

INTIFADA

Palestine at the Crossroads

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JAMAL R. NASSAR

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ROGER HEACOCK

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The Islamic Movement and the *Intifada*

Jean-François Legrain

For more than a decade, islamicism (a term taken to mean the political face of the Islamic movement) has been an integral part of the contemporary Arab world. While there is today increasing clarity as to its common matrix,¹ it finds expression in very different ways from one national context to another, and sometimes within a given state.² In the Palestinian case, the specificity of the political and historical context is such that one cannot see the Islamic movement there as a mere extension of the Egyptian experience or an appendix of the Iranian revolution, although some of its members claim the latter experience as a model. At the heart of that specificity lies the absence of a classical state structure as well as the exceptional strength of nationalist ideology, which in the Occupied Territories has never had to face the challenges of independence, making things more difficult for the political-religious alternative.

At the end of the 1970s, the very time when the PLO had managed to monopolize the political advantages of nationalism, the islamacists made their appearance and, playing on the contradictions of the PLO, proposed Islam as an ideological, political, and military alternative to its model of struggle.³

Contrary to many islamacist groups the world over, which sought state power as a prelude to re-islamizing society, the Palestinian islamacists, such as the traditional Muslim Brothers, having analyzed the power relationship with the occupation, postponed until later the liberation of Palestine. They worked to resocialize the society along Islamic lines from the mosques, the universities (where they were to be found in large numbers with the massive arrival of

students of refugee or rural origins), and the clubs. They declared puritanical values in opposition to the alleged corruption of the pro-PLO elites and of Israelis in general. The Muslim Brotherhood also played on conflicts of interest among various Palestinian sectors, allying themselves from time to time with Jordan or with Fateh, which had a stake in marginalizing the left in whatever municipalities, universities, unions, or social and charitable associations the latter were in the majority. The authorities were only too happy to favor such developments, which promoted inter-Palestinian dissensions.⁴

The two years 1986–88 saw the emergence in Gaza and the West Bank of an Islamic current of another type. In contrast to the Muslim Brothers, with which they had broken several years before, these new proponents of the jihad advocated the immediate resort to armed struggle. In 1986–87 they launched, in the name of Islam, a whole series of military operations against Israeli objectives, thus heating up the internal Palestinian front and making an essential contribution to the preparation of the general uprising of December 1987.⁵

Whereas it had been possible, in periods of “normalized” occupation, for the Muslim Brothers to favor re-Islamization over the struggle against the occupation, the coming of the *intifada* forced them, on pain of losing all legitimacy, to translate into daily practice the radicalism of their discourse on the liberation of Palestine.

The remainder of this chapter will deal with the following questions: What does the term “Islamic Jihad” designate as applied to the group or groups which, under that name, participated in the outbreak and in various phases of the *intifada*? What is the Islamic Resistance Movement (IRM—better known today under its Arabic acronym Hamas)? What was, and is, its relationship to the Muslim Brotherhood? What was the contribution, at each stage of the *intifada* during its first year, of each of these groups and of the Islamic, as opposed to the Palestinian national, movement?⁶

THE ISLAMIC JIHAD

“Islamic Jihad” is a generic term designating a nebula of groups whose strategies sometimes diverge but which are united by a sense of belonging to the same political and religious movement.⁷ Their political communiqués are usually signed “al-Jihad al-Islami” (Islamic Jihad), while their military operations are claimed by the Saraya al-Jihad al-Islami (Brigades of the Islamic Jihad). Several student organizations backed the ideas of the Jihad in Gaza and the West Bank. The group’s communiqués, signed “Haraket al-Jihad al-Islami fi Filastin al-muhtalla,” were regularly published abroad in London and Paris, then in Cyprus in the journal *al-Islam wa Filastin (IF)*, which also opened an office in Tampa, Florida.

The Military Operations of the Jihad, 1983–87

The claiming of military operations in the name of Islam on the part of the Palestinians under occupation is a relatively new phenomenon. True, the examples given by Sheikh ‘Izz ad-Din al-Qassam in the 1930s and Hajj Amin al-Husseini throughout the period of the British mandate were never forgotten. But the first overt military act of the Jihad occurred in 1983, when a young Israeli settler was knifed to death by a commando that justified its act as a dictate of the “holy Jihad.” In October 1984, in Gaza, a cell grouped around Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, president of the most important religious association close to the Muslim Brothers, al-Mujamma’ al-Islami (the Islamic Grouping), was dismantled and its members sentenced to long prison terms for “illegal possession of weapons [which were never used] destined for acts of sabotage aimed at the destruction of Israel and the creation of an Islamic state.” Sheikh Yasin was to be freed under the terms of the prisoner exchange between Israel and the PFLP-GC (General Command) in May 1985.

