Hamas became more complex as Hamas mounted a series of armed operations that were painful to Israel and had a significant impact. Hamas began with the kidnapping and killing of Sergeant-Major Nissim Toledano in December 1992. This incident was followed by a number of armed attacks, most notably the series of bus bombings in retaliation for the Hebron massacre in 1994, then another series of bus bombings in February and March 1996 in retaliation for the January assassination by Israeli security agents in Gaza of the engineer, Yahya Ayyash, then leader of Hamas's military arm, the Izzidin al-Qassam Brigades. And lastly during the al-Aqsa Intifada which started in September 28 of 2000, the bombings and attacks against Israeli targets inside Israel and Occupied Territories. These operations were widely condemned by the United States and other Western countries, and they also were severely condemned by the Palestinian Authority, as well as by a number of Arab states, whether directly or indirectly. Hamas found itself in the position of having to defend, explain, and justify these operations and to connect them to Zionist massacres of Palestinians, such as the Hebron massacre or Israeli operations to liquidate armed groups belonging to the Al-Qassam Brigades. The Hamas opinion of Arab attitudes became increasingly bitter. After criticizing Arab regimes on their tepid support for the Intifada, Hamas had to redirect its rhetoric to justify its operations to many of those same regimes.

Hamas's political discourse addresses the question of various Arab attitudes toward the Palestinians under various circumstances. Hamas has tried to keep informed of the problems of Palestinians in their Diaspora, particularly in locations within the Arab world. Hamas's discourse refers to the massacres that Palestinians have experienced in the countries surrounding Palestine, such as during Black September (1970) in Jordan and in the Tal al-Za'tar (1976) and the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps (1982) in Lebanon.<sup>3</sup> One also finds scattered indictments of Arab maltreatment or disparagement of Palestinian communities residing in Arab states. For example, Hamas has mounted a strong defense of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and sharply denounced efforts to expel Palestinians from that country,<sup>4</sup> where Palestinians "have suffered more calamities, slaughter, and torture than anywhere else."<sup>5</sup>

The more pressing crisis that Hamas faced, however, was the hardships suffered by the Palestinian community in Kuwait after the Gulf War. Palestinians who remained in Kuwait were subjected to many forms of harassment as a result of negative attitudes toward Palestinians, who were perceived as siding with Iraq in line with the position adopted by the PLO in 1990. This atmosphere, as well as the events that led to the war, precipitated a genuine crisis for Hamas because it had established rather distinctive relations at the Islamic, political, and parliamentary levels in Kuwait.

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas called for Arab and Islamic summits in its leaflet, "Press Conference Statement by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) Concerning the Criminal Massacre at the Noble Sanctuary of Abraham," released in Amman on 26 February 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Hamas leaflet, "Commentary on the decision by Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon to suspend their participation in the talks to protest the massacre at the Noble Sanctuary of Abraham," 1 March 1994.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the references to these massacres in Hamas, Periodic statement no. 27 of 3 August 1988 and *idem*, Periodic statement no. 115 of 3 September 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 27 of 3 August 1988.

<sup>5</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 32 of 25 November 1988.

Over a period of five months following the end of the war, Hamas's position escalated gradually.

During the crisis leading to the Gulf War, Palestinians living in Egypt and the Gulf states experienced various levels of harassment. Hamas felt obliged to condemn that harassment, particularly in cases that resulted in deportation. One press release in the midst of the crisis announced that Hamas "condemns the expulsion and deportation of Palestinian students and residents from Egypt and some states in the Gulf and deems such action to be a stab in the back of the Palestinian cause and the blessed Intifada."<sup>1</sup>

Another crisis affecting Palestinians abroad, albeit at a less severe level than the crisis in Kuwait, was the plight of Palestinians working in Libya. The crisis involved two episodes. The first incident was the detention of 25 Palestinian families on the Libyan border with Egypt for several days in December 1994; this led to the death of two children. At the time, Hamas intervened actively, making direct contact with the Libyan leader, Mu'ammarr al-Qaddafi, to get authorization for the families to enter Libya. The effort was successful and was publicized by Hamas.<sup>2</sup> The second and larger-scale incident resulted from President Qaddafi's September 1995 order to deport Palestinians residing in Libya to the area controlled by the PA. This action was meant to embarrass the PA by demonstrating that it did not have the power to admit the Palestinians or to protect them. Hamas felt obliged to denounce the Libyan action unambiguously,<sup>3</sup> but only after announcing that it had contacted Libyan leaders to try getting the order annulled.<sup>4</sup>

It can be said that the Palestinians outside Palestine have yet to face the most serious crisis, and one to which Hamas will need to react. That crisis is latent in Jordan, where the largest Palestinian community outside Palestine lives, and is connected intricately to the provisions of the Israeli - Palestinian deals that will be negotiated concerning the future of Palestinian refugees and displaced persons, and the role that Jordan will play in those agreements, the situation of Palestinians in Jordan extremely sensitive politically. On the one hand they are, in theory, full Jordanian citizens and enjoy the same rights as their fellow citizens of Jordanian origin. On the other hand, they constitute the largest segment of Palestinian refugees and "displaced." Because so little discussion can be traced in Hamas's literature about this potential crisis, it is difficult to predict how the Movement would respond to possible options. Nevertheless, it is possible to get a glimpse of the crisis that could engulf Hamas if the Palestinian in Jordan were offered a choice between retaining Jordanian nationality or giving it up in favor of some status that links them to the Palestinian state that will emerge, whatever its shape. In such a situation, Hamas will have to express its opinion quite frankly. Whichever option Hamas chooses and asks the Palestinians to adopt, there will be political repercussions both for its relations with the Palestinian entity and with Jordan. Most likely, however, Hamas will opt for a pure "Palestinian option," calling the Palestinians in Jordan to choose to return back to Palestine.

### *Arab-Israeli peace settlement*

The Hamas Movement developed in an atmosphere dominated by proposals for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli struggle, despite the Intifada and the spirit it

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 64 of 26 September 1990.

<sup>2</sup> See two leaflets by Hamas on this issue, dated 21 December 1994 and 12 January 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 128 of 5 October 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Hamas, Press Statement of 9 September 1995.

embodied. Because of the extreme contradiction between settlement proposals and Hamas's ideological and political position, the Movement found itself having to denounce them constantly. It should not be surprising that the persistent series of denunciations began with the condemnation of the 1979 Camp David accords. Hamas's first communiqué issued during the Intifada inveighed against "those who are panting after a feeble peace... after vacuous international conferences...after treasonous bilateral accords in the manner of Camp David."<sup>1</sup> This sharp castigation of agreements and the Arab parties thereto set the tone for a batch of early press releases by the Movement.<sup>2</sup>

Hamas's abandonment of the strident tone that colored its discourse at the beginning of the first Intifada and its adoption of more moderate language and careful choice of words is manifest in its commentary on the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in October 1994. The Hamas description of this treaty as "a new fissure in the wall of Arab solidarity" reflected an effort to use diplomatic language to convey censure. In order to blunt the sharpness of its criticism and thus avoid infuriating the Jordanian regime, the Movement denounced all other agreements between Arab parties and Israel, such as the Camp David agreements and the Oslo and Cairo accords.<sup>3</sup> Differences in the two modes of expression are clear, although the position being expressed is the same. In the second period, emphasis is on the deed, the signature, and the treaty, rather than on the doer of the deed, the signatory of the treaty. This is a basic feature of Hamas's press releases after the Gulf War.

In between the two extremes, the strident position on Camp David and the moderate one on the Jordanian - Israeli peace treaty, one finds a spectrum of positions, reflecting gradations in the Movement's mode of expression from heated emotionalism to cool calculation.

I have focused on Hamas's attitude toward the Arab states that are most supportive of or involved in the peace effort, namely Egypt and Jordan. As stated, despite political opposition to the positions of those states, Hamas tried not to precipitate a confrontation with them. As for Arab states that are less supportive of the peace process, Hamas's dealings with them fell under rubric of "the Arab position" and "the Arab responsibility" or some such general category. Hamas used to respond with criticism of a general nature to any official relations with Israel, or to any talk about ending the boycott of Israel, but it used indirect references, without naming names. Syria,<sup>4</sup> however, was singled out for rare praise, in particular during the deportee crisis from December 1992 to December 1993.<sup>5</sup>

### *Inter-Arab Conflict*

The Gulf War, which was the most severe inter-Arab crisis since the Arabs won their independence, broke out only three years after Hamas had been formed. This crisis

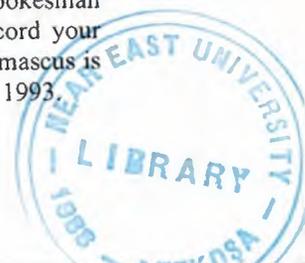
<sup>1</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 1 of 14 December 1987.

<sup>2</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 2 of mid-December 1987.

<sup>3</sup> Hamas leaflet, "The Jordanian-Zionist Treaty: A New Fissure in the Wall of Arab Solidarity," 27 October 1994.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the Hamas leaflet, "Release Concerning the Termination of the Economic Boycott and the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations with the Enemy," dated 2 October 1994; for later proclamations on this subject, see Hamas, Periodic statement no. 131 of 12 January 1996.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the letter from Abdul Aziz al-Rantisi, a prominent Hamas figure and the spokesman for the deportees, to former Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad, which says "History shall record your position toward our cause with glowing pride...Palestine is part of our Greater Syria, and Damascus is our pre-eminent leader." The text was published in the daily *Tishrin* (Damascus), 16 February 1993.



prompted Hamas to appoint for the first time an official representative outside the territory of Palestine to join the delegation representing Islamic Movements and groups that was formed to help resolve the crisis through non-military means. The Gulf crisis and the Gulf War were severe tests for the abilities of a growing and politically inexperienced movement that was entirely engaged in the Intifada inside Palestine. It needed to survive a very complex Arab development while holding on to the gains it had made at the grass-roots level in the Gulf States, particularly Kuwait, which was the center of the crisis. The test for Hamas was to succeed in finding a compromise solution consistent with the Movement's convictions while maintaining the good will of the Gulf people and not clashing with the emotional support for the Iraqi position surging among the masses, especially in Palestine and Jordan. To a certain extent, Hamas succeeded in coming up with a compromise to deal with the thorny situation.<sup>1</sup>

Initially, Hamas attempted to stay within the general rhetoric of condemning the intervention of Western forces in the region, while avoiding any clash with the popular mood that could result from any direct criticism of Iraq. In its 13 August 1990 statement, Hamas called on Iraq, Kuwait, and all Arab countries "to resolve their internal affairs between themselves and deprive enemies of the chance to exploit the situation."<sup>2</sup> Hamas leaders, however, could not withstand the pressure exerted on the Movement by its Islamist allies and its friends in the Gulf States who had close ties to governments. Hence, its position evolved so that in its 17 August press release Hamas distanced itself further from Iraqi position. According to this statement, Hamas "had been taken by surprise, as had the other Muslims, by Iraq's military intervention in Kuwait...although Hamas had sided with Iraq in the face of American threats, that does not mean that it accepts the existing state of affairs, nor does it constitute a bias toward one side or the other." The release demanded that Kuwait once again should become "a free and esteemed country rich in potential and resources that make a significant contribution to the development of the Arab world... and to the solution of the problem in an Arab and Islamic framework." Hamas considered its stand, as formulated in this release, to be a balanced position respecting basic principles and rights. It added that the solution "has to be based first of all on the withdrawal of foreign forces from the region and Iraqi forces from Kuwait; that an Arab or an Islamic force should be stationed in the hotly disputed border areas; that the people of Kuwait should have the right of determining the future of their country; and that disputes should be settled in an Arab or Islamic framework which will ensure that Iraq's demands concerning the drawing of borders or the repayment of debts arising from the war with Iran and other debts will receive due consideration."<sup>3</sup> With the passage of time this position became clearer, and more criticism was directed at the Iraqi invasion. Asserting that "occupation" should be condemned – whether it was Israeli occupation of Palestine or Iraqi occupation of Kuwait - Abdul Aziz al-Rantisi, a Hamas leader in Gaza, declared: "First of all we demand that the Iraqi troops should withdraw from Kuwait."<sup>4</sup>

In order to appreciate the courage it took to adopt such a position, one has to consider the context. Hamas took a risk by calling openly on Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.

<sup>1</sup> See, Jean-Francois Legrain, "A Defining Moment: Palestinian Islamic Fundamentalism," pp. 70-88 in *Islamic Fundamentalists and the Gulf Crisis*, ed. By James Piscatori (Chicago: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no.62 of 13 August 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Hamas leaflet dated 17 August 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in al-Quds al-Arabi (London), 13 September 1990.



Such a position was unpopular at the time for any grass-roots movement or organization in Palestine or Jordan, where the majority of Palestinians live. Hamas argued that its position was totally consistent with its conviction that political choices should not be forced on anyone.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the crisis and the following war, Hamas continued to address the Kuwaiti and Iraqi peoples, shunning any endorsement of official positions. It had to negotiate a public relations minefield. It spoke of "ending the tribulations and afflictions of the Muslim Kuwaiti people," and said that the Palestinian people never would forget "the benevolent and generous position of our brothers, the people of Kuwait, toward the people of Palestine throughout their tribulations and the calamity that befell them."<sup>2</sup> Yet Hamas also saluted "the steadfast people of Iraq who are standing up bravely to tyrannical American aggression" and called on "all Arab and Islamic peoples to stand beside the Iraqi people and to support them to the full extent of their capabilities."<sup>3</sup>

In brief, Hamas tried to hedge its bets in the crisis. It attempted to keep open its lines to the Gulf countries, which is particularly important because of the financial support the Movement receives from the public there. Hamas also had to act within the parameters set by the Palestinian public that was supportive of Iraq and resentful of the Western-led coalition. This also was the view of Musa Zied al-Keylani, a Jordanian analyst of Islamist movements: "Thus Hamas demonstrated that it had a better understanding and could read events and predict outcomes better than its domestic national rival and Hamas was able, through its neat response to the Gulf crisis, to secure financial and political benefits as well."<sup>4</sup> This strategy did allow Hamas room for maneuver and made it possible for the Movement to maintain contacts with official circles in both Iraq and Kuwait. Consequently, after the war was over, Hamas could offer to mediate, particularly in the matter of Kuwaiti prisoners and the problems that confronted the Palestinian community in Kuwait.<sup>5</sup> Although the offer to mediate over the issue of prisoners was not taken seriously, the intervention to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinians in Kuwait did have some effect. The reception given to Sheikh Yassin in Kuwait on 12 May 1998 while on his tour following his release from prison boosted Hamas's position in Kuwait. Sheikh Yassin again offered to mediate to secure the release of Kuwaiti prisoners in Iraq. His offer was accepted by Kuwait but rejected by Iraq.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the Iraq - Kuwait conflict, Hamas has not been affected directly by any other bilateral Arab disputes, apart from the general affect of such disputes in weakening the Arabs as a whole and thereby indirectly weakening Hamas's political and military position. Hamas has tried to maintain the position of a distant observer of some of these disputes, without getting entangled in any of them. Thus, it has issued calls for dialogue and for the settlement of disputes within a fraternal climate. For example, Hamas appealed to the Yemeni people after the outbreak of the war of secession in May 1994 to resolve their differences using "Yemenite wisdom, far from

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<sup>1</sup> See further Legrain, "A Defining Moment Palestinian Islamic fundamentalism;" also see Ahmad Rashed, *Hamas: Palestinian Politics with an Islamic Hue* (Annandale, Virginia: United Association for Studies and Research, 1993), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 63 of 29 August 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 70 of 4 February 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Musa Zeid al-Keylani, *Al-Haraka al-Islamiyya fil urdun wa filastin* (The Islamic Movement in Jordan and Palestine) (Amman: Al-Risala Institute, 1995), pp. 186-87.

<sup>5</sup> Nazzal interview, 30 May 2003.

<sup>6</sup> *Al-Hayat*, 11 and 14 May 1998.

outside interference." It also has called on Egypt and Sudan repeatedly to resolve the Halayeb crisis through amicable, bilateral negotiations.<sup>1</sup>

Hamas also tried to steer clear of alliance politics and to maintain a relative degree of neutrality. It did not want to become the protégé of one or another alliance or to become a partisan of one or another regime. Even while a number of its leaders and prominent figures were residing in Jordan - before the deportation of Hamas's leaders from Jordan - it maintained good relations with Syria through its official representatives and the prominent Hamas figures living in that country. The same applied to Iran and Saudi Arabia; Iran was Hamas's strategic ally, while Saudi Arabia was a source of popular support and a state where Hamas had an official relation with the regime.<sup>2</sup>

### *Domestic Arab Affairs*

In its political statement and public releases, Hamas has tried to avoid domestic Arab affairs. In only a few instances has it felt obliged to adopt positions pertaining to the domestic politics of an Arab state. Most cases involved clashes between governments and their political opposition. The position of Hamas in such situations has been to encourage dialogue and the avoidance of clashes and similar generalities. Hamas has found itself in embarrassing positions because most of the political opposition varied from peaceful means to the use of arms. Whereas Hamas felt an ideological affinity with the political orientation of those movements, it was unable to express support or solidarity with those movements unless they triumphed in peaceful democratic elections. One therefore can find a long series of statements of congratulation in Hamas's periodic statements that give the position of the Movement toward the victory of Islamists in one country or another.

Elsewhere, Hamas focused on the development and advancement of Islamic trends. When the Algerian Islamists won a crushing victory at the polls in 1990, Hamas sent a message to the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) congratulating it on the victory and describing it as a source of moral support for the Palestinian Intifada.<sup>3</sup> When the situation in Algeria deteriorated and the results of the parliamentary elections were nullified, Hamas called on the Algerian government to be patient and listen to the voice of wisdom. Hamas directed the same appeal to the Tunisian government, which opposed the Islamic Renaissance Movement, asking the government to rely on a dialogue with the Islamists.<sup>4</sup> One Hamas bulletin expressed solidarity with Tunisian Islamist prisoners and called on the government to rescind sentences passed on the Islamists, notably Rashid al-Ghannoushi, the leader of the Tunisian Islamic movement.<sup>5</sup>

When Islamists came to power in Sudan in 1989, Hamas welcomed this with great enthusiasm. Since then, Hamas has developed its relations with Sudanese regime so that it has become Hamas's strongest ally in the Arab world. Hamas's political discourse and its information releases always respond to internal changes in Sudan. When the government announced it was applying *shariah*, Hamas telegraphed its congratulations, calling it a step toward "the restoration of the dignity and impregnable of the *umma* and the liberation of lands of the Muslims from

<sup>1</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 125 of 6 July 1995. *Explain here shortly what is Halayeb crisis.*

<sup>2</sup> Nazzal interview, 30 May 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Hamas to Sheikh Abbasi Madani, dated 18 June 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 83 of 4 February 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 90 of 5 September 1992.

colonialists and Zionists."<sup>1</sup> The victories of the Sudanese army in south against the rebels headed by John Garang were welcomed by Hamas, which congratulated President Omar Hassan al-Bashir on occasions such as the July 1992 liberation of the strategic city of Torit, which had served as the headquarters of the rebels.<sup>2</sup> Hamas believed that any attack on Sudan, such as those by Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Sudanese rebels, was an assault on the security of the Arab nation as a whole.<sup>3</sup> Hamas condemned in the strongest terms the U.S. missile attack on a pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum at the end of August 1998. Washington claimed that the plant was manufacturing chemical weapons, but Hamas described the action as state terrorism. In its dealing with the Arab world, Hamas has asserted the pan-Arab nature of the conflict with Israel and focused its energies on preventing the conflict from metamorphosing into a conflict between Israel and the Palestinian alone. This theme has dominated Hamas's appeals, letters, and communications. In one letter sent to Arab heads of state, Hamas argued that the conflict between the Palestinians and the Jews should not be confined to "one piece of land or one state," emphasizing that it was "a war for destiny and existence (of the Arabs)."<sup>4</sup>

Hamas believes that the Zionist threat threatens the entire region and the Arab people as a whole, citing Israeli interventions in the Bab al-Mandab Straits, Ethiopia, and southern Sudan, and argues that such interventions form part of a plan for a "Greater Israel."<sup>5</sup> In order to combat that "threat," Hamas proposed to the Baghdad Arab summit in May 1990 a program of action based on three pillars:

1. The achievement of economic independence through Arab economic complementarity and a unified oil policy.
2. Gaining military independence by developing a modern armament industry.
3. Attaining political independence by using the media and cultural agencies to frame issues in their proper context, as a battle of the *umma*, and a battle for destiny and existence, fought against a tyrannical enemy allied with the historic enemies of this nation.<sup>6</sup>

Hamas openly asked the summit to create an "Arab Army for the liberation of Palestine," that presumably would be stationed in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. The Movement also asked that an appropriate budget be allocated for that purpose, that the military capabilities of the states surrounding Israel should be placed at the disposal of that army, and that its servicemen be recruited from citizens of all Arab states willing to fight.<sup>7</sup>

It is clear, however, that Hamas's appeals and its proposals for joint Arab action to deal with Arab national issues met with no serious response, even prior to the Gulf War. Nor did Hamas mount an effective effort to convince or to try to influence concerned Arab parties about its ambitions and programs, which are closer to a naïve wish list than proposals that could be realized on the basis of the existing Arab state of affairs. Nevertheless, Hamas's attempt to deal with Arab summits and send messages

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas leaflet, "Congratulations on the Application of the Islamic *Shariah* in Sudan," dated 13 February 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Hamas to Sudan President Omar al-Bashir, 16 July 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Hamas leaflet, "An Attack on Sudan is a Serious Threat to Arab National Security," dated 18 January 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Hamas letter, dated 25 May 1990, to Arab leaders prior to the convening of the May 1990 Baghdad summit; printed in *Al-Hayat*, 19 May 1990.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

to them constituted an evolution in its thinking, compared with the categorical censure of all Arab summits and conferences during the first two years of the Movement's life. Hamas tended to see all major events in the Middle East from the perspective of the battle with Israel. In Hamas's view, the Gulf War was a hemorrhage of Arab capabilities that should have been channeled into the battle with Israel. It saw the Egyptian-Sudanese border dispute over Halayeb also as benefiting Israel. Even the occupation of the Yemeni Island of Hanish in the Red Sea by Eritrea in January 1996 was not free of Israeli involvement and several Israeli objectives.<sup>1</sup> Hamas did take note of the Egyptian concern during 1994-96 with Israel's territorial recalcitrance and its desire to be the regional leader. Egypt's position encouraged Hamas, as did its hosting of the negotiations between the PA and Hamas in Cairo, which constituted tacit recognition of a role for the Movement. Hamas was outspoken in its appreciation for Egypt's position at the Sharm al-Sheikh anti-terrorism summit in March 1996, which clashed with the Israeli and U.S. objective to dedicate the summit exclusively to questions relating to the security of Israel. One Hamas official commented: "Egypt's influence and interests in the region clash with the expansion of Israel's interests and its influence, either directly or via its partners in the region."<sup>2</sup> Hamas tended to express its positions on pan-Arab issues or the problems facing individual Arab state through press release or statements by its prominent members. The Gulf War was the most prominent occasion of this sort, but so were the effects of the war, particularly the effects of the indefinite containment of Iraq. Hamas called for an end to the economic boycott and declared its solidarity with the people of Iraq, positions that were reiterated in consecutive bulletins, particularly during 1991 and 1992. The Movement also called for an end to enter-Arab conflicts for the sake of the Arab *umma* as a whole, to which narrow state interests should take second place.<sup>3</sup> With respect to the U.S. treatment of Libya and the charge that Tripoli was responsible for the explosion of a Pan American airplane over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988, Hamas denounced the American threats, which it termed American terrorism against Libya, and censured the boycott of Libya.<sup>4</sup> Hamas repeatedly censured the periodic acts aggression by Israel against south Lebanon, which it considered to be an Arab national cause. Each time that Israel attacked towns and villages in south Lebanon under the pretext of striking at the Lebanese resistance forces, notably bases for Hizbullah, Hamas immediately called for the support of the Lebanese resistance in the south and declared its solidarity with Lebanon. When natural disaster befell, such as the earthquake in Egypt, Hamas offered condolences,<sup>5</sup> and when famine threatened as a result of the drought and civil war in Somalia, Hamas appealed for help for the people of that country.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 131 of 12 January 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Statements by a Hamas strategist as quoted by Jamal Khashoggi in *al-Hayat* (London), 12 March 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Hamas to the Council of Arab Foreign Ministers, dated 26 July 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Hamas, leaflet, "No to the Unjust Penalties Imposed on the Muslim People of Libya," dated 15 April 1992.

<sup>5</sup> See for example the Hamas leaflet, "Our Most Heartfelt Condolences and Consolations to the Struggling Egyptian people," dated 13 October 1992; and the leaflet, "Our Most Sincere Condolences to the Egyptian People for the Victims of the Train Accident," dated 21 December 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 90 of 5 September 1992.

## *Hamas's Relations with Arab Regimes*

Hamas does not operate in a vacuum, it grew up in a region torn by conflicts and filled with contradictions. Each and every actor in the Middle East has vested interests that in part converge with others and in part diverge from them. Even those countries who at times entered into blocs or alliance building to serve certain short or long term objectives often find themselves confronted with a multitude of circumstances, external and internal, which either enhance or disperse their schemes. Difficulties are quit abundant as far as national actors are concerned in the region and examples are too many to enumerate.

Sub-national actors, as is the case with Hamas, however, operate within a regional context that is more complex in structure and more complicated in scope. The religious message Hamas espouses and the political characteristics it exhibits and programs it performs, only add greater difficulties to the already existing ones. Its scope of activities is not as formal as a government like entity; its expectations of its performance are higher than a formal governmental institution would place upon itself and the demands placed upon it by its constituent supporters and activists are by far superior to those asked of a governmental office. By definition Hamas is a movement – a people's movement, it evolved as a challenger to or at least as a disturber of the status quo in the region and one impetus behind its evolution was its rejection of what its adherents would term as the ineptness of formal governmental institutions.

Combining characteristics of a formal as well as an informal organizational structure Hamas seeming intent from the outset was to operate delicately within quite a delicate regional environment.

Aspiring to achieve a most difficult two faceted objective of rallying the masses in the Middle East region around its cause while also convincing Middle Eastern governments that it would be in their interests to remain silent or at least non-adversarial to Hamas mission the Movement urged in its Charter that :

The Arab countries surrounding Israel are requested to open their borders for the *mujahedin* of the Arab and Islamic countries so they can take their role and join their efforts with their Muslim brothers of Palestine. As for the other Arab and Islamic countries, they are asked to ease the Movement of *mujahedin* from it and to it-that is the least they could do.<sup>1</sup>

In the ensuing article of the Charter, nationalist and religious groupings, institutions, intellectuals and the whole Arab and Islamic world are addressed with the following:

The Islamic Resistance Movement would like each and every one of these organizations to stand by its side, supporting it on all levels, taking up its position, pushing forth its activities and movements and working to gain support for the Islamic Resistance Movement so the Islamic people can be its support and its victors – a strategic dimension on all levels: human, material, media, historical and geographical. It works through holding supportive conferences, producing clarifying statements, supportive articles, purposeful pamphlets and keeping the public aware of the Palestinian situation and what is facing it and what is being plotted against it, through educating the Islamic people ideological, morally and culturally in order to play its role

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas Charter, Article 28, see Appendix.

in defeating the Crusaders and pushing back the Tartars and saving human civilization and that is not hard for Allah.<sup>1</sup>

The theme of the universality and unity of the Islamic nations is a recurrent theme throughout the Covenant. Article seven addresses this theme by warning of the folly of not supporting the Movement:

Muslims throughout the world the system of the Islamic Resistance Movement; they work towards aiding it, accepting its stands and amplifying its jihad. Therefore, it is an international movement- it is prepared for this (task) because of the clarity of its ideology, its lofty goal and the sanctity of its objectives. Upon this basis it should be considered, given a fair evaluation and admission of its role. Whoever cheats it of its right, turns away from aiding it, or is blinded to hide its role, is a person who argues with fate. And whoever closes his eyes from seeing reality, unintentionally or internationally, will one day awake to find that the world has left him behind and the justification will wear him down trying to defend his position. The reward is for those who are early. The oppression of the close relations is more painful on the soul, than the assault of the sharp sword.<sup>2</sup>

The seemingly strong language in the Hamas covenant regarding Arab countries, however, should be considered in light of widely held attitudes towards Arab governments by some of Hamas leaders. To Jamil Hamameh, urging Arab governments "to open their borders for the *mujahdin* of the Arab and Islamic countries so they can take their role and join their efforts with their Muslim brothers of Palestine" does not necessarily mean intervention in those countries affairs.

The fact that Hamas gives a perspective about what is happening at present does not amount to interference in the internal affairs of Arab States.<sup>3</sup>

A leader of Hamas stresses that:

It is not Hamas policy to interfere with the internal affairs of any Arab state or to enter into an alliance with any one state against another. It respects all and the rights of all in facing the central historical problem of Palestine. It works towards combining all energies and uniting all efforts to serve in the interest of Palestine. It has announced this unequivocally in its Charter.<sup>4</sup>

Hamas takes this stance particularly bearing in mind what it sees as previous interference in the affairs of Arab states by the PLO and which it uses as a stick to further beat the PLO with:

When the PLO interfered in some Arab states, we saw the results – fighting - we reap the pains and the sufferings from this and even now we continue to suffer from their interference.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas Charter, Article 29.

<sup>2</sup> Hamas Charter, Article 7.

<sup>3</sup> Jamil Hamameh, interview in Hisham H. Ahmad, *From Religious Salvation to Political Transformation: The Rise of Hamas in Palestinian Society*, (Jerusalem: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Mahmud al-Zahhar, interview with author, (Gaza), 15 June 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

This stance of non-interference can quite reasonably be termed a pragmatic policy on the part of Hamas in order to *carry favor* with Arab states and therefore put itself in a position whereby the Arab states themselves will show reciprocal understanding of Hamas. Mahmoud al-Zahhar, while denying that Arab states reciprocate in every case alludes what they and the wider Muslim community generally, most certainly should:

It is not the case that is asked for is given. It is not within our means to open borders, however, it is an appeal to Allah and our history implemented through our convictions but not necessarily the case that our demands be implemented one way or the other. We ask Allah to avert trouble for the Palestinian people and ask that He grants wisdom. The people will be judged and not with mercy because the Palestinian problem is not the problem of the Palestinian only, not the problem of the Arabs only but is a historical, international Islamic problem. It is true that Allah has granted that we should be the tip of the spear but this does not mean that we have to compromise and depart with soil for we alone do not own it. It belongs to future generations - to the Islamic nation in its entirety.<sup>1</sup>

The Arab states received a much more positive endorsement from Mahomoud al-Zahhar although this was due entirely to the reaction of certain states to the whole issue of the December 1992 expulsion. When talking about the conditions of living on Marj al-Zuhour he stated that the patience and steadfastness of the deportees had been one factor which had made conditions bearable but the second largest factor was the support shown by numerous visitors.

The co-operation and help we got from the gracious people of Lebanon and Syria, from other Arab peoples and from the Islamic world... I recall we had a delegation representing the Nasserites. They were truly sympathetic to our plight. They said that they had come from Egypt, not the Egypt of Sadat, the Islamic empire or Camp David but the Egypt of the Arab people and the Egypt of Azhar and Islam to join hands in unity. They said: We came to say that you have raised Arab heads high and we come to kiss the ground beneath your feet.<sup>2</sup>

Another notable visitor from Egypt was "the son of the Imam, the son of Sheikh Hassan al-Banna, saif al-Islam, the sword of Islam".

