

The PLO and Israel

From Armed Conflict
to Political Solution,
1964-1994

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ELEVEN

INTIFADA DISCOURSE

THE HAMAS AND UNL LEAFLETS

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SOCIAL, CULTURAL, OR POLITICAL DISCOURSE is composed of thoughts and ideas expressed in speeches, statements, texts, and other forms of communication. A discourse characterizes the social or political world of a certain group or community, its norms and values, its institutions, and the behavior of its members.

Leaflets distributed by Hamas and the United National Leadership (UNL) played a key role in shaping the Palestinian discourse during the Intifada. Their publications dictated a particular way of life and determined the boundaries of permissible action. They brought the people into the streets, instructing them on what to do and when and how to do it. The leaflets were the vital documents of the Palestinians during the Intifada.

In this chapter I will examine the similarities and differences in perceptions of Palestinian national goals as expressed in Hamas and UNL leaflets and consider the leaflets' approach to the day-to-day reality of the Intifada. In so doing I hope to project the possible effects of the Hamas-UNL discourse on the future relationship between the two groups.

UNL AND HAMAS AS LEADING BODIES

Four major political organizations prepared leaflets during the Intifada: the United National Leadership (*al-Qiyada al-wataniyya al-Muwahada*);

the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya*, or *Hamas*); the left-wing Palestinian factions; and Islamic Jihad (*al-Jihad al-Islami*). Each was identified ideologically or linked organizationally with either the national or the religious camp. The two most important groups were the UNL and Hamas.

The UNL was a coalition of supporters of Fatah, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Communist Party. The close relationship between the UNL and the PLO was given explicit expression in UNL leaflets. Beginning with Leaflet No. 3, each communicate opened with the same declaration: "No voice can overcome the voice of the uprising, no voice can overcome the voice of the Palestinian people—the people of the PLO." This leaflet and every subsequent one noted that it was issued by the PLO and the UNL, and was undersigned by both bodies.

Hamas became an umbrella organization for activists of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in the Gaza Strip, including the Islamic Community (*al-Mujamma' al-Islami*) from which Hamas emerged. The Islamic Jihad, whose orientation is also religious, operated separately from Hamas and distributed its own leaflets. The establishment of the Islamic Jihad as an independent organization was originally motivated by a profound disagreement with the Muslim Brothers over how to advance the creation of an Islamic state in Palestine. The Jihad opted for an immediate holy war on Israel whereas the Brothers emphasized the need for social and cultural activities within the community in addition to armed struggle against Israel. The interrelation of the four bodies with either the national camp or the religious camp enabled an intensive level of activity and ensured that a high percentage of the population would perform the directives contained in the leaflets.

DIVERSITY, FREQUENCY, AND EFFECTIVENESS

The scope of Intifada activities among the groups is reflected in the diversity and frequency of the leaflets, each intended for blanket distribution in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In practice, UNL and Hamas leaflets enjoyed the widest circulation. They differed in both style and content. UNL leaflets were longer and more detailed; at the same time, they were phrased more succinctly and their authors endeavored to present political arguments couched in clear language. Hamas

leaflets, in contrast, drew heavily on religious images and slogans. With the exception of the UNL, the leaflets of all the groups were homemade; that is, they were drawn up solely by local activists. UNL leaflets were drafted in the territories and then sent to the PLO offices in Tunis for final polish and approval.

Leaflets appeared frequently: In the first year of the Intifada (December 1987-December 1988) the UNL issued 31 leaflets and Hamas 33. (Hamas began numbering its leaflets with No. 21, in May 1988). The average in the first year was therefore two or three leaflets issued by each body per month. During the second year of the Intifada, fewer leaflets were issued: 19 by the UNL and 18 by Hamas. After the third year, the average fell to 12 to 15 leaflets per year. Through May 1994, the UNL had issued 103 leaflets and Hamas 111.

