"Young Men of the Stones": Gendering the First Palestinian Intifada

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“YOUNG MEN OF THE STONES”:
GENDERING THE FIRST PALESTINIAN INTIFADA

BY

KAREN LAURIA

A master’s thesis submitted to The Graduate Faculty in Middle Eastern Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts, The City University of New York

2015
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Middle Eastern Studies in satisfaction for the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Prof. Beth Baron

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

“YOUNG MEN OF THE STONES”: GENDERING THE FIRST PALESTINIAN INTIFADA

By

Karen Lauria

Advisor: Professor Simon Davis

The First Palestinian Intifada (1987 – 1993) began on December 9, 1987 with riots protesting the killing of a young Palestinian man by the Israeli Defense Forces. The riots quickly grew into a much larger grassroots uprising – Intifada – against Israeli occupation. In the following weeks and months, the Occupied Territories were engulfed in waves of protests, demonstrations, boycotts, and other acts of civil disobedience, which continued until 1993. Although Intifada protestors represented a cross-section of Palestinian society, encompassing both old and young, male and female, a single, particular masculine trope soon came to dominate—that of young male activists risking life and limb to throw stones at Israeli forces.

This thesis is about the development of that symbolic imagery at the intersection of youth culture, factional politics, and gender in the Palestinian Occupied Territories during the first Intifada. It explores the nascent political rivalry between nationalist and Islamist leadership and how this determined that a culture of male youth activism and martyrdom came to dominate the uprising. These two developments, nationalist-Islamist rivalry and the rise of male youth activism, are intimately connected to one another, as the support of young male activists became crucial to the legitimacy of Palestinian political organizations. Conversely, the support of formal political groups empowered, shaped, and encouraged the activism of young people. Increasingly, the nationalist-Islamist rivalry was articulated around youth and youth political activism. In
particular the representation of young male protestors became an integral trope in official writings, public discourse, and policy presentation. This reification of male youth activism in turn contributed to a cult of martyrdom and increasing violence among young male activists, marginalizing female activism during the latter part of the Intifada and symbolically transforming the Intifada into a predominantly male endeavor.
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Chapter 1 - Introduction

On December 9, 1987 Israeli Defense Forces shot and killed a young Palestinian man in Gaza after he threw a Molotov cocktail at an Israeli army patrol. Within hours, rioting and demonstrations erupted throughout Gaza and the West Bank, which had been under Israeli occupation since Israel’s victory in the 1967 War. The rioting was the culmination of days of tension. Earlier that week, an Israeli businessman was stabbed to death in a shopping center in Gaza. Two days later, four residents of the Jabalya Palestinian refugee camp were run down and killed by an Israeli truck in a traffic accident. Immediately, rumors circulated within the Palestinian community that the Israelis had intentionally killed the four Jabalya residents as an act of revenge. These riots quickly grew into a much larger grassroots uprising – Intifada – against Israeli occupation. In the following weeks and months, the Occupied Territories were engulfed in waves of protests, demonstrations, boycotts, and other acts of civil disobedience, which continued until 1993.¹ Palestinians regarded the Intifada as a rebellion against Israeli rule and against decades of state repression and military occupation in the Territories, which frequently included targeted assassinations, mass deportations, detentions, and house demolitions, land expropriations, and illegal Israeli Jewish settlement.

Although surprised by the sudden outburst, Palestinian nationalist leadership soon sought to gain control over the uprising. Several Palestinian nationalist organizations: The Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and Palestine Communist Party (PCP), formed a coalition group called the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU).

Through this, they published leaflets, called *bayanat* in Arabic, political posters, and other materials offering direction, instructions, and praise for protesters and activists. The Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, which had for a long time focused its activities on largely non-political charitable endeavors, also responded to the uprising. In January 1988, young cadres of the Muslim Brotherhood formed *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah*, the Islamic Resistance Movement, whose Arabic acronym, Hamas, means “zeal.” Like the secular nationalist UNLU leadership, Hamas also sought to direct the activism of the Intifada, especially after nationalist leadership began to engage with Israel in formal peace negotiations that included talk of territorial compromise. A political struggle developed between Palestinian secular nationalist leadership and newly invigorated Islamist forces for ideological hegemony and control over the Intifada and the Palestinian struggle more broadly.