The Egyptian media *was* very interested and sympathetic to the plight of the deportees and this very much impressed Sheikh Bitawi:

In Palestine I preach to 50.000 or 100.000 people at al-Aqsa mosque and to 4.000 or 5.000 in Nablus, however, during my deportation I was given the opportunity to preach to 100s of million of Arabs and Muslims. Just imagine, the Egyptian television, radio and print media broadcasting what we preached.<sup>3</sup>

This is a very good endorsement for Egypt considering the dilemmas regarding the Hamas Movement which the Egypt of Mubarak is currently facing. While the greatest threat to Mubarak and the stability of Egypt is posed by the more radical Islamic movements such as the Islamic university, steady gains by the Muslim Brotherhood in professional and vocational spheres may actually make it the more difficult movement to deal with nationality. Mubarak cannot afford to clamp down on the Brotherhood as

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Sheikh Hamed Bitawi, interview in Hisham A. Ahmad, *From Religious Salvation to Political Transformation: The Rise of Hamas in Palestinian Society*.

this will only cause greater support for the more radical movements within Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood is of course highly supportive of Hamas but, from the point of view of the Egyptian regime, the interests of which tally more closely with those of Israel, the PLO and the United States, Hamas is an obstacle to the peace process. Because of the complexities of the Egyptian regime's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, the only discouragement that it can give Hamas is to urge contributors such as Saudi Arabia to cease or at least lessen their support of the Movement.<sup>1</sup> As well as the Egyptians quoted above, Abdil-Aziz Rantisi gives a whole list of much appreciated visitors from Arab world:

From Jordan there came the media, doctors, engineers and members of the Jordanian parliament. From the Sudan, from Northern Iraq, from Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Emirates, Tunisia, Yemen and from Libya came representatives sent by Qaddafi asking us what we needed.<sup>2</sup>

In general, however, Arab countries do remain strongly supportive of Hamas, particularly Sudan which is currently allowing Hamas activities to be trained there. Some of these young trainees are from the Occupied Territories but most were recruited from Jordanian refugee camps and their time in the Sudan is approved and given financial support from the Muslim Brotherhood headquarters in Khartoum.<sup>3</sup>

Links remain strong with Islamic groups in Algeria; it is there where Hamas receive a great deal of its empowerment due to the active role by Islamists in the Algerian political process. Hamas views the Islamists in Algeria as role models whose work energizes the Movement's supporters, the clash between the Islamists and the central government in Algeria is almost always used by Hamas as a justificatory tool in motivating its members to unite and to be more active. The crackdown on the Islamists by the Algerian government and isolating them the Algerian electorate is what enabled Hamas to provide a rationale for its program in opposition to the status quo.

Hamas pursues relations that it views as advantageous either to its program or to its well-being. While the relationship between Hamas and the various Arab actors is not viewed as a strategic one by either side, both parties try to capitalize on the benefits they can reap from such a relationship. Hamas is in need of support of Arab governments to help it advance its goals, Arab governments on the other hand, invariably needed Hamas to assist in the weakening of the PLO which did not always succumb to the dictates of Arab leaders.

It is wrong to assume, however, that Hamas's only preoccupation in the pursuance of its relations in the Arab world is limited to establishing bridges of contact with Arab governments. The Arab nation which is integral to the Islamic nation is about the most frequently used concept in Hamas jargon. It is through their appeal to the Arab peoples that Hamas has been able to widen its influence on the Arab political map. Perhaps it is the concern of Arab governments that Hamas might attempt to penetrate the Arab conscience with its advocacy which will motivate them to play this role with Hamas.

An interesting component of Hamas's relations with the Arab world can be found in the context of their ties with another sub-national actor, Hizbullah. The latter is widely known to have established strong contacts with the Islamic jihad Movement.

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<sup>1</sup> Yohanan Ramati, "Islamic Fundamentalism Gaining," *Midstream*, vol. 39, no. 2 (1993), p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Abdil Aziz Rantisi, interview with author, (Gaza), 20 June 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Yohanan Ramati, "Islamic Fundamentalism Gaining," vol. 39, p.2.

One would expect that some kind of dialogue at least was open between Hamas and Hizbullah particularly during the expulsion period which saw many Hamas supporters on Marg al-Zuhour in South Lebanon. The nature of the goals of such dialogue had it been pursued is not fully clear as there was little references to Hizbullah in discussion with some of Hamas leaders.

In effect, Hamas has been able to leave its mark on a region littered with complexities. It has pursued at times, alliances and other relationships with national, sub-national and trans-national actors in order to give meaning to its existence. While difficulties were plentiful deportation, as harsh an experience as it was, was utilized by Hamas and the benefits may have outweighed the cost in an arena where gains tend to be a scarce commodity.

At the popular level, Hamas eventually realized that the aloof treatment accorded it by Arab regimes was counterbalanced by warm feelings toward it on the part of political mass movements, particularly Islamic ones. Hamas's interest in the Arab and Islamic public developed as the Movement acquired more experience and became more proficient in its assessment of real conditions. Initially, the Hamas Charter, promulgated in August 1988, nine months after the Movement was established, did not explicitly differentiate between an official and a popular level in the Arab and Islamic arenas. However, it did contain an article concerning Arab and Islamic states and governments, followed by another article under the heading of "National and Religious Groups, Institutions, Intellectuals, and the Arab-Islamic World."<sup>1</sup> The text in this regard is general. It tries to rally the nationalist and religious groups, and it sees the Islamic peoples as a source of support for Hamas, constituting a human, material, and informational strategic depth for the Movement.<sup>2</sup>

At a subsequent stage, Hamas's perspective on the public sphere became more discriminating, and the Movement's demands of the public became more definite. The Arab and Islamic *umma* came to be regarded as strategic depth for Hamas and the Palestinian cause. Hamas put more reliance on popular forces and came to regard these forces as "the real resource for our Movement in its long struggle with the Jewish enemy."<sup>3</sup> Consequently, Hamas forged a set of general policies for its relations with the public, parallel to those devised for official Arab circles. It should be noted that these policies (like those concerning regimes) apply to the Arab and Islamic worlds. The most important of these policies, according to Hamas's documents, are the following:

1. [Hamas] is eager to consolidate its relations with various public groups, irrespective of their ideological or political affiliations, considering that the Palestinian cause and the Zionist threat concern the entire *umma*, although priority should be given to Islamic movements and grass-roots institutions with an Islamic leaning.
2. Hamas shall avoid involvement in disputes and rivalries among Islamic movements or institutions working in the same sector or in the same geographic area; and it shall not align itself with one faction against any other.
3. Hamas shall avoid racial, regional, or sectarian divisions that exist in the Arab and Islamic *umma*, and it shall refrain from participation in the details of ideological or theological (*fiqhiyah*) disputes.

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<sup>1</sup> The Hamas Charter, article 29; see Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "Siyasat Hamas al-marhaliyya."

4. Hamas shall adopt positions and information policies that foster other just causes of Islamic peoples and movements and organizations. It shall ally itself with justice and against injustice and always champion human values and human rights. In circumstances under which it is not free to act, Hamas may remain silent, but under no circumstances will it support a position that is unjust.
5. In its relationships, contacts, and the positions it adopts, Hamas respects the customs of peoples, their special characteristics, and their traditions but will not itself participate in those practices that are forbidden by the *shariah*.
6. Hamas's [policy] in its relations with grass-roots organizations and personalities is to concentrate on [cultivating relations with] key figures in each stratum and group, such as important scientists, intellectuals, journalists, and public relations officials, because that is more productive and yields faster results for the Movement.<sup>1</sup>

The above text can be interpreted in different ways. One can analyze it either in a realistic or an idealistic manner and reach different conclusions. It may be worthwhile to find a common denominator among different possible interpretations. The first point that can be made is that one can detect in the text a measure of palpable political realism, gained after three years of experience. That experience moderated Hamas's discourse from the absolutism of the Charter to the pragmatism of dealing with the details of the complex reality in the Arab-Islamic world. Here the enigma of the official and the popular constitutes an idiosyncratic structural conundrum, quite apart from how it affects, or is affected by, the Palestinian problem.

A second point that can be made concerns Hamas's attempt to deal with this complex relationship between the official and the popular levels by cultivating, the theory, and the two different sets of policies. The first set is public-oriented, aimed at nurturing mobilization, and calls for material support and participation in jihad; the second is regime-oriented, characterized by appeasement and moderation, and emphasizes noninterference on domestic affairs. In fact, these two sets were irreconcilable, because the actions that Hamas advocated for adoption by popular Arab grass-roots organizations definitely conflict with regime policies. In reality, therefore, Hamas did not pursue strongly its public level policies in the Arab countries. The Movement always has given priority to maintenance of the links – however weak – that it had established with governments over activist links with grass-roots organizations. In short, Hamas's activities were restricted to the political and informational functions of its representatives and official spokesmen. These activities amount to little more than communicating Hamas's views only on those issues that are germane to the Palestinian cause. Even at their most expansive, these activities do not go beyond the participation of Hamas's leaders as speakers or lecturers in conferences, mass rallies, and festivals. More accurately, except for a limited number of cases in Jordan and Lebanon, Hamas hardly ever has organized any mass activities under its banner in any Arab country on any occasion, and thus it is difficult to evaluate how the above policies are working in practice.

The third point that can be made concerns the application of those policies and Hamas's connections with the masses. In both Arab and Islamic states, Hamas has relied from the beginning on the complementarity and solidarity of local Islamic movements. For instance, rather than Hamas organizing its own meetings of support

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

and solidarity, the country-based groups themselves organize such meetings. This tactic has provided Hamas with a buffer between its policies and those of the governing regimes, and it has succeeded in minimizing the points of friction between Hamas and Arab regimes, particularly if one takes into account Hamas's commitment not to organize branches outside Palestine. At the same time, the cost to the Movement is that Hamas has been deprived of the benefit of establishing direct contacts with the public and developing them into a stable relationship. In an effort to sidestep the bureaucratic problems of securing official permission from security forces, many of these activities expressing solidarity with Hamas were organized under the banner of general slogans such as support for the jihad of Palestinian people or support for the Intifada. Consequently at those activities, in summary, one can conclude that Hamas's lackluster efforts in terms of establishing relations with the public effectively minimized or even eliminated conflicts with Arab regimes. Yet, that success has been achieved at the expense of Hamas's direct contacts with the Arab public, which has become rare.

One of the few ways in which Hamas retains grass-roots contacts in the Arab world is to participate in conferences that have an Arab or Islamic popular dimension. For example, it participated in the Arab Islamic Popular Congress that used to meet in Khartoum, at the invitation of its former secretary general, Hassan al-Turabi. The first congress was organized during the Gulf crisis, and it since has become a meeting place for delegates from grass-roots Arab nationalist and Islamic movements. Hamas has a seat on the general secretariat of the congress. Hamas also took part in the pan-Arab-Islamic Convention that met in Beirut in October 1994; it was organized jointly by the Arab Nationalist Conference (an annual convention of the pan-Arab nationalists) and prominent Islamic figures from throughout the Arab homeland. The Arab-Islamic convention was considered the first real meeting, at the ideological level, between the Arab nationalist and Islamist movements, and its aim was to resolve differences and to begin a new chapter in their relations. Hamas was given a seat on the general secretariat and attended subsequent meeting of the convention.

To cite some less important grass-roots activities, Hamas takes part in popular festivals and party conventions in support of the Palestinian cause. Most such festivals are held in Jordan (before the deportation of Hamas's leader from Jordan) or Lebanon, but later some are held in Syria. Hamas's files on its relations with Arab political parties and movements are full of messages of support from them. Most such messages relate to specific event, such as press release and memoranda from Jordanian and Lebanese parties on the occasion of operations by the al-Qassam Brigades or the assassination of its commanders.<sup>1</sup>

### *Hamas and Jordan*

Jordan offered an equally important range of benefits. King Hussein, who had established a political alliance with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood early in his rule and had long supported Islamist institutions in the West Bank as a means of asserting influence vis-a-vis the PLO, allowed the group to establish its main headquarters in Amman. Although Hamas officials in the kingdom were ostensibly

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, "Statement by parties Opposed to Submission and Normalization [of relations with Israel] Concerning the Armed Confrontation between the *Mujahidin* of the al-Qassam Brigades and the Israeli Occupation Forces," dated 15 October 1994 and signed by eight Jordanian parties.

prohibited from engaging in illegal activities and closely monitored by Jordanian intelligence, they enjoyed a considerable amount of freedom during the early 1990s.

The situation in Jordan has attracted Hamas's interest more than that in any other place, because of the direct impact of events in Jordan on the domestic Palestinian situation. Furthermore, political orientations and election results to a large extent reflect Palestinian public opinion because of the high ratio of Palestinians there. Hamas therefore particularly is concerned with stability in Jordan and wants opportunities to remain open for advances by the Islamists in various areas. This is evident in the reiteration by Hamas of its concern not to undermine the democratic experiment in Jordan.<sup>1</sup>

Hamas has made an effort to maintain a presence in Jordan without arousing the hostility of the regime. Therefore, it has refrained from interference in Jordan's domestic affairs and has avoided exploiting its presence in Jordan for anything beyond informational and political activities. For its part, Jordan has felt its regional political interests are being served by allowing a group of Hamas leaders to remain on its territory, rather than to move to Syria. This is particularly so because the outcome of the final status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority has yet to be determined. The shape of that outcome will naturally have an impact on Jordan; therefore Amman wants to have some influence on it, either directly or through a *de facto* alliance with Hamas.<sup>2</sup>

After the kingdom signed a peace treaty with Israel in October 1994 and began forging closer ties with the PA, the Hamas presence in the kingdom increasingly became a liability.

Nevertheless, Hamas's relations with the Jordanian regime have undergone tense moments on more than one occasion as a result of Hamas's armed activities, notably its suicide bombings inside Israel and the resulting intensification of pressure on Jordan to close down Hamas's offices and to arrest the Movement's representatives. There have been many notable periods of strain in relations with the regime. The first was in April 1994, when Jordan announced it was withdrawing the passports of Nazzal and Ibrahim Ghosheh, both Jordanian citizens, after Nazzal declared in Amman that Hamas was embarking on armed attacks inside the heartland of Palestine. The second episode was in April 1995, in the wake of further operations by Hamas, to which Israel responded by stepping up pressure on Jordan, which reacted by expelling two Hamas leaders, Abu Marzouq, the former head of Hamas's Political Bureau, and Imad al-Alami, a Political Bureau member.

The third episode was in March, 1996 in the wake of series of suicide bombings by Hamas in Jerusalem, Asqalan, and Tell Aviv. Jordanian authorities arrested a number of those working for Hamas's representatives and tightened restrictions on their activities. The fourth episode was precipitated on 7 September 1997 by the arrest of Ghosheh, the official spokesman for Hamas in that period, who was kept in detention along with a number of Hamas members. One Jordanian analyst views Hamas's conduct in Arab countries, including Jordan, as having gained the Movement credibility with the regimes of the host countries.<sup>3</sup>

In 25 of September 1997, the Israeli intelligence force (Al-Mossad) attempted to assassinate head of Hamas's Political Bureau Khalid Masha'al in Amman, this failure attempt made the king of Jordan Hussain to get angry, and he send a message to the

<sup>1</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 58 of 14 June 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Yehuda Lukas, Israel, Jordan, and the Peace Process (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), p. 184.

<sup>3</sup> Musa Zeid al-Keylani, op. cit., pp. 205-06.

Israeli prime minister threatened him to disconnect the security talks between the two sides because of the sudden incident, which considered by Jordan as Israeli aggression in the Jordanian land. In that failure attempt the Jordanian police arrested two of the Mossad agents who tried to assassinate Masha'al, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin was freed and returned to the Gaza Strip as part of a swap deal between King Hussein and Israel worked out following last month's botched Israeli assassination attempt in Jordan on Hamas leader Khalid Masha'al. Israel also freed 20 other Palestinian and Jordanian prisoners. In return, two agents from the Mossad Israel's secret service, who were captured after the failed murder plot were freed and returned to Israel.

The last episode was in 22 November 1999 when the former Jordanian prime minister Abdl Ra'ouf al-Rawabda made a decision to arrest Hamas militants in Amman, the closure of the organization's journal and offices in the Jordanian capital, as well as the arrest warrants issued for the five top Hamas leaders—Khaled Masha'al, Mohammad Nazzal, Ibrahim Ghosheh, Izat al-Rashq, and Musa Abu Marzouk—is most likely intended to prevent the radical Islamic elements from prevent the political process between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Actually, the way was paved for the Jordanian move back in October 1998 with the signing of the Wye Memorandum. It was clear that Hamas would attempt to undermine the implementation of the agreements.

The talks between Yassir Arafat and Dr. Fayiz al-Tarawinah, the Jordanian Chief of Royal Court focused on Jordanian-Palestinian cooperation in the security, political, and information fields. According to *Al-Majd*, Arafat asked al-Tarawinah to curtail the Movements of the Hamas leaders in Jordan and the Movement's activities and contacts. Sources said that al-Tarawinah promised that the Jordanian government would take measures against the Hamas leaders in Jordan if they attempt to sabotage the Wye Plantation agreement. Al-Tarawinah also affirmed that the competent Jordanian authorities had summoned the Hamas leaders in Jordan and asked them not to carry out any activities against the agreement or encourage such activities.

Following the signing of the Wye Plantation agreement, the Hamas leaders in Jordan made passionate statements calling for the continuation of military operations against Israel.

Ibrahim Ghosheh, spokesman for Hamas, declared that the Movement is eager to avoid "the mutilation of the national fabric ... in the interest of the Palestinian people." But, he hinted, "this clear and strong Hamas position, which is appreciated by foes even before friends, cannot be guarantee forever"—a veiled threat against the PA if it went ahead with the agreement's implementation. "The PA must not continue its present policy and think that Hamas and its leadership will not respond to agents, who cooperate with Jews and hand them *mujahidin*, weapons, and ammunitions,"<sup>1</sup>

However, the policies of the Netanyahu government, followed by its demise and the election "intermezzo" period in Israel postponed the Israeli withdrawal. The election of the new government under Barak brought hopes for the achievement of a real understanding between Israel and the PA and the possibility of swift progress towards a final settlement.

In order to forestall a new wave of attacks and facilitate implementation of the 1998 Wye River agreement, the Clinton administration put unprecedented pressure on Jordan to put a stop to Hamas activity in the kingdom. During a visit to Washington, King Hussein was told that congress was unlikely to approve his request for foreign aid as long as the Movement enjoyed freedom of action in Jordan.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibrahim Ghosheh, *Al-Urdun*, (Amman), 15 October 1998.

Hamas leaders have stepped up contacts and visits with their allies in Lebanon, Syria and Iran, with the intention of forming a united front against Israel. Khaled Masha'al met with Syrian Vice President Abd al-Halim and Foreign Minister Farouk a-Shara to discuss developments in the peace process and the positions of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. It is not just a coincidence that the arrests and the warrants against the militants occurred during the visit of these four leaders in Tehran.

Although the Jordanian move was long overdue, and Israel has repeatedly complained about the relative freedom of Hamas' leadership in Amman, the actual measures were taken expressively at the request of the Palestinian Authority. Jordan has come under increasing pressure from Arafat to take action against Hamas, which is the Palestinian Authority's chief rival and which has the means and the motivation to sabotage the forthcoming agreements and the Palestinian Authority.

Hamas response was by press statements which talked about condemnation of Hamas for the Jordanian step, asked the Jordanian authorities to get back of the decision, and got surprised of the Jordanian steps against Hamas, and repeated that Hamas did not interfere of domestic Jordanian affairs. Hamas leaders in Gaza insisted that the activities of Hamas in the Occupied Territories would not be affected by the Jordanian decision to exile some of Hamas's leaders outside Jordan, but it would affect the activities of Hamas in Jordan.<sup>1</sup>

The excuses of Hamas's existence in Jordan had ended when the peace process between Israel and PA reached for a high point before the Wye River Agreement, which expected Hamas to refuse and condemn it from Jordan and expected the final solution will take place soon. The response of Hamas to these episodes was limited to expressing regret for their occurrence.

### *Hamas and Syria*

The Syrian government's relationship with Palestinian Islamic fundamentalists has not always been so friendly - partly because its relations with Syrian fundamentalists have long been decidedly hostile. The late President Hafez Assad's brutal suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood in the early 1980s sparked angry denunciations in Palestinian mosques. In 1983, the chairman of the Higher Islamic Council, Saad al-Din al-Alami, held mass rallies at Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem and declared that killing Assad was a duty of all Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

The Assad regime's hostility toward the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist movement that had spread from Egypt throughout the Arab Levant by the middle of the century, reflected more than the usual sort of tensions between religious activism and the secular nationalist credo of Syria's ruling Ba'ath party and its domination by Alawites, adherents of a heretical offshoot of Islam. Also underlying this hostility was a fundamental conflict of interests regarding the Arab world's most salient public policy issue. The Brotherhood abstained from violent opposition to Israel, preaching that "internal jihad" should take priority over "external jihad." According to this doctrine, the Arabs had lost Palestine because of their deviation from Islamic norms. Armed struggle against Israel was considered fruitless until the Arabs had purged the evil within (or, in the case of the Syrian Brotherhood, the evildoers within).

Although Hamas opened an office in the Yarmouk refugee camp outside Damascus in 1991, there was little evidence of substantial cooperation between Hamas and the

<sup>1</sup> Mahmoud al-Zahhar, interview with author, 15 June 2003.

<sup>2</sup> US Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism-2001, 21 May 2002.

Assad regime until after the September 1993 signing of the Declaration of Principles. Shortly thereafter, Assad invited Hamas to join other Syrian-sponsored Palestinian groups in a new Damascus-based rejectionist coalition (the Palestinian National Salvation Front, established under Syrian auspices in 1984, had been strictly limited to secular nationalist factions).

The first clear indication of a bilateral alliance between Syria and Hamas came in the summer of 1994, as preparations for the establishment of a Palestinian Authority in Gaza and Jericho were underway and King Hussein began hinting that he would sign a separate peace treaty with Israel (a reversal of his long-standing pledge to wait for a comprehensive settlement). On June 19, while Hussein was meeting with Clinton administration officials in Washington, a Hamas delegation led by Ibrahim Ghosheh arrived in Damascus and met with Syrian Vice-president Abdul Halim Khaddam, Foreign Minister Farouq al-Sharaa and other top Syrian officials. Upon his return to Amman, Ghosheh said that the meeting inaugurated "a new era of relations" between Hamas and Syria, "marked by mutual consideration and understanding."<sup>1</sup> In October, the Syrians permitted a Hamas delegation to travel to Lebanon and meet with Hizbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah.

Around the same time, a senior Qassam Brigades commander, Sheikh Izz al-Din Khalil, arrived in Damascus and established an operational headquarters for the Hamas military wing. Khalil, who was among the hundreds of Hamas members deported from Gaza to south Lebanon in 1992 (but one of the few who opted not to return), worked closely in conjunction with Syrian military intelligence. Authorization for resistance attacks was relayed from the political leadership in Amman to the operational command in Syria, which sent instructions to Qassam Brigade cells in the West Bank by telephone and fax (usually after being routed through Cyprus to obscure the origin). After Alami arrived in 1995, Damascus became the center of all resistance fractions from strategic planning to command and control.

As the only countries bordering Israel that remained officially at war with the Jewish state, Syria and Syrian-presence in Lebanon would prove to be a much more attractive setting for Alami. Not only were they geographically proximate to the Palestinian territories, but the Assad regime imposed far fewer restrictions on its activities than the Jordanian government. Damascus was also an ideal place for Hamas to maintain contacts with Iranian officials - no other Arab country maintained such close relations with the Islamic Republic.

PA officials also complained about Syria's role in sponsoring Hamas attacks against Israel. "We have come to realize that the orders being issued by the military branches of the Islamic groups are coming from the outside," Nabil Sha'ath said. Sha'ath specifically pointed the finger at Lebanon and Syria, "where the most hard-core military wing is based."<sup>2</sup> The connection between Damascus and Hamas attacks would become even more apparent during the second Palestinian Intifada.

In July 1996, the Jordanians presented Damascus with a detailed file on Hamas and other Islamist organizations in Syria that were planning attacks against Israeli and Jordanian targets. Under pressure from the United States and Israel, the Assad regime arrested several Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists, as well as Islamic militants from Egypt, Yemen, and elsewhere in the Arab world. The Syrian "crackdown" was short-lived, however, and all of the Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants were quietly

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<sup>1</sup> Associated Press, 25 June 1994.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Monde*, (France), 4 March 1996.

released. For a time, the Syrians also prohibited the Damascus office from issuing direct claims of responsibility for Hamas attacks.

The Assad regime's most significant contribution, however, was not the relative freedom and facilities the Movement enjoyed in Syria, but the virtually unrestricted access it was granted to Syrian-presence in Lebanon. The Hamas Movement made contact with members of the Islamist Hezbollah Movement when hundreds of Hamas members were deported to south Lebanon in 1992, but did not operate openly in Lebanon until warm relations with Damascus were established after the Oslo Accords. Whereas Damascus adamantly refused to permit Hamas to organize its own demonstrations in Syria outside of the Yarmouk refugee camp (for fear that they might inspire the country's latent Islamists), it pressed its proxy regime in Lebanon to permit the group to stage high profile rallies in the streets of the Lebanese capital on several occasions. For example, on the eve of the Sharm al-Sheikh summit in mid-October 2000, which brought together US President Bill Clinton, Arafat, the then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and the leaders of Jordan and Egypt in a bid to halt escalating fighting in the territories, thousands of Hamas supporters staged public demonstration in the streets of Beirut and burned an effigy of US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. The licensing of such demonstrations clearly bore the imprimatur of Damascus - if there is one thing that Lebanese of all political and sectarian persuasions agree upon, it is that the Palestinians in Lebanon should stay in their camps.

The United States had also applied pressure on Syria to stop Palestinian groups from operating on its soil. In July 1999, Vice-president Khaddam convened a meeting of Palestinian extremist groups in Damascus and told them that they must adopt peaceful means of expressing their opposition to the peace process (this speech may have been a precondition for the start of Israeli-Syrian negotiations in Shepherdstown, West Virginia five months later). Following the breakdown of talks in early 2000, however, Hamas was back in business. In April 2000, a Hamas cell was uncovered in Nablus and its leader, Jihad Nasata, was found to be taking orders from Hamas leaders in the Syrian capital."<sup>1</sup>

The Assad regime even allowed the Hamas leaders who had been kicked out of Jordan to resume their political activities in Syria. Although the Hamas political bureau was not officially reestablished in Damascus (or anywhere else), Abu Marzouq and his aides have since worked out of the Syrian capital. Masha'al officially resides in Qatar, where he has not been allowed to undertake any form of political activity, but spends the majority of his time in Syria. The Hamas office in Damascus underwent extensive upgrades to accommodate the larger number of personnel.

In recent months, under enormous pressure from the United States, the PA has ostensibly sought to broker a halt to attacks by Hamas and other militant groups in the territories. Again, the external leadership in Damascus has thwarted the initiative. "Those sitting in Damascus and Teheran see things in a different way from their friends in Gaza or Jericho," explained one PA official. "The local Hamas leadership is much more pragmatic. But, in the end, it is the outsiders who set the tone because they have the money."<sup>2</sup> In July, former Clinton administration Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, wrote that "recent efforts by PA officials in Gaza to convince Hamas to stop attacks against Israel appeared to be making headway until the Hamas leadership

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<sup>1</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, 22 August 2000.

<sup>2</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, 13 August 2002.

in Gaza got explicit instructions from the Hamas leadership outside . . . to persist with the bombings."<sup>1</sup>

In June, US President George W. Bush declared that Syria must close "terrorist camps" and expel "terrorist organizations" operating within its borders, halt "the flow of money, equipment and recruits to terrorist groups seeking the destruction of Israel," and block "the shipment of Iranian supplies to these groups."

The Syrian regime agreed to close the offices of Palestinian groups in Damascus after the visit of Secretary of State Colin Powell and American pressure on Syria.

The Palestinian groups announced that, they close down their offices in Syria without any pressure from the regime to spare the Syrians embarrassment. And Hamas said by their leaders that they run their operations from West Bank and Gaza, so they can afford to close their offices as a gesture to Syria.

### *Hamas and Gulf States*

Another area of interest in the study of Hamas relations to the Arab world can be found in the unfolding of the Gulf crisis in 1990. The position taken by the PLO in the Gulf crisis which limited its access to funds and resulted in the expulsion of many Palestinian workers from the Gulf States worked very much to the advantage of Hamas with funds previously allocated to the PLO being transferred to them. Its predecessor, the Muslim Brotherhood, always had good relations with the Saudi Arabian monarchy and received financial support from it, this relationship served to create an easy channel for Hamas receipt of funds.

Hamas is enjoying of good relations with the Gulf States, with regimes and peoples, because of the religious emotion, especially you can find this in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Kuwait. Sheikh Yassin when he visited some countries in the Gulf area he received a warm welcome from the officials and peoples.

Hamas receives funding from private contributors in Saudi Arabia and the other rich, moderate Arab states of the Persian Gulf.<sup>2</sup> Exact estimates of aid from Gulf-state contributors are difficult to obtain, but one report quotes Western intelligence sources to the effect that Hamas gets "millions" of dollars annually from this source.<sup>3</sup>

Hamas reportedly has an office in Saudi Arabia. In April 1993, a Hamas delegation visited Qatar to discuss aid to Hamas and the Palestinian people from that Gulf state and the opening of a Hamas political office there.<sup>4</sup> Noting that the oil monarchies have supported the Arab-Israeli peace process, their reluctance to block private contributions to Hamas and Islamic Jihad may stem from an unwillingness to offend wealthy and powerful citizens or from a fear of provoking attacks against Israel.

Sheikh Yassin invited in Gulf area (when he went to Egypt to get treatment) from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Kuwait. Hamas did not organize the visit before, but when sheikh Yassin got any invitation from the Arab states he accepted it.<sup>5</sup>

Further embarrassment awaited the PLO in Yemen, where Yassin received an honorary doctorate from Sana'a University. The university's traditionally pro-PLO president, Abd Al-Aziz Al-Muqalah, said during the ceremony that Yassin

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis Ross, "The Hidden Threat in the Mideast," *The Wall Street Journal*, 24 July 2002.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1993*, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Sieff, "U.S. Aims at Hamas' Pocketbook," *The Washington Times*, Oct. 26, 1994. p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Ashraf Fouad, "Hamas Team in Qatar for Political, Financial Aid," *Reuters*, Apr. 3, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, interview with author, 30 August 2003.

represented the Palestinian people, and praised Hamas for adhering to its principles, unlike others.

Hamas enjoys strong financial backing. In fact, its rivals claim that this is major reason for its strength. Hamas receives financial support from unofficial bodies in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, and recently also from Iran. These funds are distributed among the various groups and associations identified with the Movement, and from them filter down to the operatives in the field.

A considerable proportion of the aforementioned funds originate from various sources in the Gulf States (The Gulf Cooperation Council States). Most of the funding is from Saudi Arabian sources.

Gulf States such as Qatar and Oman have open and direct economic relations with Israel. The Arab economic boycott has collapsed and, most ominously of all after the peace settlement, between Palestinian and Israelis.

Recently United States started its pressure on the Gulf States to stop financing Hamas and other Islamic groups around the world, and Israeli pressure continued to halt the funds of Hamas.

The major U.S. allies in the Gulf have quietly refused a request by the United States to drop their financial support for Hamas.

The U.S. message was relayed by Assistant Secretary of State William Burns. Burns has traveled through GCC countries in July 2003, and urged them to halt funding for Hamas.

Gulf diplomatic sources said the Bush administration failed to win commitments from several Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to end financial support for Hamas.

At least three countries have rejected the U.S. request to end funding for Hamas. They identified the states as Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

"The policy of GCC countries is to say that there is no official support for Hamas," "That has come to mean that the GCC will not block financing to the Movement."<sup>1</sup>

The American envoy said: "We want to work as hard as we can in the United States government to support those efforts across the whole range of areas: law enforcement cooperation, intelligence sharing, drying up the financing of terrorist groups, whether it's groups that have carried out acts in Saudi Arabia or any place else in the region or around the world," "And I think what we've seen is a renewed effort and a stepped-up effort on the part of the United States and Saudi Arabia to cooperate on those issues, and again we work with lots of other partners in the region as well."<sup>2</sup>

Khaled Masha'al has frequently visited the three GCC states. The Gulf Arab governments have given Masha'al an official welcome.