In 1986–87 a whole series of military actions was carried out in the name of Islam. The most important occurred on October 15, 1986, in the Old City of Jerusalem. A commando of the Jihad Brigades threw grenades at new recruits of an elite unit of the Israeli army at the Wailing Wall, killing one and injuring sixty-nine. A few days before, the Brigades had assassinated an Israeli taxi driver in the center of Gaza. Several waves of arrests followed, in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but on May 18, 1987, six members of the Brigades escaped from Gaza’s central prison and organized several armed operations, including the knifing to death of a military police captain on August 12. On October 1, 1987, in Gaza, three fighters of the Jihad Brigades were killed in an ambush set by the army (it is claimed that one of them died later under torture). On October 6, four other Jihad Brigades militants were killed in Shu-ja’iyya (Gaza) during an exchange of fire that resulted in the death of a Shin Bet officer. These events again resulted in numerous arrests, leading to the discovery of arms caches and the expulsion of Sheikh ‘Abd al-Aziz ‘Odeh, presented as the spiritual guide of the Islamic Jihad. Several large-scale demonstrations then broke out in the Gaza Strip; the Brigades claim the attack against patrols in northern Tel Aviv on November 22 and the killing in the center of Gaza of an Israeli on December 6.⁸

The Structure of the Jihad

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad, like other Islamic movements the world over, is imbued with the consciousness of making up an elite bearing a divine mission, which makes its political commitment an outgrowth of its faith. It considers that present-day Arab and Islamic regimes (with the exception of Iran) have returned to a state of *jahiliyya* (ignorance-barbarism prior to Islam) and calls for their

overthrow by a popular revolution, which alone will reestablish God's rights. Unlike the traditional Muslim Brothers, who are mainly concerned with Islamic resocialization, the Jihad has, on the model of revolutionary Iran, made a political and military question, the Palestinian cause, a central religious focus for the entire Islamic world. Since Israel is the cutting edge of the West's general offensive against Islam, it is every believer's duty to struggle for its elimination. Although critical toward the PLO's policies—noninterference in Arab affairs; distancing itself from the Iranian revolution; abandonment of armed struggle as the only way to achieve the total liberation of Palestine—the Jihad considers dialogue with nonreligious nationalists essential in view of the fact that the common enemy is the Israeli occupier.⁹

Whereas the Jihad's ideology is well known through its various publications inside and outside the Occupied Territories, its origins and history remain problematic in view of the scarcity of primary sources, which are currently limited to its communiqués and to the rare interviews of Sheikh 'Odeh, and to secondary sources, including the Israeli judicial and military authorities. The Jihad made its appearance at the end of an evolution within the traditional Muslim Brotherhood. The critique of the priority accorded to re-Islamization of the society through personal reform over the liberation struggle emerged among certain members of al-Mujamma' al-Islami in the late seventies. The Jihad was the result of one of the splits from the Brotherhood that occurred at this time within the Mujamma'. The intellectuals of the group, Sheikh 'Odeh, an instructor at Gaza Islamic University, and the pharmacist Fathi Shqaqi, both fascinated by the Iranian revolution, developed their theses through close contact with Egyptian Islamic radicalism during their studies in Zagazig. The May 1985 prisoner exchange between Israel and the PFLP-GC appears to be the key date in the passage from ideological to armed struggle. The Jihad Brigades benefited from advice and direct assistance on the part of former Popular Liberation Forces members imprisoned for their resistance activities in the early 1970s who had during their detention found their way back to Islam.¹⁰ The Brigades would not, however, have been able to take action without the financial and logistical support of Fateh, thanks to the mediation of Abu Jihad, whose Amman office was open at that time.

The number of militarily active members of the Jihad was relatively small. In the absence of official statistics, one can reckon that in November 1987 about a hundred persons were incarcerated in Gaza, and about thirty in the West Bank, for "membership in the Jihad," without their necessarily having carried out any military activities. But its support among the population was considerable, and on the rise. In November 1986 the student council elections at Gaza Islamic University yielded a 69 percent score for the Islamic Bloc, close to the Muslim Brotherhood, while the Mustaqillun (Independents), who supported the Jihad, got 4 percent. One year later, the Islamic Bloc's vote fell to 60 percent, while that of the Jihad supporters rose to 11 percent.

The Jihad in the Uprising

By general consensus, the numerous military operations carried out in the name of the Jihad Brigades played an essential role in the process that led to the *intifada*. The Jihad continued to be very active at the beginning of the uprising "in the wake of the formidable popular insurrection which began in the first week of October following the martyr[dom] of the heroes of Shuja'iyya" (communiqué, January 15, 1988). A few months later the Jihad disappeared from the Palestinian scene, not to reemerge until the fall of 1988.