Although Intifada protestors represented a cross-section of Palestinian society, encompassing both old and young, male and female, a single, particular masculine trope soon came to dominate—that of young male activists risking life and limb to throw stones at Israeli forces. This paper is about the development of that symbolic imagery at the intersection of youth culture, factional politics, and gender in the Palestinian Occupied Territories during the first Intifada. It explores the political rivalry between nationalist and Islamist leadership and how this determined that a culture of male youth activism and martyrdom came to dominate the uprising. These two developments, nationalist-Islamist rivalry and the rise of male youth activism, are intimately connected to one another, as the support of young male activists became crucial to the

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3 Ibid., 694 – 697.
legitimacy of Palestinian political organizations. Conversely, the support of formal political
groups empowered, shaped, and encouraged the activism of young people. Increasingly, the
nationalist-Islamist rivalry was articulated around youth and youth political activism. In
particular the representation of young male protestors became an integral trope in official
writings, public discourse, and policy presentation. This reification of male youth activism in
turn contributed to a cult of martyrdom and increasing violence among young male activists,
marginalizing female activism during the latter part of the Intifada and symbolically
transforming the Intifada into a predominantly male endeavor.

The first Intifada was an important turning point for Palestinian youth activism and the
political landscape of Palestine. There have been several studies on the social and psychological
impact of the First Intifada on young activists. In Growing Up Palestinian: Israeli Occupation
and the Intifada Generation, Laetitia Bucaille followed three young Palestinians from the mid-
1980s to the mid-2000s who grew up in squalid refugee camps and participated in the first and
second Intifadas. Through their life trajectories, she argues that for many young people in these
conditions it was easier and more appealing to become militants and political activists than it was
to find gainful and fulfilling employment and a peaceful family life. Her study also reveals the
class, gender, generational, political, and religious fissures in Palestinian society. Empowering
youth as political leaders created a cycle of violence, which transformed the First Intifada from a
largely nonviolent grassroots civil protest into an internally divisive confrontation.

In his study on popular memory of the Intifada, Occupied by Memory: The Intifada
Generation and the Palestinian State of Emergency, John Collins relied on interviews with
subjects in their late 20s and early 30s. He shows that the first Intifada was a political awakening
for many young people that included a “generational inversion, with young activists taking the
initiative in their interactions with a variety of adults ranging from teachers to prison authorities.” Collins examines how young Palestinians were “invested with powerful political, social, and cultural meaning” through Intifada discourse, but while his research does discuss the lionization of youth political activities in nationalist and Islamist discourse, he does not stress the essential context of the political and ideological rivalry between these two political camps.4

Several anthropological and ethnographic works have also shown the psychological and social impact of the First Intifada. In her essay “Divine Impatience: Ritual, Narrative, and Symbolization in the Practice of Martyrdom in Palestine,” Linda M. Pitcher suggests that young people responded to their discursive place at the heart of the uprising, defining and redefining not only what their role would be as politically active young people, but also what the Intifada would look like and come to represent. In particular, she argues that politically active youth were helping to forge new symbols of Palestinian resistance, which they would themselves embody—“the martyr [shaheed], the political activist [shabab], and the political prisoner,” as well as “new principles of Palestinian ethnicity (steadfastness, perseverance, and sacrifice).”5