Each group's leaflets set out to dictate the daily routine of the Palestinians. But only UNL and Hamas leaflets proved to have the force of governmental decrees; the response and obedience they elicited were great. Along with offering encouragement and enumerating the Intifada's achievements, the leaflets provided detailed guidelines on what was permitted and what was prohibited. In contrast to the leaflets of the Left and those of the Islamic Jihad, the UNL and Hamas leaflets addressed a broad range of issues: work, health, transportation, education, agriculture, and commerce; whether a strike was to be full or partial; opening hours for shops; how to maintain studies despite the closure of schools; who could travel during a strike; and who could work. The leaflets called for intra-communal help; contributions and donations to the needy and to the families of people killed or imprisoned; a selective boycott of Israeli products; boycotting of work in the Israeli agricultural sector; attacks on Jewish settlers; and the resignation of Palestinians employed by the Israeli Civil Administration, particularly policemen, tax collectors, and members of appointed local councils. Hamas leaflets, which were prepared in the Gaza Strip, also contained religious instructions regarding prayer, charity, penitence, and the need for good behavior (such as obeying traffic rules in the spirit of "Muslim politeness"). The wide range of issues tackled by the UNL and Hamas reflects their respective claims to Palestinian national leadership and their competition for the people's loyalty and obedience.

The UNL and Hamas leaflets influenced the behavior not only of the local population but of the Israeli authorities as well. They became "working papers," guiding the scale and intensity of activity by the army, the Civil Administration and other Israeli security bodies.

In the absence of a formal leadership, the anonymous writers of the leaflets became the "pamphlet leadership" of the Intifada. If effective leadership is defined as the ability to articulate values, define goals, and assure the public's obedience and compliance, the authors of the UNL and Hamas leaflets were exceedingly successful leaders.

THE PALESTINIAN STATE

A content analysis of the leaflets reveals two overriding goals common to the various groups active in the Intifada: undermining the authority of Israeli rule in the occupied territories by means of a civil revolt to force Israel to withdraw from those areas; and preparing the groundwork for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Hamas and the UNL had divergent visions as to the character of a Palestinian state, and consequently differed in their attitudes toward Israel, the Jewish people, and the peace process. These differences were inherent in each movement's credo. Hamas, with its religious ideology, aspired to establish an Islamic state in all of Palestine. According to the Hamas charter of August 1988, the soil of Palestine is a Muslim endowment (*waqf*) and Hamas is a "distinctive Palestinian movement working to raise the banner of Allah over every grain of soil in Palestine."¹ Hamas saw itself as a link in the chain of jihad against Israel. To forgo parts of Palestine was to forgo part of Islam.²

In the eyes of Hamas, the Muslims' right to all of Palestine left no room for dialogue or political settlement with Israel. The following leaflet quotations exemplify this approach:

Let any hand be cut off that signs [away] a grain of sand in Palestine in favor of the enemies of God . . . who have seized . . . the blessed land (March 13, 1988).

"Land for peace" and the "umbrella of an international conference" . . . this is no more than a mirage, deceit . . . (March 4, 1988).

Every negotiation with the enemy is a regression from the [Palestinian] cause, concession of a principle and recognition of the usurping murderers' false claim to a land in which they were not born (August 18, 1988).

Arab rulers, who invest efforts for the false peace . . . and who entreat Israel to agree to a 'just' peace . . . We hope you will fight at least once

[in order to prove] that you partake of Arab boldness or Muslim strength (January 1988).

And, in a rhetorical appeal to Israel: "Get your hands off our people, our cities, our camps and our villages. Our struggle with you is a contest of faith, existence and life" (undated leaflet).

Hamas also adduced political arguments for rejecting any attempt to achieve a political settlement with Israel. Thus, in Leaflet No. 28: "Israel understands only the language of force and believes neither in negotiations nor in peace. It will persist in its evasiveness and in building a military entity, in exploiting the opportunity for attack, and in breaking the Arabs' nose." And in the same leaflet: "The Arab world is not so weak as to run after peace, and the Jews are not so strong as to be able to impose their will . . . How long can Israel withstand all the forces?"

Furthermore, Hamas ascribed to Israel and the Jews demonic traits that justify a refusal to hold talks: Israel is a "cancer which is spreading . . . and is threatening the entire Islamic world" (May 3, 1988). The Jews, according to another leaflet, are "brothers of the apes, assassins of the prophets, blood-suckers, warmongers . . . Only Islam can break the Jews and destroy their dream" (January 1988).