"This [funding to Hamas] is under our control and according to our interests... we distinguish between relations [with Hamas] and support. They are different."<sup>3</sup>

Qatar and Saudi Arabia have relayed similar responses to the United States. All three GCC countries are said to serve as major contributors to as well as safe havens for Hamas leaders.

## *Hamas and Lebanon*

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<sup>1</sup> Gulf diplomatic source, *Tribune*, 3 July 2003.

<sup>2</sup> William Burns, a news conference in Kuwait, 25 June 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Khaled Al Jarallah, Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister, 3 July 2003.

Approximately 350,000 Palestinians live in Lebanon. That is, at least, according to the official data of UNRWA, which is careful to maintain the fixed ratio whereby 10 percent of Lebanon's population is Palestinian. Only several tens of thousands have Lebanese citizenship, which was acquired during the first period of flight, after 1949. The others live in 14 refugee camps or around Beirut. More than 50 percent of them live below the Lebanese poverty line, which is an income of less than \$90 a month. Unemployment is especially severe in the refugee camps, permits to work outside the camps are hardly ever granted and most Palestinians who manage to find work outside the camps do so illegally.

This social and ethnic fabric of Lebanon also determines the rules of war with Israel. Hezbollah, for example, which is striving to expand the national base of its military struggle and even set up multi-ethnic units for that purpose, has refrained from demonstrating any cooperation with the Palestinians, both in the military sphere and in the extent of the aid it is willing to provide to Palestinians in need.

In addition to strong representations of Fatah and the opposition organizations, there are at least another 10 Palestinian fundamentalist organizations in Lebanon. Among them are some better known ones such as Islamic Jihad and a small Hamas faction which gained some momentum when more than 400 Hamas activists were expelled to Lebanon in 1993, the Islamic Fighting Organization, which sees its task as promoting religious education and welfare services; the Association of Religious Scholars of Palestine and Lebanon and other organizations, all competing for control of the Palestinian population in Lebanon and for funds.

The void left by Fateh in Lebanon brought about the increasing activity of rival groups, which were close to the Syrians. However, these groups have difficulty in enlarging their support due to of the lack of novelty of their message, the aging of their leadership and their lack of financial resources. Hamas, on the other hand, can present itself as the central Palestinian opposition force, and the central legitimate alternative in the Palestinian Territories to the Palestinian Authority. The Movement has a relatively large public following, and above all, is the main Palestinian element that has not only abandoned the policy of armed struggle, but engages in intensive armed activities against Israel.

Another advantage of Hamas in its activity in Lebanon is its relations with Hizbollah and Iran, its financial resources and its traditional activity as a Muslim Brotherhood organization in a variety of social and communal issues. Furthermore, Hamas has much greater independence than do such groups as PFLP, PDFLP, Abu-Musa etc., which act in Lebanon under Syrian patronage—a factor that greatly limits their activity.

The establishment of "The Association of Islamic clerics of Palestine in Lebanon" illustrates the strengthening of the relationship between Hamas and Hizbollah. This is especially noticeable in its similarity to the older body established at the initiative of Hizbollah and Iran, and its connections to *Al-Jama`ah al-Islamiyyah* in Sidon—one of the few Sunni Islamic groups in the Arab world under Iranian influence since the early 1980s.

It would seem that from an Israeli point of view, the Islamist activity in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon brings with it the risk of further strengthening the Iranian elements and Hizbollah in that country, by swelling their ranks with reinforcements whose past is replete with armed attacks. At present it seems to be in its infancy. However the large-scale socio-political activity of Hamas in these camps may strengthen the Islamist hold over this part of the Palestinian public. This, plus

future developments in the talks with Israel, which will put the emphasis on the Territories at the expense of "the right of return".

Hamas appointed a representative in Lebanon, because Hamas knows the importance of Lebanon in the Middle East, also the relations between Hamas and Lebanon influenced positively because of Hizbollah and the well connection with Syrian regime.

As the only countries bordering Israel that remained officially at war with the Jewish state, Syria and Syrian-occupied Lebanon would prove to be a much more attractive setting for Imad al- Alami (a Hamas leader). Not only were they geographically proximate to the Palestinian territories, but the Assad regime imposed far fewer restrictions on its activities than the Jordanian government. Damascus was also an ideal place for Hamas to maintain contacts with Iranian officials - no other Arab country maintained such close relations with the Islamic Republic.

The group made contact with members of the Hizbollah Movement when hundreds of Hamas members were deported to south Lebanon in 1992, but did not operate openly in Lebanon until warm relations with Damascus were established after the Oslo Accords.

The Beirut office of Hamas, then headed by Mustafa Liddawi, was allowed to openly recruit Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, in conjunction with Iranian Pasdaran commanders, who were allowed by the Syrians to return to the country in great numbers. Both were allowed virtually unrestricted access to the country's 12 refugee camps, the entrances to which have long been tightly controlled by Syrian and Lebanese security forces.

Whereas Damascus adamantly refused to permit Hamas to organize its own demonstrations in Syria outside of the Yarmouk refugee camp, it pressed its proxy regime in Lebanon to permit the group to stage high profile rallies in the streets of the Lebanese capital on several occasions. For example, on the eve of the Sharm al-Sheikh summit in mid-October 2000, which brought together US President Bill Clinton, Arafat, the then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and the leaders of Jordan and Egypt in a bid to halt armed attacks against Israel, thousands of Hamas supporters staged public demonstration in the streets of Beirut and burned an effigy of US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. The licensing of such demonstrations clearly bore the imprimatur of Damascus - if there is one thing that Lebanese of all political and sectarian persuasions agree upon, it is that the Palestinians in Lebanon should stay in their camps.

### *Hamas and Sudan*

Sudan is a different Arab state, the Islamic revolution took place in Sudan, when the Islamic Movement made the military coup in 1989 and took the authority of Sudan.

Hamas welcomed the change in Sudan, and the Islamic figures took the authority there, and enjoyed of free move in Sudan of their militants who escape from the Palestinian Territories.

Sudan has given the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) office space, land and farms, when Sheikh Ahmad Yassin visited Sudan, which was a country among the Arab and Islamic states visited by Sheikh Yassin.

The Sudanese officials declared that the office was to support the Palestinian struggle against Israel, and recognition of Hamas' championing Islamic rights and defending the religious sanctuaries"<sup>1</sup>.

The American pressure continued on Hamas by making pressure on the Sudanese regime to deport Hamas figures from their land, and stop supporting it. Sudan wanted not fully to follow U.S. in the campaign against terrorism, but the Sudanese regime refused American pressure, and tried to reduce Hamas's activities in Sudan to avoid the pressure.

### *Hamas and the Islamic World*

Hamas considers the "Islamic dimension" to be "a pivotal strategic dimension for the Movement and for the Palestinian cause"<sup>2</sup> and the acquisition of power by the Islamic world - for example, the Pakistani nuclear bomb - as an asset for the Arab Islamic *umma*.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of these convictions, Hamas has been keen on establishing relations with Islamic states and peoples.

Hamas has made an effort to establish direct relations with the governments and peoples in the Islamic world. Hamas's political discourse has been sensitive and responsive to the principal causes in the Islamic world, such as Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, and Kashmir. However, the Movement has encountered problems with respect to the establishment of official relations with regimes, and even the people, in Islamic world just like the ones it experienced in the Arab world. These problems include the past history of the Muslim Brotherhood's relations with its Arab-Islamic environment; the regional and international consensus on the peace process and the abandonment of the military approach; the Western, notably American, campaign against "Islamic terrorism" and the fears this has aroused among Islamic and Arab governments; the widespread and deeply ingrained recognition of the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, a recognition that finds concrete expression in the offices and embassies the PLO maintains in those states; and finally, the administrative and organizational shortcomings of Hamas itself, beginning with the limited cadres in charge of establishing and maintaining political and public relations. One can add another obstacle: the limited interest in and familiarity with the Palestinian cause in the Islamic world and the paucity of available information on the topic. This is especially so in distant countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and a number of Islamic states in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in the Islamic communities of the West.

With respect to Hamas's general policies in dealing with the official and popular levels in the Islamic world, these are the same as the policies explained in the last section. In general, these policies are based on non-intervention in the domestic affairs of Islamic states and maintaining a careful balance between supporting issues that Hamas believes are just and not antagonizing the regimes concerned. As for dealing with Islamic countries collectively, Hamas does not enjoy any special or quasi-diplomatic status (e.g., have observer status) in the organizations and institutions established by the Islamic countries. Hamas's relations with those institutions are limited to issuing appeals and addressing statements to those fora on various occasions, particularly when high-level meetings are convened. Hamas has become

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<sup>1</sup> Majzub al-Khalifa, the governor of Khartoum State, DPA service, 2 June 1998.

<sup>2</sup> See "The Islamic Sphere" section in the Hamas Charter.

<sup>3</sup> Hamas, "Siyasat Hamas al-marhaliyya."

accustomed to putting forward its perspective on Palestinian issues in those appeals, in the hope of attracting attention from the Islamic states.<sup>1</sup>

### *Hamas and Iran*

Hamas's ties with Iran are the most significant among the Movement's relations in the Islamic world. Iran is an extraordinary state in the region for several reasons. It is a "revolutionary Islamic state"; it has had a remarkable history of concern with the Palestinian cause ever since the revolution of 1979 brought the Islamic Republic into being; and it supports and places special emphasis on Islamic Movements in Palestine. Correspondingly, there is intense interest with Iran on the part of its neighbors and other states in the region, whose relations with the Islamic Republic are strained and characterized by mutual distrust. At the international level, Iran's hostility to the West and the relentless American-led campaign against it under the justification that it supports "terrorism" and opposes peaceful settlements in the Middle East, along with the other reasons listed above, assigns special importance to Hamas's relations with Iran.

Since the Islamic Republic of Iran came into being, its relations with the Palestinian national movement in general have passed through several stages. Initially, there was a remarkable honeymoon with the PLO, Chairman Arafat landed in Tehran 1979 as the first official visitor to the capital under the new regime, and he was given a triumphal welcome befitting conquerors and *mujahidin*. The visit resulted in the opening of a Palestine embassy in place of what used to be the Israeli mission under the shah. The first few months witnessed the flowering of fraternal sentiments, during which Palestine's representatives in Tehran were hosted and feted. However, as tensions between Iraq and Iran developed and war broke out between them in 1980, the short honeymoon with the PLO ended. Relations with Tehran entered a cold freeze as the PLO drifted away from Iran to restore some balance in its relations with Arab states, a process exacerbated by Iran's disappointment in the un-Islamic conduct of members of the Palestinian delegation.<sup>2</sup> Iran developed an interest in Lebanon in 1982, particularly in Hizbollah, and some contacts were established with prominent Palestinian Islamists in Lebanon. Then a thaw in the freeze began with the outbreak of the first Intifada at the end of 1987, particularly in view of the significant and noteworthy participation of the Islamists in the uprising against Israeli occupation. Thus a third phase in Iran's relations with the Palestinians was inaugurated.

Iran unambiguously rejected the looming political settlement in the region and gave its support to the Palestinian opponents (both Islamic and secular) of the process. This support was crowned by the convening in Tehran of a conference of forces opposed to a settlement with Israel on 22 October 1991, just eight days before the Madrid Conference began. The opposition forces meeting in Tehran denounced the Madrid Conference and its participants. The Palestinian resistance organizations in attendance had met on 19 October in a forum entitled "The International Conference to Support the Palestinian People's Islamic Revolution" at which they declared their determination to halt and abort the settlement. This forum later led to the formation of *what* became known as the alliance of the ten *fasail*.

<sup>1</sup> "A Memorandum from the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, to the Organization of the Islamic Conference Meeting in Islamabad on March 23, 1997," dated 22 March 1997.

<sup>2</sup> See the chapter "The Palestinian between Dream and Reality," pp. 363-405 in Fahmi Huwaidi, *Iran minal dakhil* (Iran from the inside), 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Cairo: al-Ahram Center for Translation and Publishing, 1988).

In addition, the Iranian parliament passed a bill entitled "Law for the Support of the Islamic Revolution of the Palestinian People." This legislation established an account that was funded by contributions collected from governmental and non-governmental organizations and earmarked for support of the Palestinian people through their Islamic forces.<sup>1</sup> Iran declared the last Friday of the fasting month of Ramadan to be International Jerusalem Day and has observed it annually. In addition, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his successor, Ali *Khamenei*, have issued letters to the effect that making peace with Israel is unlawful (*haram*); Hamas welcomed and greatly appreciated these moves.

Hamas's relationship with Iran developed gradually but entered a significant phase with the outbreak of the Gulf crisis at the end of 1990. For the first time, Hamas chose an official spokesman, and the Movement organized official visits on its own and took part in joint missions to states in the region including Iran. Hamas sent an official delegation to Iran in October 1991, signaling an important upgrading of relations. This move was followed by the formal opening of a Hamas office in Tehran in February 1992, about four months after the convening of the conference of group opposed to a peaceful settlement. This office symbolized Iran's acknowledgment of the central role of Hamas in the Palestinian opposition.

Ever since Hamas opened its office in Tehran, PLO leaders constantly have accused it of owing allegiance to a foreign power. Meanwhile, on an altogether different tack, the U.S. and Western powers have mounted verbal attacks on Iran and Hamas for working together to undermine the peace process. The PLO's strategy succeeded in exaggerating Iran's relationship with Hamas out of all proportion and creating doubts in the minds of Arab regimes. In addition, Israel launched a political and media campaign depicting Iran as the sponsor of terrorism in the region and as being behind the resistance activities against Israel, even if only indirectly, through its support for Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

The most intense media campaign against Hamas for maintaining relations with Iran came from the PLO, according to Hamas sources,<sup>2</sup> who highlight two specific incidents. The first was a charge by Arafat in late 1992 that Hamas was receiving as much as \$30 million annually in support from Iran, an allegation that Hamas denied categorically as being both alarmist and exaggerated. However, the sum mentioned by Arafat was cited by the Arab and Western press and quoted extensively when discussing Hamas's relationship with Iran.<sup>3</sup> The second incident concerned a "leak" to the media by a Palestinian source in Tunis of the purported text of a signed agreement between Iran and Hamas in which Iran recognized Hamas as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. News agencies reported the agreement on 6 May 1993; the Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram* published the full text that same day in an article entitled, "Read the full details of the Iranian conspiracy against the Palestinian cause." Hamas denied the report, saying it was not true and had been fabricated in Tunis, the site of the PLO headquarters. It also denounced the PLO for resorting to cheap tricks.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A law established the fund was enacted on 9 April 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Mohammad Nazzal, interview in Kahled Hroub, *Hamas: al-Fikr wa al-Mumarsa al-Siyasiyya*.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* (London), 18 October 1992.

<sup>4</sup> Hamas leaflet, "A statement to Set the Record Straight Concerning Fabricated Reports," dated 7 May 1993.

Hamas considers Iran to be a strategic partner,<sup>1</sup> but it stresses that this is not at the expense of its relations with Arab parties. Prominent figures in Hamas point out that the Movement tries to maintain a balance in its relations with Iran and with Arab partners and tries to avoid the appearance of dependence on Iran. These points are stressed primarily for the benefit of Arab states in the Gulf, although this reason never is stated explicitly.<sup>2</sup> According to "Imad al-Alami, Hamas's former representative in Tehran and a member of the Movement's Political Bureau, Iran and Hamas are strategic allies because of "the coincidence of the Islamic dimension of their strategic viewpoints... the relationship Hamas maintains with Iran is clear and above board and is based on the mobilization of maximal support for the Palestinian cause, considering that it is an Islamic cause."<sup>3</sup> Al-Alami denies that Hamas receives direct support from the Iranian government, although "there are certain ways in which the Iranian people support the Palestinian people so as to foster their steadfastness in the Occupied Territories."<sup>4</sup>

In fact, Hamas tried to navigate the minefield of Arab-Iranian relations very cautiously. It realizes that a bias in favor of Iran will be very costly to its relations with Arab states, especially those in the Arabian Peninsula. The cost would be both political and popular (*sha'bi*) because of the sectarian sensitivity in the Gulf region toward Iran. Still, Hamas has not distanced itself from Iran but has drawn relatively close to it. For Hamas, it would be politically senseless not to value and support the state that is most adamant in its opposition to the political settlement that Hamas itself opposes. Sheikh Yassin underlined Hamas's appreciation for Iran's position and the movement's support for Iran after his release from jail in June 1998. Hamas also has made a point of giving verbal and moral support to Iran on several occasions.<sup>5</sup>

There were indications of a strong desire on Hamas's part to strengthen its relations with Iran, while still operating within the general parameters of the lines of policy to which Hamas is committed. Hamas has tried to make it clear that their relationship "is based on mutual respect, the alignment, without anyone dictating to anyone else."<sup>6</sup> As evidence of its independence, prominent Hamas figures point to an incident that took place while the 413 deported Hamas and Islamic Jihad supporters were living in exile in South Lebanon. When Jerusalem Day, the annual occasion on which Iran expresses its solidarity with the Palestinian people, came around, the deportees split into two factions. One group, comprising Islamic Jihad deportees, favored holding extensive observances in response to the Iranian call. The second group, comprising Hamas supporters, thought it would be sufficient to hold symbolic observances and to send a letter to Iran expressing support for its position; in this way the observances by the deportees would not appear to be mimicking those in Tehran. In adopting that position (which won out) and risking embarrassment to Iran while it was under the spotlight of Western attention, Hamas wanted to make clear that it was independent, even of its closest allies.

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<sup>1</sup> See Reuters interview with Imad al-Alami, member of Hamas's Political Bureau and at that time its representative in Tehran, *Al-Destour* (Amman), 1 March 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Nazzal, interview in Khaled Hroub, "*Hamas: Al-fikr wa al-Mumarsa al-Siyasiyya*".

<sup>3</sup> Al-Alami interview in *Al-Destour*, 1 March 1993.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the leaflet, "Statement on the Iranian-German Crisis," dated 16 April 1997, in which Hamas denounced German charges of Iranian involvement in political assassinations.

<sup>6</sup> Nazzal interview in Khaled Hroub, "*Hamas: Al Fikr wa al-Mumarsa al-Siyasiyya*"

## *Expressing Concern for Islamic Issues*

Hamas's principal mode of involvement with Islamic issues similar to the Palestinian cause - resistance to occupation and the struggle for independence - in practice was limited to press releases. This level of support naturally compares unfavorably with that the PLO offered during the 1970s to liberation movements similar to itself, particularly military training or the provision of expertise. Although Hamas and the PLO both saw themselves as part of a global trend for change (an Islamic liberation movement in the case of Hamas and a national liberation movement in the case of the PLO), what each did in practice was influenced by the prevailing circumstances. In the 1960s, 1970s, and up to the early 1980s, regional and international political circumstances were advantageous to the PLO. This was the period during which national liberation movements emerged in many Third World nations in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, a wave that received direct aid from the former Soviet Union and China. For this reason, theories about the world sweep of revolution and its large number of allies were describing a palpable reality.

Allowing for the difference in ideology, Hamas also saw itself as part of a global movement (albeit Islamic) trying to bring about a historic transformation, first in the Islamic world and then in the entire world, just like other Islamic movements from late 1970s to the mid-1990s. However, in reality there clearly was not solidarity among these movements nor a great power that could act as a backer for this "new internationalism" and create circumstances propitious for it to grow and develop. Consequently, Islamic causes such as Palestine, Bosnia, Chechnya, and Kashmir, which are the concern of this "new internationalism," remained in separate compartments, disconnected except in press releases and the general language of Islamic solidarity. In brief, it can be said that there is no comparison between the achievements of the Third world liberation movements during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s in their victories against the forces of colonialism and in gaining independence for dozens of states and the efforts of Islamic movements in the 1980s, and 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

One therefore sees in practice that Hamas's policies on Islamic affairs were limited to making statements to the media and providing expressions of solidarity. On the one hand, Hamas did not develop the sort of political or public relations with the Islamic world that would have given it an effective presence in any country. Apart from the case of Iran, it can be said that the Movement did not succeed in establishing real political relations with the regimes of the Islamic world, putting aside courtesy calls and messages of solidarity dutifully dispatched on appropriate occasions. On the other hand, Hamas's informational and political discourse did address all the principal issues of concern to Muslims, issues that relate to the topic of liberation or comprehensive social change.

The most striking aspect of Hamas's discourse on Islamic issues is the vigorous attack on Western double standards in dealing with Islamic as opposed to other issues that are consistent with Western interests. From early on, Hamas's monthly bulletins included a paragraph under the heading "At the External Level." This dealt with the Movement's positions on Arab, Islamic, and international issues, and it preceded the sections on domestic issues, which dealt with Hamas's attitudes on Palestinian affairs. Hamas assigned special importance to a number of recurring issues covered in "At the External Level;" four such issues are reviewed briefly below.

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<sup>1</sup> Among the more significant studies that claim that Islamic movements in the Muslim world failed to achieve their objectives is Olivier Roy, *Failure of Political Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994).

## *Balkans*

From the time that ethnic wars broke out in the former Yugoslavia and Bosnia and Herzegovina declared its independence, Hamas has been protesting "the injustice against, and the persecution of, the Muslims" there, "just because they are Muslims."<sup>1</sup> Its support for the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina is due first of all because they are Muslims, and second because they have a just cause: self-defense and the struggle for independence. In several press releases, Hamas appealed to "the free world and men of conscience everywhere to rally to the just cause of the people indicated in a free plebiscite."<sup>2</sup> In Hamas view, the basic problem facing the Muslims there was Western hypocrisy and support for the aggressor. For example, Hamas examined in detail the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) policy of non-intervention, which it saw as allowing the Serbs the opportunity to establish their hegemony. According to Hamas,

The NATO decision to confiscate the defensive weapons of the Muslims in order to secure the hegemony of European forces acting under the banner of the United Nations, while allowing the Serbs the opportunity to withdraw and keep possession of their heavy weapons, betrays the biased intentions of the West.

Hamas expressed bitterness over this persistent bias, which it perceived as indicative of the enmity between Muslims and the West: Arabs and Muslims are fed up with the extent of crude Western hypocrisy with regard to the Bosnian tragedy. They do not doubt that the Western nations lack any sense of the political historical responsibility they bear when they deal with this human tragedy, nor do they *have* a sense of the public anger that pervades the Islamic *umma* and which will be a determining factor in shaping the future order of political relations between Muslim and Western peoples.<sup>3</sup>

## *Afghanistan*

Hamas gave unreserved support to the Afghan jihad to terminate the Soviet presence in that country. Like other Islamic movements throughout the world, Hamas hastened to congratulate "the Muslim people of Afghanistan on the expulsion of the last Russian soldier from the land of Islam in Afghanistan," considering it to be "a harbinger of victory in Palestine."<sup>4</sup> Afghanistan continued to figure in Hamas statements until the Afghani jihad movements triumphed over the pro-Russian Najibullah regime and were able to enter Kabul in April 1992. The letters of congratulations sent by Hamas represented the Movement's last significant statement on the issue of Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> The issue disappeared from Hamas leaflets as vicious internecine warfare developed among the *mujahidin* groups, which split along ethnic, tribal, and sectarian lines. As the country descended into a brutal civil war among Islamic factions, the once attractive paradigm of Afghanistan lost its appeal to many Islamist activities in the world. However, the interest of Hamas was reawakened in

<sup>1</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no.9 of 5 May 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Hamas leaflet entitled, "Let us Stand Behind our Brethren in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina," dated 25 April 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Hamas, "Commentary on the NATO Decision in Reference to the Serbian Aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina," dated 10 February 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 36 of 25 February 1989.

<sup>5</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 86 of 7 May 1992; see also Hamas leaflet, "Felicitations to *Mujahid* People of Afghanistan on the Occasion of Their Conspicuous Victory," dated 25 April 1992.

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August 1998, when it condemned the U.S. missile attack against the bases in Afghanistan used by Usama Bin Laden, whom Washington accused of masterminding the bombing of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi (Kenya) and Dar-as-Salaam (Tanzania) earlier that month.

In the manner of other Islamic movements, Hamas never paused to reflect on the Afghan problem: that it was not simply a question of direct occupation by the Soviet Union; that this was a "hot" arena of struggle in the Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union; or that the issue had many nuances. Nor did Hamas consider that the victory of the mujahidin never would have been possible without the direct support they received from the U.S. Central intelligence Agency, either through Pakistan or Washington's Arab allies. Such support was designed to turn the conflict into a war of attrition against the Soviet Union, similar to the American experience in Vietnam.

### *Kashmir*

In its statements to the media and its leaflets, Hamas had addressed the issue of the Muslims in Kashmir and the general circumstances of Muslims in India. It has supported the right of Muslims in Kashmir to self-determination. Occasionally, Hamas has condemned incidents in which Muslims were victimized, such as in October 1993 when "the Indian army in Kashmir indiscriminately opened fire on Muslims who were demonstrating against the siege of the mosques."<sup>1</sup> After Hindu extremists attacked the Babri Mosque in India in December 1992, Hamas issued a strong condemnation of the act, calling on "the government of India to punish the aggressors, and to take action to deter them from pursuing their hostile practices and their covetous claims."<sup>2</sup>

Hamas's perspective on the cases above was that they were nationalistic causes, struggles for self-determination and national independence. Thus, Hamas supported the concerned Islamic nation as a whole, and its media did not trouble itself about a conflict between the popular and official levels. It was a different case, however, when Hamas had to deal with Islamic movements in Muslim countries that were not under foreign threat, such as in Turkey. In such cases, Hamas sided with the Islamic grass-roots movement. For example, Sheikh Yassin denounced the legal ban on the Refah party in Turkey, a country whose secularism he considered hypocritical and whose democracy he called a shame because it could not tolerate Refah.<sup>3</sup> Hamas dealing with these problems was simply a question of media policy, no more than declarations of solidarity from afar. Thus, one did not hear of any solidarity visits by Hamas to these areas or of Hamas sending combatants or even material aid, which could have translated words into deeds. Of course, these were difficult situations riddled with political complexities.

With respect to Hamas's position on issues relating to the official order in the Islamic world, one ought to mention the repeated calls from Hamas to Islamic governments "to let God's law (*shariah*) govern" and to "realize the aspirations of their people and to cut the apron strings of dependence on the arrogant, colonial West, to liberate themselves from it, and to become one with their peoples who yearn for the might of

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas leaflet, "Statement on the Attack by the Indian Forces on the Muslims of Kashmir," dated 25 October 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Hamas leaflet, "Statement on the Iniquitous Attack on the Babri Mosque in India," dated 9 December 1992.

<sup>3</sup> *Quds Press Service*, 15 January 1998.

Islam which will allow them to achieve dignity."<sup>1</sup> Hamas also observed the tradition of offering condolences when natural catastrophes befell Islamic countries, such as on the occasion of the floods in Pakistan in 1992 and the earthquake in Iran in 1990.<sup>2</sup>

*[The following text is extremely faint and illegible due to low contrast and bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. It appears to be a long paragraph of text.]*

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas leaflet, "A call for Unity and Coming Together is the Call for the Hajj," dated 30 June 1990.  
<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the letters of condolence to the president of Pakistan (dated 18 September 1992) and to the people of Iran (dated 13 June 1990).

## *Chapter III*

# *Hamas's International Relations*

### *Development of Hamas's General policies*

The Hamas Charter mentions three spheres with which it is concerned: the Palestinian, Arab, and Islamic spheres. Each can play a role in what Hamas perceives as the "liberation effort."<sup>1</sup> There are no positive references in the Charter to the ideal of forging specific types of relations with any country or international organization outside the Arab and Islamic worlds. Rather, there are frequent negative references and strong denunciations of foreign states and international organizations for their support of Israel. The Charter presents a naïve view of international relations and offers shallow generalizations about "the forces supporting the enemy."<sup>2</sup> There is no appreciation of differences among the major powers and the parameters within which one has to operate in dealing with them. Hamas's early bulletins are replete with incessant condemnations of "international conspiracies" against Palestine, in particular, "the British conspiracy via the Balfour Declaration" and "the conspiracy to partition Palestine," as well as "the American conspiracy" to provide unwavering support for Israel and to come to its defense whenever needed.<sup>3</sup> The international situation is viewed through Hamas's ideological lenses, from its perspective of the struggle, and from a historically grounded interpretation of the chain of events relating to the Palestinian question during the first three years of the Movement's existence. Gradually, a process of disengagement developed between Hamas's ideological perspective concerning the nature of the struggle and the nuanced political standpoint required to comment on events (both local Palestinian question) and the need to formulate and give voice to the Movement's position on them.

About three years after the Movement was founded, Hamas's perspective on international affairs began to mature and grow more nuanced. It discovered, in the course of dealing with politics, that there was considerable complexity to the relationships between Israel and the major powers. Also, there was much to be learned about the structure of international alliances, the actions of the United Nations and the Security Council, and, at the most general level, about the way international society is organized. There was a network of relations between states, international norms, and international law that constitute the foundations for interaction between states and the inevitable basis for international legitimacy, political rights and conduct, the redress of grievances, and recourse against aggression. This awareness was reflected in the emergence of a new kind of political discourse for Hamas, a discourse that relied on international law, along with its Islamic ideology, to justify and legitimate its struggle.

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<sup>1</sup> The Hamas Charter, article 14; see Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> See Hamas, Periodic statement no. 9 of 4 March 1988; no. 31 of 7 October 1988; and no. 32 of 25 November 1988.

With time then, Hamas's appreciation of international relations became more sophisticated and its discourse more nuanced. Two factors contributed to this evolution. First was the rise in the power of the Movement, which attracted international attention from politicians and the media and which in turn required a response from Hamas in a language that could be understood and acceptable. Second, and quite significantly, was the deportation incident, combined with order international experience Hamas had gained, helped to shape a new understanding of states and international organizations outside the Arab and Islamic spheres. This new perspective was receptive to the idea of Hamas entering into new relationships without self-imposed a priori handicaps, and it became manifest in the slogan "Hamas's battle is not with any foreign state or international body, its battle is with Israel alone." At a later stage, Hamas's discourse became more discriminating toward the West. Sheikh Yassin for example, called for a cultural dialogue with the West in the interest of humanity. He differentiated between Western governments that support Israel and the people of those states.<sup>1</sup>

The following twelve points, which are from the Movement's internal document on political relations, explain Hamas's perspective on international affairs:

1. Hamas's dealing with foreign states and international organizations, regardless of any pre-existing political and ideological baggage will be to serve the interests of the Palestinian people, their cause, and their rights.
2. Hamas will not undertake any moral or political commitments that contradict its firm Islamic and nationalistic principles in exchange for the establishment of political relations.
3. Hamas's interest in making contact and establishing relations with foreign states and international organizations is to seek their support and sympathy and does not violate its basic commitments and strategic position.
4. Hamas's relations with any foreign state or international organization will be affected, either negatively or positively, by the positions and policies adopted by that party toward the Palestinian cause.
5. Hamas considers Palestine to be the battleground against the Zionist enemy and is careful not to transfer that conflict to foreign soil.
6. Hamas has no dispute with any foreign state or international organization, and the Movement's policy is not to attack the interests or possessions of foreign states.
7. Hamas welcomes any international efforts, the purpose of which is to end occupation, its tyranny and hegemony over the Palestinian people, and its repressive practices. Hamas also welcomes any international aid that will improve the health and economic conditions of the Palestinian people under occupation.
8. Hamas opposes any resolutions that detract from the rights of the Palestinian people and foster the policies and positions of the Zionist enemy of the Palestinian people. However, it does not in any way seek the enmity of the United Nations.
9. Hamas is in solidarity with the cause of national liberation throughout the world and supports the legitimate aspirations of peoples seeking deliverance from occupation and colonialism.

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<sup>1</sup> Sheikh Yassin, quoted in *Quds Press Service*, 10 January 1998, and in *Al-Hayat*, 3 June 1998.