Likewise, other studies have investigated questions of gender during the Intifada. For instance, Julie Peteet argues in “Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada: A Cultural Politics of Violence,” that participation in protests, and the consequences of protesting, such as arrest and beatings, became part of male gender performance for young Palestinians. The experience of violence became a rite of passage for many young male Palestinians, both in terms of enacting violence by throwing stones or Molotov cocktails, and


through the experience of violence performed against them, in the form of punishments and Israeli repression. Related violence had a transformative effect, galvanizing those who experienced it to transform and challenge certain social power structures, while at the same time reaffirming others. Peteet also addresses the formation of a culture of youth martyrdom in “Icons and Militants: Mothering in the Danger Zone.” Here, she asserts that during both the Lebanese Civil War and the First Intifada the “front” of these conflicts was the home itself, belying the notion of masculine and feminine spheres of wartime experience. Mothers were encouraged to rejoice at their children’s nationalist activities, view their deaths as a sacrifice to the national cause, and give comfort and support to young protestors and fighters who were not their own biological children, replicating the functions of motherhood for them.  

The First Intifada was also a crucial turning point for Palestinian politics, as it gradually legitimized Palestinian nationalist leadership on the international scale through the Oslo peace process and precipitated Hamas as a powerful alternative political force. Several academic studies have addressed the emergence of the nationalist-Islamist rivalry during the Intifada. Jonathan Schanzer studies intra-communal political differences and violence among Palestinians and chronicles the struggle between Fatah and Hamas for political hegemony. He argues that Palestinian nationalist leaders and Hamas were struggling as much with each other as against Israeli policies. As Hamas gained strength on the ground in the Occupied Territories through acts of violence and civic engagement, Fatah, led by Yasser Arafat, responded by seeking to claim superior international credentials, renouncing terrorism and formally accepting pre-1967 Israeli

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borders. Meir Litvak also explores the Nationalist-Hamas rivalry. Hamas argued that it was better able to lead and represent the Palestinian people because it was located within the Territories, while nationalist leadership was outside, exiled to Tunisia since the Lebanese Civil War.

Finally, Sara Roy’s work on the history of Hamas has also been important to understanding the relationship between nationalist and Islamist forces in Palestine. Roy discusses the rivalry between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and its affiliated organizations and Hamas over government institutions, particularly in Gaza, arguing that as these groups struggled for control, the institutions of civil society were weakened because they were guided by partisan rather than objective aims. However, she asserts that Hamas grew in influence because it was able to project a public image as a counter-hegemonic authority to the secular nationalist leadership through its social service initiatives, particularly those related to youth. Elsewhere, Roy maintains that a large part of Hamas’ success as an organization is due to its civic engagement and charitable works. In addition to its more militant activities, Hamas also organizes important social service initiatives and programs, which emphasize community development and civic growth over violence. These social institutions advocated for stability and political and religious moderation, made services available for people from different social segments, and supported social and cultural renewal among Palestinians. Additionally, through these institutions, Hamas was able to prove its ability to govern effectively and honestly. The


Intifada period enabled Hamas to consolidate its control over the Islamic social sector, which in turn prompted the formation of new social institutions in the Occupied Territories.

To my knowledge no study has yet synthesized these elements to demonstrate the ways young male activists shaped, and were shaped by, the political contest between nationalist and Islamist leadership that began during the First Intifada, and the gender implications of these processes. Accessing the theories of Karl Mannheim and Ian Hacking, this paper seeks to fill that gap in knowledge to show that the rivalry and struggle for power between these political competitors was framed in large part around the activism of young men, transforming “shabab” (young people – in this context, those involved in the Intifada) into a uniquely masculine social category, which in turn masculinized the Intifada itself and reaffirmed longstanding conceptions of gender and resistance.

The young Palestinians who took part in the riots and demonstrations of the first Intifada represent a unique generation, which shared the particular experience of mass revolt. According to Karl Mannheim in his essay “The Sociological Problem of Generations,” a generational unit is more than just a collection of individuals of the same age; it is a collection of people of similar age who experience an important historical event at a particular time and place, which he refers to as the “generational location.” Through these common experiences, an age cohort can develop a generational consciousness.\(^9\) Sociologists Bryan S. Turner and June Edmonds expand on this idea, asserting that this generational consciousness can lead to political engagement.\(^10\) The events of the First Intifada could be understood as a “generational location” for the young people who


participated in it, which in turn prompted greater political engagement and participation on the part of this unique generation.

