



THE ISLAMIC JIHAD

THE IMPERATIVE OF HOLY WAR

Boaz Ganor, (Founder and Executive Director, ICT)
1.1.1993

ABSTRACT

The Islamic Jihad is one of the most complex and dangerous of the Arab terrorist organizations, with cells in many Middle Eastern countries and, apparently, in Europe as well. These groups generally act on their own initiative without coordination, sometimes even within the same country. All these groups share a fundamentalist Islamic ideology which espouses holy war (jihad) against the infidels, and which is under the powerful ideological-religious influence of the Islamic revolution in Iran. The Iranian regime and the Islamic Jihad groups collaborate closely at times. Some groups not only receive aid and guidance from Iran but also enjoy generous support from other Arab and Islamic countries such as Libya, Syria, Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the Persian Gulf oil states. They also cooperate extensively with diverse Palestinian organizations.

* The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT).

NOT ONE JEWISH VILLAGE

The Islamic Jihad is one of the most complex and dangerous of the Arab terrorist organizations, with cells in many Middle Eastern countries and, apparently, in Europe as well. These groups generally act on their own initiative without coordination, sometimes even within the same country. All these groups share a fundamentalist Islamic ideology which espouses holy war (jihad) against the infidels, and which is under the powerful ideological-religious influence of the Islamic revolution in Iran. The Iranian regime and the Islamic Jihad groups collaborate closely at times. Some groups not only receive aid and guidance from Iran but also enjoy generous support from other Arab and Islamic countries such as Libya, Syria, Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the Persian Gulf oil states. They also cooperate extensively with diverse Palestinian organizations.

The Islamic Jihad aspires to overthrow secular Arab regimes in order to establish an Islamic pan Arab empire. The Jihad is unique among the Islamic movements, however, in that it views war against the Jews and Israel ("the spearhead of the West and imperialism in the region") as an initial, essential step toward fulfilling the goals of Islam. According to the Islamic Jihad, the only way to resolve the conflict with the Jews in Palestine is by direct violent confrontation. In 1990, one of the organization's leaders -- Sheikh Tamimi (author of a 1982 booklet called "The Obliteration of Israel: A Koranic Imperative") -- expressed this principle in the following words: "The Jews have to return to the countries from which they came. We shall not accede to a Jewish state on our land, even if it is only one village.

The Islamic Jihad recruits young Arabs by means of religious indoctrination, and bases its terror strategy on the willingness of these young people to lay down their lives for what they see as a divine command -- the war against the infidels. Many of the Jihad's terrorist attacks are designed as suicide operations, in which the terrorist attempts to cause as many casualties as possible without planning his own escape. For example, during the Gulf War one Jihad recruit, instructed to set up and detonate a car bomb on a busy street in one of the countries fighting against Iraq,

told a Times correspondent that the fate he awaited in the after world was far superior to the "rotten life" he had at present. He added, however, that his life was hardly miserable since he was about to die for his country. All lives move toward Heaven or Hell, the young Arab asserted, and he chose Heaven. It is this suicidal strategy that makes the Islamic Jihad one of the most dangerous organizations of our times.

The complexity and secrecy of the Islamic Jihad, as well as the many groups in Arab countries that bear this name but have no direct connection, cause much confusion and misinterpretation concerning the structure, size, and deployment of the real Islamic Jihad around the world. This report will attempt to clarify the picture by looking separately at the activities of the Islamic Jihad in the various Arab countries and in the Israeli-administered 'territories.

Iran -- Cradle of the Jihad

It was the Islamic revolution in Iran that triggered the growth of Islamic Jihad groups in the Arab countries. In the late 1970s, after establishing their status firmly in Iran itself, the Iranian fundamentalist revolutionaries began to "export" the Islamic revolution from their bastion to areas heavily populated by Shiites and to other Arab countries generally. The Islamic Revolutionary Council was established in Iran with this purpose in mind, and it was instructed to coordinate the activities of pro-Iranian organizations in the various countries. The Council dispatched activists to Arab countries where, with the help of local supporters and sermons delivered in the mosques, they worked to recruit young people into the Islamic Jihad. Some of the new recruits traveled to Iran to acquire a military-terrorist education, and then returned to establish additional cells in their own countries.

In view of their success among young people in the Arab countries, the Iranians established another and higher-level coordinating body in 1983: the Supreme Coordinating Council between the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Movements Worldwide.