10. Hamas is in solidarity with states that are subjected to intimidation because of their just positions, and the Movement seeks to fortify the positive positions of those states through expressions of support.
11. Hamas's priority is to develop relations with states having international influence, but that does not mean that it will ignore other, less influential states.
12. Hamas declares its solidarity with Arab and Islamic states that are under pressure or subject to threats from world powers because of legitimate positions they have adopted, but Hamas will not enter into a conflict with those powers.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from those general policies, the document mentions a number of specific policies governing the discourse that Hamas uses to express its views in media statements and leaflets. These specific policies amount to a reiteration of the general policies outlined above, because the focus is on avoidance of conflict with any foreign state or international organization unless that party adopts positions hostile to the Palestinian people. Hamas stresses that the Movement's attitude toward any foreign state or international organization will not be based on cultural or broad ideological differences but rather will be based on the positions and policies adopted by the state or organization toward the Palestinian cause. Hamas's public relations policy is to reaffirm that the Movement's resistance to Zionist occupation and its "military action" against the occupation are based on international law, conventions, and treaties and that resistance to occupation is legitimate and differs from terrorism. The Movement's public relations policy claims that Hamas attacks only "legitimate" targets, such as "the occupation forces and the organs of repression and armed members," and that avoids "targeting noncombatant civilians." In the statement of its policies, Hamas reiterates that it is not engaged in a struggle with Jews as adherents of the Jewish faith. Rather, the struggle is with Jews in their role as occupiers; the cause of the struggle is "the occupation of our land by Jews, and their turning our people into refugees."<sup>2</sup>

In formulating these texts and trying to use them as a guide in its opening up to the worlds, Hamas made an intellectual leap that brought it closer to harsh reality. It also became obvious that Hamas had introduced a dose of pragmatism into the heart of its political discourse, outlook, and practice, as well as into its public relations statements. This is particularly true with respect to Hamas's efforts on behalf of the welfare of the Palestinian people, a policy that might involve dealing with one or another state or international organization while downplaying the issue of religious or cultural differences. Hamas's recognition of this multifaceted reality forced it on several occasions to observe the principles of the democratic pluralism, the rights of minorities, and other such terms it had borrowed from modern, politically correct international relations jargon. This was made all the easier as Hamas realized that this vocabulary does not contradict the Islamic ideological framework espouses.

The presence among the deportees of many intellectuals who were soft spoken and presented well-reasoned arguments (this helped to generate a moderate political rhetoric for Hamas) ran counter to Hamas's image as a terrorist organization in the Western media. The combination of these circumstances produced sympathy for the Movement's cause both in the Middle East and internationally.

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas, "Siyasat Hamas al-marhaliyya."

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

The incident was also significant because of the negative repercussion the Israeli action had on the progress of the peace talks in Washington. The talks were suspended because of the incident, and the center of attention in the Middle East and the focus for the United States shifted temporarily to resolving the problem, securing the return of the deportees, and then resuming the peace talks. Hamas found itself at the center of events and was the subject of sudden and intense interest on the part of Arab and foreign actors. From the date of the deportation incident, if progress was to be achieved toward a solution of the Palestinian problem, Hamas had to be taken into account, despite its Islamic ideology and its rejection of Israel's presence in the region.<sup>1</sup>

Capitalizing on the sympathy for the deportees, Hamas made contact with the five permanent members of the Security Council through their embassies in Amman. Being at the center of controversy and armed with Security Council Resolution 799, which called on Israel to take back all the deportees, Hamas found that it finally had an opportunity to be heard. Some prominent Hamas figures maintain that the timing for the Movement's establishment of contacts with the West was not due only to the deportation. They maintain that Hamas had been motivated to end its isolation in order to focus attention on what was happening under Israeli occupation- notably the expulsion of a large number of Palestinian intellectuals and scientists- and also to counteract the West's distorted image of Hamas, which was branded as a terrorist group. In addition, Hamas felt that it had become an effective force in the Palestinian arena and that it had to introduce itself to the relevant parties.<sup>2</sup>

In the preliminary meeting with Western nations, Hamas tried to put across its general aims, policies, and methods. From Hamas's perspective, the United States and Britain bore a large degree of responsibility for the Palestinian people's loss of homeland and displacement. Consequently, the West bore a political and moral responsibility to undo the effects of this "crime" in which it had participated. Hamas thought there was a need to explain this crime to the West, to convince the West of its duty to rectify it. According to prominent Hamas figures, this belief was the driving force for Hamas to make contact with the West. Hamas also wanted to try "to influence Western attitudes and institutions so as not to leave them under the influence of Israeli propaganda, and not to leave the field clear for Israel, which had largely shaped Western opinion on the Arab-Israeli conflict by itself."<sup>3</sup>

The actual contacts and meetings took place with diplomats of the five countries (in their embassies in Jordan) that comprise the permanent Security Council members, as well as with diplomats from Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Spain. During those meetings, Hamas representatives delivered letters from the Movement's top leadership containing a unified text laying out its political position, explaining its military practices, and reiterating that it was engaged in a struggle "to liberate the land and defend the people." This struggle, it said, constituted resistance to occupation, which is acknowledged as legitimate, judging by all international norms and, in particular, by the Charter of the United Nations and the Geneva Conventions. These letters challenged the Western classification of Hamas as "terrorist group" as "an attack not only the Palestinian people, but on all Arab and Islamic peoples, as well as all (national) liberation movements throughout the world which are fighting for the

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<sup>1</sup> Musa Zeid al-Keylani, op cit, pp. 184.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Nazzal interview in *Filastin Al-Muslima*, April 1993, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

liberty and dignity of their peoples."<sup>1</sup> On the basis of this position and in view of the usurpation of the rights of the Palestinian people, Hamas appealed to Western governments in the hope of winning their support.

The period of active contacts with the West that followed the deportation incident gave rise to several charges: that the Movement had altered its political line; that it was capitulating to the West; and that it was trying to set itself up as an alternative to the PLO. (At the time the United States shunned any official contacts with the PLO, and the peace talks in Washington were with a group of "Palestinian representative.") Hamas denied all the accusations. It reiterated its political objectives and issued an explanation entitled, "the Nature of the political Contacts and Meetings between Hamas and a Number of Nations."

The most significant contacts were with the United States. The first of their kind, these contacts were with the American embassy in Amman during January and February 1993. Thus, weeks after the deportation incident in late 1992 the United States showed interest in taking a closer look at Hamas, its positions, and its thinking; according to Hamas leaders, it wanted to learn whether the Movement would consider altering its position on certain political issue.<sup>2</sup> In the course of their talks, the United States tried to steer Hamas away from armed activities and to obtain a commitment from it not to do anything that would interfere with the peace process.<sup>3</sup> As for Hamas, it tried to present its vision of the Palestinian national cause, to explain its Islamic ideology, and explain some of its positions that it thought were misunderstood in the West.<sup>4</sup> The Americans ended the two-month contacts in early March due to pressure from Israel and because they felt no progress had been achieved to justify their continuation.

Hamas denounced the U.S. decision to break off talks, particularly as their termination closely followed a bomb explosion at the World Trade Center in New York in February 1993. In a special release, the Movement said that the break was evidence of the extent to which U.S. foreign policy was hostage to the Zionist lobby, and it reminded Washington that the contact with Hamas had been initiated by the United States.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, Hamas regretted that contact with the United States had been broken off-and said so several times- because the talks had allowed it to communicate its position directly, without going through a mediator and without the distortion of media reports. It reiterated this theme to explain the reasons for and the background of its operations in the occupied land and why the world misunderstood them. After pointing out that "Hamas always seeks good relations with all peace-loving states and peoples in the world in the interest of all humanity," it requested international support for its activities and "legitimate struggle (which)... unfettered human conscience dictates to every human being on this earth, because it constitutes support for justice, freedom, and human rights." It called on the U.S. administration and the governments of the Western nations to "show deeper appreciation for the issues of our region, and a deeper understanding of our Movement, its legitimate

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas letter dated February 1993 and sent to the ambassadors in Amman, Jordan, representing the five countries that comprise the permanent members of the Security Council.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Nazzal, interview, *Al-Mujtama* (Kuwait), 23 March 1993, pp. 30-31.

<sup>3</sup> For more details, see Jawad Al-Hamad, "Taradud al-nathra al-amrikiyya ila harakat hamas: iqamat am al-itiham bil-irhab" [the American vacillating view of the Hamas movement: Establish relations or accuse it of terrorism?], *AlHayat*, 23 January 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Hamas leaflet, "Statement by Hamas spokesman responding to the statement made by the State Department spokesman Mr. Richard Boucher about ending any political dialogue with Hamas," dated 3 March 1993.

objectives and its noble principles, and to take into account the objective facts about the Palestinian cause."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, some Americans were convinced that it was important not to break off contacts with Hamas; they argued that doing so weakened the U.S. ability to get a full picture of the political situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, particularly since the information obtained about Hamas no longer came from direct sources. Later, after the Oslo Agreement, these same officials believed that once the PA had been established in Gaza and Jericho, it would be more important than ever for the United States to have an accurate assessment of Hamas's strength.<sup>2</sup>

Generally speaking, the U.S. position before April 1993 was hesitant. This is particularly interesting because Hamas refrained from conducting attacks against American or Western interests inside or outside Israel and had limited its operations to Israeli military targets. Despite this, in April 1993 the Department of State put Hamas on its annual list of groups engaged in "terrorist activities." This classification was in fact a decisive step in the international "demonizing" of Hamas and inaugurated an American policy toward Hamas best described by Laura Drake as a "unilateral escalation of hostility."<sup>3</sup> Hamas members, thus, were viewed as "terrorists" without any credentials of liberation fighters. In May 1993, when the Congressional Research Service issued a report entitled "Hamas: Freedom Fighters or Terrorists?" – implying that the nature of Hamas was a debatable issue, influential pro-Israel groups in Washington objected to the study and it was amended; points demanded by the Jewish groups were included and its title was changed.<sup>4</sup>

Hamas's position on the United States has remained confined to verbal condemnation. It has not been translated into action nor led to the adoption of policy of targeting U.S. interests in the region. Even after the arrest of Abu Marzouq, the Movement said it wanted to avoid "a bone-crushing battle with the United States." However, Hamas continued to caution the United States against turning him over to Israel. Such a move, according to a Hamas release, "would represent (crossing) a red line. If the United States does not so, then it would become a direct party to the struggle between our people and the Zionist occupation, which would have the most undesirable consequences."<sup>5</sup>

Hamas's contacts with Western nations other than the United States have been limited to periodic contacts and meetings with those nations' ambassadors in the Arab world and to brief meetings between prominent Islamist figures and Western visitors in the Gaza Strip; these have not developed into anything noteworthy. The states with which Hamas has established contacts at various levels include Britain, China, Germany, and Spain. Hamas has made a habit of sending letters to those states on various occasions,

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas statement, entitled "A memorandum from the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) regarding recent developments," dated 8 February 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Anonymous American senior official interviewed in *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 12 July 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Laura Drake, *Hegemony and its Discontents: U.S. Policy toward Iraq, Iran, Hamas, the Hizbollah and their Responses*, Occasional Paper Series, No. 12 (Annandale, Virginia: United Association for Studies and Research, September 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Ahmad Rashed, *Hamas: Palestinian Politics with an Islamic Hue*, pp. 34-39; on the impact of the pro-Israel lobbies on American attitudes toward Hamas, see Ahmad Yusef and Ahmad Abu al-Jibeen, "Ab'ad al-hamlah al-sahyoonyah fi amrika dhid harakat hamas" [The consequences of the Zionist campaign in America against Hamas movement], *Al-Mujtama*, 1 and 8 November 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Hamas leaflet, "An Important statement on the American-Israeli Collusion in the Abu Marzouq Case," dated 9 August 1995.

mostly to explain the Movement's position on various issues or to denounce a position adopted by one of them in relation to Hamas.<sup>1</sup>

Hamas views the international theater as divided between the world of Islam and the world of the "unbelievers" though it evolved for, or due to the Intifada in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Hamas proscribes to itself the responsibility of guarding the world of Islam where Muslims live. Through the building of mosques, the establishment of formal and informal contacts with individuals and groups around the world, Hamas has expended quite an effort to publicize its message and to portray an image of credibility and viability of its organization even to non-Muslims.

In the world of "unbelievers" Hamas has tried to make quite significant inroads, in several European countries as well as in the United States, several Islamic organizations and mosques sprang up with alleged links to Hamas. While the exact nature of such links could not be fully determined the psychological dimension of the revival of Islam, even in the West deserves some attention. When the World Trade Center bombing took place in the United States for example, Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman was viewed as an Islamic hero by Hamas even after his arrest.

Having sprung into Palestinian society, Hamas gradually started to erect bridges of contact with other Islamic Movements in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. In Afghanistan, for example, there are signs that Hamas leaders are trying to employ the services of ex-fighters in the Afghanistan *mujaheddin* as trainers or volunteers for the Palestinian struggle.

Hamas did not withhold and expulsion in December 1992 became as absolute coup for Hamas on the public relations level. The media interest in the expulsion was the perfect channel through which Hamas could legitimately attack Israel for the measure and have the media friendly deportees present themselves models of peaceful resistance to victimization. Several points were raised in the interview with al-Zahhar which are very relevant to this. Firstly, the actual area or no-mans-land to which the 415 were deported was uninhabited and extremely inhospitable, on arrival at South Lebanon it was bitterly cold, wet and snowing and as al-Zahhar pointed out:

We were all generally employees in the middle class sector of life, we were educated employees and not used to harsh conditions. We were accustomed to having easy access to water which we use to cleanse before prayer but now we had to walk very far just to bring water, we had to wash in the open and in bitterly cold conditions. Clothing was scarce and none of us could get more than two blankets when it was snowing. We had to walk very far to find wood for fires.<sup>2</sup>

This was the first image that the media portrayed which engendered sympathy among the liberal Western audience despite the fact that the group was, to all intents and purposes, alleged by Israel to be "terrorists" or affiliated to act of terror.

The effects of this image were quick to bring results:

We even had support from the West; a delegation from Italy arrived bringing financial and medical assistance, they organized demonstrations against the Israeli government for taking the deportation measure. There was also some kind of debate between our official spokesman Abdul Aziz Rantisi and with an American senator on CNN. This debate gave us the opportunity to communicate our message.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example a letter sent from former Hamas spokesman Ghosheh "To His Excellency Kelmüt Kohl, the Chancellor of Germany," dated 6 April 1995; Ghosheh condemned a call made by German minister of economy for fighting Hamas and Hizbollah as priority targets in the Middle East.

<sup>2</sup> Mahmoud al-Zahhar, interview with author, 15 June 2003.

I remember that whenever there was a conference in the United States they would ask for a statement to be transmitted by phone. There were people from conferences in Great Britain and students from the Soviet Union who would say that the purpose of their trip was to interview the deportees.<sup>1</sup>

The deportation while undoubtedly giving Hamas a world stage may not necessarily have had the far reaching or long standing impact that al-Zahhar would hope. It was a very newsworthy item in the international community at the time but well before the return, media interest from the West had somewhat declined. Al-Zahhar claimed that the decline happened following Secretary of State Warren Christopher's visit to the region.

Even if this is not the case, the deportation may have helped the PLO and the peace process as the extensive press coverage of the deportation sparked a general renewal of interest in Palestinian-Israeli affairs. The sympathy for the deportees, however, and the condemnation of Israel elicited by the deportation has since been forgotten and the Western press has returned to its more usual accounting of acts of "terrorism" which affect the more important subject of Middle East peace.

However, while the deportation was used an effective tool to broaden the base of Hamas international contacts at the time it occurred, after the return Hamas turned its attention to translating its international achievements into domestic accomplishments among its supporters. Here again domestic, regional and international support was consolidated to serve the objectives of this movement which is still only a few years old.

### *Hamas and United States of America*

Generally speaking, the U.S position before April 1993 was hesitant. This is particularly interesting because Hamas refrained from conducting attacks against American Western interests inside or outside Israel and had limited its operations to Israeli military targets. Despite this, in April 1993 the Department of State put Hamas on its annual list of groups engaged in "terrorist activities." This classification was in fact a decisive step in the international "demonizing" of Hamas and inaugurated an American policy toward Hamas best described by Laura Drake as a "unilateral escalation of hostility."<sup>2</sup> Hamas members, thus, were viewed as "terrorists" without any credentials of liberation fighters. In May 1993, when the Congressional Research Service issued a report entitled "Hamas: Freedom Fighter or Terrorism?"- Implying that the nature of Hamas was a debatstudy and it was amended; points demanded by the Jewish groups were included and its title was changed.<sup>3</sup>

After its classification as a terrorist group, the U.S. position toward Hamas grew more hostile, particularly as its operations escalated with the bus bombings of 1994, 1995, and 1996. In the December 1994 Department of State report to Congress, which covered the PA's implementation of the Oslo Agreement, cited the Palestine Mosque

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Laura Drake, *Hegemony and its Discontent: U.S. Policy toward Iraq, Iran, Hamas, the Hizbollah and their Responses*, Occasional Papers Series, No. 12 (Annandale, Virginia: United Association for Studies and Research, September 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Rashed, *Hamas: Palestinian Politics with an Islamic Hue*, pp. 34-39; on the impact of the pro-Israel lobbies on American attitudes toward Hamas, see Ahmad Yusef and Ahmad Abu al-Jibeen, "Ab'ad al-hamlah al-sahyoonyah fi amrika dhid harakat hamas" [The consequences of the Zionist campaign in America against the Hamas movement], *Al-Mujtama*, 1 and 8 November 1994.

incident in October 1994 - in which 14 Hamas supporters were shot by the Palestinian police - as a turning point in the struggle between the PA and extremist groups such as Hamas that opposed the peace process; it said more needed to be done in this direction.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. position became more uncompromising with each operation by Hamas, and occasionally this was reflected in decisions or measures designed to help Israel deal with Hamas.

The debate over Hamas links to the United States began in January 1993, when Israeli journalists and their government alleged that Hamas directed its operations from U.S.-based command centers. These charges stemmed from information obtained in the January 1993 arrest of two naturalized Arab-Americans (Muhammad Jarad and Muhammad Salah) for carrying money and instructions from the United States to Hamas activists in the occupied territories. On January 3, 1995, a Ramallah court convicted Salah of transferring funds to Hamas's military arm and sentenced him to five years in prison.

The State Department acknowledges that Hamas has sympathizers in the United States but argues there is "no evidence to prove that Hamas armed operations are working out of the United States."<sup>2</sup> Unsatisfied, several members of Congress including Representative Charles Schumer (Democrat of New York) and Senator Alfonse D'Amato (Republican of New York) called for Justice Department investigations of suspected Hamas activity in the United States.<sup>3</sup> The administration did step up its efforts to learn about radical Islamic networks in the United States but took no significant steps against them.

The issue of private U.S. funding for Hamas again flared up in the aftermath of the October 19, 1994, bus bombing in Tel Aviv. Israeli officials, especially Israel's consul general in New York, Colette Avital, reiterated that Hamas was operating in the United States. Rabinovich, however, acknowledged that U.S. law enforcement agencies had worked diligently to curb Hamas activity and said Israel was satisfied with U.S. efforts to prevent funding of Hamas from the United States.<sup>4</sup> Five days after the bombing, Secretary of State Warren Christopher promised a major effort to cut off private U.S. funding for Hamas, including support for the passage of new legislation, if necessary.<sup>5</sup> On January 24, 1995, President Clinton issued an executive order blocking the assets of twelve "organizations which threaten to disrupt the Middle East peace process," including Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Hizbullah,<sup>6</sup> and prohibiting financial transactions between U.S. nationals and those organizations. The administration subsequently submitted to Congress draft legislation to implement the executive order. The administration bill was introduced in February 1995 in the Senate by Senator Joseph Biden (Democrat of Delaware) and in the House by Representative Schumer.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Al-Hayat*, 3 December 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Nelan, *Hamas and the Heartland Time*, Feb. 15, 1993. pp. 37-8.

<sup>3</sup> *Congressional Record*, daily ed., Feb. 2, 1993; p. H 320; and Feb. 18, 1993. p. S1931.

<sup>4</sup> Itamar Rabinovich Press Conference. Reuters, Oct. 19, 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Worsnip, U.S. Hints at Laws to Stop Hamas Funding. Reuters, Oct. 24, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> The other nine groups were Abu Nidal Organization, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Islamic Gama'at, [Au: which one?] Jihad, Kach, Kahane Chai, Palestine Liberation Front--Abu Abbas faction, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine--General Command. 25 Greenhouse, Steven. U.S. Hints at Better Ties if Syria Signs Peace Pact With Israel. *The New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1994. p.A8.

No one knows the full extent of Hamas fundraising activities in the United States, though State Department officials are reported to have acknowledged that Hamas receives "millions" of dollars each year from donors in America.<sup>1</sup>

Emerson presented his allegations of extensive Hamas fundraising and political activity in the United States on CBS's 60 Minutes on November 13, 1994, and in a PBS special entitled "Jihad in America" on November 21, 1994, which documented radical Islamic gatherings taking place in the United States without proving that persons resident in the United States orchestrate armed Islamic activity in the Middle East. Oliver Revell, a former high-ranking official in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, says that Islamist organizations in the United States publish and distribute radical Islamist literature in America, engage in training operations there, and frequently host radical Islamist religious leaders who visit the United States to raise funds.<sup>2</sup>

As for Hamas, it tried to present its vision of the Palestinian national cause, to explain its Islamic ideology, and explain some of its positions that it thought were misunderstood in the West.<sup>3</sup> The American ended the two month contacts in early March due to pressure from Israel and because they felt no progress had been achieved to justify their continuation.

Hamas denounced the U.S. decision to break off talks, particularly as their termination closely followed a bomb explosion at the World Trade Center in New York in February 1993. In a special release, the Movement said that the break was evidence of the extent to which U.S. foreign policy was hostage to the Zionist lobby, and it reminded Washington that the contact with Hamas had been initiated by the United States.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Hamas regretted that contact with the United States had been broken off - and said so several times - because the talks had allowed it to communicate its position directly, without going through a mediator and without the distortion of media reports. It reiterated this theme to explain the reasons for and background of its operations in the occupied land and why the world misunderstood them. After pointing out that "Hamas always seeks good relations with all peace-loving states and peoples in the world in the interest of all humanity," it requested international support for its activities and "legitimate struggle [which] ... unfettered human conscience dictates to every human being on this earth, because it constitutes support for justice, freedom, and human rights." It called on the U.S. administration and the governments of the Western nations to "show deeper appreciation for the issues of our region and a deeper understanding of our Movement, its legitimate objectives and its noble principles, and to take into account the objective facts about the Palestinian cause."<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, some Americans were convinced that it was important not to break off contacts with Hamas; they argued that doing so weakened the U.S. ability to get a full picture of the political situation in the West Bank and Gaza strip, particularly since the information obtained about Hamas no longer came from direct sources. Later,

<sup>1</sup> Martin Sieff, U.S. Aims at Hamas' Pocketbook. The Washington Times, Oct. 26, 1994. p.1.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. News and World Report, Oct. 31, 1994. p.44; Barry Schweid, Ex-FBI Official Says U.S. Provides Sanctuary for Muslim Militants; Reuters, Nov. 17, 1994; and Oliver Revell, "Protecting America," Middle East Quarterly, Mar. 1995, pp. 3-8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Hamas leaflet, "Statement by Hamas spokesman responding to the statement made by the State Department spokesman Mr. Richard Boucher about ending any political dialogue with Hamas," dated 3 March 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Hamas statement, entitled "A memorandum from the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) regarding recent developments," dated 8 February 1993.

after the Oslo Agreement, these same officials believed that once the PA had been established in Gaza and Jericho, it would be more important than ever for the United States to have an accurate assessment of Hamas's strength.<sup>1</sup>

Having expressed satisfaction at the measures taken by the PA against Hamas, the U.S. government felt that it had to adopt measures of its own to show solidarity with Israel after the Hamas bombings. In January 1995, President Clinton Announced that the bank accounts belonging to a number of Arab Americans and Islamic societies in the United States accused of financing Hamas would be frozen. In the following July, U.S. authorities arrested Abu Marzouq, then the head of Hamas's Political Bureau, when he landed in New York on a private visit. Washington released Abu Marzouq in May 1997, after Israel dropped its extradition request out of fear of retaliation by Hamas if the United States handed him over. The incident was embarrassing to both Israel and the United States, because they did not want to appear to be bowing to pressure from Hamas, but the United States did not have a strong case against Abu Marzouq.

The U.S. position on Hamas became most uncompromising when the United States pushed for the convening of an anti-terrorism summit at Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt, in the wake of the February and March 1996 suicide bombings by Hamas in Jerusalem, Asqalan, and Tel Aviv. The United States supported all the the collective punishment measures Israel applied against the Palestinian at the time. Furthermore, the United States vetoed the participation of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the National Dialogue Conference organized by the PA in April and August of 1997. According to a U.S. State Department spokesman, "we do not see any role for [them] to play; they are enemies of peace and should have no place in serious peace talks."<sup>2</sup> The U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, called Hamas and Islamic Jihad "the worst enemies of the Palestinian peoples."<sup>3</sup> According to a Hamas sympathizer in the United States, the U.S. negotiator and coordinator of the peace process, Dennis Ross, said "No to Hamas, even if it only targeted the military."<sup>4</sup>

Hamas's position on the United States has remained confined to verbal condemnation. It has not been translated into action nor led to the adoption of a policy of targeting U.S. interests in the region. Even after the arrest of Abu Marzouq, the Movement said it wanted to avoid "a bone crushing battle with the United States."<sup>5</sup> However, Hamas continued to caution the United States against turning him over Israel. Such a move, according to a Hamas release, "would represent [crossing] a red line. If the United States does so, then it would become a direct party to the struggle between our people and the Zionist occupation, which would have the most undesirable consequences."<sup>6</sup>

In the wake of continuing Hamas and Islamic Jihad attacks against Israel, the U.S. government's immediate task is to deny support to Palestinian Islamic groups. Given these groups' reliance on outside support, the success of Washington's effort depends in large measure on the leverage it wields over foreign states.

The U.S. government has no diplomatic relations with Tehran, the Palestinian Islamist groups' most vocal outside supporter, making it difficult to influence Iranian support

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<sup>1</sup> Anonymous American senior official interviewed in *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 12 July 1994.

<sup>2</sup> As quoted in a Hamas leaflet in English, "Comment on Statement by the Spokesman of the U.S. Department of State," dated 23 August 1997; Hamas strongly condemned the U.S. position.

<sup>3</sup> As quoted in a Hamas leaflet dated September 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *Al-Ittihad* (UAE), 3 June 1998.

<sup>5</sup> Ghosheh interview with *Al-Hadath* (Jordan), 9 August 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Hamas leaflet, "An Important Statement on the American-Israeli Collusion in the Abu Marzouq Case," dated 9 August 1995.

for the Palestinian groups. Washington has adopted a broad package of unilateral sanctions against Iran, including bans on aid in any form, strong Iranian imports, and U.S. exports of items with possible military applications. But economic sanctions are a relatively blunt instrument that might help keep Iran militarily weak (conventional arms acquisitions are expensive) without reducing its support for Islamic movements. (One estimate holds that it costs only about \$4,000 per year to fund a two - or three-man grouping of Palestinian Islamist guerrillas on the West Bank or Gaza Strip.)<sup>1</sup> Also, sanctions might weaken former Iran's President 'Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who has repeatedly called for an end to Iran's "foreign adventurism" (most recently at a June 7, 1994 news conference)<sup>2</sup> and wants Iran to have normal relations with the rest of the world.

Syria is another story, for the U.S. government enjoys somewhat more leverage there. Damascus wants to be removed from the U.S. list of states supporting "terrorism", and that would require it to curb Hamas and Islamic Jihad. In the wake of the January 1995 Islamic Jihad attack on an Israeli bus stop, the U.S. government protested to Damascus about its continued harboring of armed groups and pressed it to expel Shiqaqi, but the Assad regime maintains that Islamic Jihad is not violating Syrian law and that Syria will not expel *it*. Alternately, if the Assad regime is uncooperative on "terrorism", the U.S. government can impose additional sanctions (such as curbing the ever-larger American involvement in Syria's oil industry).

As the ultimate guarantor of their security, the U.S. government has real leverage over the Persian Gulf monarchies and Jordan; it can use this in the effort to persuade them to restrict private contributions to Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Washington has raised the issue in bilateral U.S.-Saudi discussions, and the Saudis have issued some regulations restricting contributions by their private citizens. In the Jordanian case, Washington can tie foreign aid and debt forgiveness to Amman's efforts.

Short of direct military or covert pressure on Tehran's radical factions, primarily the Revolutionary Guard and its associates in the Iranian foreign ministry, Washington's best near-term hope probably lies in getting Syria and Jordan to deny Iran a direct conduit to the radical Palestinian groups.

As for domestic U.S. efforts, the August 1994 crime bill criminalized the provision of money and equipment for specific acts of armed fractions, then President Clinton's executive order froze the assets of twelve Middle Eastern armed groups. In February 1995, the administration submitted to Congress draft legislation to strengthen that executive order. New "anti-terrorism" laws are likely to be enacted, but many members of Congress - as well as Arab-American and Muslim-American groups - wish to be very careful not to undermine civil liberties.

In 1996 the American Congress passed a law to fight so-called Terrorism. This law included some articles that several American scholars saw as contradicting the constitutional rights of American citizens. Among them, for example, was the right of the American Government to use so-called secret evidence in order to detain a citizen for eighteen months without a trial; or exile him from the U.S. just for suspicion of contacts with a group considered by the Administration to be a terrorist group. The accused and even his lawyers are not allowed to see the secret evidence, which is presented to the judge only by the Attorney General. The American Authorities can

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<sup>1</sup> See, David Hoffman, Hamas' Resilience Surprises Israel. The Washington Post, Feb. 3, 1993. p. A19.

<sup>2</sup> See IRIB Television First Program Network, June 7, 1994, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report: Near East and South Asia, June 10, 1994. State Department Briefing. Reuters, June 14, 1994.

also freeze the bank accounts of local groups or individuals if they are connected to any "terrorist" foreign organization.

In early September 2002, a United States envoy visiting the region passed a message to Hamas through intermediaries saying that the US would welcome a Hamas decision to become "a legitimate part of the political process," and pledging in exchange to pressure Israel to stop its arrests and assassinations of Palestinian leaders.<sup>1</sup>

Hamas denied any contacts with U.S. or received a message, "We did not receive any messages from the United States of America, either direct or indirect,"<sup>2</sup> "The Americans think of us as terrorists...no, we did not receive any messages."<sup>3</sup>

The American campaign against Islamic groups as well as Hamas Movement got harder after 11<sup>th</sup> of September events in United States, by frozen assets and surrounding the relief societies that belonged to or were close to Hamas either inside Palestinian Territories or outside. The U.S. Administration started to make hard pressure on States in Europe and Arab countries to crack down Hamas assets and its societies and activities in their lands. The U.S. accused Hamas Movement as "the enemy of peace after its attacks against Israeli targets while the U.S. administration attempting to convince the Israelis and Palestinians to accept American peace plan which is called "road map", which spoke about the establishment of Palestinian state in 2005.

Hamas was not interested in 11<sup>th</sup> September events and the frequent actions by the U.S. against Islamic groups and continued on its attacks against Israeli targets. U.S. even froze Hamas's assets in the United States. Also Hamas believes that Ariel Sharon, Israeli Prime Minister, could get the Palestinian resistance Movement in the "terrorism activities list".<sup>4</sup>

President Bush, responding to bus bombing in Jerusalem in 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2003, froze the financial assets of six top officials of Hamas as well as five European charities said by the administration to be sending cash to the Palestinian militants.<sup>5</sup>

The Bush's executive order applies to assets of the Hamas leaders and the European charities which might be in U.S. banks. Administration officials said they hoped that European nations would also issue orders freezing the assets. Bush called on "all nations supportive of peace in the Middle East" to recognize Hamas as a terrorist organization and to join the United States in freezing the groups' funds.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Palestine Report service*, 16 October 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Abdil Aziz Rantisi, *Palestine Report service*, 16 October 2002.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Abdil Aziz Rantisi, interview with author, 20 June, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> The individuals are Sheik Ahmed Yassin,; the spiritual leader, Imad Khalil Al-Alami, a member of the Hamas political Bureau; Usama Hamdan, a senior Hamas leader in Lebanon; Khalid Mishaal, head of the Hamas political Bureau; Musa Abu Marzouk, deputy chief of the political Bureau; and Abdel Aziz Rantisi, a political leader. The charities whose assets were frozen included a support group based in France called the Committee for Charity and Aid for the Palestinians; the Association for Palestinian Aid in Switzerland; the Palestinian Relief and Development Fund, or Interpal, headquartered in Britain; the Palestinian Association in Austria; and the Sanabil Association for Relief and Development, which is based in Lebanon.