Furthermore, public discourse on the Intifada, and on the young people who participated in it, helped to forge this activist generation into a unique social group with specific traits. Ian Hacking’s theory of appellation, called The Looping Effect, is useful for understanding this process. According to Hacking, new social groups emerge in response to new social situations and events. As a new social group is identified and named in society, a discourse emerges about that group. Individuals, being aware of their placement in a certain social category, in turn react to the discourse about their category, thus exerting an influence on the discourse circulating about their group and kind. What is more, by influencing the discourse on their own group, group members have the ability to redefine what it means to be a member of that group. During the Intifada years, politically active shabab – young people – emerged as a new and separate social category, defined equally by heroism in the face of a much stronger Israeli military force, by a need for guidance from above and, above all, as male.

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Chapter 2 - Gendering Nationalism and Resistance

Modern nation states, and their citizens, have often been thought of in gendered terms. According to Benedict Anderson, the nation is commonly conceived of as a fraternity, a “deep horizontal comradeship” of brothers. If the citizens of a nation are a fraternity, then by extension the nation itself is often thought of as a symbolic mother figure, the source of this brotherhood of citizens, which citizens have a responsibility to protect. These ideas endow the nation state with symbolic and emotional weight and help make possible “over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as to willingly die for such limited imaginings.”\(^\text{12}\)

Within the Middle Eastern context, much has been written about the gendered dynamics of nationalism and national identity. According to Beth Baron in her study of Egyptian nationalism, the nation state was thought of as symbolically female, not only as a mother figure but also as a young virgin lover in need of protection by her male guardians, its citizens. This gendered dynamic became an inherent part of nationalist iconography in 19\(^\text{th}\) and early 20\(^\text{th}\) century Egypt, as writers and artists produced work intended for a male audience of citizens that actively played on Arab notions of masculine honor and responsibility to control and protect female family members, in this case the nation state itself. What developed from this discourse was an active-passive nationalist dynamic in which the male citizen was the actor, the doer of deeds, the speaker, and the lover, while the female nation was the object of these energies – “the acted upon, the listener, the beloved.”\(^\text{13}\) Although Baron’s study focuses exclusively on Egypt,


\(^{13}\) Beth Baron, “Nationalist Iconography: Egypt as a Woman,” in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 120 - 121.
other scholars, including Najmabadi in her work on nationalism in Iran, have demonstrated that these gendered nationalist ideas had currency throughout the region.\(^{14}\)

If protecting and defending the nation was thought of as a masculine endeavor, then the loss of a nation was an acutely emasculating experience. Following the 1948 war and the establishment of the state of Israel, roughly 700,000 Palestinian Arabs were ejected from their homes in historic Palestine and settled as refugees in the surrounding Arab states of Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, as well as in Egypt and Iraq. According to Rashid Khalidi, this loss of homeland and the displacement of so many Palestinian Arabs into neighboring territories meant a “loss of agency” for Palestinians in their own national struggle either to Israel or to the governments of the Arab states that housed them as refugees.\(^{15}\) This loss of agency is often expressed in Palestinian nationalist literature through language of sexual frustration and unrequited male love for a female object. For instance, in the poem *Blessed be that which Has not Come!* by Mahmoud Darwish, Palestinian national aspirations are described as an unconsummated marriage, a disruption of normal gender dynamics, in which “Never shall lover reach lover / Except as martyr or fugitive.”\(^{16}\) Here, Palestine is imagined as a bride that the groom, the Palestinian people, may never possess except through death when they would be literally implanted into her by burial. The male subject of this poem, the Palestinian people, is thus denied his right to possess his bride, the Palestinian state, and must remain in a state of sexual and romantic frustration. Similar themes of frustration and yearning appear again in Darwish’s

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\(^{16}\) Collins, *Occupied by Memory*, 75.
1966 poem *Lover from Palestine*, in which the male speaker longs for his beloved, whom he names “Palestine,” but may never possess her.