Hamas often drew on historical personalities and events from Islamic tradition in order to underscore the religious character of the conflict with Israel. Names that frequently cropped up in the leaflets include: Ja'far Ibn Abu-Talib, who fought the Byzantines in the Battle of Mu'tah (629 CE); Khalid Ibn al-Walid, who fought the Battle of the Yarmuk (636 CE) and was called by Muhammad "the sword of God"; Salah al-Din, who vanquished the Crusaders at the Battle of Hittin (1187); and Baybars, the Mameluke sultan of Egypt who fought the Mongols in the Battle of 'Ayn Jalut (1260).

The Khaybar affair has also attracted Hamas's attention. Many Hamas leaflets concluded with the call: "*Allah akbar* [Allah is great]—the hour of Khaybar has arrived—*Allah akbar*—death to the conquerors." Khaybar was a wealthy Jewish colony on the Arabian Peninsula. According to a Muslim tradition, the Jews of Khaybar betrayed Muhammad by serving him poisoned meat that eventually caused his death. The Prophet and his followers had conquered Khaybar in 628 CE, allowing "the Jews their land in return for binding themselves to turn over half their harvests."³ For Muslims, Khaybar became a symbol

of Jewish treachery. Similarly, the Muslims who reside in the territories are looked on as *mujahidun*—the warriors of the holy war—or as *murabitun*—inhabitants of the Ribat, who settled in the countryside during the Muslim conquests to defend the frontier areas and thereby fulfill a religious commandment. Overall, Hamas advocates an exclusively Muslim state throughout Palestine to ameliorate the ills of the Muslim community. The organization thus looks with disfavor on Palestinian Christians and courts the support of Muslims living outside of Palestine.

In sum, Hamas believes that a political solution to the conflict with Israel would violate the religious precept of waging a holy war against the Jewish infidels. Its perception of Israel and the Jews as a religious—not a national—adversary rules out the possibility of a political settlement based on compromise. The alternative to the peace process with Israel, according to Hamas, is “victory or death.”

Quite a different picture emerges from the leaflets of the United National Leadership. UNL leaflets, which serve as a mouthpiece for the national camp, have sought to appeal to both Muslims and Christians. “Religion is God’s and the homeland is for all” (*al-din li’llah wal-watan li’l’jami*),⁴ a UNL slogan, contrasts sharply with Hamas’s *‘din wadunya*’ (“faith is the whole world”). Indeed, UNL leaflets rarely mention heroes or events from ancient Muslim history; their allusions are to modern historical figures who became national heroes. Three names in particular are frequently cited: Shaikh ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam, a pioneer of the armed struggle in Palestine who called for a return to Islamic fundamentalism and was killed by the British in 1935;⁵ ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Husaini (Husseini), who fell in the battle for the Qastel, outside Jerusalem, in 1948; and the writer and poet Ghassan Kanafani, who was killed in a car explosion in Beirut in 1972.

UNL leaflets stress the ties between Muslims and Christians. Leaflet No. 22 (July 21, 1988), for example, called on the people to “pray for the repose of the martyrs’ souls and [to] hold marches and demonstrations in protest at the measures of the occupation authorities against Islamic and Christian holy places.” Leaflet No. 30 (December 15, 1988) referred to the forthcoming Christmas celebrations in the following language: “December 24 [is] a day for ringing church bells and calling out *Allah akbar* in the minarets of the mosques, marking the birth of the messenger of peace, the Lord Messiah. We extend felicitations to our Palestinian Christian brothers and urge them to observe the religious rituals.”⁶

The UNL perceives the conflict with Israel predominantly in secular-political terms rather than in religious ones. For example, Palestinian society will be healed, Leaflet No. 28 says, through “self-determination and the establishment of an independent state with Arab Jerusalem as its eternal capital,” rather than through the imposition of the kingdom of Islam on the Palestinian world.