<sup>6</sup> AFP service, 22 August 2003.

The U.S. government has begun to take real steps to prevent the funding of Islamic groups. But these are imperfect efforts that probably will not produce results for some time to come. Islamic movements are generated in the Middle East, supported by states in that region, and therefore must primarily be combated there, even though Washington cannot exercise the leverage there that it does within the United States itself.

### *Hamas and European States*

The 1992 deportation of Hamas leaders and supporters to south Lebanon was an important turning point in translation the Movement's idealistic positions on international relations into practice. That incident afforded Hamas an historic opportunity to break out of its political isolation and to end the media blackout, both of which may have been due either to external pressures or its own shortcomings. That incident was significant for two main reasons. First, it was a cruel act, considering the large number of people (413) who were exiled to a strip of wilderness where they had to camp in mountainous terrain under harsh winter conditions. In addition, a large number of the deportees belonged to the Palestinian intelligentsia – university professors, medical doctors, engineers, university students, and imams. The presence among the deportees of many intellectuals who were soft spoken and presented well-reasoned arguments (this helped to generate a moderate political rhetoric for Hamas) ran counter to Hamas's image as a terrorist organization in the Western media. The combination of these circumstances produced sympathy for the Movement's cause both in the Middle East and internationally.

The incident was also significant because of the negative repercussion the Israeli action had on the progress of the peace talks in Washington. The talks were suspended because of the incident, and the center of attention in the Middle East and the focus for the United States shifted temporarily to resolving the problem, securing the return of the deportees, and then resuming the peace talks. Hamas found itself at the center of events and was the subject of sudden and intense interest on the part of Arab and foreign actors. From the date of the deportation incident, if progress was to be achieved toward a solution of the Palestinian problem, Hamas had to be taken into account, despite its Islamic ideology and its rejection of Israel's presence in the region.<sup>1</sup>

The actual contacts and meetings took place with diplomats of the five countries (in their embassies in Jordan) that comprise the permanent Security Council members, as well as with diplomats from Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Spain. During those meetings, Hamas representatives delivered letters from the Movement's top leadership containing a unified text laying out its political position, explaining its military practices, and reiterating that it was engaged in a struggle "to liberate the land and defend the people." This struggle, it said, constituted resistance to occupation, which is acknowledged as legitimate, judging by all international norms and, in particular, by the charter of the United Nations and the Geneva Conventions. These letters challenged the Western classification of Hamas as a "terrorist group" as "an attack not only on the Palestinian people, but on all Arab and Islamic peoples, as well as all [nations] liberation movements throughout the world which are fighting for the liberty

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<sup>1</sup> Musa Zeid al-Keylani, *op cit.*, pp. 184.

and dignity of their peoples."<sup>1</sup> On the basis of this position and in view of the usurpation of the rights of the Palestinian people, Hamas appealed to Western governments in the hope of winning their support.

The period of active contacts with the European States that followed the deportation incident gave rise to several charges: that the Movement had altered its political line; that it was capitulating to the West; and that it was trying to set itself up as an alternative to the PLO. (At the time the United States shunned any official contacts with the PLO, and the peace talks in Washington were with a group of "Palestinian representatives".) Hamas denied all the accusations. It reiterated its political objectives and issued an explanation entitled, "The Nature of the Political Contacts and Meetings between Hamas and a Number of Nations."

The European states were under American-Israeli pressure after 11<sup>th</sup> of September to work against Palestinian Hamas and Islamic Jihad. In November 2001 the European Union labeled the military wings of Hamas and Islamic Jihad "terrorist networks" for the first time. The EU demanded that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat dismantle the groups and order an end to armed attacks on Israel.<sup>2</sup>

In the efforts of talks between PA and Palestinian opposition fractions of cease-fire, the EU officials convened some meetings with Hamas leaders inside Territories and outside especially in Lebanon to reach for common understanding between the two parties. European security officials were working with the mainstream faction Fateh to reach an agreement over a ceasefire, and those discussions have also extended to Hamas.

Slightly more surprising is that the European Union sponsored the conference which convened in Cairo in November 2002. Alistair Crook, EU Middle East envoy Miguel Moratinos's security adviser, was in Cairo. According to Javier Sancho, Moratinos's spokesman, the EU's role was "to facilitate" the dialogue as "part of its ongoing efforts to stop terrorism." Also as a part of the European Union's efforts to stop Palestinian attacks against Israelis.

The European nations continued of their contacts with Hamas to convince it to accept the cease-fire and stop attacks against Israel, and in some of the contacts there were threats from U.S. via the European officials, because the U.S. can not make direct contacts with Hamas because it considers it as a terrorist movement.<sup>3</sup>

The Message was a threat from Americans to Hamas, that if it did not accept the ceasefire, they wont know the Sharon's response against Hamas, and that Israel will assassinate its leaders wherever their are.<sup>4</sup>

The French position to Hamas is to refuse to put its political wing in the "terrorist list" of EU. The Israeli ambassador in France convened a meeting in July 2003 with the political advisor of French president, the French position was that France does not consider Hamas as a terrorist group, and if it put it in the terrorist list it would spoil the peace talks about "road map". Israel got surprised of French position to Hamas, and made a heavy pressure on it to accept the Israeli suggestion of putting Hamas in the list of terrorist groups.

In September 2003, European Union named Hamas (both wings, political and military) as a terrorist group, and put it in the black list of the European Union, which allows these countries to freeze assets of Hamas in Europe. The decision came after

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas letter dated February 1993 and sent to the ambassador in Amman, Jordan, representing the five countries that comprise the permanent members of the Security Council.

<sup>2</sup> *USA Today* service, 12 November 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Khaled Masha'al, interview in Al-Jazeera T.V., 25 August 2003.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

heavy American-Israeli pressure on the EU, and after suicide bombing in Jerusalem in July 2003, and break down of the peace talks between PA and Israeli government to implement the "road map".

The EU decision to name Hamas a terrorist movement would help Israel to go on of its goals to target Hamas interest, leaders, and activists, which happened actually when Israeli attempted to assassinate Sheikh Yassin and Mahmoud al Zahaar in Gaza in August 2003. In fact the EU decision came after the Israeli threat to European Union that it would not allow the EU to play a role in the peace talks between the Palestinians and Israel.

Hamas's contacts with Western nations have been limited to periodic contacts and meetings with those nations' ambassadors in the Arab world and to brief meetings between prominent Islamist figures and Western visitors in the Gaza Strip; these have not developed into anything noteworthy. The states with which Hamas established contacts at various levels include Britain, China, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Hamas has made a habit of sending letters to these states on various occasions, mostly to explain the Movement's position on various issues or to denounce a position adopted by one of them in relation to Hamas.<sup>1</sup>

### *Hamas and Israel*

The relationship between Hamas and Israel has undergone a radical change since the Movement first began. Before the Intifada Hamas busied itself with political and grass-roots activities centered mainly in universities and mosques and designed to offer alternative ideas to the predominant secularism and nationalism offered by the PLO. Resistance to the Israeli occupation was a small part of their program at that time and they were not involved in armed resistance. Consequently, it functioned without interference from the Israeli authorities and was able to build a strong organizational structure with considerable influence among the people with whom it worked.<sup>2</sup>

On the regional level Israel sought to bring about a certain fragmentation in the Muslim world as a whole going as far as playing a role in the arms for hostages' exchanges of the USA-Iran Contra affair in which it facilitated the supply of arms to Khomeini's Iran.<sup>3</sup>

Despite of the publication of the Hamas Charter in 1988 which called for the nullification of Israel by Islam, the relationship between Israel and Hamas was not to change until May 1989 when Israel, recognizing that Hamas was becoming a threat, arrested a large number of Hamas activists, among them the spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin. The Movement was declared illegal by the Israeli authorities in September 1989.<sup>4</sup>

Two basic issues need to be considered in analyzing the mutual perceptions of Hamas and Israel and the attendant political practice that has been pursued since the creation of Hamas. The first issue concerns the accepted "wisdom" in the media, political circles, and even in academic circles about Israel's stance toward the Islamist

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<sup>1</sup> See for example a letter sent from Hamas spokesman Ghosheh "To His Excellency Helmut Kohl, the Chancellor of Germany," dated 6 April 1995; Ghosheh condemned a call made by the German minister of economy for fighting Hamas and Hizbollah as priority targets in the Middle East.

<sup>2</sup> Mahmoud Al-Zahhar, interview with author, 15 June 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Ghassan Salame, "Islam and the West." *Foreign Policy*, no. 90 (Spring 1993), pp. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Mohammad Jaradat, "Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the Territories Occupied in 1967." *News From Within*. Vol. VIII, no. 8 (August 5<sup>th</sup> 1992), p. 8.

phenomenon - the Muslim Brotherhood - before the Intifada and later Hamas. There is a common belief that Israel encouraged the Islamists, its goal being to weaken the position and diminish the influence of its main enemy, the PLO. The second issue relates to a few Israeli attempts, at different stages in Hamas existence, to open a dialogue with it with the aim of inducing it to renounce military action in favor of joining the peace process. Reviewing these issues helps to assess the extent to which either Israel or Hamas will be able, through dialogue, to reach a peaceful settlement in which Hamas is a party.

Israeli assessments and interpretations of the Islamic phenomenon in the Occupied Territories are contradictory. Some interpretations attributed the emergence and growth of the Palestinian Islamic tide to an Israeli "plot"; others posited that Israeli policy merely ignored the phenomenon; still others asserted that the Israeli stance was absolutely and implacably hostile and aimed to repress the phenomenon. The Israeli goal of such benign policy was to undermine the preeminent leadership position of the PLO. In fact, the PLO information apparatus wholeheartedly adopted these interpretations and worked to propagate them. That apparatus, particularly through its dissemination of Arafat's strident declarations, often verged in the direction of adopting the first interpretation, which declares Hamas to be merely a creation of Israel to weaken the PLO. Israel, however, adopted the reading that it was lenient, overlooked the development of the Islamic movement, and did not try to suppress it.

In contrast, the Islamists repeatedly claim that Israel's repressive policies against Islamic institutions and all vestiges of Islamic awakening, such as the Islamic University in Gaza, the mosques, and Islamic organizations in general, are evidence of its fear of Palestinian Islam and its growth. It is not reasonable, they insist, that Israel should overlook, let alone encourage, the ideologically most implacable opponent of its existence. Some observers agree; according to Ali Jerbawi, "the occupying authority was not to give the National Islamic tendency the opportunity to strengthen its foundations and to spread its influence among the masses, because to Israel, this tendency constitutes the greatest danger to its future."<sup>1</sup> Israel's policy toward the growing strength of Islamic movements throughout the 1970s and 1980s up to the first year of the Intifada was characterized by confusion, bewilderment, and an inability to take decisive action. Consequently, Israel confined itself to reaction to and monitoring of developments.<sup>2</sup> Israel's position toward Islamic institutions or toward the social and educational aspects of the Islamic awakening was no different from its established position toward other non-military phenomena that accompanied the Palestinian national movement and factions of the PLO. Hence, the level of tolerance for or suppression of the work of those institutions was the same regardless of their ideological or political bent. Scores of nationalist institutions, such as academic associations, clubs, daily newspapers, weekly magazines, schools, universities, and other organizations, bear witness to this policy. All these institutions operated by virtue of permits issued by the Israeli occupying authority; some of the institutions belonged directly or indirectly to the PLO or other Palestinian Political factions. It is not fair, therefore, to mention only the permits granted to Islamic institutions in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The chief concern of the occupation authorities during the 1970s and 1980s was military activity. Thus, they concentrated their efforts on the pursuit of such activity and were relatively tolerant toward

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<sup>1</sup> Ali Jerbawi, *The Intifada and Political leadership in the West Bank and Gaza Strip* [in Arabic] (Beirut: Tali'a House, 1989) p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> Khaled Hroub, *Hamas fiker wa al-mumarsa al-siyassiya*, p. 201.

informational and propagandistic activities, whether carried out by nationalist or Islamist forces.

It was not easy for Israel, especially after the late 1970s, to resort to harsh repressive policy toward the manifestations of Islamic awakening in the Occupied Territories. There are many reasons for this, the most important being the fear that such a policy might render an indirect service to the Islamic current by giving credence to its claim that the Jews and Israel are fighting Islam. If this assertion acquired credibility, the national struggle would be recast as an ideological one - a war between religions. This in turn might lead to the incitement of religious feelings abroad and thus to the strengthening of the Islamic current. Furthermore, the adoption of an obviously repressive policy toward non-military religious institutions in a region where the Islamic tide was rising would intensify the feeling of enmity for Israel in the region. Internationally such a policy, interpreted as an abridgment of religious freedom, would harm the reputation of Israel. Such considerations apparently continued to influence the formulation of Israel policy through the first two years of first Intifada. Resistance activities during that time, whether directed by Hamas or by the United Nations leadership of the Intifada, were confined to mass demonstrations, and the use of firearms was avoided. The situation only changed in the 1994-96 period, when regional circumstances favored the adoption of a merciless repressive policy under the slogan "fighting Islamic terrorism."

The implicit Israeli acceptance of responsibility for indirectly helping Hamas by looking the other way when it came into being can be explained by reference to the Israeli political mind-set, which is characterized by a "superiority complex." This mind-set invented the myth of the "invincible Israeli army," wove legends around the "supernatural" capabilities of its security service (including Mossad and Shin Bet), and painted a fabulous picture of its ability to influence events both regionally and on the Palestinian plane. In effect, it perceived Israeli control of most (if not all) strings as virtually absolute. Hence, it would be a great blow to Israel's "pride" to acknowledge that a Palestinian movement could form and grow in the Occupied Territories, that is, right in the lion's den. It was more consistent with this mind-set to concede that Israeli policy in one form or another was behind the emergence of Hamas. This claim would serve even as it admits an error in tactics - Israel's strategy of firmly establishing that its Arab and Palestinian foes are not capable of carrying out and undertaking that may influence events outside Israel's masterful control. In brief, the optimum position for the Israeli mind-set is to admit an error and to feign regret over a policy that led to a present situation wherein Hamas has become immune to a complete and final liquidation.<sup>1</sup>

The Islamic phenomenon in the Occupied Territories did not grow in isolation but in the context of an historical social change that swept the entire Arab and Islamic areas. Indeed, the period extending between the second half of the 1970s and the mid-1990s witnessed the dramatic growth of an Islamic awakening and several currents of political Islam. The Islamic current in the Occupied Territories thus was influenced and nurtured by the growth of an Islamic movement in Jordan to the east, the emergence of an Islamic movement, especially Hizbullah, in Lebanon to the north, and the advancement of the Islamic movement in Egypt, where moderate groups exerted influence through democratic processes in parliament and the unions while armed groups engaged in a bloody confrontation with the security forces. Beyond the

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Intifada: the Palestinian Uprising-Israel's Third Front* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), pp. 223-25.

immediate neighborhood, the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran, the evolution of the Islamic movement in Sudan, and the increasing growth of the political Islam in Algeria all had important influences on Palestinian Islam in the Occupied Territories. Thus, Palestinian Islam Was part of a broader phenomenon, not an isolated occurrence. The fact that it existed under military occupation worked only to deepen and broaden its appeal and to clarify its goals.

Considering the factors mentioned above, one can conclude that Israel's stance toward the competition among the various Palestinian forces' such as that between Hamas and the PLO was one of exploitation and manipulation in the service of Israeli interests. There is nothing creative or unique in this practice of trying to benefit from the internal contradictions of an opponent. Indeed, this is a conventional practice used by one party of struggle against its various opponents.

The importance of the topic of an Israel - Hamas dialogue derives from two angles. One is general and concerns the question of how it is even possible for any sort of serious discussion to take place between the two, given Hamas's political and ideological position on Israel. The second is narrower and pertains to the special conditions of Hamas's emergence and evolution inside Palestine and under occupation. The initial change actually can be dated back to the end of 1990 when some Hamas leaders began to appear on the political stage outside the occupied land. In the previous three years, when Hamas had on declared political leadership "abroad," Hamas leaders, without being identified as such, had been summoned to meet Israeli officials not as representatives of Hamas but in their capacity as influential, public Islamic figures. They did not speak for Hamas, of course, but they did talk about Hamas, describing its ideas predicting its behavior.

Initially, the Israelis tried to make sense of a new phenomenon which they did not know how to deal with. The task was all the more difficult because Hamas vanguards and its political leaders distanced themselves from military work and denied even belonging to Hamas. Consequently, they spent only short stints in Israeli prisons and detention centers and continued to play informational and political roles among their people. Throughout the early years of Hamas's existence, Israelis attempted to find opening through which they hoped to change the attitude toward Israel of whoever they met. During this initial period of "reconnaissance" and "political softening," a number of Hamas leaders, including Sheikh Yassin, al-Rantisi, and al-Zahhar, were summoned and engaged in discussions.<sup>1</sup> However, after the Intifada gradually shifted gears from mass demonstrations and stone throwing to the use of fire arms and Molotov cocktails, the occupation authorities on many occasions issued directives prohibiting the summoning of any Islamic personalities from Hamas or close to it for the purpose of discussions or establishing liaison.<sup>2</sup> In the second stage of Hamas's career, after Hamas had declared the presence of its leaders abroad, its position corresponded with PLO policy, which was to reject meeting with official Israeli

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the of the Israeli civil administration in Gaza summoned al-Zahhar and discussed with him the feasibility of forming a Palestinian delegation to negotiate with Israel (before the Madrid Conference), suggesting that Hamas be represented in the delegation provided that it recognizes the right of Israel to exist. When al-Zahhar refused, the Israeli threatened him with arrest; see further *Al-Nahar*, 16 December 1989.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported on 15 January 1990 that "the Ministry of Defense ordered the heads of the civil administration in the Occupied Territories not to make contacts with elements of Hamas and to serve immediately all lines of communication with persons who support the movement"; reported by *Al-Nahar* (Jerusalem), 16 January 1990.

parties. Thus, Hamas's position became one of "categorical rejection of conducting any dialogue with Zionist entity."<sup>1</sup>

Israel attempted, especially after the Oslo Agreement and Hamas's military operations in 1993 and 1994, to feel out Hamas about the possibility of establishing a dialogue or liaison, the goal being to convince Hamas to renounce violence in exchange for a guaranteed political role in a peace settlement. Several Israeli officials, including the then Prime Minister Rabin, declared Israel's readiness for dialogue and negotiations with Hamas to achieve this objective.<sup>2</sup> Even before Oslo, Shimon Peres, who at the time was foreign minister, declared that Israel was "ready to negotiate with extremists from Hamas if they were freely elected in the Occupied Territories."<sup>3</sup> In addition to sounding out Hamas and issuing press statements, Israel offered early release to many jailed leaders of the Movement in order for them to travel abroad and discuss its demands for stopping military operations with Hamas representatives.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, some Israeli military commanders discussed the same subject with numerous Hamas supporters in the Gaza Strip.<sup>5</sup>

In the first few months of 1994, Israel's attempts to engage Hamas intensified. One prominent Hamas official described these efforts as follows:

The most important of these attempts included a meeting between the deputy chief of staff of the enemy army, Amnon Shahak, with the brother, Imad al-Faluji, who was detained in Gaza's central prison in February 1994. a discussion between two members of the occupation central command and the brother, Dr. Mahmoud al-Rumhi, who was held in Hebron's central prison to await trial for being the political director of Hamas in the Ramallah area. A contact made by an Israeli living in Europe with Dr. Mahmoud al-Zahhar, and a further communication by the same Israeli with a person close to Hamas in one of the European countries whereby Israel offered to the Zionist entity and vice versa. Rabin's declaration in February 1994 represented a readiness for dialogue as a culmination to this series of attempts.<sup>6</sup>

According to this same official, Hamas believed that Israel had four goals:

The first is to exert pressure on Arafat by putting him on notice that there is a strong competitor with whom Israel can negotiate. The aim would be to push him into making more concessions. The second is to probe Hamas's position on participation in the self-

<sup>1</sup> Hamas leaflet, "Resistance and Struggle will be the Sole Language of Dialogue with the Occupying Enemy," 20 February 1994.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Ahram* (Cairo), 19 April 1994; see also a statement by the Israeli minister of police, Moshe Shahal, published in *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* (2 November 1994): "Israel makes mistake by not being ready to talk to people. There are many currents [of thought] inside Hamas. The majority denies any possibility of negotiation or recognition of the Jewish state. But there are some whom I would not say are more moderate...but are more realistic." Yossi Beillin made a statement along the same lines in November 1994.

<sup>3</sup> *Al-Hayat*, 1 January 1992.

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Nazzal, *Al-Hayat*, 22 December 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Among these discussions is one conducted in April 1994 by General Almough, commander of Israeli troops in Gaza, with Sheikh Ahmad Bahar, the head of the Islamic Society. Sheikh Bahar relates that he was summoned to the office of the Military Governor as would any citizen under occupation. Among the topics was a longish and theoretical dissection of the nature of Islamic government. With respect to [the proposal] for self-government, Bahar expressed his opposition because it consolidate the occupation and does not fulfill people's demands; see his interview in Khaled Hroub, "Harakat Hamas bain al-sulta al-filastiniyya wa Isra'il: Min muthallath al-quwa ila al-mitraqa wal-sindan," [ Hamas between the PA and Israel: From the triangle of power to the anvil and hammer], *Majallat al-dirasat al-filastiniyya*, no. 18 (Spring 1994): 24-37.

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Nazzal, interview with the author, 30 May 2003.

government authority and on stopping the armed struggle. The third goal is to soften the Movement's political and military line. The fourth is to ensure the success of self-government by giving Hamas an effective role in its leadership.<sup>1</sup>

Hamas continued to rebuff Israeli attempts to open communication channels with it, persisted in announcing those attempts when they occurred, and used very strong language in firmly rejecting Rabin's offer to negotiate. According to Hamas, "the language between us and the occupying enemy forever shall remain a language of resistance and struggle and not one of negotiation, concessions, or capitulations."<sup>2</sup>

Hamas's basic position had one exception, however. And this related to humanitarian cases and the exposure of civilians to military operations to humanitarian cases and the exposure of civilians to military operations. On several occasions Hamas announced its "readiness to negotiate in humanitarian matters through a third party such as the Red Cross as happened in November 1994 in the case of the captured Zionist soldier, Waxman, who was exchanged for Palestinian detainees."<sup>3</sup> With respect to the issue of targeting civilians, Hamas offered

an initiative in April 1994 to remove civilians from the arena of struggle between Palestinian *mujahideen* and Zionist occupation forces and to spare them the brunt of military operations. This may be done by having Prime Minister Rabin to issue clear instructions to the occupation army, Israeli settlers, and Arab collaborators to stop attacking or targeting Palestinian civilians for killing, arrest, and house demolition. In exchange, Hamas's Qassam Brigades will confine their activities only to military targets and to armed Zionist elements.<sup>4</sup>

After the series of Hamas operations in February and March 1996 and the subsequent violent campaign against it through arrests, the destruction of homes, and the closure of institutions, Israel tried once again to open communication channels with Hamas, using people close to both sides in Europe. At that time, Hamas tried to mitigate the reactions against it (among which was the Sharm al-Sheikh conference convened on 13 March 1996) by softening its rhetoric and expounding on the legitimacy of its actions. More important, it obliquely hinted at its readiness to open a dialogue with Israel. As usual, this readiness was couched in terms of removing civilians from the arena of violent struggle. It is obvious; however, that Hamas's hints had more than one interpretation. In a relatively detailed statement issued at the time to explain the rationale for its military actions, Hamas asserted its "readiness to deal with any positive (efforts) that aim to discuss the political dimension of the problem and its ramifications on the interest and future of all sides, with a view to achieving peace, security, freedom, independence, and sovereignty for our people."<sup>5</sup>

Even as Israel continued its campaign against Hamas, it made an effort to convince Hamas of its seriousness on the subject of dialogue. Israel's aims remained ambiguous: Did it try to reassure Hamas merely to gain more time to uproot its infrastructure, or did it seek a genuine dialogue leading to an armistice agreement between the two? Meanwhile, in order to mute the attack against it and to neutralize

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Hamas leaflet, "Resistance and Struggle will be the Sole Language of Dialogue," 20 February 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Hamas leaflet, "Clarification from Hamas spokesman, Ibrahim Ghosheh," 7 November 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Hamas, "Memorandum issued by Hamas's political office about the latest developments," 12 March 1996.

as many of its foes as possible, Hamas continued to signal its readiness to talk about and to deal with any effort, regional or international, aimed at achieving "a ceasefire in accordance with just conditions."<sup>1</sup>

Since 29<sup>th</sup> September 2000, Israel and the Palestinians have been engaged in an armed confrontation, which is defined and portrayed differently by each of the parties.

The confrontation between Israel and Hamas has escalated in the second Intifada, which motivate Hamas to carry out intensive and guerilla activities against Israeli targets in Occupied Territories and inside Israel.

The Israeli strategy against Hamas in the second Intifada was a destruction of the Hamas operational and strategic leadership and gives no respite to its militants, through precise targeted operations, including the use of elite units in the heart of PA territory. This should significantly reduce the threat of suicide and other attacks in Israel's heartland, but also prevent the transformation of Hamas as the leading political force in the territories.

At the beginning of the second Intifada Israel has only tried once to attack the Hamas' political leadership, and the killing of Sheikhs Jamal Mansur and Jamal Salim in Nablus. They remain to attack the militants and activists in the Occupied Territories. In this connection, Israel's political leaders haven't forgotten the diplomatic fall-out which resulted from the botched attempt to assassinate Hamas leader Khaled Meshal in Jordan, in September 1997.<sup>2</sup>

The Israeli assessment after Oslo Accord is that the PA is taking significant steps to foil Hamas attacks. The Israeli government regards the PA as a partner in both counter-terrorism efforts and the peace process.

Israel believes that any Hamas attacks campaign will aim to undermine the PA by halting the peace process. Israel's policy must reflect a new assessment of Hamas. The long-time policy of punishing the PA for Hamas attacks is no longer feasible.

Shin Bet head Avi Dichter said: Islamic Jihad and especially Hamas are "strategic threats to Israel," and characterized them as "existential threats" to the PA. With 25,000 men on the PA security payroll in Gaza, the PA could easily overwhelm groups like Hamas if it so chose.<sup>3</sup>

It was clear that Israel after the second year of Al-Aqsa Intifada attempted to uproot Hamas's infrastructure, and did not make any difference between the military wing and the political one. The Israeli position moved from small damages toward Hamas to the uprooting policy, from partial strikes to absolute strikes, especially after the continuous hard attacks of Hamas against Israel.

The American campaign in Iraq helped Israel to work hardly against Hamas, because of the American war against Islamic terrorism in whole the world, and the rearrangement of the Arabic world generally.

The Israeli move against Hamas was at the beginning to surround Hamas's existence outside Palestinian Territories, and to send threats to Arab countries, especially Syria and Lebanon, by U.S.. In fact it started seriously after the third gulf war in Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

The goal was to freeze the financial sources in the European countries and Gulf area, and attempt to close the societies which practice social activities in the Palestinian

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas, "An Important Memorandum from Hamas to kings, Presidents, and Ministers Meeting at Sharm al-Sheikh," 13 Mar 1996.

<sup>2</sup> *Ha'aretz* daily, (Israel), 17 September 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Avi Dichter, Head of Shin Beit (Israeli internal intelligence forces), conference security situation run by the Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, 20 May 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Ibrahim Abu Haija, *Hamas fi mwajhet al asifa*, [Hamas in Front of Storm], www.Islam-online.net, 31 March 2003.

Territories. Particularly the goal was to make pressure on Arab States to observe the Islamic social foundations and organization and to try to freeze the assets of Islamic figures outside Territories.

Israel attempts to prove the connection between Hamas and Al-Qaeda organization to get the international permission to attack Hamas and assassinate its leaders every where without any blame from the intentional society when it takes such a move.<sup>1</sup>

The Israeli escalation against Hamas, arrived at a high point when Israeli helicopter targeted a car of one Hamas famous leaders in Gaza in the morning 8 March 2003 Ibrahim al-Maqadma and killed him with three bodyguards. It was a big loss for Hamas because Al-Maqadma was considered as political and military leader of Hamas. With his writing and articles he was supporting Hamas's philosophy at the beginning of its existence.<sup>2</sup>

Israel continued its campaign by targeting the founders of Hamas, Israeli Special Forces kidnapped a Hamas leader in Gaza Mohammad Taha, and arrested three of his sons. It was a sign to Hamas founders that Israel will try to reach each one of them.

Israel intensified its campaign against Hamas in Gaza Strip and West Bank by attacking the militants and Islamic figures and by closing the Islamic societies which belong to Hamas and arrest its bosses.

Hamas agreed of PA's cease-fire and stopped military attacks against Israel in 29 June 2003 after the appointment of Mahmoud Abbas as a first Palestinian Prime Minister.

Sheikh Yassin announced: "If Israel withdraws completely from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and it removes all of its settlements, I will make a truce with it. You have my word for it," "If it stops its attacks on civilians, then we are not prepared to touch civilians," and "In our religion it is forbidden to kill a child, a woman or an elderly man but when you kill my wife, my daughter, my son, I have the right to defend myself. We are obliged to do so in front of the Israeli deeds,"<sup>3</sup>

The ceasefire between Hamas and Israel continued until Jerusalem suicide bombing which killed 23 Israelis, and it was Hamas's revenge of Israeli attacks against Palestinians, and because of unrespectable implementation from Israeli side to the Truce which was announced by Palestinian Authority.

Israeli retaliation of Jerusalem suicide bombing was the assassination of Ismail Abu Shanab, the first leader of Hamas after Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, by attacking his car in Gaza city and assassinate him with his two bodyguards. This resulted in break off the ceasefire announced by Hamas and Palestinian Authority. After the naming of Hamas as a terrorist organization by the European Union, Israel tried to assassinate Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin and Ismail Hania, Hamas political leader in Gaza Strip by striking a building by F-16 bomb. The Israeli operation failed, but the message was clear: Israel now does not hesitate anything in its war against Hamas and its leaders.

In sum, it appears that there was some prospect of reduced tension between Hamas and Israel for a limited period of time. But the path from a temporary respite to real detente and a return to negotiations is strewn with formidable obstacles, and there is therefore a great likelihood that the confrontation will again erupt at some point in the not too distant future.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Saleh Na'ami, The roots dismantle of Hamas and bite the parties in West Bank, [www.Islam-online.net](http://www.Islam-online.net), 31 March 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Sheikh Yassin, interview with journalists in his office, 15 June 2003.

## Chapter IV

# *Hamas and Regional and International Organizations*

Having realized the important role played by some regional and international organization and bodies, Hamas has paid a great attention to such organizations in its discourse, responding positively or negatively to those resolutions that deal with the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Hamas has also played a role within some Arab and Islamic organizations (especially non-governmental ones). This has resulted in adopting certain resolutions. It has continued to send such organizations memorandums and petitions which stress the necessity of mobilizing Arab and Islamic effort to face Israeli occupation.

With respect, Hamas did not announce its positions toward all regional and international resolutions at the beginning in its first communiqué in 14 December 1987, but it has adopted some of the most important resolutions which match Hamas understanding of Palestinian issue and Arab-Israeli conflict, especially after the start of the first Intifada and establishment of Hamas Movement in 1987.