The writing of Ghassan Kanafani similarly takes up this theme of emasculation and the loss of the homeland. This idea is epitomized in his story “Men in the Sun” through the character Abul Khaizuran, who was chemically castrated following injuries in the 1948 war and who now seeks to profitably exploit Palestinians living in Iraq. Abul Khaizuran agrees to transport the three protagonists, Abu Qais, Assad, and Marwan, all Palestinian exiles, across the Iraq-Kuwait border in the water tank of his truck. The water tank becomes so hot during that day that it is only possible to remain inside for a few minutes without suffocating. When stopped at a checkpoint and forced to listen to an Iraqi guard’s ribald story of an affair with a prostitute, Abul Khaizuran relates a false story about his own masculine virility, which the reader knows is not true. The delay causes the three men in the truck to die. According to Amy Zalman, “the journey taken by the men in the sun is structured by a crisis related to prevailing notions of manliness in the same degree that it is by the sense of national crisis.” That is, the various disruptions of normal life experienced by these characters due to displacement and, in the case of Abul Khaizuran, physical impotence, act as an allegory for an emasculated and conquered nation.

This sense of emasculation was not only due to the loss of the Palestinian homeland to Israel, but also to the subordination of the Palestinian cause to the needs and interests of neighboring Arab governments. The Palestinian loss of agency in their national struggle “manifested itself in the struggle over who would ‘represent’ the Palestinians.” Consequently, though the Palestinian question remained an important ideological symbol for Arab

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governments, the Palestinian national cause was subordinated in the 1950s into the political interests of other rulers, who considered independent Palestinian political organization as a potential threat to their authority.\(^\text{18}\)

Despite such repression, Pan-Arab nationalism of the 1950s inspired a new generation of activists from the Palestinian diaspora to advance Palestinian nationalist aspirations. Pan-Arab nationalism understood Arabs as a united national identity and called for the unification of Arab states into a single political entity. This period also witnessed the continuing development of independent Palestinian political activism and the formation of “independent, clandestine campaigns of political organization and military training” among Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and elsewhere.\(^\text{19}\)

From its outset, Palestinian resistance was imagined as a primarily masculine endeavor and relied heavily upon gendered language and imagery. In 1959, a group of politically active Palestinian graduates of Cairo University living in Kuwait founded The Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah).\(^\text{20}\) Fatah was secular nationalist in its outlook and eventually grew to become the largest, most popular, and most influential of the Palestinian nationalist organizations. Other guerilla groups were founded during this period with the goal of liberating Palestine from Israeli control through armed resistance, a development that “threatened Arab


regimes, which by then had reached a modus vivendi with the decade-old Israeli state.”\(^{21}\) Responding to this development, The Arab League, which represented the governments of several Arab nations, founded The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 as an organization through which to channel Palestinian political action and pursue the cause of a Palestinian state.

The PLO’s first two documents were the Palestinian Nationalist Charter and the Palestinian National Charter, which defined the goals and methods of the PLO and Palestinian resistance more broadly. The documents accessed gendered language to define what and who constituted the Palestinian nation and the nature of resistance to Israel. The Charter describes the Zionist takeover of Palestine “as a rape of the land” and “views Palestinians as the children of Palestine, portrayed as a mother” while “the Zionist enemy is clearly seen as masculine.”\(^{22}\) In this conception, the loss of the Palestinian state to Israel is described in sexually violent terms, as a violation that fundamentally changes the nature of the Palestinian people and shifts the responsibility of reproducing the nation from the mother-territory to male Palestinians themselves.