Despite Iranian assistance and guidance, however, the Islamic Jihad failed to establish a broad public infrastructure in Iran (such as that built by the Palestinians in Beirut in the late 1970s). The Islamic Jihad operated for the first time inside Iran itself during the Gulf War, its members launching terror attacks on the British, Italian, and Turkish embassies in Teheran (February 1991). A Jihad spokesman asserted that: "The attacks on people from aggressor countries will continue unless the Western terrorist onslaughts against the helpless Iraqi people cease.

Lebanon -- First Terror Operations

The first active cells of the Islamic Jihad surfaced in Lebanon after the outbreak of Operation Peace for Galilee. The Jihad groups in Lebanon left their bases in West Beirut and the Beka'a Valley to attack Western, IDF, and South Lebanese Army targets, and to kidnap Westerners in Lebanon.

One of the most prominent leaders of the Islamic Jihad in Lebanon is Imad Moraniya. Moraniya, a Lebanese about 40 years of age and the grandson of a clergyman, was close to Fatah-Arafat until the Lebanon War. He joined Hizbullah in 1982 and quickly rose through the ranks until he was appointed chief of the organization's security apparatus. It seems that Moraniya began to operate in Lebanon under the name of "Islamic Jihad" in the course of doing his job. Imad Moraniya, responsible for a long list of attacks against the United States and against Western targets and civilians in Lebanon, is subordinate to Iran but also has close ties with various Palestinian organizations. According to the New York Post, Israel and the United States were about to act against Moraniya, but France warned him, thereby saving his life.

Another Islamic Jihad group in Lebanon has connections to Hizbullah and may even be an integral part of this organization. In practice, the operational command of Hizbullah has undertaken numerous attacks under the name of Islamic Jihad. The attack on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in March 1992 was apparently done by Hizbullah activists in Argentina in

revenge for the killing of one of the organization's top leaders, Abas Massawi, by the IDF in Lebanon. Yet responsibility for the attack was claimed by a body calling itself the Islamic Jihad. The organization's announcement said: "The war will continue until Israel ceases to exist and the last Jew is eliminated from the world. Israel is entirely evil and must be wiped off the face of the earth.

The connection between Hizbullah and the Islamic Jihad factions in Lebanon is also expressed in joint operations, such as the attack on an Israeli army column in April 1992 when a large roadside bomb killed two soldiers and wounded five others. The group responsible for the attack was comprised of three terrorists: two Sunnis from the Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine, the major Islamic Jihad faction in Lebanon, and one Shiite from Hizbullah. The group was trained at a Hizbullah base in Lebanon. The Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine also conducts activities at sea, apparently in an attempt to train groups for sea borne operations. Thus in August 1992 an Israeli navy patrol boat killed four members of the organization who were training on boats in the sea near the Nahar el-Bard refugee camp in northern Lebanon.

It should be emphasized that the joint goal of the Islamic Jihad factions and the Palestinian and Shiite terror organizations in Lebanon, the aspiration to destroy the State of Israel, underlies the cooperation among these organizations and frequently even leads to the transfer of activists from Palestinian terrorist organizations to factions of the Islamic Jihad.

Egypt -- Threatening the Regime

Unlike most Islamic Jihad groups and organizations in the Arab world, the Egyptian Jihad has a long history that predates the Shiite revolution in Iran. The Jihad movement in Egypt was founded by breakaway Muslim Brotherhood activists. The departure of these Jihad groups, which began in the 1960s and gathered strength in the 1970s, was triggered by disagreements over terror strategies.

The aims of the Egyptian Jihad groups are similar to those of Islamic Jihad organizations elsewhere, namely, the establishment of an Islamic state in Egypt and neighboring countries. These groups, operating in small underground cells and recruiting members aged 15-30, take "credit" for numerous terrorist attacks against Egyptian government officials and institutions, Christian leaders and institutions, and Israeli and Western targets on Egyptian soil. Jihad recruits are trained in remote bases in Egypt, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan and elsewhere.

The Jihad groups in Egypt receive funds for their activities from various countries (Libya, Iran, etc.), canvass local notables and institutions for donations, and collaborate with the Egyptian underworld in crime, especially against the Coptic Christian community.

