



Deterred but Determined

Salafi-Jihadi Groups in the Palestinian Arena

Yoram Cohen and Matthew Levitt,
with Becca Wasser

Policy Focus #99 | January 2010

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Published in 2010 in the United States of America by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy,
1828 L Street NW, Suite 1050, Washington, DC 20036.

Design by Daniel Kohan, Sensical Design and Communication

Front cover: Members of the militant Islamic group Jund Ansar Allah stand guard as their leader, Abd al-Latif Musa, right, speaks during Friday prayers in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, August 2009. (AP Photo/STR)

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The opinions expressed in this Policy Focus are those of the authors and not necessarily those of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, its Board of Trustees, or its Board of Advisors.

Acknowledgments

OUR COLLABORATION ON THIS STUDY was made possible by the generosity of the Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, which afforded us this opportunity for research. The support of The Washington Institute's Executive Committee and Board of Trustees, its executive director, Dr. Robert Satloff, and deputy director for research, Dr. Patrick Clawson, has been invaluable. Our thanks go to Michael Jacobson, senior fellow in the Institute's Stein Program, who coordinated the peer review, and to the Institute scholars whose comments and constructive criticism shaped this work. We extend special thanks to our esteemed outside reviewers, Dr. Daniel Byman, director of Georgetown University's Center for Peace and Security Studies, and Dr. Assaf Moghadam, assistant professor and senior associate at the Combating Terrorism Center, U.S. Military Academy at West Point; this study benefited significantly from their thorough review and detailed feedback. Finally, we wish to thank Washington Institute researchers Benjamin Freedman, Julie Lascar, Stephanie Papa, and Albar Sheikh.

Executive Summary

Introduction

In mid-August 2009, security forces from the Hamas-run government in Gaza, together with members of Hamas's Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades terrorist wing, raided a mosque affiliated with a Salafi-Jihadi¹ preacher and engaged in protracted gun battles with his followers. The clashes, which left some 24 people dead and 130 wounded, followed a Friday sermon by the cleric Sheikh Abd al-Latif Musa that condemned the Hamas government and announced the establishment of an "Islamic emirate" in the Gaza Strip. Al-Qaeda in Iraq denounced the Hamas attack on its website, calling on Allah "to avenge the blood of the murdered men and to destroy the Hamas state."² The episode highlights the presence in Gaza of Salafi-Jihadi groups inspired by, but not yet formally affiliated with, al-Qaeda, as well as the tensions between these groups and Hamas, an organization that is both violent Islamist and Palestinian nationalist.

In fact, the Palestinian conflict's prominence in al-Qaeda propaganda contrasts strongly with its lack of a role in actual al-Qaeda operations: al-Qaeda has neither established a local affiliate in the Levant nor accepted within its fold any of the locally radicalized, globally inclined jihadists in the region.³ While several Palestinian groups, mostly in the Gaza Strip, claim to be affiliated with al-Qaeda, none has more than tangential links—individual or ad hoc—to Usama bin Laden's global jihadist movement.

Salafi-Jihadism within Palestinian Society

Radicalization within Palestinian society is not new, nor is the use of radical ideologies, from Marxism to Islamism, to drive Palestinians from political activism to violent activism. What is new is that some radicalized Palestinians are choosing to engage in violence, not through established Palestinian groups such as Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, or the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, but through Salafi-Jihadi groups that aspire to be a part of al-Qaeda's global jihad. Salafi-Jihadi ideology considers militant jihad a religious obligation on par with the traditional five pillars of Islam, with the aim of establishing a transnational Islamic state.

For the most part, radicalized Palestinians have initiated contact with al-Qaeda, rather than the other way around. It is indisputable, however, that the Salafi-Jihadi and global jihadist narrative propagated by al-Qaeda is increasingly accepted by Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. In the words of a European observer living among Palestinians, Palestinian society has experienced "an accelerated process of broad society Islamization and radicalization."⁴ Al-Qaeda is truly a global organization with world-encompassing outreach. While most Palestinian terrorist organizations are nationalist—or in the case of Hamas, Islamist-nationalist—and limit their operations to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, al-Qaeda offers a broader agenda and ideology, not in the name of a particular nationality, but of the Muslim *umma* (nation).

1. Largely a product of the Afghan war against the Soviet Union, Salafi-Jihadi ideology borrowed from the puritanism and jihadist principles of Muslim Brotherhood theoretician Said Qutb. It professes the view that "Muslims must actively wage jihad (defined in its aggressive form) against all infidels and apostates until an Islamic state can be declared on as large a territory as possible." See Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 100.
2. Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, "The Struggle between Hamas and the Jihadi-Salafist Networks in the Gaza Strip Affiliated with the Global Jihad," October 4, 2009, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e084.pdf.
3. Al-Qaeda has carried out a small number of attacks targeting Israeli or Jewish targets, but these have been small scale and halfhearted. For a group that has executed spectacular attacks involving sophisticated planning throughout the world, al-Qaeda's record when it comes to targeting Israel is remarkably poor. For a full discussion of this issue, see Matthew Levitt, "Israel as an al-Qaeda Target: Sorting Rhetoric from Reality," *CTC Sentinel*, October 2009, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1370>.
4. Levitt interview with European diplomat, East Jerusalem, September 10, 2008.

Overall, however, Salafi radicalization has occurred in the West Bank “through the relatively simple formula of preaching, education, the creation of groups of devotees, and the subsequent self-organization of these devotees.”⁵ In the Gaza Strip, Hamas has struggled with balancing its own jihadist identity and commitment to violent “resistance” with the need to govern and establish control in the Strip. As a result, some ideologically extreme and militant Hamas operatives have broken with the group and joined Salafi-Jihadi groups that espouse “pure resistance,” denouncing even temporary ceasefires or truces with Israel and calling for the immediate implementation of *sharia*, or Islamic law, in Gaza.

While Hamas and other jihadist groups in Gaza share a desire to destroy Israel and impose *sharia*, Hamas focuses on local Palestinian interests. It therefore directs its energy largely at Israel, while the Salafi-Jihadi groups target foreigners as well. This is why, when Hamas agreed to a *tahdiyah*, or lull, in the fighting with Israel in June 2008, some members of these groups were especially motivated to continue attacks. Several Salafi-Jihadi groups in Gaza share members, and in general, such groups are small and joined together in loose alliances.

A variety of Palestinian groups in the West Bank and Gaza support al-Qaeda’s ideology and claim some affiliation with it. This includes Jahafil al-Tawhid wa-l Jihad, Jaish al-Quds al-Islami, Jaljalat, Palestinian Jundallah, Jund Ansar Allah, Qaedat al-Jihad Wilayat Filastin, Fatah al-Islam in Palestine, Asbat al-Ansar in Palestine, Jaish al-Umma, and Jaish al-Islam. Several of these organizations first emerged among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza in the mid-2000s. Although they initially focused their activities on electronic forums, these efforts soon translated into attacks on Israeli, and later Western, targets, as well as violent action to rid Gaza of “corruption” and “un-Islamic” establishments. For example, Suyuf al-Haq (Swords of Righteousness) has focused its attacks on

Western-influenced institutions and people in Gaza, primarily members of the media and women.

Each of these Salafi-Jihadi groups can boast no more than a few dozen militants, sometimes reinforced by a handful of foreign fighters, most notably Egyptians, who significantly enhance the groups’ otherwise minimal capabilities. None of these groups appears to have operational or organizational links to al-Qaeda and its leadership, which is ironic, given Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri’s regular public focus on Palestinian issues.

The Salafi-Jihadi presence in Gaza has also been bolstered by foreign fighters who have entered Gaza to promote their ideology and carry out terrorist attacks. According to Israeli officials, up to a few dozen foreigners have entered Gaza from Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula (particularly Yemen), France, Belgium, and elsewhere in Europe and joined Salafi-Jihadi groups. Some are believed to be experienced fighters who have come to provide training, while others appear to have come to be trained and to experience jihad. Officials estimate the total foreign fighter population to be between thirty and fifty, none of them actual al-Qaeda operatives. With some exceptions, foreign fighters in Gaza tend to be either Arab Muslims from elsewhere in the Middle East or recent converts to Islam from the West, primarily Europe, who enter Gaza after studying at religious centers in the Middle East.⁶

Some of the smaller Salafi-Jihadi groups in Gaza, many of which are groups in name only, have no connection to al-Qaeda beyond their declared vision of an Islamist caliphate governed by strict adherence to Islamic law. These smaller groups have limited their attacks to Israel and to “un-Islamic” organizations in Gaza, mostly because they lack any greater capability. Many have an operational focus in the Gaza Strip, yet have linked their threats and attacks to global issues. Suyuf al-Haq, for example, in response to the cartoons of Muhammad published in Denmark and to statements by the Pope that the organization deemed anti-Islamic, threatened to attack several churches in Gaza.⁷

5. Jonathan Spyer, “Self-Radicalization,” *Global Politician*, August 3, 2008, <http://www.globalpolitician.com/25080-arabs>.

6. Levitt interview with Israeli officials, Tel Aviv, September 2009.

7. BBC Monitoring, Maan News Agency, “Islamist Group Claims Attack on Gaza al-Arabiya Office,” January 25, 2007.

This sort of global motive for local attacks reflects Suyuf al-Haq's transformation from nationalist-Islamist to the transnational ideology of many Salafi-Jihadi groups in Gaza, which effectively ties their local cause to the global defense of Islam in what has been described as "glocal" Islamism.⁸

Three of the Gaza Strip's Salafi-Jihadi groups stand apart in size, organization, and operational capacity: Jaish al-Umma, Jaish al-Islam, and Jund Ansar Allah. These are clearly the most formidable of the al-Qaeda-inspired "glocal" Salafi-Jihadi groups in Gaza, and they are the subjects of individual case studies in this Policy Focus.

Prospects for an 'al-Qaeda in Palestine'

Since al-Qaeda-inspired groups threaten Hamas's authority, it is no surprise that Hamas has cracked down on them. What is remarkable, however, is that such groups have failed so far to connect more formally with al-Qaeda, given al-Qaeda's recent antipathy to Hamas and its history of incorporating local conflicts into its global jihadist campaign. Some suggest that al-Qaeda remains unconvinced not only of Hamas's jihadist credentials, but also of the Salafi commitment of groups like Jaish al-Islam, whose leader, Mumtaz Dughmush, is better known for his criminal past than his religious zealotry. In the words of one analyst, "Mumtaz Dughmush dresses the part now, but he is still a criminal."⁹ Al-Qaeda may also have concerns about the survivability of such groups, and one could argue that it waits patiently for groups to establish themselves before accepting them into the fold.¹⁰

Indeed, of all the local conflicts al-Qaeda might want to commandeer for its global campaign, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems the most logical. Rife with both religious symbolism and the symbolism of occupation by a Western-backed, non-Arab, and non-Muslim country, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be seen as a "near

jihad" targeting a local government ripe for conversion to a platform for the "far jihad" targeting the United States and the West. Yet al-Qaeda has not made operations against Israel a priority, nor has its Salafi-Jihadi cause caught on among significant numbers of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

In fact, the prospect of a true al-Qaeda affiliate developing in this area remains unlikely for several reasons. Palestinians living alongside Israel have suffered under occupation but have also seen up close the benefits Israelis enjoy by living in a moderate, prosperous, democratic society. The vast majority of Palestinians do not want their cause globalized by al-Qaeda or anyone else; they want sovereignty, economic prosperity, and control over their own lives independent of Israeli authorities.

Moreover, those Palestinians keen to engage in jihad based on a radical Islamist ideology need not travel far or search long to seek out opportunities; there is no shortage of jihadist groups to join or Israeli targets to strike. Indeed, most of the attacks carried out to date by radicals in the West Bank or Salafi-Jihadi groups in Gaza have targeted Israel, not the United States or other Western targets. For the majority of Palestinians committed to violent resistance (whether through terrorism, political violence, or other militant activity), their cause is nationalist first and religious second, if at all. Moreover, the local jihadist groups—Hamas in particular, as the group in power in Gaza—have demonstrated their antipathy for Salafi-Jihadi organizations that may seek to encroach on their territory or challenge their authority. The presence of a longstanding local jihad denies al-Qaeda a natural beachhead into the West Bank or Gaza Strip, where most see the conflict with Israel as primarily nationalist. Moreover, in the West Bank, Israel and the Palestinian Authority's security services are dominant, and in Gaza, Hamas is firmly in control. Even among Palestinian Islamists, including those in Hamas, portraying the conflict as a larger

8. Martin Kramer, "Hamas: 'Glocal' Islamism," in *Iran's Race for Regional Supremacy: Strategic Implications for the Middle East* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2008), pp. 68–73, <http://www.jcpa.org/text/iran2-june08.pdf>.

9. Levitt interview with Israeli intelligence official, Tel Aviv, September 2008.

10. Note, for example, that even after its war with the Lebanese Armed Forces, Fatah al-Islam—which was formed by Shaker al-Absi, a hardened jihadist who fought in Iraq—has not been welcomed as an al-Qaeda affiliate.

struggle against the enemies of Islam and in defense of the *umma* resonates only so long as it remains focused on the Palestinian cause.

Yet the potential does exist for still greater Islamist radicalization and the growth of the Salafi-Jihadi movement in Palestinian society. Despite Hamas's ideological differences with al-Qaeda leaders and its violent crackdown on Salafi-Jihadis in Gaza, its radicalization campaign has created an ideal springboard for further radicalization. When suicide bombers are presented as role models, it is only another small step along the path of radicalization to say that such behavior is laudable not only in some jihadist campaigns, but in all. Al-Qaeda has demonstrated in Egypt and many other places an ability to turn people from the "near jihad" to the "far jihad." Hamas itself has often blurred the lines between its own and al-Qaeda's jihadist campaigns with posters featuring both Hamas and al-Qaeda personalities and with sermons by Hamas-affiliated preachers demonizing the United States and the West.¹¹

Conclusion

Among Israeli Arabs and Arabs in the West Bank, where intelligence and law enforcement agencies can keep close tabs on terrorist recruitment in general, and Salafi-Jihadi elements in particular, al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism will most likely continue to show itself sporadically through individuals radicalized by travel abroad or the internet. The ability of West Bank Arabs to travel and study abroad creates opportunities for radicalization and recruitment outside of the country, but the area's relatively strong and growing civil society makes it less amenable to the development of organized Salafi-Jihadi groups. While even small cells or lone wolves could potentially carry out significant terrorist attacks, the threat is minimized by a strong counterterrorism presence. The Gaza Strip, however, is another story.

Hamas in Gaza, by engaging in secular politics, failing to institute *sharia*, and cracking down on fellow Palestinians who do attack Israel or threaten its rule, has created a vacuum that Salafi-Jihadi groups—often populated by disgruntled Hamas operatives—have been keen to fill. Even so, membership in Gaza's Salafi-Jihadi groups is estimated to be in the low hundreds.

Some have argued that the existence of al-Qaeda-inspired groups in Gaza means that Hamas is no longer the worst option and that Israel should engage with Hamas without preconditions lest al-Qaeda take over the Strip. In fact, these groups, lacking significant numbers and grassroots support, cannot pose any real political threat to Hamas in Gaza or Fatah in the West Bank.

That said, al-Qaeda-inspired groups in Gaza "think big" and are regularly plotting large-scale attacks, such as infiltrating Israel with booby-trapped trucks.¹² Hamas finds it difficult to exert control over these newly formed groups, which often draw former Hamas members to their ranks, and for which Hamas's recent actions against Israel are insufficient. Furthermore, their capabilities could be enhanced if larger numbers of foreign fighters enter Gaza or if Palestinians who have fought abroad return there. In 2005, in the wake of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, the number of foreigners entering Gaza from Egypt reportedly jumped.¹³ In 2009, reports emerged that some individuals who traveled to Iraq to fight U.S. forces have since turned to Gaza. While not necessarily affiliated with al-Qaeda itself, they are operating in Gaza "in the framework of extremist organizations identified with the 'worldwide jihad.'" ¹⁴ Israeli defense officials express concern that this influx into Gaza will increase as U.S. forces are rotated out of the country.¹⁵ Some foreign fighters from Europe have reportedly "come with their credit cards" and financed jihadist activities while in Gaza.¹⁶

11. Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

12. Levitt interview with Israeli intelligence officials, Tel Aviv, September 2008.

13. Levitt interview with Israeli official, Washington, D.C., May 2009.

14. Amos Harel, "Terrorists Who Fought U.S. in Iraq Make Way to Gaza," *Haaretz*, August 11, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1106689.html>

15. *Ibid.*

16. Levitt interview with Israeli intelligence officials, Tel Aviv, September 2008.

Beyond established groups, whether in Gaza or the West Bank, Israeli officials remain focused on rogue cells that break away from formal groups and on small cells of self-organized radicals. “The biggest concern,” says one Israeli official, is that “rogue cells and Hamas individuals close to al-Qaeda” will carry out attacks on their own.¹⁷

In the near term, Israeli experts believe that while al-Qaeda has not shifted its operational focus to target Israel, the threat of Salafi-Jihadi attacks from local groups in Gaza and al-Qaeda affiliates remains serious. As in the Danish cartoon crisis, al-Qaeda could easily take advantage of local events to inspire local groups or regional affiliates to focus on attacks against Israel. An ideal outcome for al-Qaeda in this arena would be an attack in which it plays nothing more than an inspirational role. Among al-Qaeda affiliates, analysts are particularly focused on the North Africa-based al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), given its access to Muslim-European and Palestinian operatives and the plethora of Jewish and Israeli targets in Europe.¹⁸

The lack of a meaningful al-Qaeda presence in the Palestinian arena could change. Under stress, the group could seek to bolster its image by focusing not only its rhetoric, but also its operations, on Israel in an effort to take ownership of the emotive Palestinian issue. Spurred by al-Qaeda’s continued rhetoric against Israel, regional affiliates like AQIM could ultimately carry out successful attacks on Israeli targets abroad. In addition, the local Salafi-Jihadi groups in Gaza could catapult themselves to center stage and demand the attention of al-Qaeda’s core leadership with a single successful attack inflicting significant casualties or targeting a major international figure. In the words of a senior Jaljalat member, “So far al-Qaeda has not sponsored our work. We are waiting to carry out a big jihadist operation dedicated to Sheikh Usama bin-Laden. However, our course and doctrine are similar to those of al-Qaeda. If al-Qaeda asks us to pledge allegiance to it, we are completely ready for it.”¹⁹

17. Levitt interview with senior Israeli security official, Washington, D.C., February 2005.

18. Levitt interview with Israeli intelligence officials, Tel Aviv, September 2009.

19. Hasan Jabr, “Jaljalat’ Is Waiting to Carry Out a Big Operation in order to Dedicate It to Bin-Ladin,” *al-Ayyam*, July 11, 2009, obtained from “Palestinian Pro-Fatah Newspaper Profiles ‘Jaljala’ groups in Gaza Strip,” BBC Worldwide Monitoring, July 13, 2009.