Article 4 of the Palestinian National Charter defines “Palestinian identity as ‘a genuine, inherent and eternal trait and is transmitted from fathers to sons.’” Article 5 states that “Palestinians are those Arab citizens who used to reside ... in Palestine until 1947 ... and everyone who is born of an Arab Palestinian father after this date – whether inside Palestine or outside it – is a Palestinian.” According to Joseph Massad, this shift in definition of what


\(^{22}\) Ibid., 471.
constitutes Palestinian identity directly relates to this notion of the rape of the Palestinian motherland. Prior to 1947, Palestinian identity is determined in maternal terms by birth in the land of Palestine, but after 1948 and the metaphoric “rape” of Palestine, Palestinian identity is instead determined through “physiological and metaphorical paternity.” Thus, the responsibility for reproducing the Palestinian nation shifts from the mother – the despoiled territory – to Palestinian men, who endow their children with Palestinian identity. According to Massad, “within this metaphoric schema, women clearly cannot be agents of nationality. Their role, thus, becomes secondary and supportive in the narrative of nationalism.”23

The centrality of male actors to the Palestinian national movement is further emphasized through the PLO focus on armed resistance as the central means of confronting Israel. The PLO charter defined “armed struggle” as “the only way to liberate Palestine” and that “commando action constitutes the nucleus of the Palestinian popular liberation war.”24 Indeed, during the 1960s and 1970s, Palestinian resistance took on a largely “underground, secretive, populist, activist, and radical” character through the militant activities of the PLO’s composite organizations, including Fatah. Collectively, these militant groups were called Harakat Al-Muqawama Al-Filastiniyya (the Palestinian Resistance Movement - PRM) and their guerilla fighters – called feda’iyyin in Arabic – coordinated attacks against Israel and Israeli interests.25

However, this gendered conception of nationalism and resistance did not preclude active female participation in the Palestinian Resistance Movement. Throughout the late 1960s and

23 Ibid., 471 - 472.


25 Farsoun and Aruni, Palestine and the Palestinians, 182 – 183.
1970s, women were recruited into the PRM in fairly large numbers as full time or part-time members or as more loosely associated “friends” of the PRM, and given military and political training. Additionally, a few women, such as Leila Khaled, emerged not only as active participants in Palestinian resistance, but also as spokespeople and icons of the movement. Involvement in the PRM often provided women an avenue for greater personal choice and freedom, as Julie Peteet shows in her study of women in the PRM in Lebanon in the 1970s and early 1980s. According to Peteet, full-time involvement in the PRM, which paid members’ salaries and often also provided housing, enabled women to exercise a degree of choice in selecting husbands, family planning, divorce, and other issues that would traditionally be left either to the larger family structure or to the husband. However, according to Rosemary Sayigh, most of the female members in the PRM were assigned to “support activities that were 'natural' extensions of their domestic skills–nursing, providing food and uniforms for the fighters, setting up the social and cultural institutions that accompanied armed struggle.” Female PRM members also had the challenge of balancing their duties with the resistance with their domestic responsibilities, for which they were typically solely responsible, even when their family members encouraged their involvement with the PRM. Indeed, during this period, women’s domestic tasks and family member support were configured as a service to the nation, with losing a son to the cause being the ultimate act of female resistance.


28 Ibid., 884.

If we understand the loss of the Palestinian nation as an acutely emasculating experience, then the conditions of life under Israeli Occupation following the 1967 War could be seen as the ultimate robbery of manhood. Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem came under Israeli control following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, in which Israel defeated the combined military forces of Jordan, Egypt, and Syria. While Israel eventually annexed East Jerusalem, Israel ruled the West Bank and Gaza in a perpetual state of emergency, a police state, in which the Israeli military had the power to confiscate and destroy property, detain and arrest individuals without due process, and impose restrictions on people’s movement, among other powers. According a 1989 report produced by Al-Haq, a Palestinian human rights non-governmental organization, Israel reinstated the British Defence (Emergency) Law, which had originally been imposed by British Mandate authorities in Palestine to quell unrest in 1945. These laws gave British forces wide authority to govern the Mandate as a police state, with the power to “deport citizens of Palestine, to demolish houses, to impose curfews and town arrest, to censor newspapers and books, and to administratively detain, all without the necessity of judicial proceedings.”