Organized Mobilization

Between December 10, 1987, and March 8, 1988, at least a dozen communiqués bore the signature of the Jihad or the Brigades.¹¹ From December 10, the Jihad exhorted the population to act against the occupation, and it was among the first organizations to call for mass actions under a particular slogan and on a precise date. The general strike it declared for January 9 (communiqué of January 8, 1988, reproduced in *IF*) was strictly observed. Its presence on the ground was so strong that Israeli observers considered it responsible for tracts distributed in Jerusalem by an "Uprising Leadership" that was still poorly understood.¹²

Its tracts, whether rhetorical or programmatic, did not refer to the Iranian revolution, but the idea of "Islamic revolution" recurs several times, as does the Libyan-inspired term *jamahiri* (mass-based), to describe the movement.

The Will for Unity with the PLO

At least during the first months of the uprising the Jihad stated its desire to work in concert with the PLO so as to intensify the struggle. Like the United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU), the Jihad Brigades renounced the use of weapons (only collaborators were threatened with death). While in their communiqué of January 29, 1988, the Brigades gave a series of instructions on ways of fighting the enemy (burning Israeli vehicles, attacking Israeli economic interests, refusing to pay taxes, eliminating collaborators), there was never any call to kill Israelis, civilian or military. In its press communiqué of February 3, 1988, the Jihad denounced articles in the British press according to which it was calling for military operations, stating its belief that Israel would be forced to "withdraw its military apparatus under the exclusive impact of the blood of the martyrs, the cries that 'God alone is Great' and the throwing of stones." This was the fruit of a deliberate choice, since the Jihad recalled that it was also capable of carrying out armed struggle when it found it necessary.¹³ The will for unity was demonstrated even where its positions differed from those of the PLO.¹⁴

The Jihad and the UNLU

The constant preoccupation with stressing its identity in relation to the PLO, and its effective participation in the anti-Israeli struggle, have led many outside observers as well as a number of Palestinians, including leaders on the outside,¹⁵ to conclude that the Islamic Jihad had joined the UNLU. The UNLU itself, however, never made any such claim, and the Jihad rejected it. The "important communiqué" of the National Leadership of the Uprising in Gaza (undated, early 1988) simply stated that it is "a large coalition of combat brought about by the intifada," made up of the main PLO forces represented in the Occupied Territories, Fateh, the Palestine Communist party, the PFLP, the DFLP, and "other patriotic forces, patriotic committees, . . . institutions, patriotic personalities and patriotic religious forces committed to the program of the PLO." This formulation obviously excludes the Muslim Brotherhood and others whose objectives diverge widely from those of the PLO. While stressing its solidarity, the Jihad negated its participation in the UNLU (communiqué of February 3, 1988). It is not clear whether or not certain individuals, members of the Jihad Brigades and also close to Fateh, may have agreed to associate themselves with the UNLU.¹⁶

Israeli Repression

In early March 1988, the Jihad seemed to disappear from the Palestinian political scene. The rapid and violent Israeli repression of its members, activists or simple sympathizers, doubtless explains this withdrawal. High-ranking leaders were deported from the Occupied Territories: Sheikh Abd al-'Aziz 'Odeh, April 11, 1988; Dr. Fathi Shqaqi, August 7, 1988; Ahmad Hasan Muhanna, December 14, 1988; Saïd Barakat, January 1, 1989. On the outside, military leaders were eliminated: on February 2, 1988, in Limassol, three of them died in a car-bomb explosion; on April 16, 1988, Abu Jihad himself, whose name had variously been mentioned, during the trials of Brigade members, as the Jihad's contact in Fateh and the PLO, was assassinated in Tunis. Numerous arrests were made, in continuation of a policy predating the uprising. All of this amounted to a severe blow to the organization, whose quasi-disappearance a number of people announced. Israel, however, continued periodically to announce the dismantling of Jihad cells.¹⁷ Various local reports also speak of tracts being circulated.

Rejection of the PNC Decisions

The Jihad reappeared in the fall of 1988, announcing its break with the PLO, which was preparing for the nineteenth Palestinian National Council (PNC) meeting in Algiers. On October 10, "on the occasion of the first anniversary of the battle of Shuja'iyya," the Jihad Brigades broke with eleven months of common abstention with the UNLU from armed struggle and announced their

resumption of military activities, claiming to have thrown a grenade against a military patrol in Sheikh Radwan neighborhood (Gaza). The Islamic Jihad, in a communiqué on November 11, 1988, reproduced in *al-Islam wa Filastin*, attacked "those who consider themselves the representatives of the Palestinian people," just as the PNC was preparing to accept UN Resolutions 242 and 338 as the bases for the PLO's participation in an international peace conference:

Oh masses of our Palestinian Muslim people! The Movement of the Islamic Jihad in Palestine proclaims in your name, in the name of your jihad, in the name of your struggle, in the name of your sacrifices, that that peace is sacrilegious, that that commitment is null and illicit, that the partition of the homeland with the enemy and the recognition of its legitimacy go against the divine order.