1 | Introduction

IN MID-AUGUST 2009, security forces from the Hamas-run government in Gaza, together with Hamas's Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, raided a mosque affiliated with a Salafi-Jihadi preacher and engaged in protracted gun battles with his followers. The clashes, which left some 24 people dead and 120 wounded, followed the preacher's Friday sermon condemning the Hamas government and announcing the establishment of an "Islamic emirate" in the Gaza Strip. Al-Qaeda in Iraq denounced the Hamas attack on its website, calling on Allah "to avenge the blood of the murdered men and to destroy the Hamas state."¹ The episode highlights both the presence in Gaza of Salafi-Jihadi groups inspired by al-Qaeda—though not yet formally affiliated with it—and the tensions between these groups and Hamas, an entity that is Palestinian nationalist as well as violent Islamist.

Salafi-Jihadi ideology, borrowed from the ideological puritanism and jihadist principles of Said Qutb, leading ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood and a radical Egyptian scholar executed by Gamal Abdul Nasser's government, is largely a product of the Afghan war against the Soviet Union. It considers jihad a religious obligation on par with the traditional five pillars of Islam and holds the view that "Muslims must actively wage jihad (defined in its aggressive form) against all infidels and apostates until an Islamic state can be declared on as large a territory as possible."²

The ironies in the clashes described above are telling. Hamas opposes Salafi-Jihadi groups in Gaza, sometimes violently. Nevertheless, its campaign to radicalize Palestinian society and transform the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from an ethno-nationalist conflict over land into a religious battle over theology

fosters an environment conducive to Salafi-Jihadi ideology, which promotes global jihad in defense of the Muslim *umma* (nation). As Gaza's de facto government authority, Hamas has at times tried to rein in militant groups planning to attack Israel—despite its continued support for these attacks—and has incurred the wrath of Salafi-Jihadi groups in return. For such groups, Hamas's participation in local elections and its temporary ceasefires with Israel are anathema, a violation of the requirement to wage violent jihad. It should therefore come as no surprise that some Salafi-Jihadi groups consist largely of former Hamas members disillusioned by the organization's failure to enforce *sharia* (Islamic law) vigorously in the Gaza Strip and to use the area as a launching pad for attacks on Israel. Moreover, it was during the Hamas-orchestrated breach of the border wall between the Gaza Strip and Egypt in January 2008 that a small number of foreign fighters entered Gaza to help strengthen the Salafi-Jihadi groups there.³

And yet, none of these groups in the Gaza Strip or West Bank is formally tied to al-Qaeda. While Palestine as a theme dominates the rhetoric of al-Qaeda leaders, the organization has done remarkably little to bring about the destruction of Israel and the creation of an Islamic state in historic Palestine.⁴ Indeed, while al-Qaeda famously succeeded in remaking local conflicts from Chechnya to the Philippines so that they are not local battles against "near enemies," but rather central components of a global jihad against "far enemies," it has never committed the resources to do the same in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which, according to al-Qaeda rhetoric, should have been one of its highest-priority areas of focus.

1. Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, "The Struggle between Hamas and the Jihadi-Salafist Networks in the Gaza Strip Affiliated with the Global Jihad," October 4, 2009, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e084.pdf.
2. Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 100.
3. Levitt interview with Israeli officials, Tel Aviv, September 2009.
4. "Historic Palestine" often refers to the region encompassing what today is Gaza, the West Bank, Israel, and Jordan (see Mark A. Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

In fact, the prominence of the Palestinian cause in al-Qaeda propaganda contrasts strongly with its lack of a role in actual al-Qaeda operations: al-Qaeda has neither established a local affiliate in the Levant nor accepted within its fold any of the locally radicalized, globally inclined jihadists in the region.⁵

While several Palestinian groups, mostly in the Gaza Strip, claim to be affiliated with al-Qaeda, none has more than tangential links—individual or ad hoc—to Usama bin Laden’s global jihadist movement. Who are these groups? What are their true ties, if any, to al-Qaeda? What support do they have within Palestinian society in the West Bank or Gaza Strip, or among

Israeli Arabs? How many members do they have? And what are their capabilities? In spite of the conventional wisdom, perpetuated by media reports that regularly inflate their numbers and capabilities, only a small number of such groups exist.

Given that key Palestinian leaders like Abdullah Azzam played a strong role in the formation of al-Qaeda,⁶ why have residents of the West Bank and Gaza not joined the global jihad in greater numbers? The answers have as much to do with al-Qaeda and its true goals and intentions as they do with the particular circumstances of Arabs in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and Israel today.

5. Al-Qaeda has carried out a small number of attacks against Israeli or Jewish targets, but these have been small scale and halfhearted. For a group that has executed spectacular attacks involving sophisticated planning throughout the world, al-Qaeda’s record when it comes to targeting Israel is remarkably poor. For a full discussion of this issue, see Matthew Levitt, “Israel as an al-Qaeda Target: Sorting Rhetoric from Reality,” *CTC Sentinel*, October 2009, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC06.php?CID=1370>.

6. Abdullah Azzam was a Palestinian scholar who made significant contributions to the development of al-Qaeda through his active support of the jihad in Afghanistan. He was also a mentor to Usama bin Laden.

2 | Salafism in Palestinian Society

ACCORDING TO A 2004 POLL by the Jordanian Center for Strategic Studies, Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza display a higher degree of support for al-Qaeda than those living in neighboring Arab countries. Only 7 percent of respondents in the Palestinian territories classified al-Qaeda as a “terrorist” organization, with 70 percent opting for “resistance movement.”¹ A 2005 poll conducted in the Palestinian territories by the Norwegian nongovernmental organization Fafo again demonstrated support for al-Qaeda terrorism, with 65 percent of those polled supporting al-Qaeda operations in Western countries. Notably, support for al-Qaeda was significantly higher in the Gaza Strip (79 percent) than in the West Bank (57 percent).²

The Fafo poll highlights the fact that Gaza residents expressed greater support than West Bank residents for al-Qaeda ideology and violence even before Hamas took over Gaza by force. The polls also suggest that al-Qaeda’s rhetoric regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has resonated among Palestinians. In addition, the data indicate that among Palestinians, especially in Gaza, there may be a segment of society inclined toward Salafi-Jihadi ideology that could serve as a fertile recruiting ground for al-Qaeda-inspired groups.

Although initially Salafist ideology³ was largely restricted to academic environments, its popularity surged among Palestinians in response to the Six Day War in 1967, and then again with the Iran’s Islamic Revolution in 1979.⁴ Salafist ideology first found its

way into Palestinian society in the 1970s when Palestinian students who studied under religious scholars at Saudi universities returned home. The Salafists in Palestinian society mirror the larger Salafist community and include both those whose main focus is preaching and missionary work (*salafiya dawiyah*) and those focused on violent jihad against infidels and perceived enemies of Islam (*salafiya jihadiyah*). According to a senior official with the Palestinian Ministry of Islamic Endowments (waqf), Salafist groups in Gaza are very different from those in the West Bank, where Salafists are “more or less loyal” to local authorities and are not engaged in violence. Salafists in the West Bank, according to this official, may raid mosques and lecture people sternly on how to pray or how to behave, but “they do not call for violence against Israel or the PA [Palestinian Authority].”⁵ While Palestinian Salafism promotes the Palestinian cause, it does not take a nationalist approach, and in fact, it attempts to differentiate itself from Palestinian nationalist groups such as Fatah or Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). Instead, it has the same transnational focus as the Salafi-Jihadism advocated by al-Qaeda.

Salafi-Jihadi Elements in the Gaza Strip

In recent years, and especially since the June 2007 Hamas takeover of Gaza and the international isolation that followed, the traditionally conservative Gaza Strip has proved fertile ground for the establishment and growth of Salafi-Jihadi elements. As Hamas has

1. “Revisiting the Arab Street: Research from Within,” Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan, February 2005. See also Gro Hasselknippe, *Palestinian Opinions on Peace and Conflict, Internal Affairs and Parliament Elections 2006: Results from Fafo Polls in September and November-December 2005*, p. 16, <http://www.fafo.no/pub/rapp/797/797.pdf>.

2. Gro Hasselknippe, *Palestinian Opinions on Peace and Conflict, Internal Affairs and Parliament Elections 2006: Results from Fafo Polls in September and November-December 2005*, p. 16, <http://www.fafo.no/pub/rapp/797/797.pdf>.

3. While both Salafists and Salafi-Jihadis reject all laws except for the will of God and seek to follow the same lifestyle as did the Prophet Muhammad, several characteristics distinguish the two types of groups. Salafists believe in carrying out the will of God through proselytization, while Salafi-Jihadis support violent jihad. Groups like Hamas are exceptional, in part because, while they make proselytizing a priority, they also engage in what they consider a religiously mandatory jihad to establish an Islamic state in all of historic Palestine. Yet they do not subscribe to Salafi-Jihadi principles, such as a low threshold for declaring a Muslim an infidel worthy of death (*takfir*, or excommunication) or the individual duty (*fard ayn*) to engage in jihad wherever Islam is believed to be under attack (see Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

4. Khaled Hroub, “Salafi Formations in Palestine and the Limits of a De-Palestinised Milieu,” *Holy Land Studies* 7, no. 2 (November 2008), p. 160.

5. Levitt interview with PA official from Ministry of Islamic Endowments (waqf), Azariya, West Bank, September 2009.

struggled with balancing its own jihadist identity and commitment to violent “resistance” with the need to govern and establish control in the Strip, some ideologically extreme and militant Hamas operatives have broken with the group and joined Salafi-Jihadi groups that denounce even temporary ceasefires or truces with Israel and call for the immediate implementation of Islamic law in Gaza.

Hamas shares with other jihadist groups in Gaza a desire to destroy Israel and impose *sharia*. Hamas, however, focuses on local interests limited to the Palestinian domain, and it therefore directs its energies largely at Israel, while the other groups target foreigners as well. The Salafi-Jihadi groups have an ideology of “pure resistance” that, as noted, allows no room for ceasefires or temporary halts in attacks against the enemy. Therefore, when Hamas agreed to a *tabdiyah*, or lull, in the fighting with Israel in June 2008,⁶ some members of these groups were especially motivated to continue attacks. Several of these groups share members, and in general, they are small and joined together in loose alliances.

Various Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip and West Bank espouse al-Qaeda’s ideology and claim some affiliation with it. These include Jahafil al-Tawhid wa-l Jihad, Jaish al-Quds al-Islami, Jaljalat, Palestinian Jundallah, Jund Ansar Allah, Qaedat al-Jihad Wilayat Filastin, Fatah al-Islam in Palestine, Asbat al-Ansar in Palestine, Jaish al-Umma, and Jaish al-Islam. Several of these organizations first emerged in the West Bank and Gaza in the mid-2000s and focused their activities on electronic forums. Such an approach was soon translated into attacks on Israeli, and later Western, targets, in addition to violent action to rid the Gaza Strip of “corruption” and “un-Islamic” establishments. For example, Suyuf al-Haq (Swords of Righteousness) has focused its attacks on Western-influenced institutions

and people, primarily the media and women in the Gaza Strip.

Although ideologically Salafi-Jihadi, Suyuf al-Haq has no distinct ties to al-Qaeda. A reported leader and spokesman of the group is Abu Suhayb al-Maqdisi. Gaza police believe that the group includes members of Hamas’s executive force with ties to the Qassam Brigades, though Hamas has disputed this claim. In October 2006, Suyuf al-Haq took responsibility for opening fire at an internet café in Jabalya in the northern Gaza Strip and subsequently setting fire to it, actions it claimed were undertaken to combat corruption and unethical behavior.⁷ The group was involved in many similarly motivated attacks in 2007, such as kidnappings and murders of people involved in prostitution, “corrupt” businesses, or assumed indecency.⁸

Each of these Salafi-Jihadi groups can boast no more than a few dozen militants, sometimes reinforced by a handful of foreign fighters, most notably Egyptians, who significantly enhance the groups’ otherwise minimal capabilities. None of these groups appears to have operational or organizational links to al-Qaeda and its leadership, which is ironic, given Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri’s regular public focus on Palestinian issues.

Although they receive no directives from al-Qaeda, these groups identify with its Salafi-Jihadi ideology and model their tactics and strategy on al-Qaeda’s. Their ideological objective, like those of other extreme Sunni Islamist groups, is to revive the golden days of ancient Islam (*salafi*) and establish a global Islamic caliphate that implements *sharia*. They sanctify the use of violence (jihad) as the main way to realize this vision and consider it legitimate to use force against non-Muslims (infidels), regimes considered insufficiently Islamic, and other perceived enemies of Islam.

6. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “One Month of Calm along the Israel-Gaza Border,” July 27, 2008, available at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Hamas+war+against+Israel/One+month+of+calm+in+Gaza+28-Jul-2008.htm>.

7. Ali Waked, “Al-Qaeda Affiliate Burns Coffee Shop in Gaza Strip,” *Ynet News*, October 8, 2006, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3312455,00.html>.

8. Arnon Regular, “Violent Winds over Gaza,” *Jerusalem Report*, May 28, 2007; Hassan Jabr, “Al-Ayyam Opens File on Salafi Groups in the Gaza Strip,” BBC Worldwide Monitoring, coverage of *al-Ayyam*, May 14, 2007; Eric Westervelt, “Islamic Group’s Wrath Stokes Fears in Gaza,” *NPR Morning Edition*, March 2, 2007.

Some of the smaller Salafi-Jihadi groups in Gaza, many of which are groups in name only, have no connection to al-Qaeda beyond their declared vision of an Islamist caliphate governed by strict adherence to Islamic law. They have limited their attacks to Israel and “un-Islamic” groups in Gaza, mostly because they lack any greater capabilities.

Many have an operational focus in the Gaza Strip, yet have linked their threats and attacks to global issues. Suyuf al-Haq, for example, in response to the cartoons of Muhammad published in Denmark and to statements by the Pope that the group considered anti-Islamic, threatened to attack several churches in Gaza.⁹ This sort of global motive for local attacks reflects the group’s transformation from an organization with a nationalist-Islamist ideology to one with the transnational ideology of many Salafi-Jihadi groups in Gaza, which effectively ties their local cause to the global defense of Islam in what has been described as “glocal Islamism.”¹⁰

Such groups frequently cite al-Qaeda ideology or quote al-Qaeda leaders in their statements. Qaedat al-Jihad al-Wilayat Filastin often refers to bin Laden in its statements and repeats his words, as in 2006, when it released a videotape and a message paying homage to the al-Qaeda leader. Furthermore, the group has adopted al-Qaeda’s operational focus in threatening Americans and Jews.¹¹ Jaish al-Quds al-Islami acknowledges that it advocates al-Qaeda’s ideology. The group cites bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as its ideological leaders.¹² Palestinian Jundallah has also claimed ties to al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, demonstrating its global jihadist ideology.

Several of these groups have relied on technology to recruit people to their cause and to spread their

ideology. Members of Jahafil al-Tawhid wa-l Jihad have used electronic forums geared to Fatah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad members to post announcements about their group’s actions, such as launching mortars at an Israeli checkpoint, and to proclaim their intentions.¹³ In fact, many accounts of these events have been loosely translated into English on various electronic forums.¹⁴ Palestinian Jundallah has also published statements on several electronic forums.¹⁵

Salafi-Jihadi Elements in the West Bank

According to an Israeli official, while there are no established al-Qaeda-inspired groups in the West Bank, individuals espousing global jihadist ideology can be found there, as can Salafist groups. The potential exists for an al-Qaeda-affiliated movement to develop in the West Bank, and this possibility should not be discounted.¹⁶ Indeed, according to a senior Palestinian Authority official from the Ministry of Islamic Endowments (waqf), Salafist missionaries (*salafiya dawiyah*) are particularly active in the West Bank. While violent Salafi-Jihadi groups are predominantly based in Gaza, where the environment is far more tolerant of such groups and a more radical society provides a more fertile recruiting ground, individuals in the West Bank committed to a Salafi-Jihadi ideology have drawn from al-Qaeda’s rhetoric and ideology in their numerous statements and targets. The radical Islamist missionary work of their fellow travelers involved in *salafiya dawiyah* provides the ideological foundation that allows them to gain further recruits for violent activities. There is no evidence, however, that any of these groups has successfully established ties with al-Qaeda.