In view of the grave threat posed by the Jihad factions to the Egyptian regime, and due to the grave terrorist attacks for which they were responsible, the Egyptian security forces have given top priority to their war on the organization. During the tenure of former Egyptian Minister of Interior General Zaki Badr, some 8.000 Jihad activists were imprisoned. However, the organization's infrastructure was not destroyed, and when the new Interior Minister, General Abd al-Halim Moussa, took office, the Jihad groups actually stepped up their activities. In response, General Moussa declared in October 1990 that: "The security forces have committed themselves to the complete elimination of the Jihad organization in Egypt, as well as that of other organizations acting to undermine governmental stability

In June 1992, after activists of the Islamic Jihad in Egypt murdered author Faraj Fodah, who had openly supported Israeli-Egyptian peace, a "hit list" was revealed that had been prepared by organization activists and which included the names of tens of Egyptians to be killed by the Islamic Jihad, including the Interior Minister -- General Moussa, the journalist Anis Mansour, and others.

Jordan and the Israeli-Administered Territories Terrorism as "Armed Propaganda"

The Islamic Jihad has been one of the most active terror organizations in the territories and in Israel over the last few years. Its members have stabbed civilians, carried out murderous suicide

attacks (such as forcing an Israeli bus off a cliff), set Israeli fields and forests on fire, and killed Palestinian "collaborators.

Three groups of Islamic fanatics have been active over the years in the mosques of Judea, Samaria, and East Jerusalem: Al-Tahrir al-Islami; Al-Jihad; and the Muslim Brotherhood. Many young members of these movements, profoundly influenced by the Islamic revolution in Iran, were critical of Palestinian terror organizations that consciously struck all Islamic content from their platforms and opposed the establishment of an Islamic religious Palestinian state. Nevertheless, they opposed traditional Islamic movements (such as the Muslim Brotherhood) that disregarded the Palestinian problem, placed the struggle to liberate Palestine on a back burner, and chose to focus mainly on Islamic culture and social work in the territories in an effort to maximize their recruitment of young Palestinians. The national-religious perception that began to coalesce in the late 1960s and 1970s as an alternative to these traditional Islamic movements gained momentum in the 1980s when a few Islamic activists, banding together under the name of Islamic Jihad, began to operate vigorously in the Palestinian arena, invoking terrorism as "armed propaganda".

Like the Islamic Jihad movements in other Arab countries, the groups in Jordan, the territories, and Israel treat Khomeini's revolution in Iran as their model for emulation and regard themselves as part of the revolution sweeping all of Islam. For the Jihad movements in Jordan and the territories, however, "liberation of Palestine" is the top priority; they have concentrated their efforts on armed struggle and "jihad against the Jews occupying Islamic land." The Jihad groups stress that the Arab-Israeli conflict is not a national dispute over territory but rather a fundamentally religious conflict. For this reason they postulate the liberation of all of "Palestine" and reject any political arrangements or diplomatic activity by which the problem may be resolved. According to the Islamic Jihad, Israel is the spearhead of the imperialist West in the center of the Muslim world; this pernicious factor must therefore be eliminated as the first step toward the return of all Muslims to the faith and the establishment of an Islamic state on all

Muslim territory. Thus, the Jihad groups allege, the Palestinian question is central to the Islamic revolution, and they invoke the attitude toward Palestine in the Koran and in Muslim religious law to support their claim. The main provisions of Islamic Jihad ideology are disseminated among the activists through sermons in mosques in the territories, books and newspaper articles, and political indoctrination in Israeli prisons. It should be emphasized that the Islamic Jihad factions in the territories have also apparently established cooperative links with fundamentalist elements among Israeli Arabs as well.

Even though the Islamic Jihad occupies a unique place in the territories and Jordan, its activists are encouraged and supported by brother organizations in the Arab countries. An Islamic Jihad leaflet distributed in the territories in October 1988 exemplifies the point: "We call on all our people -- the old, the young, and the children -- to go out and hunt down the soldiers of the enemy. The hearts of your brethren -- the Islamic Jihad in Egypt, Beirut, the Arab Maghreb, Islamabad, Teheran, and the entire world -- will be with you.

Islamic Jihad members in the territories cluster in small, secret cells and operate with a rather generous degree of autonomy. They maintain contact with the Jihad leadership in the territories and sometimes with higher echelons in Jordan. This leadership, generally composed of senior Islamic Jihad operatives who were expelled From Israel, directs the activities of its people in the territories, gives them instructions through various channels, covers their expenses, and meets all their needs. One indicator of the relative strength of Islamic Jihad activists in the territories was the success of the general strike called by the organization on December 6, 1992, to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Intifada. (The traditional date honored by the PLO and its affiliates is December 9).