Like Hamas’s leaflets, however, those of the UNL are harsh in their denunciations of Israeli policy and leaders. The detention facilities for Palestinians are “Nazi camps” (Leaflet No. 15); Sharon, Peres, and Rabin are “fascist dwarfs” (No. 16); Rabin is a “shedder of blood” (No. 11); he is a “terrorist” and Shamir is “arrogant” (No. 25); the settlers are “herds” or “rabble” (No. 27); and the Israeli military authorities are a “Zionist machine of oppression and fascist executioners” (No. 28).

Yet the UNL also addresses practical demands to Israel that indicate that it perceives Israel pragmatically, as a political and not demonic adversary. Leaflet No. 26 (September 27, 1988) contained a typical list of such demands: annulment of the 1945 emergency regulations; removal of the army from Palestinian population centers; release of all Intifada detainees and repatriation of the deportees; free elections in all the local governments, urban and rural, under UN supervision; and cessation of punitive measures, such as economic “siege,” demolition of houses, torture, deportations, arrest without trial, and building of settlements.

Some leaflets were addressed to the Israeli public in an effort to explain the rationale behind the Intifada and the need for a peaceful settlement. Leaflet No. 28 (October 30, 1988) offers a clear example of this approach:

UNL stresses to the Israeli street that our blessed uprising . . . did not aspire to shed the blood of Palestinians or Jews, but was a revolution against the dispossession, oppression, and fascism of the occupation, and [a manifestation of] national determination to establish a just peace in our region, [a peace] that will emerge only with the establishment of our Palestinian state on our national soil.

The differences of opinion between Hamas and the UNL regarding a Palestinian state and the role of the political process reflect the ongoing competition between Hamas and the UNL’s mother movement, the PLO, over hegemony and national leadership. This has generated continuous friction between the two movements.

Nowhere was the struggle and competition between Hamas and the UNL-PLO more apparent than in the wake of the events at the Palestine National Council meeting held in Algiers in early November of 1988. At this meeting the PNC expressed support for a peaceful solution, declared the establishment of a Palestinian state on the basis of UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of November 1947, and called for the partition of Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. In response, Hamas issued a Special Leaflet (November 10, 1988) condemning the PLO's decision to accept a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and denying the PLO's right to represent the Palestinian people in the occupied territories:

Our brothers, members of the Palestinian National Council . . . sons of Qibya and Dir Yasin . . . In this session of your council, there are those who urge agreement on stopping the fighting with the enemy and signing an agreement recognizing him, and an agreement on abandoning the greater part of Palestine . . . Be careful not to be dragged in by the exponents of this inclination, which is dangerous and destructive to our cause . . . And let us say to them . . . In whose name are you condemning to failure the uprising and delivering a death blow to the achievements of the exemplary and *jihadic* achievements?! Which of the martyrs authorized you?! Which of the wounded solicited you?! Which of the widows has approached you in supplication?! Which of the infants has sought your help to conduct negotiations with the Jews, the enemies of peace and of humanity, the murderers of the prophets?! Is it in the name of the suckling babe into whose eye the Jew was quick to fire a bullet while he was in his mother's arms?! Or in the name of the shaikh whom the Jew kicked in the leg and [then] stepped on his forehead, who worships only Allah?! Or in the name of the mother whose son was robbed from her arms and thrown into the black pits of prison?! Or in the name of the youth whose bones Rabin broke?! Or in the name of the youth upon whom they rained blows and electric stings [beatings] and who are injected with bacteria at the order of Rabin, Shamir, and Peres?! Or in the name of the family whose home the Jews destroyed, leaving [the family] to live under the open skies?! In whose name, O our gentleman, will you conduct negotiations?!