THE ISLAMIC RESISTANCE MOVEMENT (IRM)—HAMAS

For their part, the traditional Muslim Brothers could not remain outside the unfolding events. They thus broke with their long history of abstention from anti-Israeli mobilization. In Gaza, their individual participation from the beginning of the uprising is certain. As for their mobilization as an organization, it is a problematic issue, as will be seen.

The Ideology of the IRM

Ideological tenets of the Muslim Brotherhood were clearly perceptible in communiqués of the IRM from the beginning of the *intifada*, and their coherence was preserved throughout. In each of its tracts, the IRM devoted a good deal of space to ideological positions, setting forth in simple terms a historiography of the Palestinian question since the beginning of the century: the Islamic people has a consciousness of its duties before God in the defense of Palestine, God's blessed country and that of the prophets, eternal property (*waqf*) of the Islamic community. Enduring and courageous, it has never hesitated to shed blood again and again, but it was duped by Arab regimes and leaders, simple stooges of the atheist West and its regional representative, Israel. In 1988, as in 1936, the Arab leaders have become the instruments of surrender and defeat, being disposed, at the behest of the United States, to recognize Israel and thus legitimize usurpation. The PLO is never directly attacked by the IRM; never quoted, it does not exist. Implicitly however, the political initiatives of its leaders are constantly under attack.

The Various Phases in the Mobilization of the IRM

Whereas the IRM displays great ideological continuity, several periods can be distinguished, corresponding to clearly differentiated political practices, and leading to serious questions as to whether the authors of its very first tracts were

the same as those of its later ones. The first year of the uprising is divided into three distinct phases where the IRM is concerned.

Participation in the Uprising

The first period begins with an undated tract and ends with the distribution on February 11 of the IRM's fourth communiqué. Signed by the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya*), a heretofore unknown organization, the first tract was a hymn to the courage of the people, to its endurance and to its faith in final victory. Without providing a detailed calendar for mobilization, it called in general for the continuation of the uprising. That first tract was undated, but from various indications it may be presumed to have been circulated around December 15, 1987. While this is clearly a very early date in the history of the written communiqués of the uprising, it does not, as the Muslim Brotherhood now claims, prove decisively that it was mobilizing even before the PLO-affiliated groups. This is because nothing proves that the first, second (mid-January 1988), and third (January 22, 1988) IRM communiqués were issued by the Muslim Brotherhood. Those communiqués in fact give no indication as to their authors' affiliations. On the contrary, their slogans remained vague and universal ("This is the voice of Islam! The voice of the entire Palestinian people!"—January 22, 1988). This ambiguity has been interpreted as a Muslim Brotherhood tactic designed to appeal to a much broader base at a time when the Islamic Jihad enjoyed much greater popularity. But the publication by *al-Islam wa Filastin* of two early IRM tracts, including the first one, suggests that persons close to the Jihad may in fact have been the founders of a movement which only in mid-February 1988 became the political expression of the Association of Muslim Brothers. Some writings (including of course those of persons and groups close to the PLO) claim that the Muslim Brotherhood as an organization was absent from the events of the first months of the *intifada*, and was then forced by the departure of some of its members and ever-stronger internal criticism to become involved later on.

Organizing the Uprising

The participation of the Muslim Brothers characterizes the second phase of the IRM's history, which begins with the fourth communiqué of February 11, 1988, in which the movement presents itself as "the powerful arm of the Association of Muslim Brothers" (a presentation that appears to have been contested by some in the IRM, since one version of the tract omits it). This period continued through May-June 1988. For the first time, the initials HMS (*Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya: Movement of the Islamic Resistance*) are used, which in the fifth communiqué become the acronym Hamas, a (non-Koranic) term signifying "zeal" or "enthusiasm."

This new stage witnesses the appearance of a precise mobilization calendar, including general strikes, fasting, or days of confrontation with the enemy. Hamas, like the UNLU, also gives instructions for the organization of the uprising

in all aspects of daily life: appeals to merchants or landlords, including threats against those who do not comply, not to raise prices; warnings against those thieves who would try to take advantage of the mass resignation of Palestinian police; exhortations to collaborators to repent; appeals to the population to defend itself against settlers, and advice on security measures; appeals for a return to the land and development of domestic economy so as to ensure the greatest possible self-reliance. Traditional Muslim Brother themes are likewise found, such as "the role of the Holy City of Jerusalem and Palestine among Muslims" or "the perversion of the children of Israel." Religion is now placed at the service of the anti-Israeli struggle, which is depicted as the eschatological combat between good and Evil.