9. BBC Monitoring, Maan News Agency, “Islamist Group Claims Attack on Gaza al-Arabiya Office,” January 25, 2007.

10. Martin Kramer, “ Hamas: ‘Glocal’ Islamism,” in *Iran’s Race for Regional Supremacy: Strategic Implications for the Middle East* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2008), pp. 68–73, <http://www.jcpa.org/text/iran2-june08.pdf>.

11. Reuven Paz, “Qaidat al-Jihad,” International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, May 7, 2002, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/763378/posts>.

12. Fadhil Ali, “Al-Qaeda’s Palestinian Inroads,” *Jamestown Terrorism Monitor* 6, no. 8 (April 17, 2008), http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4864&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=167&no_cache=1.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Jihadist websites, U.S. Government Open Source Center Summary, “Al-Yaqin Media Center Re-Publishes Creed of Jundallah in Palestine,” June 17, 2008.

16. Levitt interview with Israel Security Agency official, May 11, 2009.

The ongoing Israeli military presence in the West Bank, together with a renewed commitment by the Palestinian Authority under Mahmoud Abbas, has largely denied violent extremists, from Hamas to al-Qaeda-inspired groups, the ability to function effectively there. Still, individual cases of al-Qaeda-inspired extremists have come to light. In the summer of 2008, for example, two Bedouin men admitted to being in contact online with global jihadist elements who sent them material on possible suicide attack targets in Israel.¹⁷

In another case, Azzam Abu al-Adas, a Palestinian from the Balata refugee camp in the northern West Bank, was studying in Jordan when he was recruited by two al-Qaeda members, Abdullah (known as Abu Qudama) and Motaz Omar Seelawi.¹⁸ Al-Adas then recruited Bilal Hafanawi and formed a small cell in Balata. Hafanawi was originally a Hamas operative who headed a cell of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. Abu Ayash, another Martyrs Brigades operative, was recruited into the Balata cell in 2005. Between September and December 2005, the small Salafi-Jihadi cell began planning a terrorist attack in Jerusalem's French Hill involving a car bomb and a suicide bomber.¹⁹

Al-Adas and Hafanawi traveled to Jordan several times to request financial assistance from Abu Qudama to plan and execute attacks. In one meeting, Abu Qudama refused to provide money for weapons purchases but asked that the two men enlist new operatives in what he called "al-Qaeda." Abu Talha, another Jordan-based operative, did provide 2,000 dinars to finance a terror attack at a later date. Following the transfer of these funds, Abu Talha requested

that the terror attack be carried out on Ramadan 27, which is Laylat al-Qadr, one of the holiest nights in the month of Ramadan. At each meeting, Abu Qudama stressed the need for Bilal and al-Adas to recruit more members. Qudama also informed Bilal that an operative from the Salah al-Din Brigade—which, according to the indictment of another member of the group, is affiliated with al-Qaeda—would provide the cell with military training.²⁰

While these cells appeared to focus on attacking Israel, others expressed interest in hitting U.S. targets as well. In June and July of 2008, six men—two Arab Israeli citizens and four Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem—were arrested on charges that they had links to al-Qaeda. Meeting in Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque, the group planned attacks against Israeli and U.S. targets. In addition to its East Jerusalem residents, the group comprised two Hebrew University students who were followers of Yussuf Soumarin, a former prisoner released from an Israeli jail not long before. One of the students, Muhammad Nijam, had discussed on an al-Qaeda-affiliated website the possibility of attacking President George W. Bush's helicopter while Bush was in Israel. Nijam's dormitory room at Hebrew University's Givat Ram campus overlooked the Knesset helicopter landing pad, and in early 2008 he used his cell phone to film helicopters landing and did online searches for instructions on how to shoot one down. According to an Israeli security official, other cell members also collected intelligence for the plan. In addition, investigators found radical Islamist material and instructions for using explosives stored on group members' computers.²¹

17. Israel Security Agency, "Palestinian Terror in 2008: Statistics and Trends," December 2008, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionImages/english/TerrorInfo/2008-sum-english.pdf>.

18. Murad Batal al-Shishani, "Al-Qaeda's Presence in the Territories," *Jamestown Terrorism Monitor* 4, no. 11 (June 2, 2006), http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=792.

19. Indictment of Darwish Ibrahim Darwish Abu Ayash, Israeli military court, June 9, 2007, author's personal files.

20. Ibid.

21. Israel Security Agency, "Palestinian Terror in 2008: Statistics and Trends," December 2008, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionImages/english/TerrorInfo/2008-sum-english.pdf>; Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center, "The Israeli security forces recently detained six Israeli and East Jerusalem Arabs, some of them students. They planned to set up an al-Qaeda network and planned to carry out terrorist attacks in Israel, including downing the helicopter of the American president during his visit to Jerusalem," July 21, 2008, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_e002.htm; Amos Harel, "Six Israeli Arabs Arrested for Allegedly Plotting Attack on Bush," *Haaretz*, July 21, 2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1003467.html>; Efrat Weiss, "Six Israeli Arabs Charged with Operating al-Qaeda Cell," *ynet News*, July 18, 2008, <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/articles/0,7340,L-3569927,00.html>; Yaakov Katz, "Israel-Arab al-Qaida Cell Plotted to Kill Bush," *Jerusalem Post*, July 18, 2008, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1215331015746&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull>.

3 | Gaza's Salafi-Jihadi Groups: Case Studies

JIHADIST IDEOLOGY has long thrived in Palestinian society, especially in the Gaza Strip, in Islamist-nationalist groups like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. This history provided the foundation on which al-Qaeda-inspired groups with a global Salafi-Jihadi ideology were able to establish themselves quickly. Recruits did not have to be indoctrinated into jihadist ideology; they just had to be directed toward a more global, less local, variation on the theme. It should therefore come as no surprise that often, members of al-Qaeda-inspired groups are former members of other Palestinian terrorist organizations, such as Hamas, Fatah, and, to a lesser extent, Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

One of the more capable groups dominated by disgruntled current and former Hamas operatives is Jaljalat, a loosely structured organization consisting of smaller groups, which was created by disillusioned Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad members around 2005 and crystallized over its members' objection to the 2008 ceasefire between Hamas and Israel.¹ The exact number of its members is unknown, but the group has claimed clearly inflated figures of up to 7,000. In a July 2009 interview, Mahmoud Muhammad Talib (a.k.a. Abu al-Mutasim) confirmed that senior leaders of Hamas's Qassam Brigades are Jaljalat members and explained that the name "Jaljalat," which means "rolling thunder," was inspired by the name of a popular song calling for jihad. Talib stated that the group hoped to carry out a major attack dedicated to bin Laden, after which it would be given a more formal name. Jaljalat began operating in earnest in the Gaza Strip after Hamas decided to participate in the 2006 elections, a decision the group's members opposed. Talib claimed responsibility for

several attacks—some successful, others not—including attempts to assassinate former president Jimmy Carter and former British prime minister Tony Blair during their trips to the Gaza Strip. Jaljalat, like other Salafi-Jihadi groups, has targeted internet cafes in the Strip.² According to Israeli officials, Jaljalat remains a loosely organized collection of small groups or cells.³ Depending on how disillusioned they are with their original groups, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad members may waver back and forth between belonging to those groups and to Jaljalat. On average, these officials estimate, each Jaljalat group includes at least one foreign fighter.⁴

The Salafi-Jihadi presence in Gaza has also been bolstered by these foreign fighters, who have entered Gaza to promote their ideology and carry out terrorist attacks. According to these officials, up to a few dozen foreigners have entered Gaza from Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula (particularly Yemen), France, Belgium, and elsewhere in Europe and joined Salafi-Jihadi groups. Some are believed to be experienced fighters who came to provide training, while others appear to have come to be trained and experience jihad. The officials estimate the total foreign fighter population to be around thirty to fifty, none of them actual al-Qaeda operatives. With some exceptions, foreign fighters in Gaza tend to be either Arab Muslims from elsewhere in the Middle East or recent converts to Islam from the West, primarily Europe, who enter Gaza after studying at religious centers in the Middle East.⁵

Several of the Salafi-Jihadi groups that developed in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, such as Asbat al-Ansar and Fatah al-Islam, have found their way to the Gaza Strip. For example, several Fatah al-Islam members

1. Jonathan Figchel, "Tawhid and Jihad Legions in Palestine: A New Global Jihad-Oriented Organization in Gaza," International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, December 22, 2008, <http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/tabid/66/Articlsid/571/currentpage/1/Default.aspx>; Jonathan Spyer, "Al-Qaida-Style Islamism Comes to Gaza," *Jerusalem Post*, April 19, 2009, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1249418650349&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull>; Levitt interviews with Israeli officials, Tel Aviv, September 2008.
2. Hassan Jabr, "Jaljalat Awaits Execution of Major Operation to Show Allegiance to bin Laden," *al-Ayyam*, July 11, 2009.
3. Levitt interview with Israeli intelligence officials, Tel Aviv, September 2009.
4. Ibid.
5. Levitt interview with Israeli officials, Tel Aviv, September 2009.

reportedly fled Lebanon and made their way to Gaza via Egypt,⁶ and in December 2007, the group announced its presence in the Strip.⁷ Shortly thereafter, the Palestinian Authority charged that Fatah al-Islam in Palestine was responsible for several homemade rocket attacks on the southern Israeli town of Sderot.⁸ In one video, members of the group are shown launching a rocket they named “al-Zarqawi” toward Sderot. One of them states that the rocket is meant as revenge for all Muslims and for the Fatah al-Islam martyrs in Lebanon, and he adds that “it is for the sheikh of Islam, Usama bin Laden.”⁹ Furthermore, according to Israeli intelligence officials, in May 2008, Fatah al-Islam in Palestine planned to kidnap foreign journalists in Gaza and attack the local offices of Hizballah’s al-Manar satellite television station because it is funded by Shiite money.¹⁰ Fatah al-Islam in Palestine has reportedly developed a strong following and infrastructure within Gaza.¹¹ In February 2009, about a month after the end of Israel’s Operation Cast Lead against Hamas in Gaza, there was speculation that Fatah al-Islam was responsible for rocket fire and border attacks against Israeli targets from its base in Southern Lebanon and from Gaza.¹²

Among the al-Qaeda-inspired “glocal” Salafi-Jihadi groups in Gaza, three stand apart in size, organization, and operational capacity: Jaish al-Umma, Jaish al-Islam, and Jund Ansar Allah.

Case Study: Jaish al-Umma

Jaish al-Umma (Army of the Nation, or JAU) emerged in around 2006.¹³ According to its website, the organization seeks to enforce *sharia* in “the land of Palestine” and around the world, unite the Muslim community, and restore the caliphate. Jaish al-Umma has publicly aligned itself with other Salafi-Jihadi groups, especially those inspired by al-Qaeda, in order to demonstrate its support for a global jihadist ideology, but to date the group’s operational activities have focused on the Palestinian issue.¹⁴

According to its leader, Abu Hafis al-Maqdisi, the group adheres to Salafist ideology but is not directly part of al-Qaeda. However, he adds, “there is an ideological bond between our brothers in al-Qaeda and ourselves. We share the same course, the course of our Prophet Muhammad.”¹⁵ In a January 2008 interview, al-Maqdisi stated, “For us al-Qaeda, Fatah al-Islam, and all those who believe in the Salafist creed are the same. However, there are no contacts with them currently.”¹⁶ In another interview he noted, “We are linked to the brothers of the al-Qaeda organization only from an ideological point of view.”¹⁷ Jaish al-Umma has actively sought to promote itself and its ideology, both in the Gaza Strip and online.¹⁸

Al-Maqdisi claims that Jaish al-Umma has “thousands” of members and operates in the Gaza Strip, the

6. Infolive.tv, “Exclusive—Al Qaida’s Fatah al-Islam Is Operating in Gaza,” December 27, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXuu81qKcXY>.
7. “Fatah al-Islam Regroups in the Gaza Strip,” *INSITE* 1, no. 4 (July 1, 2008): p. 9.
8. Khaled Abu Toameh, “PA Claims Fatah al-Islam Militants at Work in Gaza, Blames Hamas,” *Jerusalem Post*, December 26, 2007, <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/jpost/access/1405689141.html?dids=1405689141:1405689141&FMT=ABS&FMTS=ABS:FT&date=Dec+26%2C+2007&author=KHALED+ABU+TOAMEH&pub=Jerusalem+Post&edition=&startpage=02&desc=PA+claims+Fatah+al-Islam+militants+at+work+in+Gaza%2C+blames+Hamas>.
9. Infolive.tv, “Exclusive—Al Qaida’s Fatah al-Islam Is Operating in Gaza,” December 27, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXuu81qKcXY>.
10. Levitt interview with Israeli intelligence officials, Tel Aviv, September 2008.
11. Are Hovdenak, “Al Qaida—A Challenge for Hamas?” Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), January 12, 2009, http://www.ps.au.dk/fileadmin/site_files/filer_statskundskab/subsites/cir/pdf-filer/a_challenge_for_Hamas.pdf.
12. Yaakov Lappin, “Global Jihad Could Be behind Rockets,” *Jerusalem Post*, February 23, 2009, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1233304850889&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FshowFull>.
13. BBC Monitoring, *al-Ayyam*, “Palestinian Daily Interviews ‘Leading Figure’ in Jihadist Group,” January 16, 2008.
14. Lt. Col. Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi, “The Army of the Nation—Another al-Qaeda Affiliate in the Gaza Strip,” *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, vol. 7, no. 12, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, August 7, 2007, <http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=379&PID=0&IID=1748>.
15. BBC Monitoring, *al-Ayyam*, “Palestinian Daily Interviews ‘Leading Figure’ in Jihadist Group,” January 16, 2008; Rafid Fadhil Ali, “Hamas Arrests Pro-al-Qaeda Leader of Jaysh al-Umma in Gaza,” *Jamestown Terrorism Focus* 5, no. 34 (September 24, 2008), [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=5182](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=5182).
16. BBC Monitoring, *al-Ayyam*, “Palestinian Daily Interviews ‘Leading Figure’ in Jihadist Group,” January 16, 2008.
17. Adnkronos, “Middle East: New Militant Group Emerges in Gaza,” September 2, 2008, <http://www.adnkronos.com/AKI/English/Security/?id=1.0.2454389513>.
18. At least two websites reportedly tied to Jaish al-Umma, www.al-amanh.net and www.almqdes.com, were no longer functional when this report was written.

West Bank, and other “Palestinian territories” within Israel.¹⁹ Israeli officials, however, estimate the group’s actual membership to be in the low hundreds at most, and they see its operational reach as limited to Gaza.²⁰ The group is most active in the towns of Rafah and Khan Yunis, suggesting its base of support is centered there.²¹ Al-Maqqisi’s deputy, Abu al-Hayja, heads the group’s Southern Brigade.²²

In a sign of its Salafi-Jihadi orientation, JAU has focused its rhetoric, and at least one apparent operational threat, on the United States as much as on Israel. On January 9, 2008, in a press conference in Khan Yunis, the group threatened to kill then U.S. president George W. Bush, who was due to visit the region, and his allies, specifically those from Arab and Islamic states.²³ This was one of several threats to kill the president during this visit.²⁴ According to Jaish al-Umma’s spokesman, the United States was the “head of infidelity. It is running a war against everything that is Islamic, starting from Afghanistan through Chechnya and Palestine.” JAU has also announced its opposition to “the Western Crusade project around the world.”²⁵

The organization first received media attention on June 9, 2007, when it took responsibility for firing three locally produced rockets on Sderot. JAU claimed the rockets were intended as tactical support for operations that Fatah’s al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades and Palestinian Islamic Jihad’s al-Quds Brigades were then carrying out. At a strategic level, the statement

explained, the attacks were intended to “raise the banner of monotheism.”²⁶ This application of the Salafi-Jihadi conception of *tawhid* (the principle of monotheism as manifested by the indivisibility of God and His sovereignty) applies not just to Christians and Jews, but to Shiite Muslims as well. In an undated Jaish al-Umma video, the group focuses its ideological ire on the threat posed by Iran and the spread of Shiism in Palestinian society. The video accuses PIJ—a Sunni group but a proxy of Shiite Iran—of being a Shiite organization and a tool of Iran used to spread Shiite ideology. JAU specifically targets PIJ charities as purveyors of Shiism, and has labeled several PIJ leaders “Shiite.”²⁷

Jaish al-Umma has also employed electronic media to recruit members and to demonstrate its military capabilities. In July 2007, it posted an introductory video about itself on jihadist websites. Shot in the Gaza Strip, the video depicts approximately twenty operatives performing military exercises in a JAU training facility.²⁸ In another video, militants are shown training with rocket-propelled-grenade (RPG) launchers called “al-Qaeda 2.”²⁹ Other videos depict more military exercises with RPGs and other weapons.³⁰ In a news broadcast, members of Jaish al-Umma state, “We are tied to our brothers in al-Qaeda.”³¹

Operationally, Jaish al-Umma has focused on Israeli targets, mainly within the Gaza Strip. On September 17, 2007, JAU was among three groups to claim

19. BBC Monitoring, *al-Ayyam*, “Palestinian Daily Interviews ‘Leading Figure’ in Jihadist Group,” January 16, 2008.

20. Levitt interview with Israeli officials, Tel Aviv, September 2009.

21. BBC Monitoring, “Al-Arabiya TV Airs Footage of al-Qaeda-Affiliated Jaysh al-Ummah in Gaza,” September 3, 2008.

22. BBC Monitoring, Hikmat Yusuf, “Jaysh al-Ummah: We Seek Abu-Hafs’s Release through Peaceful Negotiations with Hamas,” Sama News, September 9, 2008.