Hamas, according to the leaflet, articulates the true aspirations and needs of the Palestinian people, expressing the real meaning of Palestinian national interests. In appeals to PNC members, Hamas claims that it:

has already made it clear that it posits [as a goal] an all-encompassing jihad until Palestine [is complete], and it decided to launch the uprising, on 8 December 1987, in order to realize this goal. All the members of [the people of] Palestine sided, and continue to side, with it. With the help of Allah, the power latent in our people was able to burst forth, making [the people] the paragons of the century when they confronted the usurping Jewish enemy in daily clashes. We all hope that you will stand behind the aspirations of your people, for the people chose the way . . . the way of jihad, honor, and sacrifice, finding that for the sake of Allah and the liberation of Palestine, whatever is more precious and more valuable than money, than a son and than the soul, is cheap . . . We stress to you that the plan known as a "provisional government," or the "charter of independence," or the "government-in-exile," and whatever includes a plan for a solution, is nothing more than bait with the purpose of sticking a knife in the back of the uprising's achievements; a sword in the back of the children of the stones, and preventing our children from continuing the struggle and [from achieving] martyrdom. Our struggle with the Zionists is not a campaign for a partition of borders and it is not a dispute over the division of land, it is a campaign over entity and destiny. In this stand we see the hope and aspiration of our people everywhere to arouse in you the spirit of the struggle, the spirit of the outbreak of the revolution of 1965.⁷ We call on you to take under your wing the spirit of the children of the stones and the continuation of the armed struggle, no matter what the cost. Our people has often confronted plots, and has made many sacrifices to thwart them. Our people is still possessed with the same readiness to make sacrifice after sacrifice, and it expresses this through this blessed uprising which has been recorded as a phenomenon unprecedented in history.

On the local level, the competition between Hamas and the PLO over leadership position and political control exacerbated the power struggle between Hamas and the UNL, increasing the risk of all-out confrontation between the two parties. Yet each side was wary of taking drastic steps that might cause irreparable damage to their relationship. Thus, the UNL and Hamas endeavored to play down the conflicting views and disagreements between them, emphasizing shared values of unity and solidarity. In Leaflet No. 29 (November 20, 1988), entitled "The Joy of the Palestinian State," the UNL appealed to

a number of fundamentalist elements to prefer the general national interests, our people's national interest, over their basic assumptions and

factional interests . . . and to cease presenting negative stands and manifestations. For they serve the enemy, whether they wish to or not. They must draw the conclusions from the mass celebrations . . . marking the declaration of the [Palestinian] state, reflecting the deep roots of our legitimate leadership and sole representative, the [PLO]. It is still not too late to fuse all the loyal forces in the melting pot of the uprising and its United National Leadership.

In reaction, Hamas declared, in Leaflet No. 31 (November 27, 1988), that it opposed splitting the ranks but that this might result from "leaflets being planted in the name of the Hamas movement which the [Israeli] occupier circulated in order to split the ranks and cast aspersions on the [various] currents." And, above all: "preserve the unity of the people. Pay no heed to the enemy's attempts to cause a rift in families, clans, currents of thought and ideas."

Hamas's response to UNL's charges attest to its complex attitude toward the national camp. On the one hand, Hamas was not eager to aggravate its disagreements with the UNL to the point of a head-on clash. Such a development would have a boomerang effect in the struggle against Israel. On the other hand, Hamas did not undertake to back away from a confrontation in the future, if the UNL, together with the PLO, should assent to a political settlement that jettisoned the principle of liberating the whole of Palestine.

The ideological discord and power struggle between Hamas and the UNL-PLO increased the potential for an irreparable rift between the two camps. Both sides were well aware of the gulf dividing them and the difficulty of reaching an agreement that would enable them to live side by side in political harmony. Still, along with the conflicting interests in the ideological realms, there was an awareness of common interests in the practical domain, namely, in the day-to-day struggle against the Israeli authorities.

THE QUESTION OF CIVIL REVOLT

A second goal of the Intifada shared by the UNL and Hamas was to undermine Israeli rule in the occupied territories by means of a civil revolt that would force Israel's withdrawal from these areas. On this issue, unlike those noted above, the two groups shared a common

approach reflected in their nearly identical directives to the Palestinian public about its role in the uprising.

The population was called on to cooperate in both violent and non-violent actions. The former included throwing stones and firebombs, building barriers, burning tires, wielding knives and axes, clashing with the Israeli forces, and attacking collaborators. In the realm of non-violent activity, the population was called on to take action in three areas: (1) severing economic ties with Israel and building up local institutions to provide alternative public services; (2) engaging in civil disobedience (disobeying laws and regulations); and (3) performing activities that promote solidarity.