The mosques became the natural place for this social structuring of the uprising by Hamas, especially in Gaza. By mid-March, mosque committees were instructed to organize popular teaching to make up for the closure of schools and universities. They were also to see to the collection of the *zakat* (Muslim charity) and its proper redistribution among the poor and the victims of the uprising.

The political content of the communiqués from that period does not vary much from the outlines traced during the first stage: Hamas continues violently to denounce the Arab regimes, with their lip-service to American initiatives, a just and durable peace, an international conference, and so on. "Our answer . . . is as follows: no to peace with the Zionist entity" (March 13, 1988). Hamas, like the UNLU, mobilizes against George Schultz's various missions to the region and calls (simultaneously with the UNLU) for a general strike against his visit on February 24 and 25.

Despite differences on the final resolution of the Palestinian question, Hamas and the UNLU reached a good-neighborly *modus vivendi* in the streets. Hamas' unilateral call for a general strike on April 9 in commemoration of the 1948 Deir Yasin massacre did not lead to clashes on the ground, since Hamas had not attempted to impose a strike beyond its traditional areas of mobilization. The theme of national unity is a recurrent one, and the UNLU and Hamas together denounced Israeli provocations in the form of false communiqués,¹⁸ car burnings, the attempted burning of the Gaza blood bank (a PLO stronghold), and so on. "The unity of our people in this phase constitutes the supreme objectives to which we are attached and over which we watch" (Hamas communiqué, May 6, 1988).

Directing the Uprising

The third mobilizing phase of Hamas begins in May and June. It is characterized by tension with the UNLU, at a time when the PLO is multiplying its diplomatic initiatives. The political themes continue as before, but Hamas, while denying that this is the case, presents itself more and more as the alternative leadership of the *intifada*. On August 18 it publishes a Covenant (*Mithaq*), a forty-page synthesis of its ideological stance, which Hamas intends to defend through popular mobilization.¹⁹ Its communiqués are henceforth numbered, like

those of the UNLU. Hamas takes advantage of this development by inflating the number of its tracts so as to strengthen its claim to an earlier commitment than that of PLO advocates. The communiqué of June 26 carries the number 24, whereas everything indicates that about fifteen Hamas tracts had by then been published. At the same time its mobilization calendar becomes heavier and takes priority over all else in the text. Beginning on August 2, 1988, its calls for general strikes are multiplied and become catalysts for tension with the UNLU, which increases after King Hussein's announcement on July 31, 1988, of the "severing of legal and administrative ties" with the West Bank.

The UNLU welcomed this development as a major achievement for the *intifada* and a ratification of the eighteenth PNC of 1987, which reinforced the authority of the PLO (UNLU Communiqué No. 23 of August 5, 1988). Hamas in this context decided to show its lack of accord with the PLO's claim of filling the political void alone by contesting the de facto prerogative of the UNLU and drawing up a calendar of popular mobilization. As of August 2, 1988, three days before the UNLU communiqué, Hamas called for a strike on August 9, the now-traditional monthly remembrance of the outbreak of the *intifada*, as well as August 14, the Islamic new year. The UNLU then chose dates at variance with those of Hamas, forcing the latter unilaterally to call for general strikes. This happened three times in a row (twice in August, once in September),²⁰ and in the three cases the Brothers, isolated, felt they had to respond to the challenge. Whereas on August 14 Hamas had limited itself to mobilizing the Gaza Strip, on August 21 and September 9 it decided to move beyond its traditional areas of influence and impose its strike call in the West Bank, using methods that included physical pressure. Clashes occurred in Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Hebron. Only Jerusalem remained free of tension, since Hamas had not tried to impose its strikes there on merchants, virtually all of whom opened their shops.²¹

The UNLU and Hamas both issued repeated mutual denunciations coupled with calls for unity. For Hamas, "agents of the Jews tried to break the strike, but our people . . . made this occasion fail. . . . Let all know that the IRM is not against any of the children of our people but against the Jews and those who resemble them. It calls for patriotic unity" (September 5, 1988). For the UNLU, "the attempts of the last few days led by the Hamas movement, which is the wing of the Muslim Brothers, to impose its authority on the patriotic street and impose a general strike Sunday, 21 August, were perceived by the masses of our people . . . as . . . going against the patriotic calendar determined by its United National Leadership. . . . We have extended our hand and we extend it again, to any force which wishes to join in the patriotic task" (September 6, 1988).²²

On the outside, moderation was the order of the day. PLO leaders minimized the significance of these contradictions,²³ while "summit meetings" were arranged between the parties.²⁴ An armistice was concluded, as shown by the fact that from September 17 to December 9, Hamas and the UNLU called for nine general strikes in common, Hamas choosing only two independent occasions,

October 29 and November 29. On the former date, the UNLU gave instructions by word of mouth to go along with Hamas' date, which became a common strike. The latter occasion, on the other hand, marks the anniversary of the 1947 UN Partition Resolution, and Hamas insisted on going its own way. Since the UNLU, following the decisions of the PNC, no longer saw any need to protest a resolution which, on the contrary, was now considered a basis for resolving the problem, Hamas found itself mobilizing for a strike side by side with the PFLP to mark their common, continued rejection of partition.²⁵ There was after that a renewed general convergence in calendars between Hamas and the UNLU.