23. BBC Monitoring, Maan News Agency, “Army of the Nation Issues Threat to Kill Bush from Gaza,” January 9, 2008.

24. Israel Security Agency, “Palestinian Terror in 2008: Statistics and Trends,” December 2008, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionImages/english/TerrorInfo/2008-sum-english.pdf>.

25. Rafid Fadhil Ali, “Hamas Arrests Pro-al-Qaeda Leader of Jaysh al-Umma in Gaza,” *Jamestown Terrorism Focus* 5, no. 34 (September 24, 2008), [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=5182](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=5182).

26. BBC Monitoring International, Ramattan News Agency, “New Palestinian ‘Army of the Nation’ Group Claims Firing Rockets,” June 10, 2007.

27. Lt. Col. Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi, “The Army of the Nation—Another Al-Qaeda Affiliate in the Gaza Strip,” *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, vol. 7, no. 12, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, August 7, 2007, <http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=379&PID=0&IID=1748>.

28. Ibid.; “Jaish al-Umma,” October 16, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5cypFW4-q8>.

29. Lt. Col. Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi, “The Army of the Nation—Another Al-Qaeda Affiliate in the Gaza Strip,” *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, vol. 7, no. 12, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, August 7, 2007, <http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=379&PID=0&IID=1748>.

30. Infolive.tv, “The Army of the Nations: An al-Qaida-Style Group in Gaza Prep,” September 2, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuRo0X0YlE>.

31. Ibid.

responsibility for firing two 80-mm mortars at an Israeli base.³² About a month later, on October 25, Jaish al-Umma, along with another group, took responsibility for firing two 60-mm mortars at the barracks of the Nahal Oz military base.³³ On January 12, 2008, the group claimed responsibility for firing a short-range rocket into the western Negev.³⁴

Jaish al-Umma went on to take responsibility for firing two rockets at the Kissufim military base in February 2008 and for a sniper attack targeting Israeli farmers in April of that year that led to an Israeli retaliatory action in which JAU militants were reportedly wounded.³⁵

In September 2008, Abu Hafis al-Maqdisi was detained by Hamas after a Jaish al-Umma armed training session.³⁶ JAU publicly advocated for his release but denied rumors that it intended to kidnap Hamas officials and institute a bombing campaign as retribution.³⁷ Al-Maqdisi's deputy stated, "We want to release him through peaceful negotiations with the government in Gaza. We will not become entangled in a strife [*sic*] with Hamas and the Palestinian factions."³⁸ According to Jaish al-Umma, following the Hamas operation to apprehend al-Maqdisi, approximately twenty-three of its members were arrested.³⁹

In the months ahead, the group began to challenge Hamas more openly. In November 2008, it fired rockets

at the Israeli city of Ashkelon, despite Hamas efforts to maintain a ceasefire with Israel. In the video it made of the attack, JAU announced that it refused to adhere to any ceasefire arrangement and would continue actions as part of the "global jihad."⁴⁰ Interestingly, while JAU was sharply critical of the 2008 ceasefire, it may have had an unwritten agreement with Hamas that allowed it to operate in Gaza at the same time. Still, in September 2008, a JAU video featured Abu Hafis al-Maqdisi saying, "We have found that Hamas does not implement the *sharia* on the ground. They do not implement or break through the barriers and does [*sic*] not uphold the Islamic *sharia*."⁴¹

Jaish al-Umma took responsibility for attacks during Operation Cast Lead in December 2008 and January 2009. The group claimed responsibility for firing mortar shells at a convoy of Israeli tanks in Gaza City on January 5, 2009, and for shooting an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldier on January 10.⁴² On January 30, JAU announced that it had fired a missile at Israeli military vehicles in a neighborhood near Gaza City, and a few days later it released a video showing the group firing rockets into Israel.⁴³

In May 2009, Jaish al-Umma claimed that Hamas was arresting its operatives while they were on a "jihad mission" targeting Israeli forces.⁴⁴ The same week, it took responsibility for launching rockets in the area

32. BBC Worldwide Monitoring, "IDF Troops Kill Palestinian Youth in West Bank, Two New Militant Groups Emerge," September 17, 2007.

33. BBC Monitoring, Maan News Agency, "Palestinian Report Says Two Hamas Militants Killed by Israeli Fire," October 25, 2007.

34. BBC Monitoring, Maan News Agency, "Palestinian Groups Claim Clashing with Israeli Forces in Gaza, Firing Rockets," January 12, 2008.

35. BBC Worldwide Monitoring, "Palestinian Groups Fire at Israeli Targets in 'Response' to Camp Attack," February 16, 2008; "Palestinian 'Army' Claims It 'Sniped Two Israeli Farmers' in Gaza," BBC Worldwide Monitoring, April 4, 2008.

36. Reuters, "Pro-al-Qaeda Group Urges Hamas to Free Its Leader," September 8, 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL8704611>.

37. Hikmat Yusuf, "Jaysh al-Ummah: We Seek Abu-Hafis's Release through Peaceful Negotiations with Hamas," BBC Worldwide Monitoring, coverage of *Sama News*, September 9, 2008.

38. BBC Worldwide Monitoring, "Gaza Militant Group Denies Plan to Abduct Hamas Leaders to Protest Detention," coverage of *Sama News*, September 9, 2008.

39. BBC Worldwide Monitoring, "Relations between Hamas and al-Qaeda in Gaza Deteriorating—Paper," coverage of *al-Quds al-Arabi*, September 20, 2008.

40. NEFA Foundation, "Al-Qaida Faction in Gaza Claims Rocket Attacks on Israeli Targets, Including Ashkelon," November 2008, <http://www.nefafoundation.org/multimedia-prop.html>; CSS Special Information Bulletin, "News of the Terrorism and Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," November 19, 2008, available at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/nov_e003.htm.

41. Infolive.tv, "The Army of the Nations: An al-Qaida-Style Group in Gaza Prep," September 2, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuRo0XOYLcE>.

42. BBC Monitoring, Maan News Agency, "Palestinian Fighters Launch Projectiles at Israeli Towns, Resist Invasion," January 5, 2009; Maan News Agency, "Israeli Shelling Kills Palestinian Militant Leader; Rockets Fired," January 10, 2009.

43. Bahrain News Agency, "Missile Fired on Israeli Military Vehicles," January 30, 2009; "Jaish al-Ummah—Menghantam Zionis Dengan Roket," February 3, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAqGdNWtXJM>.

44. Fathi Sabbah, "Hamas Government Intends to Prevent Firing of Rockets out of Concern for National Interest and Stability in Gaza," *al-Hayat*, May 22, 2009; "Hamas Denies Report on Arrests of Seven Members of Palestinian Armed Group in Gaza," BBC Worldwide Monitoring, coverage of Maan News Agency, May 26, 2009.

of Nahal Oz, near the Gaza Strip.⁴⁵ In early June 2009, Hamas forces again arrested Abu Hafs al-Maqdisi; Jaish al-Umma issued a statement on June 7 protesting his arrest and accused Hamas of “flagrant oppression” and “blatant assault on the sons of Jaish al-Ummah in Jerusalem.”⁴⁶

Case Study: Jaish al-Islam

Jaish al-Islam (Army of Islam, or JAI) grew out of the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC)⁴⁷ and became an independent group around 2006. JAI has kidnapped Western journalists and planned to assassinate former British prime minister Tony Blair, but it is believed to comprise only a few hundred activists. The group associates itself with al-Qaeda by posting statements and videos on jihadist websites and implicitly linking itself to the global jihad through photos of Usama bin Laden.⁴⁸ At one point JAI claimed to have boosted its operational capacity with fighters trained in Afghanistan and to have received funds from al-Qaeda.⁴⁹

Headed by Mumtaz Dughmush (aka Abu Muhammad al-Ansari), who has reportedly rediscovered Islam in recent years, Jaish al-Islam is dominated by the Dughmush clan, which lives in the southern Gaza Strip and has long engaged in crime and smuggling in the Rafah area. Like many other Salafi-Jihadi groups, JAI has promoted attacks on “the hypocrites, the apostates, the Jews, the Crusaders and the Rejectionists.”⁵⁰ The group denied claims that it was responsible for attacks against Christian targets in the Gaza Strip, but it condemned

the spread of Shiism in Palestinian society.⁵¹ Like other Palestinian Salafist groups, Jaish al-Islam insists that it seeks to promote virtue and prevent corruption in Muslim society.⁵²

The group does plan large-scale attacks, though its capabilities and resources remain limited. For example, it hatched a plot to booby-trap trucks heading into Israel but failed to carry it out. In fact, some of the foreigners who entered Gaza and joined JAI and other Salafi-Jihadi groups were surprised by their lack of operational capacity, and several quickly returned home disappointed.⁵³

According to Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a Jaish al-Islam leader, the group is “ideologically linked to al-Qaeda. At the moment, there are no ties from an organizational point of view.” Though al-Maqdisi claimed the organization has a presence in Gaza, the West Bank, and “inside the territories occupied by Israel in 1948,” Israeli officials believe that it is limited to the Gaza Strip.⁵⁴ In response to an interviewer’s question about expanding the group’s jihad into the West Bank, another leader of Jaish al-Islam, Sheikh Abu al-Harith al-Ansari, replied that “jihad is not connected to Palestine only, but it should cover all occupied lands of Muslims.”⁵⁵

In an interview, JAI operative Abu Mutfana noted that “Jaish al-Islam has numerous Islamic soldiers who are heroes and wear suicide bomb belts on their bodies.”⁵⁶ According to Israeli officials, while JAI lacks infrastructure and weapons capabilities, it aspires to carry out “mega-attacks” rather than small operations.⁵⁷

45. Jihadist websites, U.S. Government Open Source Center (OSC) Summary, “Al-Ummah Army Claims Rocket Attack on Nahal Uz Area East of Gaza 23 May,” June 3, 2009.

46. Jihadist websites, OSC Summary, “Jaysh al-Ummah Protests Hamas Arrest of Its Amir,” June 11, 2009.

47. The Popular Resistance Committees are a loosely structured organization of radical Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, made up of members of various other groups, including Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Fatah.

48. Michael Slackman and Souad Mekhennet, “A New Group that Seems to Share al-Qaeda’s Agenda,” *New York Times*, July 8, 2006.

49. Lt. Col. Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi, “The Army of the Nation—Another al-Qaeda Affiliate in the Gaza Strip,” Jerusalem Issue Brief, vol. 7, no. 12, August 7, 2007, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, available at <http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=442&PID=0&IID=1748>.

50. Jihadist websites, OSC Summary, “Army of Islam Welcomes Palestinian Jihadist Unity, Spells Out Terms,” September 1, 2008.

51. Adnkronos, “Middle East: Palestinian Group Admits Link to al-Qaeda,” June 11, 2008; Jihadist websites, OSC Summary, “Army of Islam-Palestine Condemns Spread of Shia Islam in Gaza Strip,” June 12, 2008.

52. Jihadist websites, OSC Summary, “Army of Islam Welcomes Palestinian Jihadist Unity, Spells Out Terms,” September 1, 2008.

53. Levitt interview with Israeli officials, September 9, 2008.

54. Adnkronos, “Middle East: Palestinian Group Admits Link to al-Qaeda,” June 11, 2008; Levitt interview with Israeli intelligence officials, Tel Aviv, September 2008.

55. Jihadist websites, OSC Summary, “GIMF Posts Interview of Army of Islam’s Official Shaykh Abu-al-Harith al-Ansari,” September 21, 2008.

56. Infolive.tv, “The Army of Islam Warns Hamas,” July 9, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQ1fe5rGfuc&feature=channel>.

57. Levitt interview with Israel Security Agency officials, September 9, 2008.

Some have speculated that Jaish al-Islam could have as many as 15,000 members and supporters, primarily made up of the Dughmush clan and its allies.⁵⁸ The group's active membership, however, is assessed to be only several dozen, perhaps as many as 200 to 300.⁵⁹ In a sign that the group may need to conserve limited manpower resources, Sheikh Abu al-Harith al-Ansari expressed reservations about Jaish al-Islam employing suicide, or "martyrdom," operations. "We permit them in case there is no other possible means and according to the necessity," he noted. "However, as long as there are other possible means, we think that we should preserve the mujahedin's lives [*sic*], unless the group found that such operation [*sic*] will strongly afflict the enemy."⁶⁰

JAI's membership includes a variety of individuals radicalized by Salafi-Jihadi ideology, many of whom were affiliated with other groups, including Hamas, or remain affiliated with them. In one instance, in June 2008, Hamas and Jaish al-Islam each claimed responsibility for Abud Hudhayfa, a "martyred" operative.⁶¹ According to the Hamas-run Ministry of the Interior, "Scores of Fatah policemen who used to serve in the Palestinian Authority security forces in the Gaza Strip have now joined the al-Qaeda-affiliated group calling itself the Army of Islam."⁶² Israeli officials report that foreign fighters from Egypt, Yemen, and Europe have entered Gaza and joined Jaish al-Islam as well. However, some of them reportedly left after a

short time, frustrated by the relative lack of operations targeting Israel.⁶³

Jaish al-Islam and the Dughmush clan have a stronghold in Gaza City, although much of the group's activity appears to be in southern Gaza.⁶⁴ While Mumtaz Dughmush is the leader of Jaish al-Islam and of the Dughmush clan, JAI has issued statements appearing to highlight the importance of the group's religious leader. According to one statement, "the Army is not represented by a specific person, however, the Sheikh Abu-Muhammad al-Ansari is the only person who is entitled to negotiate directly with any party."⁶⁵ Another leader is Abu al-Hasan al-Maqdisi, or Khattab al-Maqdisi, a veteran from Afghanistan who reportedly fought alongside the Taliban.⁶⁶

On June 25, 2006, members of the Dughmush clan affiliated with the Popular Resistance Committees joined with Hamas to kidnap Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit at the Kerem Shalom crossing. The abductors burrowed under an Israeli army guard post by way of a tunnel that began in a house in Rafah, located some 350 meters from the border fence. During the attack, two Israeli soldiers were killed and three injured. Shalit was wounded by shrapnel and has been held by Hamas since his capture.⁶⁷ That same month, the Dughmush clan and its supporters broke from the PRC to form Jaish al-Islam.⁶⁸ With this break, relations between Hamas and Mumtaz Dughmush soured, as he became

58. Ed Blanche, "Gaza's War of the Clans," *The Middle East*, July 1, 2007, available at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2742/is_380/ai_n25009204/.

59. Levitt interview with Israeli officials, Tel Aviv, September 9, 2008; Olivier Guitta, "Al-Qaida's Opportunistic Strategy: Part 2," *Middle East Times*, August 11, 2008, available at <http://www.njscvva.org/Armed%20Forces%20News%20PDFs/200808/2008%2008%2011%20-%20Al%20Qaedas%20Opportunistic%20Strategy%20Part%202.pdf>.

60. Jihadist websites, OSC Summary, "GIMF Posts Interview of Army of Islam's Official Shaykh Abu-al-Harith al-Ansari," September 21, 2008.

61. "Former Hamas Member Decries Leadership," *INSITE* 1, no. 4 (July 1, 2008): p. 2.

62. Khaled Abu Toameh, "Scores of Fatah Policemen Defect to al-Qaida," *Jerusalem Post*, November 1, 2007, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1192380715974&pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull>.

63. Levitt interview with Israeli officials, Tel Aviv, September 9, 2008, and September 10, 2009.

64. Kuwait News Agency, "Armed Confrontations in Gaza Leave Many Injured," July 27, 2008.

65. Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center, "The Army of Islam," May 20, 2007, available at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/islam_troops_e.pdf; Jihadist websites, OSC Summary, "Army of Islam Welcomes Palestinian Jihadist Unity, Spells Out Terms," September 1, 2008.

66. Lt. Col. Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi, "The Army of the Nation"—Another al-Qaeda Affiliate in the Gaza Strip," Jerusalem Issue Brief, vol. 7, no. 12, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, August 7, 2007, <http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=379&PID=0&IID=1748>.

67. BBC News, "Q&A: Israeli Soldier Held in Gaza," November 30, 2009, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6238858.stm; Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Two Soldiers Killed, One Missing in Kerem Shalom Terror Attack," June 25, 2006, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2006/Two+soldiers+killed+one+missing+in+Kerem+Shalom+terror+attack+25-Jun-2006.htm>.

68. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) Terrorist Organization 2006–2007," June 5, 2008, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism+-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Terror+Groups/The%20Popular%20Resistance%20Committees%20Terrorist%20Organization%202006-2007>.

more extreme and began to present a challenge to Hamas. One Hamas official described Dughmush as “deranged and illiterate,” adding that he was obsessed with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian-born head of al-Qaeda in Iraq killed in June 2006.⁶⁹

Some weeks later, on August 14, 2006, members of Jaish al-Islam kidnapped two Fox News journalists in Gaza City. Correspondent Steve Centanni, an American, and cameraman Olaf Wiig, from New Zealand, were dragged from their car at gunpoint and taken to another car blindfolded and handcuffed. A group calling itself the “Holy Jihad Brigades” demanded the release of Muslims in U.S. jails within seventy-two hours, but Palestinian officials determined the name was a front for local militants later linked to Jaish al-Islam and the captives were ultimately released two weeks later after being forced to convert to Islam.⁷⁰

In March 2007, the group again targeted Western interests in Gaza and kidnapped BBC journalist Alan Johnston.⁷¹ The commander of the kidnapping plot was reportedly Khattab al-Maqdisi, the JAI leader who fought with al-Qaeda alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan.⁷² Jaish al-Islam later claimed responsibility for the kidnapping in an audio recording posted on the al-Firdous website, which is often used by al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups.⁷³ The recording, provided to al-Jazeera’s office in Gaza as well, demanded the return of prisoners held in “infidel countries” and called for

the release of Sheikh Abu Qatada—described by the British government as a “significant international terrorist”—who was convicted of terrorism charges in Jordan while detained in Great Britain.⁷⁴

In June 2007, while Johnston was in captivity, JAI released a video, presented as a message from Jaish al-Islam to Hamas’s Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, which appeared on various Islamist websites. The video reiterated JAI’s commitment to establishing an Islamic emirate in the Gaza Strip adhering to Islamic law. Addressing the Qassam Brigades, the message urged Hamas not to pressure Jaish al-Islam to release Johnston, and asked, “Are you hurt by the fact that we strive to release Muslim prisoners? Do you know what our brothers experience in British jails?” The JAI spokesperson stated that pressuring the group to release Johnston without the release of Abu Qatada would only lead to Johnston’s death.⁷⁵ One of the captors later acknowledged that “one of our men with Alan had the instruction that if there was an attack [a Hamas raid], he must not think of defending himself, his duty is to kill the journalist.”⁷⁶

In late June 2007, Hamas security forces arrested two Jaish al-Islam members. In response, on July 2, JAI released another video, featuring Johnston wearing what appeared to be an explosive vest.⁷⁷ Two days later, Johnston was freed by Jaish al-Islam after nearly four months in captivity. JAI’s deal with Hamas reportedly allowed it to retain its weapons.⁷⁸ This deal, along with

69. Khaled Abu Toameh, “Fatah Policemen ‘Defect to Al-Qaida,’” *Jerusalem Post*, November 3, 2007, available at <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1192380715974&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull>.

70. Fox News, “Captors Release Two Fox News Journalists Kidnapped in Gaza Aug. 14,” August 28, 2006, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,210645,00.html>.

71. BBC News, “Fears for BBC Gaza Correspondent,” March 12, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6442663.stm.

72. Marie Colvin, “Al-Qaeda Veteran Led Johnston Kidnap Gang,” *Sunday Times* (London), July 8, 2007, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article2042383.ece.

73. Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center, “The Army of Islam,” May 20, 2007, available at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/islam_troops_e.pdf.

74. “Terror Group’s Dramatic Demand over Kidnapped Alan Johnston,” *Evening Standard* (London), May 9, 2007, available at [http://findarticles.com/p/news-articles/evening-standard-london-uk/mi_8010/is_20070509/terror-groups-dramatic-demand-kidnapped/ai_n40159615/?tag=content;col1;William Tinning, “Al-Qaeda Link to BBC Kidnapping,” *Herald* \(Glasgow\), May 10, 2007, <http://www.heraldsotland.com/al-qaeda-link-to-bbc-kidnapping-1.857655>; “Profile: Abu Qatada,” BBC News, February 26, 2007, available at \[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4141594.stm\]\(http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4141594.stm\).](http://findarticles.com/p/news-articles/evening-standard-london-uk/mi_8010/is_20070509/terror-groups-dramatic-demand-kidnapped/ai_n40159615/?tag=content;col1;William Tinning, “Al-Qaeda Link to BBC Kidnapping,” Herald (Glasgow), May 10, 2007, http://www.heraldsotland.com/al-qaeda-link-to-bbc-kidnapping-1.857655; “Profile: Abu Qatada,” BBC News, February 26, 2007, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4141594.stm)

75. “Establishment of an Islamic Emirate in Gaza,” video of “A Message from Jaish al-Islam to Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades,” June 20, 2007, http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=71b_1182365598.

76. Marie Colvin, “Al-Qaeda Veteran Led Johnston Kidnap Gang,” *Sunday Times* (London), July 8, 2007, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article2042383.ece.

77. Mitchell Prothero, “Kidnapped BBC Man’s Fate Hangs on Clan Feud,” *Observer* (England), July 1, 2007.

78. Associated Press, “Hamas Says Kidnapped British Reporter Alan Johnston Has Been Released,” July 3, 2007; Khaled Abu Toameh, “Scores of Former Fatah Policemen Join al-Qaeda’s ‘Army of Islam,’” *Jerusalem Post*, November 2, 2007; Jaish al-Islam member Abu Mutfana denied these reports of a deal allowing JAI to retain its weapons, stating that the “Jaish al-Islam gave you Alan [Johnston] at their own free will. See Infolive.tv, “The Army of Islam Warns Hamas,” July 9, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQ1fe5rGfuc&feature=channel>.

the Hamas crackdown and the prohibitive cost of holding Johnston, contributed to JAI's decision to release him. After Johnston's release, an aide to Mumtaz Dughmush complained to the press that feeding Johnston cost £70 a week.⁷⁹

According to Hamas officials, following Johnston's release, Jaish al-Islam continued to use tunnels to smuggle large amounts of weapons and explosives into the Gaza Strip from Sinai. Also according to Hamas, in November 2007, large numbers of Fatah policemen from the Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces who lost their jobs when Hamas took over Gaza joined Jaish al-Islam.⁸⁰ The following year, in February 2008, JAI demonstrated its ideological affinity for al-Qaeda by publicly eulogizing, on a jihadist website, Abu Laith al-Libi, a senior al-Qaeda leader killed in Pakistan a few days earlier.⁸¹ Clashes between Hamas and JAI broke out again in August 2008 when Hamas forces reportedly attacked the homes of Jaish al-Islam operatives suspected of planting explosive devices that killed five senior Hamas activists.⁸²

Jaish al-Islam members, while not formally affiliated with al-Qaeda, do have personal relationships with people connected with the global jihadist movement. According to a study titled *The al-Qaeda Media Nexus: The Virtual Network behind the Global Message*, in July 2007, Jaish al-Islam posted seven statements on two prominent online forums tied to al-Qaeda. The study notes that these jihadist media production and distribution forums "are virtual and function both as branding mechanisms and . . . as connective tissue linking the groups that carry out acts of violence" around the world. The connections established through these virtual entities are significant. As the study concluded,

"While internet-based media do not provide the best basis for inferring operational links, the constantly reinforced and carefully supervised associations between MPDE's [media production and distribution entities] and jihadist groups must at some point involve concrete individuals."⁸³

The Johnston case offers a telling example of how JAI has leveraged such online relationships. According to Israeli officials, "Al-Qaeda was very interested in the Johnston affair."⁸⁴ This assessment was underscored in the course of the February 2009 trial in Canada of Said Namouh, a jihadist propagandist affiliated with the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF). According to Canadian prosecutors, Namouh and an associate in Austria, Muhammad Shawqi Mahmoud, "played a major role for the GIMF" in editing the Jaish al-Islam video featuring Johnston. In October 2009, Namouh was convicted of involvement in an international terror plot. According to the Quebec court judge, Namouh "also prepared ransom demands on behalf of the Army of Islam."⁸⁵ Mahmoud had already been sentenced in March 2008 to four years in prison in Austria for belonging to a terrorist organization after he produced a video for the GIMF that threatened terrorist attacks against Germany and Austria if they failed to withdraw their troops from Afghanistan. The video also called for attacks during the Euro 2008 soccer championships. Jaish al-Islam, in a communiqué denying that Mahmoud played a role in the video editing during Johnston's kidnapping, confirmed that he contacted the group after Johnston's abduction through a "private inbox inside a certain forum on the internet" to advise it not to harm Johnston and to pass along a message from an

79. Marie Colvin, "Al-Qaeda Veteran Led Johnston Kidnap Gang," *Sunday Times* (London), July 8, 2007, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article2042383.ece.

80. Khaled Abu Toameh, "Fatah Policemen in the Gaza Strip 'Defect to al-Qaida,'" *Jerusalem Post*, November 2, 2007.

81. Jihadist websites, OSC Summary, "Army of Islam Eulogizes al-Qaeda's Abu-al-Layth al-Libi," March 24, 2008.

82. Lt. Col. Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi, "Al-Qaeda Affiliate—Jaish al-Islam—Receives Formal Sanctuary in Hamas-Ruled Gaza," vol. 8, no. 7, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, August 20, 2008, <http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=442&PID=0&IID=2408>.

83. Daniel Kimmage, *The al-Qaeda Media Nexus: The Virtual Network behind the Global Message*, RFE/FL Special Report, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, March 2008, http://docs.rferl.org/en-US/AQ_Media_Nexus.pdf.

84. Levitt interview with Israeli intelligence officials, Tel Aviv, September 2008.

85. CBC News, "Quebec Man Guilty in Austrian-German Bomb Plot," October 1, 2009, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2009/10/01/quebec-namouh-guilty.html>.

Austrian reporter seeking news about the British journalist's condition.⁸⁶

Throughout this period, Jaish al-Islam continued to attack Christian and Western institutions in Gaza. On February 15, 2008, for example, JAI blew up the YMCA library in Gaza City, destroying the thousands of books inside. Fourteen masked gunmen raided the building, placed explosives throughout it, and kidnapped (and later released) the two security guards. Hamas security forces detained Jaish al-Islam members, but they were quickly let go after the group threatened to secure their release by force. This attack came just days after newspapers across Europe reprinted the controversial cartoon featuring the Prophet Muhammad that sparked riots when it first ran in 2006, causing speculation that the YMCA bombing was retaliation for the publication of the Danish cartoon. At the time, a spokesman for the PRC faction controlled by Zakaria Dughmush, Mumtaz's brother, issued a statement calling on "Muslims and jihad warriors to hunt down all those pigs that painted the despicable cartoon or took part in its publication, and to slaughter them at the doorstep of Muhammad's tomb."⁸⁷

In June 2008, Jaish al-Islam was accused of attacking Muslim stores in the Gaza Strip. Recognizing the potentially negative consequences of targeting fellow Muslims, however, the group issued a statement on a jihadist website denying responsibility for these attacks. JAI acknowledged its intent to see to the "prevention of vice" through "Sharia constraints and laws," but blamed the attacks on a purported Shiite plot to

undermine the group and Gaza.⁸⁸ In another statement released the next day, Jaish al-Islam again condemned the "invasion" of Shiism in the Gaza Strip "through foundations, organizations, societies and parties," echoing the radically anti-Shiite message of al-Qaeda and other extremist Sunni movements.⁸⁹

On June 17, 2008, the Israeli military killed several Jaish al-Islam operatives in a series of targeted air strikes. One was aimed at a car in which JAI's second in command, Mumtaz Dughmush's half brother Mutaz, was riding.⁹⁰ Two days later, Jaish al-Islam released a statement eulogizing a group member killed with Mutaz Dughmush, pronouncing him a martyr.⁹¹ Prior to the IDF strike, both Fatah and Hamas had been trying to kill Mutaz Dughmush for two years.⁹² A Fatah official alleged that he was responsible for the murder of PA intelligence officer Gen. Jad Tayeh in September 2006, and that he had received an assassination order from Hamas. Before establishing Jaish al-Islam with his brother Mumtaz, Mutaz Dughmush was a member of Hamas's Qassam Brigades and, according to a Hamas official, also did the "dirty work" for Fatah's security forces.⁹³

Despite the group's relatively small size and the impact of Israeli strikes targeting its leaders, Jaish al-Islam remains capable of carrying out serious attacks. In July 2008, for example, the group planned to target former British prime minister and Quartet envoy Tony Blair during his upcoming visit to the Gaza Strip.⁹⁴ Israeli intelligence warned Blair, who subsequently canceled the trip.⁹⁵

86. NEFA Foundation, "Army of Islam: 'Statement and Clarification in Response to the Austrian Charges against Brother Muhammad Shawqi, Apprehended in Josefstadt Prison—Vienna,'" January 29, 2009, http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefa_armyislamhahmoud0109.pdf. See also *Austrian Times*, "Austrian al-Qaeda Cell Watched for Three Years," April 8, 2009, <http://www.austriantimes.at/index.php?id=12395>.

87. *Ibid.*

88. Jihadist websites, OSC Summary, "Army of Islam Denies Targeting Muslims in Gaza, Blames 'Shiite Plot,'" June 4, 2008; Adnkronos, "Middle East: Palestinian Group Admits Link to al-Qaeda," June 11, 2008, <http://www.adnkronos.com/AKI/English/Security/?id=1.0.2244184654>.

89. Jihadist websites, OSC Summary, "Army of Islam-Palestine Condemns Spread of Shia Islam in Gaza Strip," June 12, 2008, available at <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateI01.php>.

90. Khaled Abu Toameh, "Dughmush's Death Pleases Both Fatah and Hamas," *Jerusalem Post*, June 19, 2008; Avi Issacharoff and Yuval Azoulay, *Haaretz* Correspondent, and News Agencies, "IAF Gaza Strikes Kill Six Including Gunmen Linked to Shalit Kidnap," *Haaretz*, June 18, 2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/993651.html>.

91. Jihadist websites, OSC Summary, "Palestinian Army of Islam Eulogizes 'Martyred' Mujahid," June 20, 2008.

92. Khaled Abu Toameh, "Dughmush's Death Pleases Both Fatah and Hamas," *Jerusalem Post*, June 19, 2008.

93. *Ibid.*

94. Levitt interview with two Israel Security Agency officials, September 9, 2008. See also CBS News, "Post Calls on Militants to Assassinate Blair during Visit to Gaza," July 14, 2008, <http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2008/07/14/monitor/entry4260717.shtml>.

95. Levitt interview with Israeli officials, September 9, 2008.

On July 26, 2008, armed clashes broke out between Palestinian police and Jaish al-Islam fighters in the southern Gaza Strip. Local media reported “heavy overnight clashes” leading to the arrest of an unspecified number of JAI members.⁹⁶ Hamas officials justified the crackdown, noting that they suspected Jaish al-Islam of being responsible for recent bombings, including one targeting a popular café.⁹⁷ JAI's Abu al-Hasan al-Maqdisi acknowledged the fighting but claimed violence broke out due to Hamas's “unjustified house-to-house search operations” and attacks on Jaish al-Islam fighters.⁹⁸ JAI posted a statement on a jihadist website criticizing both the Qassam Brigades and Fatah and warning them that Jaish al-Islam would respond.⁹⁹

Evidence of JAI's interest in engaging with the broader Salafi-Jihadi community came in August 2009, when the group's role in training an Egyptian jihadist cell came to light. Known as the “al-Zeitoun cell,” the Cairo group planned to assassinate Israeli ambassador to Egypt Shalom Cohen and bomb his home and embassy. Three suspects were arrested; they later attributed their failure to carry out the plan to tight security around the ambassador's home. The suspects claimed they were members of al-Qaeda and said that they had surveyed tourist sites in the Sinai Peninsula. The al-Zeitoun cell was also involved in a February 2009 Cairo market attack and planned to target religious and tourist sites in Egypt and the gas pipeline

between Egypt and Israel. According to the suspects, they trained in camps belonging to the “Palestinian Army of Islam in the Gaza Strip” and were involved in smuggling others across the Egypt-Gaza border to wage attacks.¹⁰⁰

Case Study: Jund Ansar Allah

Since its establishment in late 2008, Jund Ansar Allah (Army of Allah's Supporters, or JAA) has grown into an umbrella organization encompassing several Salafi-Jihadi groups and defectors from Hamas and Islamic Jihad.¹⁰¹ The organization came to public attention in the summer of 2009 when its leader, Abd al-Latif Musa, declared an Islamic emirate in Gaza and Hamas, perceiving this as a direct challenge to its rule,¹⁰² clashed with the group's members at Rafah's Ibn Tamiyya mosque.

At one point during the August shootout, a Jund Ansar Allah member pretended to surrender to a Hamas battalion commander so that he could draw near and shoot him.¹⁰³ In the course of the clashes, Hamas reportedly bombed Jund Ansar Allah's safe house in Rafah without first asking those inside to surrender; it later found nearly fifty explosive belts or vests in the house.¹⁰⁴

After the gunfight, which Hamas health officials say resulted in 24 deaths and 120 injuries, Hamas forces seized the mosque from Jund Ansar Allah.¹⁰⁵ Both Musa

96. *Middle East News*, “Hamas Clashes with Army of Islam after Crackdown on Fatah,” July 27, 2009.

97. Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, “Fatah suppressed in the Gaza Strip: violent Fatah-Hamas confrontations lead to the flight of 180 Fatah operatives to Israel. The operatives were transferred to the Palestinian Authority,” August 4, 2009 bulletin, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e002.pdf.