Major Islamic Jihad Factions in the Territories

The following is a description of some of the Islamic Jihad factions in the territories and Jordan, named for their leaders:

**Sheikh Abed el-Aziz Ouda and Dr. Fathi Shekaki*

Dr. Shekaki, a physician From Gaza, is the publisher of "Khomeini: The Alternative and the Islamic Solution." Sheikh Ouda worked as a teacher in Gaza and disseminated his ideas among Palestinian students there. Ouda was arrested for incitement in 1984 and sentenced to 11 months in prison. When he was released, he resumed his activities with the Islamic Jihad until he was expelled from the territories together with Shekaki about a month before the start of the Intifada.

This faction is one of the largest Islamic Jihad groups in the territories and is responsible for many recent acts of terrorism in the areas of Ramallah, Shechem, Hebron and the Gaza Strip. The faction's leaders, Dr. Shekaki and Sheikh Ouda, are based in Syria and southern Lebanon. The two maintain good relations with the Syrian leadership and have close ties with Hizbullah and the Iranian forces in Lebanon. Since their expulsion From Israel, Ouda and Shelraki continue to direct the activities of their operatives in the territories and their followers in Lebanon. The faction's activists in Lebanon recruit youth from the Palestinian refugee camps and train them to carry out terror attacks in Israel with the active help and assistance of Hizbullah.

**Sheikh Assad al-Tamimi*

Sheikh Tamimi, the scion of a distinguished Hebron family, served in the 1960s as imam of Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. When his term of office expired (before the Six-Day War), Tamimi went to the East Bank and joined the Muslim Brotherhood. After the Iranian revolution, he apparently left the movement and, with the Iranian government's blessing and in cooperation with Fatah, began to recruit young Palestinians -- including active Fatah members -- for a new Islamic Jihad faction called Belt al-Muqades, based in Jordan. At the same time, Sheikh Tamimi organized additional Islamic Jihad cells in the territories and patronized various Jihad groups that

had already coalesced there. Thus most of the Jihad factions in the territories were associated with Sheikh Tamimi at some stage; some were even subordinate to him. In view of his close ties with the Iranians as well as with Fatah (especially with the organization's strike forces -- the "Western Sector"), Tamimi quickly became a liaison between Fatah and Islamic Jihad activists in the territories. In this fashion Tamimi was able to forward funds he had received from Iran, Fatah, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries to Jihad factions. It also seems that he coordinated attacks in the territories and in Israel. Until 1991, the Jordanian security forces allowed Tamimi and his people to operate from Jordan with relative freedom, while carefully monitoring his actions and those of his followers in the Hashemite kingdom itself.

Sheikh Tamimi's stature among the Islamic Jihad factions in the territories has slipped in the past few years; organizations previously subordinate to or closely connected with him have defected from his organization. Nevertheless, the Belt ai-Muqades faction, still directly subordinate to Sheikh Tamimi, is believed to be responsible for numerous attacks against Israel from Jordan and the territories, as well as the murder of Israelis in a tour bus in Ismailiya, Egypt, in February 1990 .

**Jabbar Amar*

Jabbar Amar, a former Fatah member who embraced Islam, was released from an Israeli jail in 1983. Today Amar lives in Sudan where, with support from Fatah and Iran, he oversees the activities of his followers in the territories.

**Ahmed Ma 'ana*

Ahmed Ma'ana was a major activist in Dr. Shekaki's faction and later served as an assistant to Sheikh Tamimi in Jordan. Ma'ana exploited his good relations with the Syrian leadership and pro-Syrian organizations -- especially the PDFLP (Jibril) -- to help broker the agreement

between the PDFLP and the Islamic Jihad under which Jihad activists were allowed to use the PDFLP radio station, Al-Quds, which broadcasts to the territories from southern Syria. In 1990, after his activities in Jordan angered the Jordanian security forces and embittered Tamimi, Ma'ana went to Syria where he has evidently established a rival faction of the Islamic Jihad.

**The Al-Aqsa Brigade*

In September 1990, Sheikh Tamimi's assistant, Ibrahim Sarbal, defected from the Beit al-Muqades faction with several activists and established a rival faction called the Al-Aqsa Brigade. This faction claimed responsibility for several attacks in the territories, including the detonation of roadside charges near the military government building in Bethlehem in December 1990.