The directives on severing ties with Israel called for not working in Israel; not working in Jewish settlements in the occupied territories; boycotting Israeli products; withdrawing deposits from Israeli banks; resigning from the Civil Administration; developing a home-based economy—including growing vegetables and raising domestic animals in one's yard—and for farmers, "to plant cereals and legumes such as lentils, chickpeas, broad beans, garlic, onions, wheat, and so forth, for storage" (UNL Leaflet No. 24, August 22, 1988);⁸ expanding local plants and taking on new workers; establishing and expanding popular committees on education, information, guard duty, and agriculture; and setting up and cultivating local bodies for "popular education"—a directive calling on parents, teachers, and students to uphold the routine of studies despite the protracted closure of educational institutions by the Israeli authorities.

Directives regarding civil disobedience called for non-payment of taxes and fines; staging partial commercial strikes; and holding general strikes on specified days. As for activities to enhance solidarity, the population, or at times certain groups, were called on to fulfill the following directives: day-long strikes of solidarity with prisoners; day-long strikes of solidarity with families of victims; memorial days for traumatic events, such as the civil war in Jordan which broke out in September 1970; coordination by lawyers in their dealing with prisoners, and press conferences to expose conditions in the detention camps; sit-down strikes by students, teachers, and parents in front of foreign missions and closed schools; volunteer work to help farmers with the olive harvest; assistance to needy families; refraining from raising rents; reducing medical fees; and writing slogans on walls and raising flags.

An analysis of the first 30 leaflets issued by the UNL and Hamas shows a steady and significant rise, over time, in the number of both

violent and non-violent directives issued by both groups. Subsequent leaflets maintained the same high proportion of violent and non-violent directives. Of 315 directives published in the first 30 UNL leaflets, 70 (22.2 percent of the total) were printed in the first ten leaflets, 111 (35.2 percent) in Leaflets 11-20, and 134 (42.6 percent) in Leaflets 21-30.

A similar trend is discernible in the first 30 leaflets put out by Hamas. Of 139 violent and non-violent directives in Hamas leaflets, 36 (about 26 percent of the total) appeared in the first ten leaflets, 40 (29 percent) in Leaflets 11-20, and 63 (more than 45 percent) in Leaflets 21-30.

Statistical analysis indicates a significant rise in the number of directives calling for violent activity in UNL leaflets. In the first ten leaflets, 14.3 percent of the 70 instructions entailed violent action; in Leaflets 11-20, the number had risen to 28 percent; and in Leaflets 21-30, such instructions accounted for a third of the total. Thus, the percentage of violent instructions more than doubled between the first months of the Intifada and the periods to follow.

Concurrently, a dramatic decrease is visible in the number of directives to sever ties with Israel in the realms of the economy and services: from 27 percent in the first ten leaflets, to 11 percent in Leaflets 21-30. The frequency of the two other types of non-violent instructions—civil disobedience and encouragement of acts of solidarity—remained stable.

Where Hamas is concerned, the overall picture regarding violence and the severing of contact with Israel was substantially the same. A comparison of the instructions for violent actions in Hamas and UNL leaflets reveals that the violence level of the former was consistently high from the start of the Intifada. In the UNL the violence level was initially low but gradually crept upward during 1988; after August 1988 it approached that of Hamas. The difference in the amount of violent directives should not cloud the fact that both groups evinced an identical trend: a growing number of violent directives, on the one hand, and a sharp decline in calls to break economic ties with Israel, on the other. In UNL leaflets this trend was discernible as early as the second period, while in Hamas it did not emerge until the third period of 1988.