However, Hamas's role in this field remained limited due to the newness of the movement, the ideological line it adopted and the changing regional circumstances concerning the Palestinian issue.

Most of regional and international resolutions focused generally on the Palestinian cause, with particular focus on the Palestinian people's rights of establishing an independent state, right of return for Palestinian refugees, and motivating the public opinion and political attitudes of western states to practice pressure on Israel to withdraw from Palestinian occupied territories.<sup>1</sup>

Hamas did not recognize the peace settlement or international conference to resolve the Palestinian issue. Also it rejected the thought of the self-determination right in the part of historic Palestine which was occupied in 1967. Hamas's attitude is different of PLO's attitude, which was announced by PLO in its declaration of Palestine state communiqué in 15 November 1988.<sup>2</sup>

### *Hamas and the Arab League*

The relationship between the Arab League and Palestinian people and its issue since the preparation of the league Covenant in 1944, and the discussions were about the necessity of appointment of Palestinian representative in the league. Actually, the

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<sup>1</sup> Abid Aziz Sarhan, *Palestinian State* [in Arabic], Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiya, (Cairo) 1989, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> PLO in its communiqué that declared the independence Palestine state in Algeria 1988, accepted *Israel's* existence and called for Palestine state on Palestinian territories which were occupied in 1967. Hamas rejects the 242 resolution and considers it as a resolution among states, which did not recognize the national rights of Palestinian people. *Hamas wants to resolve the Palestinian cause - borders and security problem - among the states of the region*, and solve the refugee problem as a human problem not as a national one, and recognize Israel as an independent state.

Arab leaders agreed to include in the Covenant of the league a text to appoint a representative of Palestine to join the sessions of the council.<sup>1</sup>

The Arab League considered the Palestinian case as a special case, however, the Arab states which agreed of the League Covenant decided to choose an Arabic representative to represent Palestine.<sup>2</sup>

The Arab League - the group of 22 Arab states - created the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1964 and then crowned the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinian people 10 years later. Particularly, the PLO has become a full member in the Arab League in 1976.<sup>3</sup>

Hundreds of decisions were taken by the Arab League that supported the Palestinian people's rights, and were calls to the Arab states to support Palestinian struggle against the Israeli occupation. In fact these decisions roughly were only verbal support, and proved the weakness of the league to support the Palestinian struggle.

In Khartoum summit of the Arab League, after the defeat of six days war in 1967, the council of the league had taken a famous decision of the No, "No settlement, No negotiation, and No recognition" with Israel. Since that time the Arab League started to call of full Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied since June 1967.

Hamas did not mention the name of the Arab League in its Charter and statements at the beginning of its existence, but replaced it by mentioning some euphemisms like "Arab States", "Arab regimes", and "Arab leaders".

Hamas has dealt with the Arab League through two approaches. The first has been to take stands concerning some of the League's resolutions, and the second has been to send letters and memorandums to normal and emergency sessions of the League. It is true that Hamas criticized, in its communiqués during its first year, Arab States for giving up the Palestinian cause, but it soon corrected this attitude and started to send special letters to the Arab emergency summits. The first among such letters was the one sent to the Arab emergency summit of Casablanca on 21 May 1989, where a development of Hamas's political form of address can be noticed. Hamas always calls for the Arab leaders to adopt a program of confrontation and comprehensive development of the Arab position on the basis of joint Arab work. At the same time, the Movement endeavored to support those attitudes of the Arab summit and the Arab League Council which are compatible with the Movement's political orientations.

The interior and justice ministers of the 22 Arab States within the League of Arab States signed on 22 April 1998, for the first time, an accord to fight terrorism and extremism. The only reference here is the differentiation between Terrorism and the struggle against occupation. It gives legitimacy to Palestinian Islamic organizations against Israel.

#### The Main Principles of the Accord:

1. Commitment to high moral and religious principles, above all the rules of the Islamic *Shari`a* and the human heritage of the Arab Nation,

<sup>1</sup> Hussain Hassona, *the Arab League and the regional conflicts*, (Georgia publishing, United States, 1975), p. 264.

<sup>2</sup> Ali Sadik Abu Haifa, *Al-qanoon al-dawli al-aam* [The General International law], (Monsha'at al-Ma'aref, Alexandria, 1972), p.981.

<sup>3</sup> Abdullah al-Ashā'al, *al-markaz al-qanoni al-dawli li monazamit al-tahreer al-filistiniyya* [The international legality of PLO], ( Dar Al-Nahda al-Arabiyya, Cairo, 1988), p. 23.

which condemns violence and terrorism and stresses the defense of human rights and cooperation between societies for the sake of peace.

2. Commitment to the rules of the covenant of the League of Arab States, of the UN, International Law and all other related international agreements. These are all the wells ping of international society in its pursuit of peace and security for all.
3. Differentiation between terrorist crimes and the struggle against foreign occupation and aggression, according to the principles of International Law.
4. Intensification of the Arab cooperation and coordination in the judicial security fields, and the creation of a common ground for this coordination by accepted bases to the judicial means of operations.
5. Coordination between the terms of this accord and the laws and steps taken by every individual state, in order to fulfill the common national aims of this accord.

#### The Main Terms of the Accord:

1. The members of the League commit themselves not to use their lands as an arena for planning, organizing or carrying out terrorist crimes of any kind nor take part in such activity. This includes the prevention of infiltration of terrorist elements into their lands or the sojourn upon them of individuals as well as groups, nor accommodation, training, finance, arms or any other assistance.
2. The members of the League, mainly those which have common borders, commit themselves to coordinate the means of Counter-Terrorism, including the arrest of terrorists and bringing them to judgment according to their national laws, or surrendering them according to this accord or bilateral accords.
3. The exchange of information, researches and experience among the members of the League, and conducting of common training courses in order to promote the scientific and practical abilities of those who work in the field of Counter-Terrorism.
4. The extradition of prisoners or detainees of terrorist nature who are wanted by any other state member of the League, in accordance with accepted and defined rules. The appeals for extradition should be exchanged between the concerned officials directly or through the Justice Ministries or the diplomatic channels.
5. Every state has the right to ask another state to take in its place the necessary legal measures related to Terrorism on its lands. The Member States of the League also commit themselves to give the other states all the possible assistance needed in the investigations or the trials of Terrorist nature.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Ayyam* newspaper (Qatar), 23 April 1996.

Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, crown prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, presented when his initiative calling for full Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied since June 1967, in implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, reaffirmed by the Madrid Conference of 1991 and the land-for-peace principle, and Israel's acceptance of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, in return for the establishment of normal relations in the context of a comprehensive peace with Israel.

Emanating from the conviction of the Arab countries that a military solution to the conflict will not achieve peace or provide security for the parties, the council:

1. Requests Israel to reconsider its policies and declare that a just peace is its strategic option as well.

Further calls upon Israel to affirm:

- Full Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied since 1967, including the Syrian Golan Heights, to the June 4, 1967 lines as well as the remaining occupied Lebanese territories in the south of Lebanon.
- Achievement of a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194.
- The acceptance of the establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian territories occupied since June 4, 1967 in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

2. Consequently, the Arab countries affirm the following:

- Consider the Arab-Israeli conflict ended, and enter into a peace agreement with Israel, and provide security for all the states of the region.
- Establish normal relations with Israel in the context of this comprehensive peace.

4. Assures the rejection of all forms of Palestinian patriation which conflict with the special circumstances of the Arab host countries.

5. Calls upon the government of Israel and all Israelis to accept this initiative in order to safeguard the prospects for peace and stop the further shedding of blood, enabling the Arab countries and Israel to live in peace and good neighborliness and provide future generations with security, stability and prosperity.

6. Invites the international community and all countries and organizations to support this initiative.

7. Requests the chairman of the summit to form a special committee composed of some of its concerned member states and the secretary general of the League of Arab States to pursue the necessary contacts to gain support for this initiative at all levels, particularly from the United Nations, the Security Council, the United States of America, the Russian Federation, the Muslim states and the European Union.

It calls on the international community with all its organizations and states to support the initiative.

The Council calls on its presidency, its secretary general and its follow-up committee to follow up on the special contacts related to this initiative and to support it on all

levels, including the United Nations, the United States, Russia, the European Union and the Security Council.<sup>1</sup>

Hamas's response on the Arab peace initiative was negative. Hamas rejected Arab peace overture to Israel, however, Hamas asked Arab states to support Palestinian struggle against Israel, instead of presenting initiatives.

Hamas's representative in Lebanon said: instead of offering Israel peace, the Arab summit "should have cut all kinds of relations and contacts with the Zionist entity." He added: "We want a clear commitment to the right of return to the Palestinian refugees" and "clear resolutions in support of the resistance and the Intifada, "The Palestinian people want an Arab boycott in the face of Israeli aggression and terrorism against them."<sup>2</sup>

### *Hamas and the United Nations and its Bodies*

When the United Nations was founded in San Francisco on 26 June 1945, Palestine was a territory administered by the United Kingdom under a Mandate received in 1922 from the League of Nations.

At its second regular session, after an intense two-month-long debate, the General Assembly, on 29 November 1947, adopted resolution 181, approving with minor changes the Plan of Partition with Economic Union as proposed by the majority in the Special Committee on Palestine. The Partition Plan, a detailed four-part document attached to the resolution, provided for the termination of the Mandate, the progressive withdrawal of British armed forces and the delineation of boundaries between the two States and Jerusalem. It called for the creation of the Arab and Jewish States not later than 1 October 1948. Palestine was to be divided into eight parts: three parts were allotted to the Jewish State and three to the Arab State; the seventh, the town of Jaffa, was to form an Arab enclave within Jewish territory; and the international regime for Jerusalem, the eighth division, would be administered by the United Nations Trusteeship Council.

The Jewish Agency accepted the resolution despite its dissatisfaction over such matters as Jewish emigration from Europe and the territorial limits set on the proposed Jewish State. The Plan was not accepted by the Palestinian Arabs and Arab States, on the grounds that it violated the provisions of the United Nations Charter, which granted people the right to decide their own destiny. They said that the Assembly had endorsed the Plan under circumstances unworthy of the United Nations, and that the Arabs of Palestine would oppose any scheme which provided for the dissection, segregation or partition of their country, or which gave special and preferential rights and status to a minority.

The Security Council adopted resolution 237 (1967), calling upon Israel to ensure the safety, welfare and security of the inhabitants of the areas where military operations had taken place, and to facilitate the return of the displaced persons. The Governments concerned were asked to respect scrupulously the humanitarian principles governing the protection of civilian persons in time of war contained in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. At its fifth emergency special session, convened after the fighting began, the General Assembly called upon Governments and international organizations to extend emergency humanitarian assistance to those affected by the war. The Assembly asked Israel to rescind all measures already taken

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<sup>1</sup> Official translation of the full text of a Saudi-inspired peace plan adopted by the Arab summit in Beirut.

<sup>2</sup> Osama Hamdan, Hamas representative in Lebanon, Associated Press, 29 March, 2002.

and to desist from taking further action which would alter the status of Jerusalem.

Later that year, on 22 November, the Security Council unanimously adopted, after much negotiation, resolution 242 (1967), laying down principles for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. Egypt and Jordan accepted resolution 242 (1967) and considered Israeli withdrawal from all territories occupied in the 1967 war as a precondition to negotiations. Israel, which also accepted the resolution, stated that the questions of withdrawal and refugees could be settled only through direct negotiations with the Arab States and the conclusion of a comprehensive peace treaty. Syria rejected the Council action, maintaining that the resolution had linked the central issue of Israeli withdrawal to concessions demanded from Arab countries. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) strongly criticized the resolution, which it said reduced the question of Palestine to a refugee problem.

At its third regular session, on 11 December 1948, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 194, which delineated ways to resolve the Palestine problem. Following suggestions contained in the report prepared by Count Bernadette to find a solution to the increasingly intractable situation in Palestine, the Assembly declared that refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that those choosing not to return should be compensated for their property. It called for the demilitarization and internationalization of Jerusalem and for the protection of, and free access to, the holy places in Palestine.

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which had been established in 1964, adopted a new National Charter in 1968. The document stated that the international community had so far failed to discharge its responsibility, and called for continuing the fight to achieve Palestinian rights.

General Assembly resolution 3236 of 22 November 1974 reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, which included the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property. The rights of the Palestinian people, as set forth by the Assembly in 1974, have been reaffirmed every year since.

Also in 1974, the Assembly invited the PLO to participate in its proceedings with observer status, as representative of the Palestinian people.

Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, efforts were made within and without the United Nations to resume and conclude the peace negotiating process in order to resolve the diplomatic deadlock in the Middle East and achieve a comprehensive peace in the wake of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. Immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities in October 1973, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 338 (1973), calling for an immediate truce and cessation of all military activity. The resolution asked the parties to begin implementation of resolution 242 (1967) "in all of its parts" immediately after a cease-fire. It also called on the parties to begin, immediately and concurrently with the cease-fire, negotiations under appropriate auspices for establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

Concern for the human rights of the civilian population in the territories occupied by Israel during the 1967 war was first expressed by the Security Council in resolution 237 (1967), which, among other things, recommended to the Governments concerned the scrupulous respect of the humanitarian principles contained in the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention. The Convention, on the protection of civilian persons in time of war, forbids the forcible transfer of inhabitants out of an occupied territory and the movement into the territory of the civilian population of the occupying Power. The Convention also deals with other matters, such as the treatment to be accorded to the

protected persons of an occupied territory and to those under detention; it prohibits the imposition of collective penalties. Israel is a party to the Convention.

In its mature phase (1993 onward), Hamas repeatedly has quoted UN resolutions, referred to conventions of international organizations, and attempted to link its conduct to universal norms. While it is debatable whether the Movement has succeeded in these endeavors, it is clear that Hamas's discourse in this area has evolved in the direction of acknowledging and seeking "international legitimacy." It is evident that Hamas's use of the language of international legitimacy was prompted by the international condemnation of its armed attacks. The Movement has tried desperately to defend its military strategy as falling within the realm of universal principles such as resistance to foreign occupation and aspirations of national self-determination.

However, Hamas is selective in its recognition of UN resolutions, because it only accepts the ones that do not "infringe the rights of the Palestinian people." Hamas leaders argue that accepting some UN resolutions while simultaneously rejecting others is neither a contradiction nor a rejection of the UN system. They also point out that Israel is the most "rejectionist and violating" state in the world with respect to UN resolutions.<sup>1</sup> Hamas itself readily accepted the UN Security Council Resolution No. 799, which called for the immediate return of the Palestinian Islamists deported by Israel to south Lebanon in late 1992, but it vehemently rejected other - and far important - resolutions, such as 242 and 338, on the basis that they violate Palestinian rights.

Hamas's rejection of some UN resolutions was because such resolutions were incompatible with the Movement's principles. In its rejection of these resolutions, Hamas used only political means and never resorted to violence against international community or agencies.

In the area of conducting practical relations with international bodies and non-governmental organizations, Hamas has not been successful in establishing workable contacts. It confined itself to issuing letters and appeals on certain occasions. For example, in March 1996 it sent lengthy memoranda and letters to the United Nations and to the contracting parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention in the wake of the convening of the Sharm al-Sheikh Conference, which targeted Hamas in particular.<sup>2</sup> With the exception of occasional contacts with the international Red Cross, the record of Hamas's ties to international group is remarkably poor.

### *Hamas and Contemporary International Law*

Hamas emphasize that the right of self-determination is an essential part of the rights of the Palestinian people acknowledged by international law and conventions. Implementing this right would not be possible without the withdrawal of Israeli occupation from Palestinian Territories. The Movement thinks that administrative self-autonomy would only provide a cover of legitimacy to occupation, and resign the Palestinian people's right to liberation and self-determination.<sup>3</sup>

There are, however, indications which suggest that Hamas is ready to consider a political solution which involves an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders as a preliminary step for an independent state.

<sup>1</sup> Abu Marzouq, interview with author, 21 May 2003.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Hamas's letter, "Memorandum from Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) to the Contracting Parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention," dated 26 March 1996.

<sup>3</sup> Hamas memorandum to Sharm al-Sheikh conference, dated 13 March 1996.

International laws and conventions reveal that Hamas should be considered as a part of the national liberation movement of the Palestinian people. As such, the Movements enjoy certain rights within the regulations of international law in relation to war and peace. Hamas considers the international law as an important authority in defining and acknowledging the rights of the Palestinian people and in dealing with the injustices of Israeli occupation. According to international law Hamas is considered as a political movement under military occupation. This would entail a certain way of dealing with the Movement and its members, taking into consideration human rights conventions and the laws that deal with civilians under occupation.<sup>1</sup>

The past record of Hamas illustrates that it resorted to armed struggle and military resistance only when all other political and peaceful means were exhausted. This being the case, we have all the reasons to conclude that Hamas has the legitimacy to work militarily against military targets and to face the Israeli occupation while avoiding any civilians targets and respecting the humanity even in battle.

The international law provides legal and political cover for Hamas's activities in the Palestinian Territories, whether political or military. Hamas has alternatively developed its approach to international law and resolutions as these resolutions offer to deal fairly with the rights of the Palestinian people.

### *The Historic and Interim Solution*

The following analysis focuses on Hamas's position(s) on the liberation of "all Palestine" from Israeli occupation and whether this liberation has to be total or can be partial. This is a core issue of Hamas's political thought, and it represents a major distinction in its thought from the political program of the PLO and the PA. Hamas's literature discussing what usually is known as the long-term and short-term options is extensive. First, there is the long-term solution - or what can be called the historic solution - for the Palestine problem. This amounts to declaring the objective to be winning back Palestine within its historic borders, that is, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, and then to seek that goal.

Secondly, there is the short - or medium-term solution - , which can be called the interim solution to the problem. This means declaring that one is willing to accept Palestinian or Arab or Islamic sovereignty over only a part of the historic territory of Palestine, alongside a sovereign Israeli state, and the attempts to achieve this end. As it has been developed in Hamas's thought, this interim solution could be achieved either through war or through peaceful means and usually it is coupled with the idea of an armistice.

#### *The Historic Solution:*

The Hamas Charter refers to Palestine as Islamic *waqf* (religious trust land). *It is thus inalienable property granted to*

Islamic generation until Judgement Day, no Arab state nor all Arab states combined, no king or president nor all kings and presidents, and no organization nor all organization, whether Palestinian or Arab, have the right to dispose of it or relinquish or cede any part of it, because Palestine is Islamic land that has been entrusted to generations of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

Muslims until the Day of Judgement. Who, after all, has the right to act on behalf of Islamic generations until the Day of Judgement?<sup>1</sup>

Even before the Charter was issued in August 1988, Hamas communiqués conveyed the same general sense, insisting that "Palestine is an indivisible unit, from its north to its south, its coast to its mountains, and its sea to its river."<sup>2</sup>

This "historic solution" position remained constant for years after the Charter was issued. It was restated from time to time, particularly in speeches designed to mobilize opinion against the PLO policy of accepting agreements that recognized the existence of Israel, as well as in Hamas's literature directed at the Arab and Islamic hinterland. Hamas found itself obliged to reaffirm this position on several occasions when it was accused of having retreated from it. The most significant instance came in the wake of political speculation occasioned by the April 1994 initiative from its Political Bureau, which some interpreted to mean that Hamas had opted for an interim solution and abandoned its old position. Following the stir caused by the statements of then former Political Bureau head Abu Marzouq, Hamas issued a clarification affirming that "the movement still believes that the Palestinian people have a right to Palestine from the Mediterranean to the Jordan; that jihad is the path to liberation; and that negotiation with the enemy is totally unacceptable."<sup>3</sup>

It is clear that this position has remained central to Hamas even as its political position evolved. It is the threat that bound its position from its inception to all its later positions in subsequent years. This position was based on several considerations. To begin with, there was the ideological conviction stemming from an "Islamic perspective" on the sanctity of the territory of Palestine. In addition, there was and still is a perceived need for a political alternative to the course charted by the PLO, which has adopted an interim solution and is involved in negotiations. Hamas felt that the basic contribution it had to make in the Palestinian arena was to re-establish the commitment to historic fundamentals. What had befallen the PLO also casts a shadow on Hamas. The Movement saw the PLO as responding in phases to changing circumstances in the region and throughout the world. It had accepted the UN resolution and embraced nations for a compromise settlement that involved establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Hamas regarded the prospect of following the same road with great trepidation, especially in view of the fact that the PLO with the gradual softening of its position had yielded meager results.

The early years of first Intifada had fuelled enthusiasm and vigor that helped to consolidate Hamas's position. The Movement immersed itself in the daily events of the uprising, which it saw as one link in the chain leading to liberation. It vehemently rejected attempts to make political capital out of the Intifada, as the PLO had done. Hamas drew some reassurance from sticking to a position based on principle, reiterating the call for the liberation of all Palestine, and repeating continuously that the Intifada was a step on the road to liberation. Yet this sense of reassurance was a form of avoidance, because it obscured the need to find the other links in the chain for after the Intifada. The question of what happens after the Intifada remained problematic throughout the years of the uprising. There were only two "paths" for the answer: Either one had to be a realist in dealing with regional and international

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<sup>1</sup> The Hamas Charter, Article 11; see Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 10 of 12 March 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Special Hamas leaflet, "Bayan hamm sader an al-maktab al-siyasi li harakat hamas hawl al-tatawwurat al-akhira" [An important statement issued by Hamas's Political Bureau about the latest developments], 21 April 1994.

situation, which meant exploiting the Intifada for political gain, but which Hamas rejected outright; or one had to wait for a change in the regional and international situations that would make it possible to forge the next link in the chain. This change would have to come from outside Palestine, such as military action from a state surrounding Israel. However, there were no expectations that this would happen in the foreseeable future. In practice, Hamas adopted the second path - waiting for change, which offers no answer to the question that is directly relevant to the present: what comes after the Intifada?

The increasing strength of Islamic movements in the region during the late 1980s contributed, albeit indirectly, to the avoidance of this difficult question by raising hopes that the waiting time could be cut short and that external links in the chain leading to liberation could be forged. In particular, the growing power of Islamists in Algeria and Sudan, in addition to Iran of course, had a strong impact on the minds and spirits of Islamists activities, who began to hope that a change in the regional balance of power was about to occur. These developments offered Hamas a glimmer of hope on an otherwise bleak horizon, and the progress achieved by the Islamists in the Middle East encouraged it. Furthermore, the strength of the Islamists in Jordan and the strong representation that they won in parliament following elections in the late 1980s contributed to the tendency to avoid the difficult question of what comes after the Intifada and to be content with a restatement of the principled position: from the Mediterranean to the Jordan.

Related to Hamas's call for the "historic solution" was the failure of the Movement's leaders to offer a convincing answer to the question of what was to become of the millions of Jewish colonial settlers in Palestine. The most detailed explanation on this issue came from Sheikh Yassin, who suggested that all should live in equality in Palestine, but the majority should rule once all Palestinians who had been driven out or emigrated had been allowed to return.<sup>1</sup> This idea, however, was not developed in terms of the right to self-determination, elections, and other civil rights measures that could have earned it international legitimacy. Nor did it constitute a cohesive view that Hamas could put forward, even as an abstract solution, which would have allowed the Movement some room for maneuver and offered it some protection from the aggressive Israeli information campaign portraying the Arabs and Hamas as being bent on the destruction of Israel.

By analogy to the proposal formally adopted by the PLO in 1974 calling for a secular democratic state in all of Palestine - and thereby rescuing the PLO from the theoretical problem of what to do with the Jews in Palestine - Hamas has proposed a greater Islamic state in the region. This state would be established at a future date; Jews could live in it as citizens, but the proposal provides for no sovereign Jewish entity. The thinking was that the Jewish majority in Palestine would disappear once millions of Arabs in neighboring countries became part of the greater Islamic state.<sup>2</sup> This proposal was more an attempt to answer Islamic and hypothetical questions about what position to adopt concerning the status of Jews in the future than an effort to devise mechanisms for creating a functional modern, sovereign state with clearly demarcated borders.

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<sup>1</sup> Sheikh Yassin, interview in Al-Nahar, 30 April 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Sheikh Yassin, interview in Sawt al-haq wal huriya, 5 January 1990.

Since the first few months of its existence, Hamas has adopted a wavering position in favor of an interim solution in tandem with its core position calling for liberating Palestine from the Mediterranean to the Jordan. The primary reason for this is that the movement was founded in the Occupied Territories, where Hamas's leaders had a problem of openly declaring their central position, especially to the Israeli media. Broadly speaking, Palestinian resistance discourse in the Occupied Territories, as enunciated by the Movement leaders and central figures, has focused on terminating the occupation. Calls for the destruction of Israel or for liberating all Palestine from the Mediterranean to the Jordan have been conspicuous by their absence, but such calls could lead to arrest on charges of incitement.

Hamas initially was object of intense scrutiny by the media due to interest in a new and very energetic movement. The Israeli media in particular sought interviews with Hamas figures, as well as with those close to the Movement on the understanding that they were Islamists, not that they were members of or spokesmen for the Movement. Those interviews provide the first thoughts by Hamas and its leaders on the interim solution. Those ideas were rather hesitant, vacillating between the principle couched in the central position and the practical realities under which Hamas had to exist on a daily basis, the omnipresent Israeli military occupation that could not be defeated easily.

The harsh realities on the ground that made Hamas's historic solution akin to a dream rather than a political program compelled the organization to choose between two alternatives: either to deal with the full range of developments on the Palestinian scene, particularly the peace process that is very alien to its historic solution; or to turn its back on these developments because they essentially were linked to compromise settlements that Hamas rejected outright. In making its choice, Hamas tried to bridge the two so that it would gain a voice in developments while simultaneously emphasizing that "discussing details (of settlement plans) does not signify acceptance of the plans themselves."<sup>1</sup> These "details" – which greatly concerned Hamas in terms of its gains, losses, and potential role – including elections, the extent of Israeli withdrawal, the idea of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation, and the declaration of a Palestinian state; all constituted structural components for interim solutions.

Hamas's "ideas" on an interim solution for the West Bank and Gaza Strip date back to the early months of its formation, taking shape in a proposal that Mahmoud al-Zahhar presented in March 1988 to Israel's then foreign minister, Shimon Peres. At the time Zahhar was reputed to be a leading Hamas member in the Gaza Strip, but he did not *act* as an official spokesman for Hamas. Rather, he spoke in his general capacity as an Islamist who was close to the Movement. The proposal in fact outlined both a short-term and long-term solution. Zahhar's short-term solution involved four main points:

1. Israel would declare its willingness to withdraw from the territories it occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem in particular.
2. The Occupied Territories would be placed in the custody of the United Nations.

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<sup>1</sup> Abu Marzouq, interview with author, 21 May 2003.

3. The Palestinian people inside and outside Palestine would name their representatives to the peace talks in whatever manner they choose. Israel may not object to the choice unless the Palestinians also have the right to object to the representatives of Israel.
4. At the time agreed by both sides, negotiations are to begin among the representatives concerning all issues relating to all rights.<sup>1</sup>

Zahhar's long-term solution called for discussing the final situation of the Palestinian problem within wider circles than the Palestinian and Israeli ones, specifically to involve the community of Islamic peoples at large. However, his proposal did not receive the political attention or the media coverage it deserved, despite its uniqueness and significance. Apparently this was because the proposal was presented at a time when Hamas lacked the significance that it enjoyed at later stages, an importance that would prompt other parties to pay more attention to what it had to say.

Hamas's political thought on an interim solution became sharper over time, and related references and ideas became more frequent in its discourse. This occurred in tandem with the advancement of the peace process and partly as a defensive means to counter the consequences of its military action. For example, the Movement's leader Muhammad Nazzal, stated in January 1993 that Hamas was prepared to accept a peaceful solution in return for Israel's withdrawal from the territories it had occupied in 1967, so long as this was not conditioned on Hamas recognizing Israel.<sup>2</sup> However, the Movement was unable or unwilling to resolve the ambiguities that emanated from remaining faithful to its fundamental historic position and accepting interim solution. Nevertheless, it did reap political dividends by taking advantage of the maneuverability gained from the ambiguities in its position, creating a dual and contradictory image of a pragmatic and principled movement.

Hamas made its acceptance of an interim solution contingent on a number of ideological and factual conditions that helped to differentiate its position from that adopted by the PLO several years earlier. The former head of Hamas's Political Bureau summed up five pillars or guidelines on which Hamas based its support for an interim solution:

First, Hamas does not reject the interim solution on principle, but rather depending on the resulting entitlements. Second, the main dispute concerns recognition of the Zionist entity and its continued existence on the soil of Palestine. Third, in our opinion, the best method in practice to achieve progress beyond the interim solution, in terms of liberating parts of Palestine, is jihad and armed resistance, the most prominent example of which has been the Palestinian Intifada. Fourth, there is a way of accepting an interim solution that is consistent with the *shariah*, namely, an armistice (*hudna*). This differs from a peace agreement in that the armistice has a set duration, and it does not require acceptance of the usurpation of (our) rights by the enemy. Fifth, the Palestinian people must be allowed to select the strategies determining its destiny through free plebiscites and unrestricted elections for a representative legislature. They must be offered a choice concerning the proposals for a political settlement and the choice of an elected and representative leadership. Hamas will adhere to whatever the people choose –whether they choose to accept or to reject the political proposals before them- and will accept the result of the choice of leaders who will be the legitimate representative of

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<sup>1</sup> Zahhar in Zakaria Ibrahim, *Masharee' taswiyat qadhiyat filastin min 'aam 1920 hatta nihayat 'aam 1991* [Proposals for the settlement of the Palestine question, 1920-1991] (Gaza Strip: N.p., 1991), pp. 109-110.

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Rai'* (Amman), 31 January 1993.

the people and who will be in charge of implementing the programs on the basis of which they were elected.<sup>1</sup>

It is essential to state that, while these guidelines are to be found either grouped together or scattered throughout Hamas's literature and in the statements of its leaders, their best materialization was the so-called April 1994 initiative of the Movement's Political Bureau. This dealt with an interim solution, an armistice, and the establishment of a Palestinian entity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Its main points are as follows:

1. The unconditional withdrawal of the Zionist occupation forces from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including Jerusalem.
2. The dismantling and removal of settlements and the evacuation of settlers from the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem.
3. The holding of free general elections for a legislative body among the Palestinian people inside and outside (Palestine) so that they can choose their own leadership alone shall decide on all the subsequent steps in our struggle with the occupiers.<sup>2</sup>

The remarkable aspect here is that "these points are grouped together in the form of an agenda or initiative. This is the first time in Hamas's history that the Movement provided a (non-historic) concept (of a solution) in the form of a proposal or an almost comprehensive solution."<sup>3</sup> The other new aspect was the external one, that is, the increasing concern with all things relating to Hamas. Thus, the April 1994 initiative received far greater attention than al-Zahhar's 1988 proposal had gotten. Simply stated, the Movement had become a major political force, and considerable attention was attached to the positions it adopted in view of the changing political context and developments at the Palestinian level and in Israel and the region.

#### *Acceptance in Principle of an Interim Solution*

The first pillar is not to reject the principle of an interim solution. The literature produced by Hamas during its first year, as well as the statements made by its leaders, indicate that the notion was accepted from the beginning and was not the result of the post-Oslo phase. If one follows Hamas's literature from the Movement's formation, one finds a realistic attitude very early on, an awareness that the Palestinian "dream" cannot be realized immediately and an acceptance in principle of an interim solution. The best evidence of this is found in the statements of Sheikh Yassin during the first two years of Hamas's existence, before he was imprisoned. For instance, he spoke of his acceptance of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip "or on any inch of Palestine that we liberate...but without relinquishing our remaining rights" as a preliminary stage.<sup>4</sup> In the same interview he rejected the view that there are not sufficient bases for a Palestinian state. Several years later (end of 1993) in his letters

<sup>1</sup> Abu Marzouq interview, 21 May 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Statement issued by the Hamas political Bureau, 26 April 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Khaled Hroub, "Harakat Hamas bayn al-sulta al-filastiniyya wa Israel: min muthallath al-quwa ila al-mitraqa wal sindan" [The Hamas movement between the Palestinian Authority and Israel: From the triad of power to the hammer and anvil]. *Majallat al-dirasat al-filastiniyya*, No. 18 (Spring 1994), p.32.