**The Islamic Jihad Squads*

This faction of the Islamic Jihad is associated with the Organization 77 Committee of the Fatah strike forces (the "Western Sector") and is operated directly by Fatah activists. In October 1986, members of this faction carried out the grenade attack on Israeli army recruits during the ceremony at the Western Wall in Jerusalem marking the end of their basic training. Among the Fatah members who seem to have led this group were Bassem Sultan (Hamadi), Marwan al-Kiali, and Muhammad Hassan Bahes, all of whom were killed in the detonation of a car bomb in Limassol, Cyprus.

Relations with Fatah

Islamic Jihad ideology, in which the "liberation of Palestine" is defined as the first and principal objective on the road to an Islamic revolution throughout the Middle East, has been a convenient basis for tight collaboration among Jihad groups in the territories and Jordan, and between them and Yasser Arafat's Fatah organization. Fatah has sought to expand its circle of supporters in the territories, recruit a reserve of young, active personnel, prevent harmful competition with the

religious trend (a problem that had begun to gather momentum in the territories), and harness the Jihad activists' religious fervor to escalate the "armed struggle." Meanwhile, the nascent Islamic Jihad groups needed Fatah's broad infrastructure in the territories, its connections in Jordan and other Arab countries, and, especially, the large sums of money necessary to consolidate their status in the territories.

Cooperation between Fatah and the Islamic Jihad groups weakened sharply after 1988-1990 in the wake of Arafat's political activities and the death of the Islamic Jihad's patron within Fatah, Abu Jihad. Arafat's proclamation of his willingness to recognize Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 was construed by the Islamic Jihad as recognition of the existence of the "Jewish entity," causing a rupture of the unwritten covenant with Fatah that had existed until that time. The criticism of Fatah by Islamic Jihad activists led Fatah to terminate its assistance and financial support to Jihad groups in the territories. The conflict between the Islamic Jihad and Fatah brought the Jihad leadership closer to "pro-Syrian" organizations that are rivals of Arafat's. The Jibril Front, as noted, opened its radio station in southern Syria to Sheikh Tamimi, enabling the broadcast of announcements to Jihad activists in the territories.

On the eve of the intifada, Islamic Jihad activists were locked in a bitter struggle with their rivals in the religious movement over positions of influence at the Islamic College in Gaza. The struggle was accompanied by violent confrontations, including stabbings and the use of acid, as well as the daring escape from jail (in May 1987) of six Islamic Jihad activists who melted into the population of the Gaza Strip and continued their terrorist attacks. All of this aroused sympathy and admiration among residents of the territories and many young people joined the ranks of the organization at that time.

When the Intifada broke out, Islamic Jihad members played an important role in conceiving, directing, and participating in mass demonstrations and commercial strikes. However, the

Islamic Jihad groups refused to become an integral part of the Unified National Command in the territories.

Relations with Hamas

Harsh disagreements also erupted between Jihad activists and their Islamic-Palestinian counterparts in the Muslim Brotherhood and its military arm, Hamas. Until 1987, the differences between Hamas and the Islamic Jihad could have been summarized in three points: Hamas claimed that a solution to the Palestinian problem might come about only after an Islamic state was established outside Palestine; the Islamic Jihad insisted that the order should be reversed. Hamas and the Islamic Jihad were at odds with respect to the importance and centrality of the Islamic revolution in Iran. The third point of discord was the major one: had the time come to launch a Jihad against the Jews? The Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas argued that they had to develop their infrastructure in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank by means of Islamic indoctrination, and that a changeover to armed struggle at that stage could diminish the relative freedom of activity afforded them by the Israeli security forces. The Islamic Jihad counter argued that armed struggle was a divine obligation that had to be effected immediately.

The outbreak of the Intifada in late 1987, and the mass demonstrations that took place in the territories at that time, made it clear to Hamas activists that a fence-sitting posture might seriously damage their support in the territories. The Hamas decision to join the riots (thereby adopting the views of the Islamic Jihad about the immediate need to embark on Jihad against the Jews) was inevitable and eventually obfuscated the differences between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Jihad. Despite the relative rapprochement between the Islamic Jihad and Hamas during the Intifada, however, their competition and rivalry are still fierce, significant, and bitter .