98. Kuwait News Agency, “Armed Confrontations in Gaza Leave Many Injured—Witnesses,” July 27, 2008.

99. Jihadist websites, OSC Summary, “Army of Islam Supporter Sees ‘Nahr al-Barid’ Events Being Repeated in Gaza,” August 4, 2008.

100. *ynet News*, “Report: Cell Plotted to Kill Israel's Ambassador to Egypt,” August 8, 2009, <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/articles/0,7340,L-3758892,00.html>. This was not the first time Egyptian authorities reported that local terrorists had trained in Palestinian camps in Gaza. In 2006, Egypt announced the arrest of two people who belonged to al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (Unity of Allah and Holy War) and were suspected of involvement in the 2006 attacks in Dahab, in the Sinai. See Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies, “The Egyptian Interior Ministry exposed operative collaboration between terrorist elements in Sinai (connected to the Global Jihad and suspected of involvement in the attacks at Dahab) and Palestinian terrorist elements in the Gaza Strip (whose identity is unclear),” May 26, 2006, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/dahab_250506.htm.

101. Kifah Zibun, “The Salafi Groups in Gaza Are Close to al-Qa'idah, and Have Split from Factions Including Hamas,” *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, August 16, 2009; Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, “Hamas Steps Up Its Struggle Against the Global Jihad—Affiliated Networks Trying to Challenge Its Control of The Gaza Strip,” September 1, 2009, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e080.pdf.

102. NEFA Foundation, “Jund Ansar Allah Declares ‘Islamic Emirate’ in Gaza,” August 14, 2009, http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefa_jundansarallah081409.pdf.

103. Levitt interview with Israeli officials, Tel Aviv, September 2009.

104. *Ibid.*

105. Ibrahim Barzak, “Hamas Battle with Islamic Radicals Kills Seven in Gaza,” Associated Press, August 14, 2009; Howard Schneider, “For Hamas, Challenges May Be Growing,” *Washington Post*, August 16, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/15/AR2009081502192>.

and the group's military leader, Fuad Banat,¹⁰⁶ died in the attack. Banat, originally a Hamas operative sent from Damascus to improve Hamas training in Gaza, had split with the group over its ceasefire with Israel and served as JAA's military commander alongside Musa, the group's spiritual leader.¹⁰⁷ According to a Jund Ansar Allah statement following Banat's death, he specialized in making bullets, had a "brilliant jihadi and military biography," and "worked closely with Hamas and provided it with his expertise." Banat was also "very close to Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades commanders Muhammad al-Jabari, Abu al-Shaimaa, and Abu Muaz."¹⁰⁸

JAA's website describes the organization's goals as establishing *sharia*, defending the Prophet, uniting the *umma* (nation), and gaining the release of Muslim prisoners from Israeli jails. Moreover, its messages are directed to mujahedin in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Iraq, Kashmir, Somalia, and the Philippines, demonstrating that its members perceive themselves as part of a global jihadist group fighting on multiple fronts.¹⁰⁹ The website also features videos and photographs of members involved in military training, obituaries of "martyred" members, and videos and photographs of bin Laden and other global jihad leaders.¹¹⁰

Jund Ansar Allah's main criticisms of Hamas are that it has not taken sufficient action against Israel, that it has cracked down on those who did, and that

it has failed to establish *sharia* in Gaza. The criticism has increased over time. Following the fighting, JAA released a statement saying that "the battle to establish *sharia* has begun and will not end until its complete establishment as it was given to us by God."¹¹¹

According to one JAA member, the group has "been forced into secret activities," including secret lectures by Salafist sheikhs. Members have shaved their beards and refrained from wearing Afghan-style dress.¹¹² Yet just weeks before the August 2009 clashes, a Salafi-Jihadi told a Western journalist, "We know how strong they [Hamas] are and how supported they are on the street, but we can't live underground forever."¹¹³

Though Jund Ansar Allah has kept a low profile since Hamas began its vendetta against Salafist groups in Gaza, it seems to be attracting a following of former Hamas members. According to the Jund Ansar Allah member, this can be seen in the deaths of former Hamas operatives such as Banat at the side of JAA leader Abd al-Latif Musa in August.¹¹⁴ In mid-September the Hamas government, apparently feeling its Islamist credentials were being questioned because of the clash with Jund Ansar Allah, released fifty JAA security detainees for the holiday of Eid al-Fitr.¹¹⁵

Following the battle with Hamas at the Ibn Tamiyya mosque, Jund Ansar Allah released a statement threatening to respond to Hamas in Gaza, yet added that

html; Majeda El Batsh, "Gaza Clashes Reveal Hamas's Complex Struggle with Radicals," Agence France-Presse, August 17, 2009, available at http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jZs3owHhun_01pl2TWT2i4vumpDg?index=0; Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, "Hamas Steps Up Its Struggle against the Global Jihad—Affiliated Networks Trying to Challenge Its Control of the Gaza Strip," September 1, 2009, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hamas_e080.pdf.

106. Fuad Banat also went by the names of Abu Abdallah al-Suri and Abu Abdullah al Muhajir (Levitt interview with Israeli officials, Tel Aviv, September 10, 2009).

107. Levitt interview with Israeli officials, Tel Aviv, September 10, 2009.

108. NEFA Foundation, "Jund Ansar Allah Threatens 'Response' to Hamas Clashes," August 16, 2009, http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefa_jundansarallah081609.pdf.

109. BBC International Monitoring, Hassan Jabr, "Jund Ansar Allah: New Salafi Organization Appears in Southern Part of Gaza Strip," *al-Ayyam*, December 23, 2008.

110. Ibid.; Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, "Internet and terrorism: a local terrorist network in the Gaza Strip affiliated with al-Qaeda and global jihad was behind the failed attempt to perpetrate a showcase terrorist attack at the Nahal Oz fuel terminal (June 8). The network's website is serviced by several companies, including one based in the U.S.," June 14, 2009.

111. Majeda El Batsh, "Gaza Clashes Reveal Hamas's Complex Struggle with Radicals," Agence France Presse, August 17, 2009, available at http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jZs3owHhun_01pl2TWT2i4vumpDg?index=0.

112. Nidal al-Mughrabi, "Qaeda Ally in Gaza Defiant, Seeing New Recruits," Reuters, September 16, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE58F2AN20090916>.

113. Lawrence Wright, "Letter from Gaza: What Really Happened during the Israeli Attacks?" *New Yorker*, November 9, 2009, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/11/09/091109fa_fact_wright.

114. Nidal al-Mughrabi, "Qaeda Ally in Gaza Defiant, Seeing New Recruits," Reuters, September 16, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE58F2AN20090916>.

115. Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, "The Struggle between Hamas and the Jihadi-Salafist Networks in the Gaza Strip Affiliated with the Global Jihad," October 4, 2009, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/hamas_e084.htm.

JAA members were not, in fact, *takfiri*.¹¹⁶ It also denied involvement in bombings of Hamas units, such as an attack on Hamas security headquarters.¹¹⁷ Turning a traditional Hamas slogan used against Fatah back at Hamas, Jund Ansar Allah charged that “Hamas’s actions serve the interest of the Jewish usurpers of Palestine,” and, in a Salafi-Jihadi twist on the theme, it added, “and the Christians who are fighting Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya and Somalia.”¹¹⁸

Hamas’s relationship with Jund Ansar Allah and, indeed, with many of the Salafist groups in Gaza is a complicated and often contradictory one. Hamas fears increased Salafi-Jihadi power in Gaza,¹¹⁹ and in late 2009, it initiated a serious crackdown on al-Qaeda-affiliated groups, including JAA. Jund Ansar Allah maintains that it has “not intended to confront Hamas and [its] battle is only with the Zionist enemy,” though the JAA member cited above also states that “we will be obliged to confront anyone who would try to block jihad and resistance.”¹²⁰

Jund Ansar Allah fought against the Israeli military in Operation Cast Lead after a young member was “martyred” in Rafah during an Israeli raid.¹²¹

The group also took responsibility for an attack on Israeli forces at the Nahal Oz fuel terminal on June 8, 2009.¹²² In the attack, a group of eight to ten men¹²³ equipped with booby-trapped vehicles, three to five explosive-laden horses,¹²⁴ and suicide belts targeted Israeli soldiers¹²⁵ in what Israeli officials suspect was a kidnapping attempt.¹²⁶ Israel did have early warning because an IDF force saw operatives placing improvised explosive devices around the border fence, and it hit them with an air strike.¹²⁷ JAA orchestrated the Nahal Oz attack with the intention of filming it, and it is featured prominently on the organization’s website.¹²⁸

Jund Ansar Allah’s ideology is similar to al-Qaeda’s, but al-Qaeda has not declared any links to the group or even direct support for its battle against Hamas at the Ibn Taymiyya mosque.¹²⁹ JAA is a small group and it therefore has limited capabilities, but it may nonetheless be able to use Gaza as a base for serious operations or even target Israeli tourists in Sinai.¹³⁰ Despite the lack of direct al-Qaeda support and the recent Hamas crackdown, Jund Ansar Allah continues to pose a threat to security in Gaza and elsewhere.

116. *Takfir* refers to labeling Muslims who do not subscribe to Salafi-Jihadi ideology as non-Muslim, and thereby justifying the use of violence against them (see Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008, pp. 101–102).

117. NEFA Foundation, “Jund Ansar Allah Threatens ‘Response’ to Hamas Clashes,” August 16, 2009, http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefa_jundansarallah081609.pdf.

118. Khaled Abu Toameh, “Gaza’s Radical Islamists: Hamas Serves the Jewish Usurpers,” Jerusalem Post, August 20, 2009, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1249418662461&pagename=JPArticle%2FshowFul>.

119. Nidal al-Mughrabi, “Qaeda Ally in Gaza Defiant, Seeing New Recruits,” Reuters, September 16, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE58F2AN20090916>.

120. Ibid.

121. BBC International Monitoring, Hassan Jabr, “Jund Ansar Allah: New Salafi Organization Appears in Southern Part of Gaza Strip,” *al-Ayyam*, December 23, 2008.

122. Maan News Agency, “God’s Supporters Group Claims Gaza Border Attack,” June 9, 2009.

123. Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, “News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, June 2–9, 2009,” http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ipc_e035.htm.

124. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Main Terrorist Attacks Carried Out at Gaza Strip Crossings,” <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Hamas+war+against+Israel/Main+terrorist+attacks+carried+out+at+Gaza+Strip+crossings+16-Jan-2005.htm>; Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, “News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, June 2–9, 2009,” http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ipc_e035.htm.

125. Tzvi Ben Gedalayhu, “IDF Foils Kidnapping Attempt by ‘Horseback Terrorists,’” Israel National News, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/131755>.

126. BBC News, “Profile: Jund Ansar Allah,” August 15, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8203239.stm>.

127. Levitt interview with Israeli officials, Tel Aviv, September 10, 2009; Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, “News of Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, June 2–9, 2009,” http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ipc_e035.htm.

128. Levitt interview with Israeli officials, Tel Aviv, September 10, 2009; Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, “Internet and terrorism: a local terrorist network in the Gaza Strip affiliated with al-Qaeda and global jihad was behind the failed attempt to perpetrate a showcase terrorist attack at the Nahal Oz fuel terminal (June 8). The network’s website is serviced by several companies, including one based in the U.S.,” June 14, 2009, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/gj_e004.pdf.

129. Levitt interview with Israeli officials, Tel Aviv, September 10, 2009.

130. Ibid.

4 | Palestinian Radicalization

THE GROWTH OF SALAFI-JIHADI ideology in Palestinian society has not occurred in a vacuum. Hamas, while not a Salafi-Jihadi group, is a radical Islamist organization with Salafist roots. Its radicalization efforts are not new,¹ nor is the use of radical ideologies, from Marxism to Islamism, to drive Palestinians from political activism to violent activism. What is new today is the choice made by some radicalized Palestinians to engage in violence not through established Palestinian groups like Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, or the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, but through Salafi-Jihadi groups that aspire to be a part of al-Qaeda's global jihad. To understand the foothold that Salafi-Jihadi groups have gained among Palestinians at the expense of these potential competitors, it is essential to understand the global jihadist narrative, al-Qaeda's appeal and approach to radicalization, and how these factors manifest themselves in the radicalization process within Palestinian society.

Al-Qaeda's Global Narrative

The extremist narrative of Islamist groups finds fertile soil in so many societies for reasons as varied as the societies themselves. Some Muslim youths respond to the messages of radical preachers because they feel excluded from their societies, trapped in poverty, denied economic or social opportunities, or hopeless under the yoke of authoritarian regimes in the Middle East. Palestinians live in an environment that by its very nature creates social conditions that extremist groups leverage to radicalize society, such as the suffering caused by Israeli occupation policies, which have long created real and perceived inequities. These, and the roadblocks, curfews, and other measures intended to disrupt Palestinian terrorist operations, affect the everyday lives of average Palestinians and are significant

sources of Palestinian anger and frustration. Radicalization is much easier in the context of occupation, given the Islamist principle of liberating all lands that were at one time ruled by Muslims. Since the Israeli-Palestinian conflict represents perhaps the single most animating regional grievance for many Arabs and Muslims, its occupation provides radicalizers worldwide, and certainly in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with a powerful rhetorical tool for recruitment and fundraising.

Radicalization has occurred among Israeli Arabs, Arabs in the West Bank, and particularly Arabs in the Gaza Strip. While the trends in each of these areas are different, it is still debatable whether al-Qaeda has truly established a foothold in the region.

For the most part, radicalized Palestinians have initiated contact with al-Qaeda elements, not the other way around. It is indisputable, however, that al-Qaeda's Salafi-Jihadi and global jihadist narratives have been gaining a place among Palestinians. In the words of a European observer living among Palestinians, Palestinian society has experienced "an accelerated process of broad society Islamization and radicalization."² In order to grasp the spread of this ideology, one must understand its appeal. Al-Qaeda disseminates a radical message that draws on a variety of local and global grievances, from local economic and social woes to the threats facing Muslims worldwide, including in the West Bank and Gaza. Radicalizers frequently place local grievances in the context of these wider struggles, fostering a pan-Islamic worldview that sees an individual's predicaments as part and parcel of the threats facing the larger *umma* (nation).

Most Palestinian terrorist organizations are nationalist—or in the case of Hamas, Islamist-nationalist—and limit their operation to the Israeli-Palestinian arena, but al-Qaeda offers a broader agenda and ideology.

1. See, for example, Matthew Levitt, "Teaching Terror: How Hamas Radicalizes Palestinian Society," lecture at a conference titled "The Roots of Terror: Understanding the Evolving Threat of Global Terrorism," sponsored by Women in International Security and the U.S. Army War College, February 12, 2007, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=331>.
2. Levitt interview with European diplomat, East Jerusalem, September 10, 2008.

Radicalization within Palestinian Society

Palestinians live under conditions that are especially conducive to radicalization: the occupation and the failure of successive, notoriously corrupt Palestinian governments to provide effectively for the basic needs of their constituents. This means that Palestinians, like radicalized second-, third-, and now even fourth-generation Muslims in Europe, may suffer from a feeling of alienation, even though they live in their own country, surrounded by their own language and culture. Some face difficulties adjusting to modern society, which is tied to the fact that tribe and clan remain the key social groupings within their society.

The immaturity of civil society and institutions in the Palestinian territories is another cause of instability. Longstanding tensions that lead to intermittent conflicts between Palestinian political and military factions is a further destabilizing factor. Among Israeli Arabs, alienation and a sense of second-class citizenship can cause identity crises that foster radicalization as well. And even within the Islamist camp, Hamas's participation in Palestinian elections and its willingness to make ceasefire agreements with Israel have pushed some of the more militant members of jihadist groups to form their own, more radical factions. These groups, some inspired by al-Qaeda, then actively recruit others to join their ranks.

Indeed, there are several paths to radicalization. Often, a charismatic individual, such as a prominent sheikh or an experienced fighter, plays the role of radicalizer. Those with special credentials, such as a local person who returns from fighting jihad abroad or a foreign fighter visiting the territories, are particularly well suited to radicalizing others. It is not uncommon, however, for money to play a dominant role in drawing people to more radical factions. Facing economic hardship, either under occupation in the West Bank

or closure and embargo in the Gaza Strip, some people are simply drawn to those groups that can pay. Hamas charitable and humanitarian organizations not only fund the families of Hamas suicide bombers, they also finance important health, education, and welfare projects that play a critical role in building sympathy and support for the group. Hamas draws people in with its services, then couches its humanitarian projects in Islamist terms to build grassroots support for its religious agenda.

Islamist ideology also plays a role in radicalizing segments of Palestinian society. Describing what draws young men to his movement, one Salafi-Jihadi leader in Gaza noted, "First, we have a clear ideology." Some are disillusioned with Hamas, either for treating them unfairly or for failing to follow what they would consider true Islam, and many are "locals from hard-line families—those who believe there is no middle road."³

Increasingly, the internet has become a significant means of radicalizing Palestinians, as it provides ready access to radical material and exposure to influential voices through websites and chat rooms. The ability the internet provides to contact other like-minded people without having to cross checkpoints or travel internationally makes it a preferred means of reaching others without significant risk. A 2008 report by the Israel Security Agency (ISA), or Shin Bet, highlights the internet's role in providing Palestinians with access to the global jihadist community. According to the report, "The internet permits easy access to World Jihad ideological indoctrination; provides publicity regarding terror attacks carried out . . . and permits easy access, via forums, to operational knowledge such as the preparation of explosives, the establishment of terror cells, and the prevention of intelligence penetration and exposure."⁴ Today, the internet is the primary means of outreach and communication for al-Qaeda, which runs its own "media production and distribution entities."⁵

3. Lawrence Wright, "Letter from Gaza: What Really Happened during the Israeli Attacks?" *New Yorker*, November 9, 2009, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/11/09/091109fa_fact_wright.
4. Israel Security Agency, "Palestinian Terror in 2008: Statistics and Trends," December 2008, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionImages/english/TerrorInfo/2008-sum-english.pdf>.
5. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "World: RFE/RL Study Explores How al-Qaeda Exploits Internet," April 4, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1079736.html>.