These trends reflect the contradictory ideologies guiding the groups that were behind the uprising. On the one hand, the Palestinians' growing awareness of the vital role played by violence—in propelling the Intifada and in producing political gains—accounted for the significant increase in the violent directives in UNL leaflets and the consistently high level of violent directives in Hamas leaflets. On the other hand, the

Intifada's real capacity for endurance depended on the Palestinians' economic staying power. In the absence of self-sustaining economic capability, dependence on Israel had become a way of life. Under these circumstances, excessive pressure to sever economic contact with Israel was ineffective. To obey would mean economic hardship for tens of thousands of workers who earned their living in Israel, and a huge loss of revenue for many local merchants and factory owners who maintained commercial ties with Israeli firms. In turn, a severe economic downturn in these sectors could weaken the influence of the UNL and Hamas, stir disobedience, and encourage anarchy. If the Intifada's strength lay in its ability to attract the cooperation of all social strata and age groups, it is easy to see how the ideologically heretical became the economically unavoidable.

The inability or unwillingness of merchants, factory owners, and workers to break off economic relations with Israel forced both the UNL and Hamas to adapt to the circumstances and bow to the economic reality, gradually decreasing in the number of directives urging an economic break with Israel. Instructions in this spirit continued to appear, but more selectively. This was particularly noticeable regarding work in Israel and the boycotting of Israeli products. Later leaflets noted clearly that the prohibition on working in Israel was confined to general strike days or to persons employed in sectors that competed with products of the territories, such as the citrus industry. In the same vein, the leaflets called for a boycott of products for which local substitutes were available, notably milk products, agricultural produce, cigarettes, and soft drinks.

The decline in the number of directives calling for a total economic break with Israel indicates a reassessment by both the UNL and Hamas concerning the limits of strength of the Intifada. This awareness explains why both groups stepped back from declaring a general civil revolt and preferred to hammer home the idea that the uprising was a stage toward a total revolt.

The controlled civil revolt, like the continuous decline in the number of directives calling for the severing of economic ties with Israel, was evidence that the leading bodies of the Intifada had adopted a flexible strategy to further their political goals. The Palestinians were aware of cost-benefit considerations; too many demands would exact too much sacrifice from their constituents. They were avoiding a slide into excess in trying to achieve their political objectives. They recognized the limits of their strength and were careful not to reach a point of

no return in the confrontation with Israel. The Intifada had its share of internal contradictions and conflicting interests; nonetheless, it was able to accommodate such contradictions without succumbing to them.

THE PLO AND HAMAS: TOWARD RELATIONS OF NEITHER FULL ACCEPTANCE NOR TOTAL REJECTION

Hamas's awareness of its inability to achieve the ultimate goal of a Palestinian Muslim state in all of Palestine through all-out struggle with Israel, and the group's social and cultural activities within the Palestinian Muslim community, played a significant role in shaping the relationship with the UNL and with its mother movement, the PLO.

The discrepancy between Hamas's vision and day-to-day reality in the occupied territories led to a crucial dilemma that Hamas could hardly escape. Conformity to its grand design would have demonstrated ideological consistency, thus strengthening Hamas credibility among both its members and its adversaries. At the same time conformity to Hamas's stated doctrine may have weakened its position within broad segments of the Palestinian population who were eager to see an end to their daily agonies and grievances.

Political flexibility and incorporation into the peace process would help Hamas maintain its influence within the Palestinian population for the time being but destroy its uniqueness as the normative opposition to the PLO and increase the risk of friction and disunity within the movement. It is this tension between two competing, sometimes opposing, considerations that led Hamas to shift from its "unrealistic" posture of conflict—that of a total commitment to the vision of a Palestinian Muslim state in all of historical Palestine and a total rejection of any move toward a political settlement—to a more pragmatic posture entailing calculated deviance from its stated doctrine.

Hamas's calculated deviation found its expression in various statements made by its leader, Shaikh Ahmad Yassin, during the Intifada. Following are three examples:

1. Hamas, according to Shaikh Yassin, does not rule out the possibility of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as long as it would be considered a first phase on the road to the establishment of a Palestinian state in all of Palestine.⁹

2. Hamas is ready to consider international supervision in the territories after the Israeli withdrawal as long as it would be limited in time and would not require direct and clear-cut concessions to Israel.¹⁰
3. Hamas will reject any attempt to enter into political negotiations with Israel as long as Israel continues to control the territories. However, Hamas would allow talks after a full Israeli withdrawal.¹¹

Moreover, following the Israeli-PLO agreement of September 1993 to establish a Palestinian interim self-government authority (PISGA) in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, various Hamas leaders, time and again, stated their willingness to participate in the general elections to be held in the territories, although Hamas continued to criticize the PLO for signing such an agreement.