<sup>4</sup> Sheikh Yassin interview, Al-Nahar, 30 April 1989.

from prison, Sheikh Yassin once again reaffirmed his faith in a step-by-step or interim solution.

The debate revolving around an interim solution remained prominent in Hamas's discourse, but it was conditional on not making concessions regarding the fundamental position that all of Palestine was Islamic land. Theorizing continued to clarify the idea. The following excerpt from an interview with Muhammad Nazzal, indicates how far Hamas has moved in coming to terms with complex political reality:

We are not opposed in principle to a solution by stages. However, we also have grown accustomed to the use of the term "step-by-step" as a euphemism or cover for capitulation. We now are talking about an interim solution while ignoring the issue of Jerusalem or putting off discussion of the issue...The agreement does not address the question of Jerusalem either in a positive or a negative way. In the second place, in speaking of an interim solution, we would like the enemy to clarify his position regarding [Security Council] resolutions 242 and 338. Does Israel understand these resolutions to mean that it will have to withdraw and that a Palestinian state will be created? If these resolutions mean that, then "step-by-step" here refers to implementation in stages rather than negotiation in stages...but what guarantees will be sufficient to compel Israel to withdraw and establish a Palestinian state?<sup>1</sup>

#### *The Condition that There should be No Recognition of Israel*

The condition that there should be no recognition of Israel has been a constant factor in any interim solution acceptable to Hamas. It has appeared whenever an interim solution was discussed. However, the form in which this condition has been expressed has varied with time and place and according to the source. Official communiqués have continued to stress this point. Even in recent years, statements by Hamas concerning an interim solution and political initiatives have stressed this condition. Hamas's leaders have expressed the same condition in various ways. In particular, sheikh Yassin's statements have employed two methods with regard to this issue. Prior to his arrest, he avoided giving a direct answer to the question of whether there should be recognition of Israel. This changed following his arrest. In the earlier period, when he used to dodge the question, neither accepting recognition nor calling for the destruction of Israel, he was accused of incitement and placed under arrest.

#### *Forcing the Withdrawal of the Israeli Army and Termination of the Occupation*

Hamas believed in a strategy of force to compel Israel to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, a belief that was central to the question of an interim solution. This strategy was based on the Movement's view that Israel would not withdraw its forces completely, particularly from the West Bank, nor would it give Palestinian the minimum of their rights through peaceful means. Thus, Hamas's ideology requires it to force Israel to pull out its forces through an Intifada and armed struggle. It relies on the logic of force "because force is the only language the enemy understands. Force is what convinced the enemy, following the years of the blessed Intifada, to withdraw from every bit of our territory, which we turned into hell for him, his soldiers and his settlers. If that defeatist group which is in charge of the PLO leadership had put its

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<sup>1</sup> Nazzal interview, Al-Ayyam, 13 September 1993.

energies in this direction, instead of wasting its efforts and its funds pursuing the path of defeat, then the enemy would have withdrawn under the blows of the *mujahidin*."<sup>1</sup> Hamas's political discourse indicates that the Intifada provided a historic opportunity to apply unprecedented pressure on Israel from within. The cost of the Intifada to Israel caused it seriously to entertain the idea of withdrawing from the Gaza Strip as a first step. According to Hamas, this idea would not have arisen "had it not been for the heroic resistance of the Palestinian people through the Intifada with the Islamic forces at their vanguard. This is due to the fact that the Intifada received serious support, and all efforts were directed toward escalating the resistance and increasing its efficiency. [Had this line been pursued] instead of squandering those efforts in the theatrics of settlement, Israel would have been compelled to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, without [the Palestinians having to submit to] humiliating conditions, such as those that accompanied the Oslo Agreement."<sup>2</sup>

Since the first year of the first Intifada, this belief can be seen in any reading of Hamas's objectives for the Intifada and the Movement's declared goals. Sheikh Yassin, in reply to a question concerning what he hoped to achieve through the Intifada, said: "In the first place, I want total Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, then to have these territories placed under the supervision of the United Nations, afterwards, the Palestinians will be able to choose their representatives."<sup>3</sup>

### *The Armistice*

The idea of an armistice or truce (*hudna*) as part and parcel of an interim solution came up later in the history of Hamas and was not part of its position in the early years. It represented a new element in Hamas's political thought and its vision of the struggle as a whole. It is an exception to the general rule mentioned earlier that Hamas's positions on an interim solution are both new and old and are parallel to each other, appearing in new garb periodically but remaining unchanged in their essence.

Armistice refers to the idea of signing a truce with Israel for a fixed duration, such as ten or twenty years. During this period, both parties will undertake not to attack one another. According to Hamas, the basic difference between the concept of an armistice and a peace treaty is that the latter is not of limited duration but is open-ended. A treaty therefore would involve capitulation of Palestinian rights and acceptance of the usurpation of those rights by Israel, according to Hamas. In contrast, an armistice, while constituting a realistic acknowledgement of the imbalance of power favoring the other side, puts a freeze on the situation as far as rights are concerned. In theory it provides an opportunity to alter the balance of power, which could make possible an adjustment in the status of rights at the termination of the period.<sup>4</sup>

The basic reference to an armistice occurs in Sheikh Yassin's letters from prison, referred to earlier. The letters include a dialogue with Talab al-Sane', one of the Arab members of the Israeli Knesset. In passage quoted below, Sheikh Yassin speaks clearly about his vision of an armistice:

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<sup>1</sup> Hamas leaflet, "Sit sanawat min al-jihad al-azim wal Intifada al-mutawasila" [Six years of great and continuous uprising], 17 December 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Abu Marzouq interview, 21 May 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Sheikh Yassin interview, Tediote Ahranot, 16 September 1988.

<sup>4</sup> Sheikh Yassin, *Filastin al-Muslima*, March 1995.

Q) What would you do if you were asked to sign an agreement with Israel?

A) We could sign an armistice agreement for ten or twenty years on condition that Israel shall withdraw unconditionally from the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, returning to the borders of 1967, and allowing the Palestinian people the full freedom of self-determination to decide their future.<sup>1</sup>

After that exchange the concept of an armistice assumed an important position in Hamas's political discourse and its vision of a solution. Most well-known Hamas leaders inside and outside the Occupied Territories began to refer to the concept. Abdul Aziz Rantisi, a Hamas leader inside the Occupied Territories, indicated his acceptance of the essence of Sheikh Yassin's idea: "With respect to the armistice as an interim solution, we are not opposed to the idea, because it safeguards the right of the Palestinians to demand that their homeland be returned to them. An armistice in this context means not recognizing Israel. Sheikh Yassin set a time limit on it, namely ten years, which is consistent with the Hudaibah truce and its not inconsistent with religious law."<sup>2</sup>

Among the leaders of Hamas outside the Occupied Territories, the April 1994 statement by Musa Abu Marzouq is the most significant indicator of the adoption of the armistice principle: "as a resistance movement, it is our opinion that if the enemy's government wishes to extricate itself from this impasse, it should not seek to impose surrender on the Palestinian people. There could be a peace treaty or an armistice that would provide an exit from the complicated situation in the region and allow disengagement from the crisis."<sup>3</sup>

The topic of an armistice assumed greater significance after the establishment of the PA and the arrival of its police in the Gaza Strip and Jericho in May 1994, in accordance with the Oslo Agreement. The new situation created a major dilemma for Hamas insofar as the continuation of military operations against Israeli targets was concerned. The newly constituted PA (and of course Israel) considered these operations to be a major obstacle to progress in the peace process, particularly in relation to the transfer of authority in the West Bank. The PA asked Hamas to cease its military operations in the Gaza Strip and not to use it as a staging area; Hamas refused.

The continuation of activities by Hamas and the insistence by the PA of rigorously implementing the security aspects of the Oslo Agreement as a way of demonstrating its competence and preparing for the next phase led to an escalation of tensions between them. These tensions almost brought Hamas and the PA to the brink of civil war. This situation gave new meaning to the idea of an armistice as a means of avoiding an explosive inter-Palestinian situation. "Armistice" assumed more significance for defusing potential clashes with the PA, in addition to its original relevance for the conflict with Israel. In this regard, one finds several initiatives by Hamas leaders, particularly initiatives by those inside the Occupied Territories such as "Imad al-Faluji, a prominent Hamas figure in the Gaza Strip until he was expelled in December 1995. he proposed as cessation of attacks by Hamas for ten years on condition that Israel agree to democratic elections in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank; it withdraw from those territories, including East Jerusalem; and it evacuate the

<sup>1</sup> Sheikh Yassin letters, Al-Wasat, 11 November 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Al-Sabeel (Jordan), 10 November 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Abu Marzouq, interview with author, 21 May 2003

Jewish settlers.<sup>1</sup> In a similar vein, Nizar Awadallah (another Hamas leader who was released in 1995 after six years in detention) proposed "a necessary temporary armistice so as not to put the PA in a difficult situation. This is particularly so because no one was willing any longer to tolerate the existing state of affairs between the Authority and Hamas."<sup>2</sup>

A statement on the subject of an armistice by Sheikh Yassin was made in mid-1995 (that is, one and one-half years after he first brought forth the idea) in an interview with *Maariv* Israeli newspaper during an intensive Israeli campaign against Hamas and a wave of arrests of its members. In response to a question concerning the prospects of peace with Israel, the sheikh said: "One can envision an agreement for a limited period, let us say 15 years, but not forever...I cannot commit future generations to that course of action. They will have to decide for themselves."<sup>3</sup> Limiting the armistice to a fixed duration was abandoned, practically speaking, when Sheikh Yassin involved the possibility of "renewing" the armistice. Following his release from and in response to a question concerning the state of affairs at the end of an armistice, he said: "When the armistice expires...we shall look to see whether there still are unresolved problems between us. If there are outstanding problems, then the armistice is over. However, if the problems between us have been resolved, we will renew the armistice."<sup>4</sup>

The armistice concept also assumed special importance for the al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, particularly after the operations of 1994-95, which elicited widespread condemnation. In a series of communiqués, Hamas mentioned an "armistice" that would grant immunity to civilians from violence. Hamas stated that it would not target civilians, as long as Israel pledged to do the same.

Hamas's concept of an armistice is not free of controversy. Debate on this subject centers on whether, in fact, there is such a major difference between an armistice and a peace treaty. The defenders of the armistice idea among Hamas's cadres stress that it is of limited duration and can be timed to last until the *umma* overcomes its weakness. But the defenders of the peace treaty approach put forward the argument that a peace treaty reflects the balance of power at the time; any change in the balance (such as the overcoming of weakness) will reflect on the treaty, leading to its amendment or even its abrogation. Therefore, the difference between the two concepts simply may be a semantic one, despite the historical and religious legacy that the term *hudna* (armistice) connote, but the term "peace treaty" lacks.<sup>5</sup>

### *A Popular Referendum*

The idea of a popular referendum has come to from an integral and important aspect of the interim solution idea for Hamas. As Hamas sees it, a referendum is the only mechanism that reasonably can lead to a national consensus or even a quasi-consensus on the issues that will determine the fate of the Palestinian people. It is clear that Hamas's attachment to this idea stems from its belief that if such a referendum were to be implemented it would endorse its own popularity and bestow more legitimacy on its political agenda. Hamas leaders have used the referendum concept, in many forms and on many occasions, to defend their political ideas. By saying that they would back

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Quds al Arabi*, 6 March 1990.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 24 May 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Sheikh Yassin's response to the Israeli journalist as reprinted in *Al-Hayat*, 3 June 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Sheikh Yassin interview, *Filastin al-Muslima*, November 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Hroub, *Al-Islamiyoon fi filastin*, p. 40.

down if a majority were to support alternative ideas in a referendum, Hamas leaders have been able to maintain their positions for the time being. Sheikh Yassin has maintained ever since Hamas was founded that the will of the Palestinian people should be given top priority, even if it went against the views of Hamas, and even if it went against the Islamic form of a Palestinian state. He has stated clearly: "If the Palestinian people express their rejection of an Islamic state, I Shall respect and honor their will."<sup>1</sup>

Calls for a referendum have tended to coincide with important political events and rose to a fever pitch after the failure of the Washington talks subsequent to the 1991 Madrid Conference. Hamas maintained that the opinion of the Palestinian people should be consulted concerning this issue. Such consultation "only can be done through a general popular referendum inside and outside [Palestine] in an atmosphere that is free of pressure or coercion, so that the Palestinian people will have a say in whatever affects its future, determines its fate and the fate of generations to come."<sup>2</sup>

Following this statement, Dr. Haider Abdel-Shafi, the head of the Palestinian delegation to the Washington talks, called for a referendum of the Palestinian people to determine whether to continue with the negotiations. Hamas welcomed Abdle-Shafi's call, deeming it a victory for the Movement's political stance: "Abdel-Shafi's request for a referendum constitutes a basic change and an indication of the success of Palestinian popular pressure in making the people's position known. In the next phase, the Madrid/Washington team should reconsider its calculations and review its position and go back to the Palestinian people to ask them to decide the issue."<sup>3</sup>

This position was crystallized in the seminal April 1994 initiative by Hamas's Political Bureau, which demanded general elections for a Legislative Council. The victors in those elections would decide the course for the Palestinians. In addition, the statements by the former head of the Political Bureau, which set the stage for the initiative, detailed the essential commitment to the choice of the people, no matter what it may be, and Hamas's readiness to abide by it. This was to be achieved through "free elections in which the Palestinian people would choose their elected leaders, who in turn will express the aspirations of the Palestinian people regarding the future of the struggle. If Hamas wins the elections, it will implement its well-known position on the struggle. If Hamas is in the minority, it will express its opinion freely, but will respect the opinion of the elected majority."<sup>4</sup>

### *Hamas and the Road Map*

Implementation of the Palestinian-Israeli Road Map will confront the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas with a dilemma, forcing it to choose between its ideological and long-term strategic commitment to the establishment of an Islamic state in all of Palestine, on the one hand, and its short-term political considerations, on the other. Hamas has consistently opposed any peaceful settlement with Israel and has done its utmost to sabotage any progress in that direction by launching armed attacks against Israel.

Unlike the Palestinian Authority leadership, which hoped to use the confrontation as leverage on Israel in future negotiations, Hamas wanted to force Israel to withdraw

<sup>1</sup> Sheikh Yassin interview, *Al-Nahar*, 30 April 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Hamas, Periodic statement no. 90 of 5 September 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Ibrahim Ghosheh, quoted in *Al-Quds*, 22 September 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Abu Marzouq, *Al-Sabeel* (Jordan), 19 April 1994.

unilaterally from the West Bank and Gaza Strip without any parallel Palestinian concessions. In addition, Hamas' political influence has grown during this confrontation. As the PA's civilian apparatus crumbled, Hamas more efficient and less of social-welfare institutions became ever more popular. In addition, Hamas attacks were viewed by Palestinians as appropriate punishment of Israel for the harsh measures it employed against the Palestinians. Consequently, Hamas depicted all previous proposals to end this confrontation as tantamount to Palestinian surrender.

Hamas spokesmen have opposed the Road Map as "a conspiracy" and "a disaster for the Palestinian people" that did not reflect Palestinian aspirations or redress their "immense sacrifices" after many years of struggle.<sup>1</sup> They complain that it is based on the same pattern as the 1993 Oslo Accords and view it primarily as a "security project" intended to end the Palestinian armed resistance and consecrate the occupation. They boast that Israeli Prime Minister Sharon "totally failed" to fulfill his promises to achieve security for the Israelis and insist that the Road Map was created "to pull Sharon and the Zionist entity from the quagmire of the Palestinian Intifada and the heroic resistance." They warn that the Road Map's "plotters" wanted to drive the Palestinians into a civil war that "would provide the Zionists with the security" which their military actions have failed to achieve. They caution that Israel's acceptance of the Road Map is deceptive, since Sharon continues to deny the Palestinians their basic rights, particularly Jerusalem and the right of return for the Palestinian refugees. And they predict that Israel will destroy the Road Map with more assassinations of Palestinians, more incursions and more house demolitions.<sup>2</sup>

However, as a mass movement with long-term aspirations to succeed the PA leadership, Hamas has always been attuned to Palestinian public opinion. Therefore, it cannot ignore popular support for the Road Map, which promises to ease the dire socio-economic conditions of Palestinians after 30 months of fighting. Nor can Hamas afford to be blamed for the continuation of Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories and the thwarting of all prospects of Palestinians statehood. Finally, Hamas must consider the possibility of pressure from friendly Arab governments, mainly in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, which support the US effort, lest it lose their financial and political backing.

In return, Hamas would stop targeting the "so-called civilians within Zionist society." Such terminology implies a refusal to stop attacks on Israeli soldiers and on civilians in the Palestinian Territories. But it also warned that it would never voluntarily give up its weapons. Khaled Masha'al, the head of Hamas's Political Bureau, went further, saying that Hamas would continue its armed resistance as long as Israeli occupation of Palestinian land continued.<sup>3</sup>

While Hamas may eventually accept a temporary truce (ceasefire) frequently, with Israel, it is highly unlikely that it will agree to hand in its weapons to the PA or tone down its vicious anti-Jewish incitement, as required by the Road Map. It is more likely that Hamas will mobilize public support against any perceived concessions by the Palestinian negotiators and wait for the opportunity to resume military activity

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<sup>1</sup> Abel Aziz Rantisi, interview with author, 20 June 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Khaled Masha'al, interview in Al-Jazeera TV. 25 August 2003.



## *Conclusion*

This study has examined in detail the emergence and evolution of Hamas's ideology, political thought, and, above all, it's about foreign relations. It showed the qualitative leap in the self-perception of the mainstream Palestinian Islamists at the end of 1987, when the Intifada was launched. The Islamists reinvented themselves, making the transition from being a social-educational-proselytizing movement (predominantly in the shape of the Muslim Brotherhood) to a political, armed resistance organization (mainly in the form of Hamas).

In its first years of existence (1987-90), Hamas's total involvement in the Intifada, which accompanied the birth of the Movement, limited the depth and scope of its political thought. The first Intifada was the biggest and the most consuming issue on Hamas's agenda. During those initial years in particular, the Movement suffered from the absence of an organizational extension outside the Occupied Territories. Such an extension could have provided it with a regional or international perspective and could have helped it to formulate a political ideology in keeping with the growth of the Movement, the spread of the Intifada, and the expansion of its base of support. A disparity between the growing popular base of the Movement and its political inexperience was abetted by the constant change in the top echelons of Hamas's leadership due to the continual arrests of its leaders. These developments forced Hamas to promote its second-, third-, fourth-, and, occasionally, even fifth-level leaders to the first rank to fill the vacuum. Consequently, the Movement's political leaders had no opportunity to acquire experience and to capitalize on that experience in formulating Hamas's ideology or deciding on its political positions.

Hamas's ideology and political practice also are shaped by international and regional circumstances. Hamas is not an isolated phenomenon; it is a part of the rising Islamic tide, a phenomenon that appeared in the late 1970s and has been gaining influence ever since. This Islamic wave has been gaining mass support faster than it could absorb it, and its capacity to forecast the future course or to devise formulas that would enhance its own progress has been outstripped by events. Thus, the political thought of the Islamist movement in general –the source from which Hamas derives its sustenance- has remained meager and disproportionate to its size. This is reflected in the manner in which Islamist organizations have made forays into the domains of political sociology, culture, and economics.

Since 1988, American and international efforts to find a peaceful solutions to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have intensified, while an Arab military option became remote as a result of the Iran-Iraq war. When that conflict ended, the Gulf War swept through the region, the Arabs states became severely divided, foreign troops came to the region, and the most important Arab military power was destroyed. Then the peace process was launched. The Madrid Conference was convened in 1991, and the Oslo and Cairo agreements followed in 1993 and 1994. Furthermore, the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc collapsed at the end of the 1980s, and the beginning of the 1990s, upsetting the international balance of power, with repercussions for the Arab region. New slogans concerning democracy and human rights circulated around the globe as part of the (American) "new world order." Political opportunities shrank for

all Third World (not just Arab) political movements opposed to American hegemony in the wake of the Cold War. The fast pace of these developments called for political flexibility, a capacity for improvisation, and a quick response time with which the slow pace of traditional *fiqh*-style *ijtihad* could not cope.

At the pan-Arab level, as a general rule, Hamas avoided joining political blocs or siding with one camp against the other. It managed to stake out a middle-of-the-road position that maintained certain political relations with most states in the Middle East: Egypt, Jordan (before the deportation of its leaders), Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, and non-Arab Iran. It fortuitously escaped the Gulf War imbroglio by adopting a middle-of-the-road position to the right of the PLO, coming out in favor of the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and withdrawal foreign forces from the Gulf. It did this at a time when no popular movements or parties in Palestine or Jordan—the two areas where Hamas's popular base is concentrated—dared to call for the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Hamas's relations with Syria and Libya came next in order of importance.

In its relations with international organizations, Hamas suffered from a serious handicap in that it was unable to gain the support of any major power. The end of the Cold War and its bipolarity worked to the disadvantage of Hamas, in view of the international consensus that the United States was able to secure on a peace settlement in the Middle East, the Madrid Conference and the Oslo agreements. In fact, Hamas was burdened with international condemnation because of its continued use of armed operations. Its numerous appeals, memoranda, and explanations that resistance to occupation was legitimate from the perspective of the United Nations and international law were of no avail in altering the overall Western perspective on its practices. Particularly after the series of suicide bombings, Hamas's activities and its style of resistance to occupation came to be seen as terrorism.

At any rate, the continued existence of Hamas as a grass-roots movement is not in doubt. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, to destroy it because it is so deeply rooted. Even if the current organization is eliminated, it will reproduce itself once again in a new guise. As long as a large percentage—if not the majority of Palestinians in this case—feel that the bare minimum of Palestinian rights have not been achieved, the soil will be fertile for the reemergence of Hamas or an organization closely resembling it. "Even if outside support were to end, the Palestinian Islamic groups have sufficient support among Palestinian inside the territories to continue operating."<sup>1</sup>

However, the future of Hamas, or more accurately, the future of Hamas's objectives in Palestine, is tied to very complicated factors exogenous to the Palestinian context. Whether Hamas continues its armed operations or freezes them will become more dependent on the regional context than ever.

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<sup>1</sup> Congressional Research Service, "Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad: Recent Developments, Sources of support and implications for U.S. Policy," Report submitted to the Foreign Relations and National Security Committee of the U.S. Congress (Washington: Government Printing Office, December 1994), p. 13.

Appendix

*Hamas Charter: published 18 August 1988.*

# *The Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)*

*In The Name Of the Most Merciful Allah*

You are the best community that has been raised up for mankind.

Ye enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency; and ye believe in Allah. And if the People of the Scripture had believed, it had been better for them. Some of them are believers; but most of them are evil-doers.

They will not harm you save a trifling hurt, and if they fight against you they will turn and flee. And afterward they will not be helped.

*Ignominy shall be their portion wheresoever they are found save [where they grasp] a rope from Allah and a rope from man. They have incurred anger from their Lord, and wretchedness is laid upon them. That is because they used to disbelieve the revelations of Allah, and slew the Prophets wrongfully. That is because they were rebellious and used to transgress. Surat Al-Imran (III), verses 109-111*

Israel will rise and will remain erect until Islam eliminates it as it had eliminated its predecessors.

The Islamic World is burning. It is incumbent upon each one of us to pour some water, little as it may be, with a view of extinguishing as much of the fire as he can, without awaiting action by the others.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Grace to Allah, whose help we seek, whose forgiveness we beseech, whose guidance we implore and on whom we rely. We pray and bid peace upon the Messenger of Allah, his family, his companions, his followers and those who spread his message and followed his tradition; they will last as long as there exist Heaven and Earth.

O, people! In the midst of misadventure, from the depth of suffering, from the believing hearts and purified arms; aware of our duty and in response to the decree of Allah, we direct our call, we rally together and join each other. We educate in the path of Allah and we make our firm determination prevail so as to take its proper role in life, to overcome all difficulties and to cross all hurdles. Hence our permanent state of preparedness and our readiness to sacrifice our souls and dearest [possessions] in the path of Allah.

Thus, our nucleus has formed which chartered its way in the tempestuous ocean of creeds and hopes, desires and wishes, dangers and difficulties, setbacks and challenges, both internal and external.

When the thought matured, the seed grew and the plant took root in the land of reality, detached from temporary emotion and unwelcome haste, the Islamic Resistance Movement erupted in order to play its role in the path of its Lord. In so doing, it joined its hands with those of all Jihad fighters for the purpose of liberating Palestine. The souls of its Jihad fighters will encounter those of all Jihad fighters who have sacrificed their lives in the land of Palestine since it was conquered by the Companion of the Prophet, be Allah's prayer and peace upon him, and until this very day. This is the Charter of the Islamic Resistance (Hamas) which will reveal its face, unveil its identity, state its position, clarify its purpose, discuss its hopes, call for support to its cause and reinforcement, and for joining its ranks. For our struggle against the Jews is extremely wide-ranging and grave, so much so that it will need all the loyal efforts we can wield, to be followed by further steps and reinforced by successive battalions from the multifarious Arab and Islamic world, until the enemies are defeated and Allah's victory prevails. Thus we shall perceive them approaching in the horizon, and this will be known before long:

*"Allah has decreed: Lo! I very shall conquer, I and my messenger, lo!  
Allah is strong, almighty.:"*

## **PART I - KNOWING THE MOVEMENT**

### *The Ideological Aspects*

#### **Article One**

The Islamic Resistance Movement draws its guidelines from Islam; derives from it its thinking, interpretations and views about existence, life and humanity; refers back to it for its conduct; and is inspired by it in whatever step it takes.

### *The Link between Hamas and the Association of Muslim Brothers*

#### **Article Two**

The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the wings of the Muslim Brothers in Palestine. The Muslim Brotherhood Movement is a world organization, the largest Islamic Movement in the modern era. It is characterized by a profound understanding, by precise notions and by a complete comprehensiveness of all concepts of Islam in all domains of life: views and beliefs, politics and economics, education and society, jurisprudence and rule, indoctrination and teaching, the arts and publications, the hidden and the evident, and all the other domains of life.

### *Structure and Essence*

#### **Article Three**

The basic structure of the Islamic Resistance Movement consists of Muslims who are devoted to Allah and worship Him verily [as it is written]: "I have created Man and Devil for the purpose of their worship" [of Allah]. Those Muslims are cognizant of their duty towards themselves, their families and country and they have been relying on Allah for all that. They have raised the banner of Jihad in the face of the oppressors

in order to extricate the country and the people from the [oppressors'] desecration, filth and evil.

#### **Article Four**

The Movement welcomes all Muslims who share its beliefs and thinking, commit themselves to its course of action, keep its secrets and aspire to join its ranks in order to carry out their duty.

Allah will reward them.

#### ***Dimensions of Time and Space of the Hamas***

#### **Article Five**

As the Movement adopts Islam as its way of life, its time dimension extends back as far as the birth of the Islamic Message and of the Righteous Ancestor. Its ultimate goal is Islam, the Prophet its model, the Qur'an its Constitution. Its special dimension extends wherever on earth there are Muslims, who adopt Islam as their way of life; thus, it penetrates to the deepest reaches of the land and to the highest spheres of Heavens.

#### ***Peculiarity and Independence***

#### **Article Six**

The Islamic Resistance Movement is a distinct Palestinian Movement which owes its loyalty to Allah, derives from Islam its way of life and strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine. Only under the shadow of Islam could the members of all regions coexist in safety and security for their lives, properties and rights. In the absence of Islam, conflict arises, oppression reigns, corruption is rampant and struggles and wars prevail. Allah had inspired the Muslim poet, Muhammad Iqbal, when he said:

When the Faith wanes, there is no security  
There is no this-worldliness for those who  
have no faith. Those who wish to live their life  
without religion Have made  
annihilation the equivalent of life.

#### ***The Universality of Hamas***

#### **Article Seven**

By virtue of the distribution of Muslims, who pursue the cause of the Hamas, all over the globe, and strive for its victory, for the reinforcement of its positions and for the encouragement of its Jihad, the Movement is a universal one. It is apt to be that due to the clarity of its thinking, the nobility of its purpose and the loftiness of its objectives.

It is in this light that the Movement has to be regarded, evaluated and acknowledged. Whoever denigrates its worth, or avoids supporting it, or is so blind as to dismiss its role, is challenging Fate itself. Whoever closes his eyes from seeing the facts, whether

intentionally or not, will wake up to find himself overtaken by events, and will find no excuses to justify his position. Priority is reserved to the early comers.

Oppressing those who are closest to you, is more of an agony to the soul than the impact of an Indian sword.

*And unto thee have we revealed the Scripture with the truth, confirming whatever scripture was before it, and a watcher over it. So judge between them by that which Allah hath revealed, and follow not their desires away from the truth which has come unto thee. For each we have appointed a divine law and a traced-out way. Had Allah willed, He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which he has given you [He has made you as you are]. So vie with one another in good works. Unto Allah, you will all return. He will then inform you of that wherein you differ.*

Hamas is one of the links in the Chain of Jihad in the confrontation with the Zionist invasion. It links up with the setting out of the Martyr Izz a-din al-Qassam and his brothers in the Muslim Brotherhood who fought the Holy War in 1936; it further relates to another link of the Palestinian Jihad and the Jihad and efforts of the Muslim Brothers during the 1948 War, and to the Jihad operations of the Muslim Brothers in 1968 and thereafter.

But even if the links have become distant from each other, and even if the obstacles erected by those who revolve in the Zionist orbit, aiming at obstructing the road before the Jihad fighters, have rendered the pursuance of Jihad impossible; nevertheless, the Hamas has been looking forward to implement Allah's promise whatever time it might take. The prophet, prayer and peace be upon him, said:

*The time will not come until Muslims will fight the Jews (and kill them); until the Jews hide behind rocks and trees, which will cry: O Muslim! there is a Jew hiding behind me, come on and kill him! This will not apply to the Gharqad, which is a Jewish tree (cited by Bukhari and Muslim).*

### ***The Slogan of the Hamas***

#### **Article Eight**

Allah is its goal, the Prophet its model, the Qur'an its Constitution, Jihad its path and death for the case of Allah its most sublime belief.

### **PART II - OBJECTIVES**

#### ***Motives and Objectives***

#### **Article Nine**

Hamas finds itself at a period of time when Islam has waned away from the reality of life. For this reason, the checks and balances have been upset, concepts have become

confused, and values have been transformed; evil has prevailed, oppression and obscurity have reigned; cowards have turned tigers, homelands have been usurped, people have been uprooted and are wandering all over the globe. The state of truth has disappeared and was replaced by the state of evil. Nothing has remained in its right place, for when Islam is removed from the scene, everything changes. These are the motives.

As to the objectives: discarding the evil, crushing it and defeating it, so that truth may prevail, homelands revert [to their owners], calls for prayer be heard from their mosques, announcing the reinstatement of the Muslim state. Thus, people and things will revert to their true place.

#### **Article Ten**

The Islamic Resistance Movement, while breaking its own path, will do its utmost to constitute at the same time a support to the weak, a defense to all the oppressed. It will spare no effort to implement the truth and abolish evil, in speech and in fact, both here and in any other location where it can reach out and exert influence.