The story of Khaled bin Khalil Abu Ruqaiq, an Israeli Arab, illustrates the point. From 2002 to 2008, Abu Ruqaiq visited a number of websites associated with al-Qaeda, radical Islam, and global jihad, including al-Ikhlās, al-Hisba, al-Buraq, al-Maarek, al-Firdous, and Balsam al-Iman. He also helped develop some of these sites, designing computer graphics for al-Hisba and al-Buraq. On one of these sites, he established contact with a self-identified “Fatah al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades operative.” In 2004, Abu Ruqaiq planned to establish and lead a terrorist cell, though ultimately it did not carry out an attack. In 2006, he planned to produce an explosive device and attack Israel Defense Forces (IDF) vehicles, but this did not happen, either.⁶ According to one assessment, despite his failure to carry out an attack, Abu Ruqaiq represented a disturbing trend of “Israel’s Arab citizens being recruited to al-Qaeda and global jihad based on their affiliation with the ideology of al-Qaeda and radical Islam, distributed online.”⁷

Perhaps most dangerous is the virtual community of like-minded extremists created by jihadist websites. In this respect, these websites and forums function like a social networking tool and are enticing to Palestinian youth. According to the ISA, “The end result is that these forums form a recruitment pool of fundamentalist youth accessible to terror elements abroad who aim to locate, recruit and encourage involvement in terror activity in Israel and abroad.”⁸ As a great deal of al-Qaeda’s appeal is due to its clever exploitation of the media, the importance of the global jihadist internet network cannot be overemphasized.

And yet, none of these contacts have led to new terrorist entities that are truly affiliated with al-Qaeda, as opposed to groups merely inspired by bin Laden. This

provides little comfort so long as radical ideas and operational principles can penetrate national boundaries and enter Israel, the West Bank, or the Gaza Strip so easily. The radicalization process, however, is different in each of these locations, as the local political, economic, military, and religious situations create distinct environments that are more or less amenable to the extremist global narrative of the online or face-to-face radicalizer.

Radicalization in the West Bank

The Palestinian Authority–controlled West Bank, headed by President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayad, has experienced radicalization along the lines of many European nations. While not to the same extent as in Europe, radicalization in the West Bank community in part is due to the greater mobility of the residents and their access to the outside world, whether through foreign study or the internet or media.

Consider the case of Amjad Najeh Daoud Qadri, a Nablus merchant who served as “a moderator on a closed online forum belonging to the global jihad networks” and was sentenced to fourteen months in prison for these activities.⁹ Qadri maintained online correspondence with someone called “al-Asif,” used a private username and password, and logged on as a regular member over three months. He also participated in discussions on al-Firdous, another online global jihad forum discussed earlier.¹⁰

Overall, however, Salafist radicalization has occurred in the West Bank “through the relatively simple formula of preaching, education, the creation of groups of devotees, and the subsequent self-organization of

6. Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center, “Terrorism and Internet: Charges have recently been filed against an Israeli Bedouin, suspected of forming contact with al-Qaeda through the internet. The suspect was planning to perpetrate terrorist attacks in Israel, mainly a suicide bombing attack at the Beersheba central bus station,” August 31, 2008 report at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/ct_e005.htm.

7. Ibid.

8. Israel Security Agency, “A Review of al-Qaeda and the Diffusion of Its Ideas in Israel and the Palestinian Authority,” <http://www.shabak.gov.il/English/EnTerrorData/Reviews/Pages/AlQaeda-report.aspx>.

9. Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center, “Terrorism and Internet: Al-Qaeda and the global jihad continue to recruit Palestinian operatives on the internet. An Israeli military court sentenced Amjad Qadri from Nablus to 14 months in prison. He was charged with being a moderator on al-Hisbah, a closed online forum of the global jihad,” March 25, 2009 report at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/gj_e003.htm.

10. Ibid.

these devotees.”¹¹ Under Abbas and Fayad, the Fatah-affiliated Palestinian Authority (PA), eager to weaken Hamas, has often replaced imams close to Hamas with Salafists.¹² In November 2007, the PA began to crack down on imams supporting Hamas, and across the West Bank, Hamas imams were arrested and removed from their posts.¹³ Yet, according to a European diplomat, in 2008, sixty out of seventy mosques in Nablus were still affiliated with Hamas, and in some mosques where the imam is not directly linked to the group, Hamas continues to offer sermons. While the crack-down on Hamas imams giving radical sermons at Friday prayers was a reaction to the group’s violent seizure of Gaza in June 2007, in some cases this reportedly enabled Salafist imams to fill the vacancies so long as their official sermons were more moderate than their private preaching.¹⁴

Of these new imams, those associated with the radical group Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Liberation Party, or HT) in particular have risen in prominence in the West Bank, especially in the Hebron area. HT preachers are now reported to dominate prayer services at Jerusalem’s al-Aqsa mosque.¹⁵ Despite its Palestinian origins—it was founded in 1952 by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, a Palestinian from Jerusalem, then under Jordanian control—HT rejects Palestinian nationalism. Instead, it calls for the reestablishment of an Islamic caliphate that would govern the entire Muslim world under Islamic law. Instead of engaging in terrorism or political violence to achieve its goals, HT seeks to infiltrate armies in Muslim countries and ultimately, once it has taken over these countries, to

fight Israel and other infidels with the caliphate’s conventional army.¹⁶

In the West Bank, support for HT has risen sharply since Hamas took over the Gaza Strip. The conflict between Hamas and Fatah appears to have given HT the opportunity to present itself as an alternative to both. The group’s rallies and protests have become more visible, such as an August 2007 gathering in Ramallah that drew close to 20,000 people.¹⁷ HT is often referred to as a “gateway” or “conveyor-belt” group, meaning that while it does not engage in terrorism or maintain an armed wing itself, its radical ideology can lead its members to turn, “by stages, into sympathizers, supporters and ultimately, members of terrorist networks.”¹⁸

While HT is not a Salafi-Jihadi group, it preaches puritan Islamist ideas that are inherent to Salafist ideology, such as nonengagement in the political sphere, yet it also seeks the reestablishment of a global Islamic caliphate to promote the ideal Islamic way of life.¹⁹ HT espouses a “clash of civilizations ideology” and is deeply anti-Semitic, and its active radicalization efforts help create an environment conducive to Salafi-Jihadi radicalization.²⁰ HT criticizes Western societies for being immoral and destructive, which, in its view, intensifies the need to transform them. In its efforts to compete with Hamas and Fatah, which recruit young supporters through camps and school programs, HT launched a youth movement called “Lion Cubs of the Caliphate.”²¹ Not only are the group’s ideological underpinnings dangerously parallel to those of al-Qaeda and other Salafi-Jihadi groups, but HT has

11. Jonathan Spyer, “Self-Radicalization,” *Global Politician*, August 3, 2008, <http://www.globalpolitician.com/25080-arabs>.

12. Levitt interview with Danish diplomat, East Jerusalem, September 10, 2008, and with PA official from Ministry of Islamic Endowments (waqf), Azariya, West Bank, September 2009.

13. Rory McCarthy, “Fatah Targets Mosques in Latest Anti-Hamas Campaign,” *Guardian* (Manchester), November 2, 2007, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/nov/02/israel.comment>.

14. Levitt interview with Danish official, September 10, 2008.

15. Ehud Yaari, “A Name Worth Remembering: Hizb al-Tahrir,” *Jerusalem Report*, October 1, 2007.

16. See Zeyno Baran, *Hizb Ut-Tahrir: Islam’s Political Insurgency* (Washington, D.C.: Nixon Center, 2004), and Houriya Ahmed and Hannah Stuart, *Hizb Ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy* (London: Centre for Social Cohesion, 2009), http://www.socialcohesion.co.uk/files/1257159197_1.pdf.

17. Ilene R. Prusher, “Palestinian Group Sounds like al-Qaeda but Forgoes Violence,” *Christian Science Monitor*, January 22, 2008, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2008/0122/p01s03-wome.html>.

18. U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Terrorism, 2006, available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/83383.pdf>

19. Ibid.

20. Baran, *Islam’s Political Insurgency*, and Ahmed and Stuart, *Ideology and Strategy*.

21. Ehud Yaari, “A Name Worth Remembering: Hizb al-Tahrir,” *Jerusalem Report*, October 1, 2007.

condoned suicide bombings,²² sanctioned jihad in “occupied Islamic lands” through “terrorizing the enemy,”²³ and encouraged hijacking planes of “enemy states.”²⁴ In the context of terrorism targeting Israel, HT leader Ara Abu Rishta was clear: “There can be no peaceful relations with the Jews: this is prohibited by Islamic Law. It is also prohibited to settle for only part of Palestine. There can be neither negotiations, coexistence, nor normalization of relations with the Jews in Palestine . . . It is impossible to solve the problem of Palestine by peaceful means: what is required is actual war, in the form of Jihad.”²⁵

Such radicalization is not just a theoretical challenge in the West Bank and is not limited to HT. In February 2008, for example, Hassan Qrea was indicted for attempting to establish a military cell based on al-Qaeda’s ideology and providing information to online jihadists considering an attack on U.S. president George W. Bush during his January 2008 visit to Israel. Qrea was in contact with several people on global jihadist websites, produced explosive devices based on instructions he found on these sites, and provided his online contacts with maps and photographs to aid in their plotting for the attack.²⁶ While the intent displayed by such plots and the actions taken to carry them out are real, the capabilities of such cells remain limited, and it is far from clear that they could successfully execute so dramatic an operation.

Radicalization in the Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip, governed as it is by a terrorist organization, presents a unique environment for Islamist radicalization. Hamas institutions engage in extensive

indoctrination through textbooks, children’s television programming, summer camps, and more. Ironically, while Hamas has often clashed with militant Salafi-Jihadi groups in Gaza, its ideology shares a basic foundation with theirs.²⁷ Promoting violence in the name of God is a very slippery slope, and the environment Hamas created has made the Strip’s residents ripe for radicalization by other, still more extreme groups as well. Once Hamas has led people down the path of radical Islamism, it cannot prevent them from drifting away from the nationalist part of its ideology to embrace only its Islamist message.

Under Hamas rule, terrorist organizations—including global jihadist groups—began to operate in Gaza.²⁸ Additionally, violent groups and individuals had less and less fear of the authorities as the rule of law was eroded and violence targeting Israel promoted. An environment in which violence under some circumstances is acceptable encourages groups that promote violence under broader circumstances and against other targets.

This proliferation of violence has occurred within the larger context of societal radicalization. For example, according to a European observer, Taliban-like dress has become increasingly common in Gaza. The decision of women to wear the *naqab* (a garment usually concealing all but the eyes) is often a collective one made within a family or even a neighborhood.²⁹ It should come as no surprise in such an environment that not only have radical groups spread, but individuals have been drawn to extremism as well. For example, Yusuf Miqdad, a resident of Gaza’s Shati refugee camp, was arrested in November 2002, convicted in August 2008, and sentenced to six years’ imprisonment for

22. Baran, *Islam’s Political Insurgency*, p. 50.

23. Ahmed and Stuart, *Ideology and Strategy*, p. 3.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 31 and Appendix B.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

26. Israel Security Agency, “Palestinian Terror in 2008: Statistics and Trends,” December 2008, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionImages/english/TerrorInfo/2008-sum-english.pdf>.

27. Salafism is a broader movement in Islam encompassing several trends. Some focus on proselytizing, while others stress Islamic reformation to create a popular movement to foment a social Islamist revolution. With the advent of Said Qutb’s focus on violent jihad, and the Egyptian crackdown that drove many followers of the Muslim Brotherhood’s Qutbist faction to Saudi Islamic universities, Salafist ideology—and its Saudi variant, often described as “Wahhabism”—became more political, activist, and sometimes violent. See, for example, Moghadam, *Globalization of Martyrdom*, pp. 95–97.

28. Jonathan Fighel, “Islamization or Secularization of the Palestinian Cause,” International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, January 29, 2009, <http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/tabid/66/Articlsid/639/currentpage/1/Default.aspx>.

29. Levitt interview with Danish diplomat, East Jerusalem, September 10, 2008.

his attempts to establish an al-Qaeda branch in the Strip.³⁰ Miqdad was in contact with global jihadists via the internet, and even traveled to Saudi Arabia to fund his endeavor.³¹

Radicalization among Israeli Arabs

Even within Israeli society, with its higher standard of living, Arab citizens are exposed to radicalization. However, it is limited to sporadic cases, unlike the more widespread phenomena in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This trend toward radicalization is connected to several issues, including rapid population growth; a widening socioeconomic gap between Arab and Jewish Israelis; the Israeli government's continued neglect of Arab citizens; the feeling of marginalization that may come with defining oneself as a minority; and exposure to radical Islamist ideologues, both in Israeli Arab towns and in West Bank villages.³² Of course, Israeli Arabs are also deeply affected by the daily stresses experienced by their brethren in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

According to the Or Commission, a group appointed by the Israeli government to investigate

Israeli Arab rioting at the start of the second intifada in October 2000, Israeli Arab radicalization is often manifested as “expressions of identification with and even support of the Palestinian struggle against the state.”³³ The corrosion of loyalty to the state—and the identification with the Palestinian cause—is in part due to a separate, parallel system in place for Israeli Arabs that affects their schools, welfare systems, and more.³⁴ According to a report by the International Crisis Group, “Increased urbanization, combined with a lack of educational and employment opportunities, has created a large pool of disaffected youth at a time when traditional, rural- and tribal-based control mechanisms have weakened.”³⁵

Like other populations in the Middle East, Israeli Arabs have experienced the rise of political Islam. This has been demonstrated in Israeli elections, as two Israeli Arabs aligned with the Islamic Movement now hold seats in the Knesset, Israel's parliament.³⁶ Moreover, the Islamic Movement has sought to fill the void left by inadequate Israeli provision of social services to the Arab sector by offering its own services,³⁷ which has increased its influence over Israeli Arabs.

30. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “IDF and Border Police Operation at Palestinian Preventive Security Service (PPSS) Headquarters in Gaza City,” November 18, 2002, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2002/IDF%20and%20Border%20Police%20operation%20at%20Palestinian%20Pre>.

31. Israel Security Agency, “Palestinian Terror in 2008: Statistics and Trends,” December 2008, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionImages/english/TerrorInfo/2008-sum-english.pdf>.

32. Sammy Smooha, “The Arab Minority in Israel: Radicalization or Politicization,” *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 5 (1989): 60–61. See also Eli Rekhess, “*Hakfar ha'aravi beyisrael: Moked politit mithadesb*,” *Ofakim bageografiab* 17–18 (1986): 145–160, and Eli Rekhess, “*Bein komunizm leleumiyut 'aravit: Rakab vebami'ut ha'aravi beyisrael (1965–1973)*” (PhD diss., Tel Aviv University, 1986).

33. Or Commission Report, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=335594&contrassID=2&subContrassID=1&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y>.

34. See International Crisis Group, *Identity Crisis: Israel and Its Arab Citizens*, March 4, 2004, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2528&l=1>.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

36. Agence France-Presse, “Israel Raids Offices of Islamic Movement,” August 23, 2008, <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5j9h3oFFqzk8dOMOi5S8FjZnWaSIQ>.

37. *Ibid.*

5 | Competition with Hamas

IT IS NOT SURPRISING that Hamas will not tolerate challenges to its supremacy in Gaza, such as Jund Ansar Allah's declaration of an Islamic emirate, but the public spat between Hamas and al-Qaeda that played out over the internet after Hamas took power in Gaza in 2007 was unexpected. To be sure, al-Qaeda's antipathy for the Muslim Brotherhood, of which Hamas is a part, is longstanding. But while Hamas is not part of al-Qaeda's global jihadist movement or even an affiliated regional franchise, neither is it a member of the quietist school of radical but nonviolent Brotherhood affiliates. Rather, it is a "glocal" Islamist group committed to fighting jihad in its corner of the world—not as a nationalist war of liberation, but as a religious duty on behalf of the *umma* (nation), which is ideologically transnational.

Hamas won the admiration and respect of al-Qaeda operatives and global jihadists with its military conquest of the Strip. But al-Qaeda takes issue with Hamas's focus on the Palestinian conflict and its rejection of the Salafi-Jihadi global jihadist imperative. The quarrel revolves around Hamas's decision to participate in a secular political process and not to implement or enforce strict adherence to *sharia* in Gaza. As a Salafi-Jihadi group, al-Qaeda wholly rejects political engagement as being contrary to the principle of *tawhid* (monotheism as manifested by the indivisibility of God and His sovereignty), which precludes living by the rule of man. Hamas's involvement in the Palestinian electoral process and then later, in a diplomatic process with Fatah and Egypt, conflicts with al-Qaeda's Salafist-influenced, strictly militant course of action to restore the Islamic caliphate. As noted previously, some

Hamas members, especially from the Qassam Brigades, have left the group to join al-Qaeda-inspired organizations in Gaza.