The Political Offensive of the IRM

The progressive coordination in mobilization on the ground cannot mask profound political differences as to the future. On August 18, under the title "Palestine is Islamic from the sea to the river," Hamas had launched its offensive in the face of preparations for the nineteenth PNC meeting and denounced the temptation of negotiations. While Hamas never mentioned the PLO in its communiqués, its Covenant discusses it in a broader framework of an analysis of patriotic movements, which it casts in a highly positive light "as long as they do not owe their allegiance either to the communist east or to the crusader west. . . . The PLO is the closest of the close to the IRM. Father, brother, neighbor and friend belong to it. Can the Muslim remain a stranger to his father, his brother, his neighbor or his friend? Our homeland is one, our struggle is one, our destiny is one and our enemy is common. But . . . the PLO has adopted the idea of a lay state . . . [which] totally contradicts the idea of religion. . . . The Islamic nature of Palestine is a part of our religion. . . . The day the PLO adopts Islam as its rule for life, we will be its soldiers" (articles 26–27).

One of the Muslim Brothers' leaders, Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, also made contradictory statements during the same period, sometimes stressing the association's convergence with the PLO, at other times its divergence from it. The publication of the Covenant and outbreaks of inter-Palestinian street violence were played up in the Israeli media, which accorded a long interview on (state-owned) television to Sheikh Yasin. The PLO denounced this development, noting the relatively light repression to which the Muslim Brotherhood was being subjected by Israel.²⁶

The PNC's decisions did little to change the course of events. The IRM continued to stress its own views while usually seeking to engage in joint mobilization with the UNLU. In a letter to the PNC, it claimed paternity for the uprising, stating that

Hamas was born of the establishment of total jihad . . . until the liberation of all of Palestine. It decided to launch the uprising on 8 December 1987 in order to attain this objective. All of the children of Palestine then stood by its side and continue to do so. . . . Do not err regarding the voices which call for peace with the assassins, at the very

time when they occupy our land and persecute our people. . . . Brothers! We declare before you that the projects for so-called "provisional government," for a "declaration of independence," or a "government in exile" . . . are all nothing more than bait whose objective is to destroy the gains made by the intifada, a knife thrust into the back of the children of stones.

After having expressed this warning, Hamas returned to deliberately ignoring the PLO. The very name of the PNC is not to be found, nor is any reference to an independent Palestinian state. Hamas returned to denouncing its traditional enemies: the Arab regimes and their historic betrayal of Palestine (cf. communiqué 32 of November 21, 1988).

OF THE DIFFICULTY OF BEING SIMULTANEOUSLY PALESTINIAN AND ISLAMICIST

For Hamas, peace is an unacceptable option. It would mean having God surrender to Evil through negotiations with the incarnation of illegitimacy, Israel. This intransigence contrasts with the policies of the UNLU. Both Hamas and the UNLU broke in their mobilizing practices with the policy of the Jordanian-oriented notables of an earlier age. Both depersonalized their policies: decisions are made by an anonymous leadership, and the UNLU only very rarely mentions Yasser Arafat by name. The *intifada* is in this sense, both in its lay and in its religious wings, a fruit of the 1980s, after the charismatic Palestinian leaders in the Occupied Territories (such as the mayors elected in 1976) had been deposed, imprisoned, or deported. The politics of the *intifada* are marked by the practices of a decade when the society was being restructured through various unions and associations that imposed themselves even more deeply than its national leaders in defense of certain values. Mobilization was decentralized and transferred from restricted elites to a multitude of local leaders. This was most evident in the case of the followers of the PLO. The youth of the refugee camps for a time swept the intelligentsia of the Jerusalem-Ramallah-Bethlehem area aside to launch the uprising. In the longer run, and thanks to the diplomatic process, these personalities appear to be making a comeback.

Developments in the religious camp should be seen in similar terms. The prominent early role of the Jihad and the structural absence of the Muslim Brothers during the first months of the *intifada* represented a warning by a more radical base to the Islamic elites, one that was heeded, as can be seen by the Muslim Brothers' subsequent effective participation. In the beginning, it would appear that individuals or groups still belonging to the Muslim Brothers, but seduced by the ideas of the Jihad and carried away by the wave of the *intifada*, forced the leadership of the movement to adopt an offensive attitude toward Israel. In the second phase, the Brothers in turn played on the tensions between the pro-PLO elites linked to the outside and a determined internal base to challenge the UNLU, suggesting the importance of ties between the PLO and Arab leaders.