Beyond the legal implications of Israeli rule in the Occupied Territories, the broad powers of the Israeli occupying forces created an acute human rights crisis for those living in these areas. According to a 1987 report by al-Haq, Israeli house demolition policies, and similar punitive strategies, were extreme punishments, which punished not only those individuals accused of anti-Israeli political activities, but also their families. These measures constituted a

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“collective punishment” with long lasting consequences for the well-being of Palestinian society. These issues were similarly explored in several United Nations reports from the 1980s and earlier. One UN report from 1985 asserted that Israeli forces had evicted and displaced two hundred Palestinian families, stating that “houses have been demolished; grain storage and water wells destroyed, and villagers have been forced off their lands,” actions that constitute “direct contravention of principles affecting basic human rights.”

The generation of young Palestinians growing up under these conditions thus shared the common experience of political repression, made worse in many cases by the poor living conditions in Palestinian refugee camps and by bleak economic prospects. Many of the people who lost their homes during the 1948 war, called the Nakbah (Catastrophe) by Palestinians, continued to live as refugees in camps in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and in the Occupied Territories. Many of the young people taking part in the Intifada were the children and grandchildren of these displaced people, who grew up as refugees. These camps, run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, housed hundreds of thousands of people in cramped, and often inadequate living spaces. The camps also had underdeveloped infrastructure, many lacking basic amenities like running water and proper sanitation. Conversely, the Israeli state

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dedicated millions of dollars to developing Jewish settlements in the Territories, providing these settlements with the infrastructure, sanitation, and security not available in the nearby Palestinian areas.\textsuperscript{34}

Additionally, economic prospects were poor in the Occupied Territories, with the economy of Palestine subordinated to the economic needs and interests of Israel. According to historian Benny Morris, Israeli economic policies in the Territories made Palestine a virtual “slave market,” dependent upon Israeli imports for food and finished goods.\textsuperscript{35} A UN report from 1985 on living conditions in the Palestinian Occupied Territories likewise claimed that through land confiscation, the expropriation of natural resources, including water, and lack of investment in Palestinian Arab zones, the Israeli occupation had resulted in “overall stagnation of the Palestinian economy.”\textsuperscript{36} In these conditions, many young people were unable to find well-paying jobs despite high school and college diplomas, especially after Gulf nations placed limits on migrant worker programs earlier in the 1980s. Most Palestinian workers could hope only for menial labor, while many remained unemployed.\textsuperscript{37}


\textsuperscript{35} Morris, \textit{Righteous Victims}, 564 – 566.


The spontaneous mass mobilization of the Intifada, centered within the Occupied Territories, represented a shift in Palestinian activism away from the Palestinian Diaspora in neighboring Arab states. Following the 1967 War, *feda’iyyin* militants took control of the leadership of the PLO and the organization became a “revolutionary umbrella organization under the influence of Fateh and Fateh’s leader,” Yasser Arafat. The PLO established bases in neighboring countries; first in Jordan, from which it was violently expelled in 1970, and then in Lebanon where, by the early 1980s, they had succeeded in forming a virtual state within a state within the Palestinian refugee camps. Tensions mounted between Palestinian militants and the Lebanese Christian community, which eventually erupted into a civil war in 1976 that came to involve all religious and political factions in Lebanon as well as the governments of Syria and Israel. The fighting concluded in 1982, after Israeli forces invaded Lebanon and forced the PLO to leave Lebanon for Tunisia.