Following major Hamas gains in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in 2006, Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's second in command, called on his "brothers in Hamas to fight on and not to accept agreements between the Palestinian Authority and Israel."¹ Hamas continued to couple its militant attacks with politics and intra-Palestinian negotiations, prompting al-Qaeda to launch a public dialogue decrying Hamas's actions.

On December 20, 2006, following calls for a national referendum that would unify the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, al-Zawahiri publicly rebuked Hamas for participating in the January 2006 elections: "How come they did not demand an Islamic constitution for Palestine before entering any elections? Are they not an Islamic movement?"² When Hamas signed the Mecca Accords in early 2007,³ al-Zawahiri continued to criticize the movement, accusing it of surrendering to "the U.S. Satan and his Saudi agent."⁴ In April, al-Qaeda figure Abu Yahya al-Libi appealed to Hamas's military wing, saying that Hamas had "betrayed the dreams of their young fighters and . . . stabbed them in the back."⁵ Al-Qaeda has publicly suggested that Hamas should abandon its government role and "choose jihad and resistance" rather than "abandoning Palestine."⁶ In the words of Kuwaiti cleric Hamid al-Ali, designated an al-Qaeda terrorist by the United Nations and the U.S. Treasury Department,⁷ Hamas's conflicting post-election needs to maintain its rule while "preserving the noble values of its martyrs" left the movement in

1. CNN.com, "Bin Laden's No. 2 Condemns Mohammed Cartoons," March 5, 2006, <http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/03/04/zawahiri.tape/index.html>.
2. Ismail Patel, "Terming the Extremists," *Muslim Weekly*, August 3, 2007.
3. The Mecca Accords refers to a 2007 Saudi-brokered agreement that made Hamas part of a unity government among other Palestinian factions.
4. Inal Ersan, "Qaeda's Zawahiri Rebukes Hamas over Mecca Deal," Reuters, March 11, 2007, available at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKL1145337420070311>.
5. Yaakov Lappin, "Al-Qaeda: Hamas Betrayed God," *Ynet News*, June 5, 2007, <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/articles/0,7340,L-3396525,00.html>.
6. SITE Institute, video of Third Interview with Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, May 5, 2007, available at http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1xev2_dr-ayman-al-zawahiri-3_news.
7. See <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sc9384.doc.htm> and <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp191.htm>.

an untenable position, much like a “sheep besieged by wild animals that want to suck her blood.”⁸

However, al-Qaeda changed its tone when Hamas took over Gaza in June 2007, congratulating the organization on its military victory over the secular Fatah. “Today we must support the mujahedin in Palestine, including the Hamas mujahedin,” al-Zawahiri stated, even as he challenged the Hamas leadership to “redress [their] political path.”⁹ That did not happen, which prompted al-Qaeda to try to lure Hamas operatives away from the movement’s nationalist focus to the cause of global jihad. In February 2008, the elusive Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, head of al-Qaeda in Iraq, denounced the Hamas leadership for betraying Islam and called on Hamas’s military wing to break from the group and join the global jihadist movement.¹⁰

Recognizing the damage such challenges pose to Hamas’s own jihadist credentials, in September 2009, the movement’s terrorist wing posted on its website a paper on “The Concept of Jihad as the Islamic World Understand” [*sic*] in which it highlights the work of Sheikh Yousef Qaradawi, famous for his religious edicts (*fatwas*) justifying suicide bombings targeting civilians in Israel and Iraq.¹¹ Qaradawi, the paper stresses, “is extremely careful to distinguish between extremist groups that declare war on the whole world, killing indiscriminately, tainting the image of Islam and providing its enemies with fatal weapons to use against it, on the one hand, and on the other, groups resisting occupation.”¹²

And yet, for some in the Salafi-Jihadi community, Hamas’s jihadist credentials do make it a legitimate partner of the global jihadist movement. In June 2009,

Mustafa Abu al-Yazid (aka Sheikh Said), al-Qaeda’s commander in Afghanistan, stated that al-Qaeda and Hamas “share the same ideology and the same doctrine.”¹³ But in a sign that Hamas remains a hotly debated issue among Salafi-Jihadi ideologues, Islamist theoretician Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi quickly disputed this claim, asserting that the Salafi-Jihadis and Hamas “share neither ideology nor doctrine.”¹⁴

Publicly, Hamas leaders deny the presence of al-Qaeda-inspired elements in the Gaza Strip. Hamas leader Salah al-Bardawil disputed press reports that al-Qaeda or members of the group’s global jihad had moved from Iraq into Gaza. Instead, he said, individuals suspected of and implicated in jihadist-like activities were carrying out personal vendettas and were not, in fact, directly connected to al-Qaeda.¹⁵

For the most part, al-Bardawil is right: al-Qaeda as such is not present in the Gaza Strip. Nevertheless, al-Qaeda-inspired groups and Salafi-Jihadi individuals—including a small number of foreign fighters—are not only present in Gaza, but have already presented no less a challenge to the Hamas-run government than they have to Israel and to Christian and Western interests there. Hamas’s crackdown on these groups, which threaten its authority, should come as no surprise. What is surprising is that these groups have thus far failed to connect more formally with al-Qaeda, given al-Qaeda’s recently expressed antipathy for Hamas and its history of incorporating local conflicts into its global jihadist campaign. Some suggest al-Qaeda remains unconvinced not only of Hamas’s jihadist credentials, but also of the Salafist commitment of groups like Jaish al-Islam. In the words of one

8. Reuven Paz, “The Islamic Debate over Democracy: Jihadi-Salafi Responses to Hamas’ Victory in the Palestinian Elections,” Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center, Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM), Occasional Papers, vol. 4, no. 1, January 2006, www.e-prism.org/images/PRISM_no_1_vol_4_-_Jihadi-Salafi_response_to_Hamas.pdf.

9. Agence France-Presse, “Al-Qaeda’s Zawahiri Voices Support for Hamas,” June 26, 2007, available at <http://www.thedailynewsegypt.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=7904>.

10. NEFA Foundation, “Audio Statement from Abu Omar al-Baghdadi,” February 13, 2008, www.nefafoundation.org/multimedia-prop.html.

11. CSS Special Information Bulletin, “Interpal, Part I,” December 2004, available at http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia//ENGLISH/MARKETING%20TERRORISM/PDF/DEC12A_04.PDF.

12. Ezzedein al-Qassam Brigades Information Office, “The Concept of Jihad as the Islamic World Understand,” September 26, 2009, http://www.qassam.ps/specialfile-283-The_concept_of_Jihad_as_the_Islamic_world_understand.html.

13. Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), “Prominent Salafi-Jihadi Scholar Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi: ‘We and Hamas Share Neither Ideology nor Doctrine,’” Special Dispatch No. 2482, August 11, 2009.

14. Ibid.

15. *Al-Quds al-Arabi* (London), “Hamas Figure al-Bardawil Denies Presence of al-Qaeda Members in Gaza,” website in Arabic, August 12, 2009.

analyst, “Mumtaz Dughmush dresses the part now, but he is still a criminal.”¹⁶ Al-Qaeda may also have concerns about the survivability of such groups, and one could argue that it waits patiently for groups to establish themselves before accepting them into the fold of its global jihadist movement.¹⁷

Indeed, of all the local conflicts al-Qaeda might want to commandeer, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems the most logical. Rife with both religious symbolism—including a dispute over the status of Jerusalem, the third holiest city in Islam—and the enduring symbolism of a population under occupation by a Western-backed, non-Arab, non-Muslim country, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could reasonably be seen as a paradigmatic “near jihad” targeting a local government ripe for conversion to a platform for engaging in the “far jihad” targeting the United States and the West. Yet al-Qaeda has not made operations against Israel a priority, nor has its Salafi-Jihadi cause caught on among significant numbers of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

In fact, the prospects of a true al-Qaeda affiliate developing in the West Bank or Gaza remain unlikely for several reasons. Palestinians living alongside Israel have suffered under occupation, but they have also seen up close the benefits Israelis enjoy by living in a moderate, prosperous, democratic society. The vast majority of Palestinians do not want their cause globalized by al-Qaeda or anyone else; they want political sovereignty and control over their own lives.

Moreover, those Palestinians keen to engage in jihad need not travel far or search long to seek out opportunities; there is no shortage of jihadist groups to join or Israeli targets to strike. Indeed, as the examples above demonstrate, the majority of attacks to date by radicalized elements in the West Bank or Salafi-Jihadi groups

in the Gaza Strip have been against Israel, not the United States or other Western targets. For the majority of Palestinians committed to violent resistance to occupation (through terrorism, political violence, or other militant activity), their cause is national first and religious second, if at all. Moreover, the local jihadist groups— Hamas in particular, as the group in power in Gaza—have demonstrated their antipathy to Salafi-Jihadi organizations that may seek to encroach on their territory or challenge their authority. The presence of a longstanding local jihad denies al-Qaeda a natural beachhead into the West Bank or Gaza Strip, where most see the conflict with Israel as primarily nationalist. In addition, in Israel and the West Bank, security services are dominant, and in Gaza, Hamas is firmly in control. Even among Palestinian Islamists, including those in Hamas, the portrayal of the conflict in the scope of a larger struggle against the enemies of Islam and in defense of the *umma* resonates only so long as it remains focused on the Palestinian cause.

Yet the potential does exist for still greater Islamist radicalization and the growth of the Salafi-Jihadi movement within Palestinian society. Despite Hamas’s ideological differences with al-Qaeda leaders and its violent crackdown on Salafi-Jihadis in Gaza, its campaign of radicalization has ironically created an ideal springboard for further radicalization. When suicide bombers are presented as role models, it is only a small step to say that their behavior is laudable not only in some jihadist campaigns, but in all. Al-Qaeda has demonstrated in Egypt and many other places an ability to turn people from the “near jihad” to the “far jihad.” Hamas itself has often blurred the lines between its own jihadist campaign and al-Qaeda’s with posters featuring Hamas and al-Qaeda personalities and sermons by Hamas-affiliated preachers demonizing the United States and the West.¹⁸

16. Levitt interview with Israeli intelligence official, Tel Aviv, September 2008.

17. Note, for example, that even after its war with the Lebanese Armed Forces, Fatah al-Islam—which was formed by Shaker al-Absi, a hardened jihadist who fought in Iraq—has not been welcomed as an al-Qaeda affiliate.

18. Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

6 | Global Jihad in the Palestinian Arena?

AMONG ISRAELI ARABS and Arabs in the West Bank, where intelligence and law enforcement agencies can keep close tabs on terrorist recruitment in general, and Salafi-Jihadi elements in particular, al-Qaeda-inspired terrorism will most likely continue to show itself sporadically through individuals radicalized via the internet or travel abroad. The ability of West Bank Arabs to travel and study abroad creates opportunities for radicalization and recruitment out of the country, but the area's relatively strong and growing civil society makes it less amenable to the development of organized Salafi-Jihadi groups. While even small cells or lone wolves could potentially carry out significant terrorist attacks, the threat is minimized by a strong counterterrorism presence. The Gaza Strip, however, is another story.

Even though Hamas has successfully implemented law and order in Gaza, the Strip is under significant stress. In its governance, Hamas has failed to provide for the needs of its constituents, and it remains an international pariah under economic siege. At the same time, its credentials as a "resistance" movement have been eroded since Israel's Operation Cast Lead in early 2009, as it continues to refrain from attacking Israel for fear of reprisals. Hamas failed to inflict significant harm on Israeli forces during Cast Lead, and instead of protecting its civilian population, it hid its leaders and armaments behind civilian structures such as mosques and hospitals.¹ Gaza residents are disenchanted with Hamas, and reportedly rue voting for it in 2006.² Israeli officials have described the Hamas policy as "industrial quiet," which includes a pause in

violence for the practical purpose of rearming and the strategic aim of consolidating control in Gaza.³ By engaging in secular politics, failing to institute *sharia*, and cracking down on fellow Palestinians who do attack Israel or threaten its rule, Hamas has created a vacuum that Salafi-Jihadi groups have been keen to fill. Even so, membership in Gaza's Salafi-Jihadi groups is estimated to be in the low hundreds.

Some have argued that the existence of al-Qaeda-inspired groups in Gaza means that Hamas is no longer the worst option there and that Israel should engage with Hamas without preconditions lest al-Qaeda take over the Strip. In fact, these groups lack numbers and grassroots support and cannot pose any real political threat to Hamas in Gaza or Fatah in the West Bank.

That said, al-Qaeda-inspired groups in Gaza nonetheless "think big" and are regularly plotting large-scale attacks, such as infiltrating booby-trapped trucks into Israel.⁴ Their capabilities could be enhanced if larger numbers of foreign fighters enter Gaza or if Palestinians who have fought abroad return there in larger numbers. In 2005, in the wake of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, the number of foreigners entering Gaza from Egypt reportedly jumped.⁵ In 2009, reports emerged that some individuals who traveled to Iraq to fight U.S. forces have since turned to Gaza. While not all of them are directly affiliated with al-Qaeda, they are operating in Gaza "in the framework of extremist organizations identified with the 'worldwide jihad.'"⁶ Israeli defense officials express concern that this influx into Gaza of people with experience fighting in Iraq will increase as U.S. forces are rotated out of the country.⁷ Some

1. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Operation in Gaza: Factual and Legal Aspects," July 29, 2009, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Hamas+war+against+Israel/Operation_Gaza_factual_and_legal_aspects_use_of_force_Hamas_breaches_law_of_armed_conflict_5_Aug_2009.htm.
2. Howard Schneider, "What to Do with Hamas? Question Snarls Peace Bid," *Washington Post*, October 7, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/06/AR2009100602146.html>.
3. Ibid.
4. Levitt interview with Israeli intelligence officials, Tel Aviv, September 2008.
5. Levitt interview with Israeli official, Washington, D.C., May 2009.
6. Amos Harel, "Terrorists Who Fought U.S. in Iraq Make Way to Gaza," *Haaretz*, August 11, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1106689.html>.
7. Ibid.

foreign fighters from Europe have reportedly “come with their credit cards” and financed jihadist activities while in Gaza.⁸ Hamas finds it difficult to exert control over these newly formed groups, which often draw former Hamas members to their ranks, and for which Hamas’s recent actions against Israel are insufficient.

Beyond established groups in Gaza or the West Bank, Israeli officials remain focused on rogue cells that break away from formal groups and small cells of self-organized radicals. “The biggest concern,” says one Israeli official, is that “rogue cells and Hamas individuals close to al-Qaeda” will carry out attacks on their own.⁹ Al-Qaeda has sought to recruit operatives from within Hamas ranks in the past. The FBI reported in 2004 that al-Qaeda, after four years of successive losses in the global struggle against terrorism, was actively seeking to lure Hamas recruits to replenish its ranks. In a search warrant affidavit targeting a suspected Hamas supporter, the FBI noted that the post-September 11 crackdown on al-Qaeda had spurred the organization to place “renewed emphasis” on finding “confirmed jihadist supporters in the United States by trying to enlist proven members of other groups such as Hamas to make up for the vacuum on the field level.”¹⁰

In the near term, Israeli experts believe that while al-Qaeda has not shifted its operational focus to target Israel, the threat of Salafi-Jihadi attacks from local groups in Gaza and al-Qaeda affiliates remains serious.

As in the Danish cartoon crisis, al-Qaeda could easily take advantage of local events to inspire local groups or regional affiliates to focus on attacking Israel. An ideal outcome for al-Qaeda would be an attack in which it plays nothing more than an inspirational role. Among al-Qaeda affiliates, however, analysts are particularly focused on the North Africa-based al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), given its access to Muslim-European and Palestinian operatives and the plethora of Jewish and Israeli targets in Europe.¹¹

Al-Qaeda’s lack of a meaningful presence in the West Bank and Gaza could change. Under stress, it could seek to bolster its image by focusing not only its rhetoric, but also its operations, on Israel in an effort to take ownership of the emotive Palestinian issue. Spurred on by al-Qaeda’s continued rhetoric against Israel, regional affiliates like AQIM could ultimately carry out successful attacks on Israeli targets abroad. In addition, local Salafi-Jihadi groups in the Gaza Strip could catapult themselves to center stage and demand the attention of al-Qaeda’s core leadership with even one successful attack resulting in significant casualties or targeting a major international figure. In the words of one senior member of Jaljalat, “So far al-Qaeda has not sponsored our work. We are waiting to carry out a big jihadist operation dedicated to Sheikh Usama bin-Ladin. However, our course and doctrine are similar to those of al-Qaeda. If al-Qaeda asks us to pledge allegiance to it, we are completely ready for it.”¹²

8. Levitt interview with Israeli intelligence officials, Tel Aviv, September 2008.

9. Levitt interview with senior Israeli security official, Washington, D.C., February 2005.

10. SITE Institute, “Affidavit in Support of Search Affidavit” (U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Virginia, Alexandria Division), August 20, 2004.

11. Levitt interview with Israeli intelligence officials, Tel Aviv, September 2009.

12. Hassan Jabr, “Jaljalat’ is Waiting to Carry Out a Big Operation in order to Dedicate It to Bin-Laden,” *al-Ayyam*, July 11, 2009.

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