The Muslim Brotherhood no longer makes social re-islamization its top priority. In order to acquire broad political legitimacy, it has to show that it is an effective actor in the anti-Israel struggle. It has in this the very clear example of the Jihad, which in the course of a few months managed to obtain the unanimous support of the population.

The realities of the occupation and the absence of a state have meant that islamicists and nationalists often find themselves in ideological and political proximity, due to their Palestinian specificity. Whereas around the world, the Islamic movement has focused on challenging the states issued from decolonization, thus making antinationalism a key element of their ideology, the a-statism of Palestinians has led their Islamic movement to preach something close to the ideas of their "nationalist" rivals. Disillusionment with the Arab states has led both the Islamic movement and PLO supporters to preach a certain distancing from the Arabs and a concomitant "palestinianism." Arabism, for the rising Islamic and nationalist generation, no longer passes through any Arab capital, but through an attachment to the land and to religion.

With the *intifada*, the Islamic movement has asserted, perhaps for the first time with as much clarity, that patriotism (*wataniyya*) "is an integral part of the religious credo" (article 7 of the Covenant). While remaining ultimately Islamic in its inspiration, the current historiography of the Islamic movement in the Occupied Territories is almost exclusively Palestinian.

For a long time the Muslim Brothers have been convinced that the PLO's diplomatic initiatives will inevitably founder. The people will then, they believe, find themselves with no alternative other than Islam. For them to be able to pick up the leadership at that point, the Muslim Brothers must, so they feel, effectively participate in the anti-Israeli struggle. They do not, in case the Arafat-led PLO should falter, see any threat coming from a Marxist left, always suspected of atheism. Some also point to unbroken ties to Jordan and certain circles in Syria as giving the Brotherhood a chance of assuming national leadership in the event that the diplomatic line of Yasser Arafat should collapse.

Hamas has surely scored some points against the pro-PLO figures. It has not yet managed to acquire the overwhelming legitimacy born of resistance. Its participation is still doubted in the West Bank. But its success is genuine: it is an essential interlocutor for the majority nationalists, unlike the partisans of the rejection front, who are almost nonexistent and who are discredited by their close ties with Syria, considered responsible for the massacre of Palestinians in Lebanon.

Unity is one of the most effective weapons against Israel, and neither the nationalists nor Hamas will take the risk of abandoning it. In their struggle against the islamicists' quest for legitimacy through the rejection of all negotiations in the name of the religious obligation of liberating all of Palestine, the PLO supporters cannot permit themselves to combat the Muslim Brotherhood openly. Thus reduced to isolating Hamas on a case-by-case basis, the only guarantee of victory for the PLO lies in the rapid attainment of political results

through diplomatic initiatives designed to realize the independent Palestinian state whose existence it has declared.

NOTES

1. R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985); Gilles Kepel, "Intellectuals et militants," *Lettre Internationale* 19 (Winter 1988-89); Olivier Roy, *L'Afghanistan, Islam et modernité politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1985); Emmanuel Siwan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
2. François Burgat, *L'Islamisme au Maghreb* (Paris: Khartala, 1988); Olivier Carré and Paul Dumont, *Radicalismes islamiques*, 2 vols. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985-86).
3. Jean-François Legrain, "Islamistes et lutte nationale palestinienne dans les territoires occupés par Israël," *Revue Française de Science Politique* 36, no. 2 (April 1986): 227-47.
4. The toleration or even assistance granted by the occupation authorities is now openly recognized by the Israeli media. Cf., for example, Yehuda Litani (a journalist known for his intimate ties to the security apparatus), *Jerusalem Post* (JP), September 8, 1988; Ori Nir, *Ha'aretz*, September 16, 1988 (article translated into English by the Israeli government).
5. Jean-François Legrain, "Les islamistes palestiniens à l'épreuve du soulèvement," *Maghreb-Mashrek* 121 (July 1988): 4-42.
6. Answering these questions as objectively as possible has become all the more important since competing and contradictory historiographies are being created by the PLO (cf. the chronologies of *Shu'un Filastiniyya*) and the Muslim Brothers (cf. 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Odeh, interviewed in *al-Wahda al-Islamiyya*, April 29, 1988, reproduced in *al-Islam wa Filastin* (IF—Limassol), no. 5 (June 5, 1988): 4-6; Muhammad Nazzal, "Limadha hadha al-tajahul li dawri-l-haraka al-islamiyya fi-l-intifada?" (Why this ignorance of the role of the Islamic movement in the *intifada*?), *Filastin al-Muslima*, (FM) March 1988, pp. 12-13; 'Abd al-'Aziz al-'Umri, "Man alladhin ash'alu al-intifada wa man alladhin yaquduhaha?" (Who initiated the *intifada* and who leads it?), *al-Mujtama'* (Kuwait), June 28, 1988, pp. 18-20. The islamist historiography has been partially adopted by certain Israeli journalists. Cf. Sheffi Gabbai, " Hamas and the Uprising: The Mosques' Revolution," *Maariv*, December 16, 1988 (translated by the Israeli government).
7. "Al-Ard al-muhtalla tashta'il didd al-sahayna" (The occupied land catches fire against the Zionists), *al-Thawra al-Islamiyya* (London), no. 95 (February 1988): 40-43; Hala Mustafa, "Al-Jihad al-Islami fi-l-ard al-muhtalla" (The Islamic Jihad in the occupied land), *Qadaya Fikriyya* (Cairo), no. 6 (April 1988): 178-83; Israel: defense spokesman, "Islamic Jihad in Judea, Samaria and Gaza," reproduced in JP, February 3, 1988.
8. This last attack was also claimed by Fateh's Force 17.
9. Cf., for example, the manifesto of *Sawi al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya* (Gaza) I (October 1986); 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Odeh, *al-Fajr* (Jerusalem), August 23, 1987.
10. Interview with a leader of the Communist party, Gaza, December 1988; see also Wendy Levitt, "The Shadowy Face of Fundamentalism," *The Middle East*, November 1988, pp. 15-16.
11. It is very difficult to obtain Jihad tracts. Of the sixteen in my possession, I obtained