### **PART III - STRATEGIES AND METHODS**

#### ***The Strategy of Hamas: Palestine is an Islamic Waqf***

#### **Article Eleven**

The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine has been an Islamic Waqf throughout the generations and until the Day of Resurrection, no one can renounce it or part of it, or abandon it or part of it. No Arab country nor the aggregate of all Arab countries, and no Arab King or President nor all of them in the aggregate, have that right, nor has that right any organization or the aggregate of all organizations, be they Palestinian or Arab, because Palestine is an Islamic Waqf throughout all generations and to the Day of Resurrection. Who can presume to speak for all Islamic Generations to the Day of Resurrection? This is the status [of the land] in Islamic Shari'a, and it is similar to all lands conquered by Islam by force, and made thereby Waqf lands upon their conquest, for all generations of Muslims until the Day of Resurrection. This [norm] has prevailed since the commanders of the Muslim armies completed the conquest of Syria and Iraq, and they asked the Caliph of Muslims, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, for his view of the conquered land, whether it should be partitioned between the troops or left in the possession of its population, or otherwise. Following discussions and consultations between the Caliph of Islam, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, and the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, be peace and prayer upon him, they decided that the land should remain in the hands of its owners to benefit from it and from its wealth; but the control of the land and the land itself ought to be endowed as a Waqf [in perpetuity] for all generations of Muslims until the Day of Resurrection. The ownership of the land by its owners is only one of usufruct, and this Waqf will endure as long as Heaven and earth last. Any demarche in violation of this law of Islam, with regard to Palestine, is baseless and reflects on its perpetrators.

**Article Twelve**

Hamas regards Nationalism (Wataniyya) as part and parcel of the religious faith. Nothing is loftier or deeper in Nationalism than waging Jihad against the enemy and confronting him when he sets foot on the land of the Muslims. And this becomes an individual duty binding on every Muslim man and woman; a woman must go out and fight the enemy even without her husband's authorization, and a slave without his masters' permission.

This [principle] does not exist under any other regime, and it is a truth not to be questioned. While other nationalisms consist of material, human and territorial considerations, the nationality of Hamas also carries, in addition to all those, the all important divine factors which lend to it its spirit and life; so much so that it connects with the origin of the spirit and the source of life and raises in the skies of the Homeland the Banner of the Lord, thus inexorably connecting earth with Heaven.

When Moses came and threw his baton, sorcery and sorcerers became futile.

*Peaceful Solutions, [Peace] Initiatives and International Conferences*

**Article Thirteen**

[Peace] initiatives, the so-called peaceful solutions, and the international conferences to resolve the Palestinian problem, are all contrary to the beliefs of the Islamic Resistance Movement. For renouncing any part of Palestine means renouncing part of the religion; the nationalism of the Islamic Resistance Movement is part of its faith, the movement educates its members to adhere to its principles and to raise the banner of Allah over their homeland as they fight their Jihad: "Allah is the all-powerful, but most people are not aware."

From time to time a clamoring is voiced, to hold an International Conference in search for a solution to the problem. Some accept the idea, others reject it, for one reason or another, demanding the implementation of this or that condition, as a prerequisite for agreeing to convene the Conference or for participating in it. But the Islamic Resistance Movement, which is aware of the [prospective] parties to this conference, and of their past and present positions towards the problems of the Muslims, does not believe that those conferences are capable of responding to demands, or of restoring rights or doing justice to the oppressed.

Those conferences are no more than a means to appoint the nonbelievers as arbitrators in the lands of Islam. Since when did the Unbelievers do justice to the Believers?

*And the Jews will not be pleased with thee, nor will the Christians, till thou follow their creed. 'Say: Lo! the guidance of Allah [himself] is the Guidance. And if you should follow their desires after the knowledge which has come unto thee, then you would have from Allah no protecting friend nor helper. Sura 2 (the Cow), verse 120*

There is no solution to the Palestinian problem except by Jihad. The initiatives, proposals and International Conferences are but a waste of time, an exercise in futility. The Palestinian people are too noble to have their future, their right and their destiny submitted to a vain game. As the hadith has it:

*The people of Syria are Allah's whip on this land; He takes revenge by their intermediary from whoever he wished among his worshipers. The Hypocrites among them are forbidden from vanquishing the true believers, and they will die in anxiety and sorrow. (Told by Tabarani, who is traceable in ascending order of traditionaries to Muhammad, and by Ahmed whose chain of transmission is incomplete. But it is bound to be a true hadith, for both story tellers are reliable. Allah knows best.)*

### ***The Three Circles***

#### **Article Fourteen**

The problem of the liberation of Palestine relates to three circles: the Palestinian, the Arab and the Islamic. Each one of these circles has a role to play in the struggle against Zionism and it has duties to fulfill. It would be an enormous mistake and an abysmal act of ignorance to disregard anyone of these circles.

For Palestine is an Islamic land where the First Qibla and the third holiest site are located. That is also the place whence the Prophet, be Allah's prayer and peace upon him, ascended to heavens.

*Glorified be He who carried His servant by night from the Inviolable Place of worship to the Far Distant Place of Worship, the neighborhood whereof we have blessed, that we might show him of our tokens! Lo! He, only He, is the Hearer, the Seer. Sura XVII (al-Isra'), verse 1*

In consequence of this state of affairs, the liberation of that land is an individual duty binding on all Muslims everywhere. This is the base on which all Muslims have to regard the problem; this has to be understood by all Muslims. When the problem is dealt with on this basis, where the full potential of the three circles is mobilized, then the current circumstances will change and the day of liberation will come closer.

*You are more awful as a fear in their bosoms than Allah. That is because they are a folk who understand not. Sura LIX, (Al-Hashr, the Exile), verse 13*

### ***The Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine is an Individual Obligation***

#### **Article Fifteen**

When our enemies usurp some Islamic lands, Jihad becomes a duty binding on all Muslims. In order to face the usurpation of Palestine by the Jews, we have no escape from raising the banner of Jihad. This would require the propagation of Islamic

consciousness among the masses on all local, Arab and Islamic levels. We must spread the spirit of Jihad among the [Islamic] Umma, clash with the enemies and join the ranks of the Jihad fighters.

The 'ulama as well as educators and teachers, publicity and media men as well as the masses of the educated, and especially the youth and the elders of the Islamic Movements, must participate in this raising of consciousness. There is no escape from introducing fundamental changes in educational curricula in order to cleanse them from all vestiges of the ideological invasion which has been brought about by orientalist and missionaries.

That invasion had begun overtaking this area following the defeat of the Crusader armies by Salah a-Din el Ayyubi. The Crusaders had understood that they had no way to vanquish the Muslims unless they prepared the grounds for that with an ideological invasion which would confuse the thinking of Muslims, revile their heritage, discredit their ideals, to be followed by a military invasion. That was to be in preparation for the Imperialist invasion, as in fact [General] Allenby acknowledged it upon his entry to Jerusalem: "Now, the Crusades are over." General Gouraud stood on the tomb of Salah a-Din and declared: "We have returned, O Salah-a-Din!" Imperialism has been instrumental in boosting the ideological invasion and deepening its roots, and it is still pursuing this goal. All this had paved the way to the loss of Palestine. We must imprint on the minds of generations of Muslims that the Palestinian problem is a religious one, to be dealt with on this premise. It includes Islamic holy sites such as the Aqsa Mosque, which is inexorably linked to the Holy Mosque as long as the Heaven and earth will exist, to the journey of the Messenger of Allah, be Allah's peace and blessing upon him, to it, and to his ascension from it.

*Dwelling one day in the Path of Allah is better than the entire world and everything that exists in it. The place of the whip of one among you in Paradise is better than the entire world and everything that exists in it. [God's] worshiper's going and coming in the Path of Allah is better than the entire world and everything that exists in it. (Told by Bukhari, Muslim Tirmidhi and Ibn Maja)*

*I swear by that who holds in His Hands the Soul of Muhammad! I indeed wish to go to war for the sake of Allah! I will assault and kill, assault and kill, assault and kill. (told by Bukhari and Muslim).*

## **Article Sixteen**

We must accord the Islamic [young] generations in our area, an Islamic education based on the implementation of religious precepts, on the conscientious study of the Book of Allah; on the Study of the Prophetic Tradition, on the study of Islamic history and heritage from its reliable sources, under the guidance of experts and scientists, and on singling out the paths which constitute for the Muslims sound concepts of thinking and faith. It is also necessary to study conscientiously the enemy and its material and human potential; to detect its weak and strong spots, and to recognize the powers that support it and stand by it. At the same time, we must be aware of current events, follow the news and study the analyses and commentaries on it, together with drawing plans for the present and the future and examining every phenomenon, so

that every Muslim, fighting Jihad, could live out his era aware of his objective, his goals, his way and the things happening round him.

*O my dear son! Lo! though it be but the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, and though it be in a rock, or in the heavens, or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth. Lo! Allah is subtle. Aware. O my dear son! Establish worship and enjoin kindness and forbid inequity, and persevere, whatever may befall thee. Lo! that is of the steadfast heart of things. Turn not thy cheek in scorn toward folk, nor walk with pertness in the land. Lo! Allah loves not braggarts and boasters. Sura XXXI (Luqman), verses 16-18*

## ***The Role of Muslim Women***

### **Article Seventeen**

The Muslim women have a no lesser role than that of men in the war of liberation; they manufacture men and play a great role in guiding and educating the [new] generation. The enemies have understood that role, therefore they realize that if they can guide and educate [the Muslim women] in a way that would distance them from Islam, they would have won that war. Therefore, you can see them making consistent efforts [in that direction] by way of publicity and movies, curricula of education and culture, using as their intermediaries their craftsmen who are part of the various Zionist Organizations which take on all sorts of names and shapes such as: the Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, gangs of spies and the like. All of them are nests of saboteurs and sabotage.

Those Zionist organizations control vast material resources, which enable them to fulfill their mission amidst societies, with a view of implementing Zionist goals and sowing the concepts that can be of use to the enemy. Those organizations operate [in a situation] where Islam is absent from the arena and alienated from its people. Thus, the Muslims must fulfill their duty in confronting the schemes of those saboteurs. When Islam will retake possession of [the means to] guide the life [of the Muslims], it will wipe out those organizations which are the enemy of humanity and Islam.

### **Article Eighteen**

The women in the house and the family of Jihad fighters, whether they are mothers or sisters, carry out the most important duty of caring for the home and raising the children upon the moral concepts and values which derive from Islam; and of educating their sons to observe the religious injunctions in preparation for the duty of Jihad awaiting them. Therefore, we must pay attention to the schools and curricula upon which Muslim girls are educated, so as to make them righteous mothers, who are conscious of their duties in the war of liberation. They must be fully capable of being aware and of grasping the ways to manage their households. Economy and avoiding waste in household expenditures are prerequisites to our ability to pursue our cause in the difficult circumstances surrounding us. Therefore let them remember at all times that money saved is equivalent to blood, which must be made to run in the veins in order to ensure the continuity of life of our young and old.

*Lo, men who surrender unto Allah, and women who surrender and men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth and men who persevere (in righteousness) and women who persevere and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their modesty and women who guard [their modesty], and men who remember Allah much and women who remember Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward. Sura 33 (Al-Ahzab, the Clans), verse 35*

## ***The Role of Islamic Art in the War of Liberation***

### **Article Nineteen**

Art has rules and criteria by which one can know whether it is Islamic or Jahiliyya art. The problems of Islamic liberation underlie the need for Islamic art which could lift the spirit, and instead of making one party triumph over the other, would lift up all parties in harmony and balance.

Man is a strange and miraculous being, made out of a handful of clay and a breath of soul; Islamic art is to address man on this basis, while Jahili art addresses the body and makes the element of clay paramount. So, books, articles, publications, religious exhortations, epistles, songs, poems, hymns, plays, and the like, if they possess the characteristics of Islamic art, have the requisites of ideological mobilization, of a continuous nurturing in the pursuance of the journey, and of relaxing the soul. The road is long and the suffering is great and the spirits are weary; it is Islamic art which renews the activity, revives the movement and arouses lofty concepts and sound planning. The soul cannot thrive, unless it knows how to contrive, unless it can transit from one situation to another. All this is a serious matter, no jesting. For the umma fighting its Jihad knows no jesting.

### ***Social Solidarity***

#### **Article Twenty**

Islamic society is one of solidarity. The Messenger of Allah, be Allah's prayer and peace upon him, said:

*What a wonderful tribe were the Ash'aris! When they were overtaxed, either in their location or during their journeys, they would collect all their possessions, and then would divide them equally among themselves.*

This is the Islamic spirit which ought to prevail in any Muslim society. A society which confronts a vicious, Nazi-like enemy, who does not differentiate between man and woman, elder and young ought to be the first to adorn itself with this Islamic spirit. Our enemy pursues the style of collective punishment of usurping people's countries and properties, of pursuing them into their exiles and places of assembly. It has resorted to breaking bones, opening fire on women and children and the old, with

or without reason, and to setting up detention camps where thousands upon thousands are interned in inhuman conditions. In addition, it destroys houses, renders children orphans and issues oppressive judgements against thousands of young people who spend the best years of their youth in the darkness of prisons. The Nazism of the Jews does not skip women and children, it scares everyone. They make war against people's livelihood, plunder their moneys and threaten their honor. In their horrible actions they mistreat people like the most horrendous war criminals.

Exiling people from their country is another way of killing them. As we face this misconduct, we have no escape from establishing social solidarity among the people, from confronting the enemy as one solid body, so that if one organ is hurt the rest of the body will respond with alertness and fervor.

### **Article Twenty-One**

Social solidarity consists of extending help to all the needy, both materially and morally, or assisting in the execution of certain actions. It is incumbent upon the members of the Hamas to look after the interests of the masses the way they would look after their own interests. They must spare no effort in the implementation and maintenance of those interests, and they must avoid playing with anything that might effect the future generations or cause damage to their society. For the masses are of them and for them, their strength is [ultimately] theirs and their future is theirs. The members of Hamas must share with the people its joys and sorrows, and adopt the demands of the people and anything likely to fulfill its interests and theirs. When this spirit reigns, congeniality will deepen, cooperation and compassion will prevail, unity will firm up, and the ranks will be strengthened in the confrontation with the enemy.

### ***The Powers which Support the Enemy***

### **Article Twenty-Two**

The enemies have been scheming for a long time, and they have consolidated their schemes, in order to achieve what they have achieved. They took advantage of key elements in unfolding events, and accumulated a huge and influential material wealth which they put to the service of implementing their dream. This wealth [permitted them to] take over control of the world media such as news agencies, the press, publication houses, broadcasting and the like. [They also used this] wealth to stir revolutions in various parts of the globe in order to fulfill their interests and pick the fruits. They stood behind the French and the Communist Revolutions and behind most of the revolutions we hear about here and there. They also used the money to establish clandestine organizations which are spreading around the world, in order to destroy societies and carry out Zionist interests. Such organizations are: the Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, B'nai B'rith and the like. All of them are destructive spying organizations. They also used the money to take over control of the Imperialist states and made them colonize many countries in order to exploit the wealth of those countries and spread their corruption therein.

As regards local and world wars, it has come to pass and no one objects, that they stood behind World War I, so as to wipe out the Islamic Caliphate. They collected material gains and took control of many sources of wealth. They obtained the Balfour

Declaration and established the League of Nations in order to rule the world by means of that organization. They also stood behind World War II, where they collected immense benefits from trading with war materials and prepared for the establishment of their state. They inspired the establishment of the United Nations and the Security Council to replace the League of Nations, in order to rule the world by their intermediary. There was no war that broke out anywhere without their fingerprints on it:

*...As often as they light a fire for war, Allah extinguishes it. Their efforts are for corruption in the land and Allah loves not corrupters.*  
Sura V (Al-Ma'ida - the Tablespread), verse 64

The forces of Imperialism in both the Capitalist West and the Communist East support the enemy with all their might, in material and human terms, taking turns between themselves. When Islam appears, all the forces of Unbelief unite to confront it, because the Community of Unbelief is one.

*Oh ye who believe! Take not for intimates others than your own folk, who would spare no pain to ruin you. Hatred is revealed by [the utterance of] their mouth, but that which their breasts hide is greater. We have made plain for you the revelations if you will understand.*  
Sura III, (Al-Imran), verse 118

It is not in vain that the verse ends with God's saying: "If you will understand."

#### **PART IV**

#### ***Our Position Vis-a-Vis the Islamic Movements***

#### **Article Twenty-Three**

The Hamas views the other Islamic movements with respect and appreciation. Even when it differs from them in one aspect or another or on one concept or another, it agrees with them in other aspects and concepts. It reads those movements as included in the framework of striving [for the sake of Allah], as long as they hold sound intentions and abide by their devotion to Allah, and as long as their conduct remains within the perimeter of the Islamic circle. All the fighters of Jihad have their reward.

The Hamas regards those movements as its stock holders and asks Allah for guidance and integrity of conduct for all. It shall not fail to continue to raise the banner of unity and to exert efforts in order to implement it, [based] upon the [Holy] Book and the [Prophet's] Tradition.

*And hold fast, all of you together, to the cable of Allah, do not separate. And remember Allah's favor unto you how ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace; and (how) ye were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, and He did save you from it. Thus Allah makes clear His revelations unto you, that happily ye may be guided.* Sura III (Al-Imran), verse 102

## Article Twenty-Four

Hamas will not permit the slandering and defamation of individuals and groups, for the Believers are not slanderers and cursers. However, despite the need to differentiate between that and the positions and modes of conduct adopted by individuals and groups whenever the Hamas detects faulty positions and modes of conduct, it has the right to point to the mistake, to denigrate it, to act for spelling out the truth and for adopting it realistically in the context of a given problem. Wisdom is roaming around, and the Believer ought to grasp it wherever he can find it.

*Allah loves not the utterance of harsh speech save by one who has been wronged. Allah is ever Hearer, Knower. If you do good openly or keep it secret, or give evil, lo! Allah is forgiving, powerful. Sura IV (Women), verses 147-148*

## *The National (wataniyya) Movements in the Palestinian Arena*

### Article Twenty-Five

[Hamas] reciprocated its respect to them, appreciates their condition and the factors surrounding them and influencing them, and supports them firmly as long as they do not owe their loyalty to the Communist East or to the Crusader West. We reiterate to every one who is part of them or sympathizes with them that the Hamas is a movement of Jihad, or morality and consciousness in its concept of life. It moves forward with the others, abhors opportunism, and only wishes well to individuals and groups. It does not aspire to material gains, or to personal fame, nor does it solicit remuneration from the people. It sets out relying on its own material resources, and what is available to it, [as it is said] "afford them the power you can avail yourself of". [All that] in order to carry out its duty, to gain Allah's favor; it has no ambition other than that.

All the nationalist streams, operating in the Palestinian arena for the sake of the liberation of Palestine, may rest assured that they will definitely and resolutely get support and assistance, in speech and in action, at the present and in the future, [because Hamas aspires] to unite, not to divide; to safeguard, not to squander; to bring together, not to fragment. It values every kind word, every devoted effort and every commendable endeavor. It closes the door before marginal quarrels, it does not heed rumors and biased statements, and it is aware of the right of self-defense.

Anything that runs counter or contradicts this orientation is trumped up by the enemies or by those who run in their orbit in order to create confusion, to divide our ranks or to divert to marginal things.

*O ye who believe! If an evil-liver bring you tidings, verify it, lest ye smite some folk in ignorance and afterward repent of what ye did. Sura XLIX (al Hujurat, the Private Apartments), verse 6*

### Article Twenty-Six

The Hamas, while it views positively the Palestinian National Movements which do not owe their loyalty to the East or to the West, does not refrain from debating unfolding events regarding the Palestinian problem, on the local and international scenes.

These debates are realistic and expose the extent to which [these developments] go along with, or contradict, national interests as viewed from the Islamic vantage point.

### ***The Palestine Liberation Organization***

#### **Article Twenty Seven**

The PLO is among the closest to the Hamas, for it constitutes a father, a brother, a relative, a friend. Can a Muslim turn away from his father, his brother, his relative or his friend? Our homeland is one, our calamity is one, our destiny is one and our enemy is common to both of us. Under the influence of the circumstances which surrounded the founding of the PLO, and the ideological invasion which has swept the Arab world since the rout of the Crusades, and which has been reinforced by Orientalism and the Christian Mission, the PLO has adopted the idea of a Secular State, and so we think of it. Secular thought is diametrically opposed to religious thought. Thought is the basis for positions, for modes of conduct and for resolutions. Therefore, in spite of our appreciation for the PLO and its possible transformation in the future, and despite the fact that we do not denigrate its role in the Arab-Israeli conflict, we cannot substitute it for the Islamic nature of Palestine by adopting secular thought. For the Islamic nature of Palestine is part of our religion, and anyone who neglects his religion is bound to lose.

*And who forsakes the religion of Abraham, save him who befools himself? Sura II (Al-Baqra - the Co), verse 130*

When the PLO adopts Islam as the guideline for life, then we shall become its soldiers, the fuel of its fire which will burn the enemies. And until that happens, and we pray to Allah that it will happen soon, the position of the Hamas towards the PLO is one of a son towards his father, a brother towards his brother, and a relative towards his relative who suffers the other's pain when a thorn hits him, who supports the other in the confrontation with the enemies and who wishes him divine guidance and integrity of conduct.

Your brother, your brother! Whoever has no brother, is like a fighter who runs to the battle without weapons. A cousin for man is like the best wing, and no falcon can take off without wings.

#### **Article Twenty-Eight**

The Zionist invasion is a mischievous one. It does not hesitate to take any road, or to pursue all despicable and repulsive means to fulfill its desires. It relies to a great extent, for its meddling and spying activities, on the clandestine organizations which it has established, such as the Freemasons, Rotary Clubs, Lions, and other spying associations. All those secret organizations, some which are overt, act for the interests of Zionism and under its directions, strive to demolish societies, to destroy values, to

wreck answerableness, to totter virtues and to wipe out Islam. It stands behind the diffusion of drugs and toxics of all kinds in order to facilitate its control and expansion.

The Arab states surrounding Israel are required to open their borders to the Jihad fighters, the sons of the Arab and Islamic peoples, to enable them to play their role and to join their efforts to those of their brothers among the Muslim Brothers in Palestine.

The other Arab and Islamic states are required, at the very least, to facilitate the movement of the Jihad fighters from and to them. We cannot fail to remind every Muslim that when the Jews occupied Holy Jerusalem in 1967 and stood at the doorstep of the Blessed Aqsa Mosque, they shouted with joy:

*Muhammad is dead, he left daughters behind.*

Israel, by virtue of its being Jewish and of having a Jewish population, defies Islam and the Muslims.

*Let the eyes of the cowards not fall asleep.*

***National and Religious Associations, Institutions, the Intelligentsia, and the Arab and Islamic Worlds***

#### **Article Twenty-Nine**

Hamas hopes that those Associations will stand by it on all levels, will support it, adopt its positions, boost its activities and moves and encourage support for it, so as to render the Islamic peoples its backers and helpers, and its strategic depth in all human and material domains as well as in information, in time and space. Among other things, they hold solidarity meetings, issue explanatory publications, supportive articles and tendentious leaflets to make the masses aware of the Palestinian issue, the problems it faces and of the plans to resolve them; and to mobilize the Islamic peoples ideologically, educationally and culturally in order to fulfill their role in the crucial war of liberation, as they had played their role in the defeat of the Crusades and in the rout of the Tartars and had saved human civilization. How all that is dear to Allah!

*Allah has decreed: Lo! I verily shall conquer, I and my messengers.  
Lo! Allah is strong, Almighty. Sura LVIII (Al-Mujadilah), verse 21*

#### **Article Thirty**

Men of letters, members of the intelligentsia, media people, preachers, teachers and educators and all different sectors in the Arab and Islamic world, are all called upon to play their role and to carry out their duty in view of the wickedness of the Zionist invasion, of its penetration into many countries, and its control over material means and the media, with all the ramifications thereof in most countries of the world.

Jihad means not only carrying arms and denigrating the enemies. Uttering positive words, writing good articles and useful books, and lending support and assistance, all

that too is Jihad in the path of Allah, as long as intentions are sincere to make Allah's banner supreme.

*Those who prepare for a raid in the path of Allah are considered as if they participated themselves in the raid. Those who successfully rear a raider in their home, are considered as if they participated themselves in the raid. (Told by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi)*

### ***The Members of Other Religions***

### ***The Hamas is a Humane Movement***

### **Article Thirty-One**

Hamas is a humane movement, which cares for human rights and is committed to the tolerance inherent in Islam as regards attitudes towards other religions. It is only hostile to those who are hostile towards it, or stand in its way in order to disturb its moves or to frustrate its efforts.

Under the shadow of Islam it is possible for the members of the three religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism to coexist in safety and security. Safety and security can only prevail under the shadow of Islam, and recent and ancient history is the best witness to that effect. The members of other religions must desist from struggling against Islam over sovereignty in this region. For if they were to gain the upper hand, fighting, torture and uprooting would follow; they would be fed up with each other, to say nothing of members of other religions. The past and the present are full of evidence to that effect.

*They will not fight you in body safe in fortified villages or from behind wells. Their adversity among themselves is very great. Ye think of them as a whole whereas their hearts are diverse. That is because they are a folk who have no sense. Sura 59 (al-Hashr, the Exile), verse 14*

Islam accords his rights to everyone who has rights and averts aggression against the rights of others. The Nazi Zionist practices against our people will not last the lifetime of their invasion, for "states built upon oppression last only one hour, states based upon justice will last until the hour of Resurrection."

*Allah forbids you not those who warred not against you on account of religion and drove you not out from your houses, that you should show them kindness and deal justly with them. Lo! Allah loves the just dealers. Sura 60 (Al-Mumtahana), verse 8*

### ***The Attempts to Isolate the Palestinian People***

### **Article Thirty-Two**

World Zionism and Imperialist forces have been attempting, with smart moves and considered planning, to push the Arab countries, one after another, out of the circle of conflict with Zionism, in order, ultimately, to isolate the Palestinian People.

Egypt has already been cast out of the conflict, to a very great extent through the treacherous Camp David Accords, and she has been trying to drag other countries into similar agreements in order to push them out of the circle of conflict.

Hamas is calling upon the Arab and Islamic peoples to act seriously and tirelessly in order to frustrate that dreadful scheme and to make the masses aware of the danger of coping out of the circle of struggle with Zionism. Today it is Palestine and tomorrow it may be another country or other countries. For Zionist scheming has no end, and after Palestine they will covet expansion from the Nile to the Euphrates. Only when they have completed digesting the area on which they will have laid their hand, they will look forward to more expansion, etc. Their scheme has been laid out in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, and their present [conduct] is the best proof of what is said there.

Leaving the circle of conflict with Israel is a major act of treason and it will bring curse on its perpetrators.

*Who so on that day turns his back to them, unless maneuvering for battle or intent to join a company, he truly has incurred wrath from Allah, and his habitation will be hell, a hapless journey's end. Sura 8 (al-Anfal - Spoils of War), verse 16*

We have no escape from pooling together all the forces and energies to face this despicable Nazi-Tatar invasion. Otherwise we shall witness the loss of [our] countries, the uprooting of their inhabitants, the spreading of corruption on earth and the destruction of all religious values. Let everyone realize that he is accountable to Allah.

*Whoever does a speck of good will bear [the consequences] and whoever does a speck of evil will see [the consequences].*

Within the circle of the conflict with world Zionism, the Hamas regards itself the spearhead and the avant-garde. It joins its efforts to all those who are active on the Palestinian scene, but more steps need to be taken by the Arab and Islamic peoples and Islamic associations throughout the Arab and Islamic world in order to make possible the next round with the Jews, the merchants of war.

*We have cast among them enmity and hatred till the day of Resurrection. As often as they light a fire for war, Allah extinguishes it. Their effort is for corruption in the land, and Allah loves not corrupters. Sura V (Al-Ma'idah - the Table spread), verse 64*

### **Article Thirty-Three**

The Hamas sets out from these general concepts which are consistent and in accordance with the rules of the universe, and gushes forth in the river of Fate in its confrontation and Jihad waging against the enemies, in defense of the Muslim human being, of Islamic Civilization and of the Islamic Holy Places, primarily the Blessed Aqsa Mosque. This, for the purpose of calling upon the Arab and Islamic peoples as well as their governments, popular and official associations, to fear Allah in their

attitude towards and dealings with Hamas, and to be, in accordance with Allah's will, its supporters and partisans who extend assistance to it and provide it with reinforcement after reinforcement, until the Decree of Allah is fulfilled, the ranks are over-swollen, Jihad fighters join other Jihad fighters, and all this accumulation sets out from everywhere in the Islamic world, obeying the call of duty, and intoning "Come on, join Jihad!" This call will tear apart the clouds in the skies and it will continue to ring until liberation is completed, the invaders are vanquished and Allah's victory sets in.

*Verily Allah helps one who helps Him. Lo! Allah is strong, Almighty.*  
Sura XXII (Pilgrimage), verse 40

## **PART V - THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY**

### ***Confronting Aggressors Throughout History***

#### **Article Thirty-Four**

Palestine is the navel of earth, the convergence of continents, the object of greed for the greedy, since the dawn of history. The Prophet, may Allah's prayer and peace be upon him, points out to that fact in his noble hadith in which he implored his venerable Companion, Ma'adh ibn Jabl, saying:

*O Ma'adh, Allah is going to grant you victory over Syria after me, from Al-Arish to the Euphrates, while its men, women, and female slaves will be dwelling there until the Day of Resurrection. Those of you who chose [to dwell in one of the plains of Syria or Palestine will be in a state of Jihad to the Day of Resurrection.*

The greedy have coveted Palestine more than once and they raided it with armies in order to fulfill their covetousness.

Multitudes of Crusades descended on it, carrying their faith with them and waving their Cross. They were able to defeat the Muslims for a long time, and the Muslims were not able to redeem it until they sought the protection of their religious banner; then, they unified their forces, sang the praise of their God and set out for Jihad under the Command of Saladin al-Ayyubi, for the duration of nearly two decades, and then the obvious conquest took place when the Crusaders were defeated and Palestine was liberated.

*Say (O Muhammad) unto those who disbelieve: ye shall be overcome and gathered unto Hell, an evil resting place.* Sura III (Al-Imran), verse 12

This is the only way to liberation, there is no doubt in the testimony of history. That is one of the rules of the universe and one of the laws of existence. Only iron can blunt iron, only the true faith of Islam can vanquish their false and falsified faith. Faith can only be fought by faith. Ultimately, victory is reserved to the truth, and truth is victorious.

*And verily Our word went forth of old unto Our Bordmen sent [to warn]. That they verily would be helped. And that Our host, they verily would be the victors. Sura 38 (Al-saffat), verses 171-3*

### **Article Thirty-Five**

Hamas takes a serious look at the defeat of the Crusades at the hand of Saladin the Ayyubid and the rescue of Palestine from their domination; at the defeat of the Tatars at Ein Jalut where their spine was broken by Qutuz and Al-Dhahir Baibars, and the Arab world was rescued from the sweep of the Tatars which ruined all aspects of human civilization. Hamas has learned from these lessons and examples, that the current Zionist invasion had been preceded by a Crusader invasion from the West; and another one, the Tatars, from the East. And exactly as the Muslims had faced those invasions and planned their removal and defeat, they are able to face the Zionist invasion and defeat it. This will not be difficult for Allah if our intentions are pure and our determination is sincere; if the Muslims draw useful lessons from the experiences of the past, and extricate themselves for the vestiges of the [western] ideological onslaught; and if they follow the traditions of Islam.

### **EPILOGUE**

#### *The Hamas are Soldiers*

### **Article Thirty-Six**

The Hamas, while breaking its path, reiterates time and again to all members of our people and the Arab and Islamic peoples, that it does not seek fame for itself nor material gains, or social status.

Nor is it directed against any one member of our people in order to compete with him or replace him. There is nothing of that at all.

It will never set out against any Muslims or against the non-Muslims who make peace with it, here or anywhere else. It will only be of help to all associations and organizations which act against the Zionist enemy and those who revolve in its orbit.

Hamas posits Islam as a way of life, it is its faith and its yardstick for judging. Whoever posits Islam as a way of life, anywhere, and regardless of whether it is an organization, a state, or any other group, Hamas are its soldiers, nothing else.

We implore Allah to guide us, to guide through us and to decide between us and our folk with truth.

*Our Lord! Decide with truth between us and our folk, for Thou are the best of those who make decisions. Sura VII (Al-A'raf – the Heights), verse 89*

*Our last call is: Thanks to Allah, the Lord of the Universe.*

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