Hamas's statements reflect a tendency, within the movement, of searching for a conjunction between the poetry of Hamas ideology and the prose of reality. By adopting a strategy of neither full acceptance nor total rejection of the PLO's political perception and policy, Hamas was able to justify its position in normative terms, interpreting such "concessions" as tactical moves.

Hamas's present strategy towards the PLO, and its position toward the political process, will likely continue as long as the Palestinian Authority shows gradual achievements in gaining the support of the Palestinian public. Either a serious stagnation and setback, or rapid progress with clear-cut economic and institutional achievement—both of which may lead to the foundation of a Palestinian state in only the West Bank and Gaza—would increase the dissonance within Hamas.

Under these circumstances, completion of a permanent solution calling for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza may carry great risks for the fragile coexistence between Hamas and the PLO. It appears that some sort of political cooperation with Amman, based on a confederation among the parties, may provide a better option to cope with Hamas's political dissonance and its ideological discrepancies.

NOTES

1. Reuven Paz, "Ha-Amanah ha-Islamit ve-mashm'utah: 'iyun rishoni ve-targum" (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, September 1988), 30 (mimeographed).
2. *Jihad*, literally an effort, is a continuous state of holy war against the nonbelievers and is a commandment of Islam. Jihad must end when the nonbelievers (Jews and Christians) have either accepted Islam or agreed to a protected status within an Islamic state.
3. Carl Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic People* (New York: Capricorn, 1960), 28.
4. *Al-Hadaf* (Beirut); PFLP organ, 12 October 1987. Cf. Psalms 115:16, "Heaven is the Lord's, and the earth He gave to man."
5. Fatah views Shaikh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam as a national hero and not a religious figure. In his memory Fatah issued a special publication, *Thawrat al-Shaykh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam* (The revolution of Shaikh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam) (Beirut: June 1977). The Palestinian Left regards Shaikh al-Qassam as a social rebel. Hamas perceives him as a pioneer of the Islamic Jihad according to the fundamentalist interpretation, namely, that the holy war is a duty of the individual, not of the state.
6. The idea was to play down the Christmas festivities and not decorate the streets as in previous years. A similar call to refrain from holding festivities went out to Muslims on the Feast of the Sacrifice (*'Id al-Adha*).
7. 1965 marked the beginning of Fatah's guerrilla warfare against Israel. The mention of this date would seem to indicate the national-Palestinian face of Hamas.
8. The subject of a home-based economy rarely appears in Hamas leaflets. The reason is that the population density in the Gaza Strip, which is Hamas's power base, precludes the use of yards for agriculture.
9. *Yediot Aharonot* (daily; Tel Aviv), 16 September 1988.
10. Shaikh Ahmad Yasir to *Al-Sarat* (publication of the Islamic movement in Israel), 10 April 1989.
11. *Yediot Aharonot*, 16 September 1988.

TWELVE

THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN THE INTIFADA AND THE PEACE PROCESS

NAOMI CHAZAN

POLITICAL ACTION BY ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN WOMEN over the past eight years has proven not only to be a reflection of certain major political processes, such as the Intifada and the peace negotiations; it has served as an actual precursor of these processes. Since the beginning of the Intifada women have systematically been one step ahead of political events on the regional stage. Thus, by looking at what women are doing today, it is possible to get a very good idea of where political processes will be tomorrow.

A number of factors can be offered as a preliminary explanation as to why women have been in the vanguard. First, women's peace actions are characterized by a persistence that is not typical of general peace movements in the region. If we trace the activities of peace movements over a period of ten years, an up-and-down pattern emerges, with peaks and valleys. Women's peace action, on the other hand, has shown a consistent, incremental rate of increase over time.

Secondly, because Palestinian and Israeli women are somewhat outside the dominant political discourse in their societies, they have much greater flexibility in terms of the kinds of activities that they can contemplate and carry out. A third element is women's construction of