- five (including two forgeries) in the Occupied Territories, while the others, apparently authentic, were published in IF.
12. JP, January 19, 1988.
13. Cf. 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Odeh, interviewed in *al-Wahda al-Islamiyya*, April 29, 1988, who states that "the present stage does not permit the use of arms because the people [are] in the camps and the streets."
14. Cf. communiqué of February 3, 1988.
15. *Democratic Palestine*, organ of George Habash's PFLP, March 1988, and *al-Hurriya*, organ of Nayef Hawatmeh's DFLP, September 18, 1988.
16. In March 1988, Sheikh Bassam Jarrar, a personality from al-Bireh close to various Islamic groups who was later imprisoned, noted that their profound divergences made it impossible for Jihad members to be in the UNLU, adding that "if there are any religious persons in the UNLU, they are all members of Fateh." In November 1988, Dr. Mahmud al-Zahhar from Gaza, close to Hamas, estimated that the Jihad had for the first few months participated in the UNLU and added, giving no reasons, that it had withdrawn around April 1988.
17. According to the Ministry of Defense, the Shin Bet, in October-November 1988, dismantled ninety-three "terrorist cells," three of which belonged to the Jihad.
18. Notably one by the "Palestine Communist Party," denounced by a Hamas communiqué, February 11, 1988, and by the PCP communiqué of February 14, 1988.
19. Dan Fisher and Dan Williams, "Islamic Group Calls Holy War Palestine Key," *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 1988; Reuven Paz, *Ha-'imna ha-islamit umichma'utah 'iyyon rechoni utargum* (The Covenant of the Islamicists and its significance—analysis and translation) (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Dayan Center, 1988) (in Hebrew).
20. Hamas: August 9, 14, and 21; September 9 and 17. UNLU: August 9 and 22; September 8 (!) and 17.
21. Joel Greenberg and Joshua Brilliant, "Islamic Activists Lead Their First West Bank Strike," JP, August 22, 1988; Glenn Frankel, "PLO-Fundamentalist Rift Seen in Occupied Territories," *Washington Post*, September 6, 1988; Joel Greenberg and Joshua Brilliant, "Latest Leaflet Scores Split in Uprising Leadership," JP, September 7, 1988; Daniel Williams, "Rivalry to Control Uprising Grows," *Los Angeles Times*, September 10, 1988.
22. *Facts Weekly Review*, published clandestinely in English by circles close to the UNLU in Jerusalem, denounced Hamas, considering that Israel and the Western press were playing up the islamists so as to brandish the specter of Islamic fanaticism. It attributed the entire responsibility for competing calendars to Hamas. *Facts Weekly Review*, no. 24 (August 28, 1988), and no. 25 (September 11, 1988).
23. For example, Yasser Arafat in an interview with *al-Itihad* and *al-Khalij* (Abu Dhabi).
24. *Washington Post*, September 18, 1988.
25. It was in fact the second time this had occurred, the first being July 8, 1988.
26. As compared with what happened to the Jihad, this allegation is justified. Only one Muslim Brotherhood leader, Sheikh Khalil al-Quqa, was deported, while others, such as Sheikh Yasin and Mahmud al-Zahhar, are regularly interviewed as *Muslim Brotherhood* leaders on Israeli television.