The PLO exile to Tunisia contributed to a widespread reappraisal of the tactics and methods of Palestinian resistance. By the late 1980s and the start of the Intifada, PLO leadership had been operating from Tunisia for several years, away from the bulk of its constituents living in the Occupied Territories and in neighboring Arab states. The removal of the PLO prompted questions about how and from where liberation might come. In particular, the PLO exile contributed to the decline of the prevailing belief that “salvation would come from the outside;” that is, from the Palestinian Diaspora. Thus, in the years before the Intifada, “the focal point of the conflict had moved to the occupied territories” and away from Palestinian zones in

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38 Ibid., 185.
neighboring Arab states. However, as Rashid Khalidi notes, despite the physical distance between the PLO and the bulk of its Palestinian constituents, the PLO was still present and active in over one hundred countries, where “its offices generally had the status of embassies.” For this reason, it “could still credibly claim to represent the Palestinian people.” Therefore, although the mass mobilization of the Intifada began spontaneously, the nationalist organizations that comprised the UNLU coalition could expect to harness and direct the uprising as it continued.

Just as Palestinian nationalist groups were beginning to organize under the UNLU coalition, young cadres of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine also reacted to the start of the Intifada by forming Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah, known by its acronym, Hamas. The Muslim Brotherhood had come to Palestine in 1935 when Hassan Al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, sent his brother ‘Abd al-Rahman Al-Banna to Palestine to establish contacts in the region. Al-Banna believed Muslim nations could best face the challenges of modernity by rejecting hegemonic impositions, which included secularization and the rejection of indigenous cultural traditions, and by constructing modernity on Islamic principles. This notion forms the ideological basis of political Islam, or Islamism, a philosophy aimed as transforming society “to approximate as closely as possible that established by the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. This would entail the establishment of an Islamic state, with no distinction being made between religion and government, with the Quran and the

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40 Khalidi, Iron Cage, 164.

sunna serving the basis for all aspects of life.”

Therefore, while Islamism is based upon Islam, it is an inherently modern political philosophy in which Islam is mobilized to achieve political goals.

Though for several decades, the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine had focused its activities on largely non-political charitable endeavors, Hamas inextricably connected faith and politics, seeing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an inherently religious issue for pious Muslims. The Hamas Charter, published in 1988 after the start of the Intifada, outlined the movement’s ideological underpinnings and goals. In this document, Hamas adopted many of the PLO’s nationalistic values, but presented these ideas as an “Islamic platform,” casting them in “Islamic terminology and the Islamic belief system.”

In its charter, Hamas asserted that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the most recent conflict in a primordial struggle between the forces of Islam and the forces of evil, represented by the West and by Zionism, and called on Muslims to continue this ongoing and unending battle by fighting to ensure that all of historic Palestine remains under Muslim control, as the entire territory is an Islamic waqf, a religious trust, until the end of time. Additionally, because the land is a waqf, it is the responsibility of not only all Palestinians, but also of all Muslims, to fight for the liberation of Palestine from Israeli control. Members of Hamas are therefore those “Muslims who are devoted to Allah and worship Him” and who are “cognizant of their duty towards themselves, their families and country” to raise “the banner of Jihad [religious war] in the face of the oppressors in order to extricate the country and the people from the [oppressors’] desecration, filth and evil.” Consequently, Hamas rejects

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in its charter any attempts at territorial compromise with Israel, asserting that those who renounce any part of the territory are also “renouncing part of the religion.” Hamas thus defines nationalism as “part and parcel of the religious faith,” merging the religious and the political, and maintains that the best way to fight the occupation is through a strengthening and revival of Islamic values in society.44

Related to the revival of Islamic values, Hamas defines two interrelated and complementary roles for women in the fight against Israeli occupation; those of mother and pious Muslim. In its charter, Hamas argues that “Muslim women have a no lesser role than that of men in the war of liberation; they produce men and play a great role in guiding and educating the [new] generation.” Thus, Hamas defines the role of women in the movement as distinct but related to that of men. While men play a more active role in fighting through organizing and violent confrontation, women are responsible for raising children to become responsible and capable Muslims by “caring for the home and raising the children upon the moral concepts and values which derive from Islam; and of educating their sons to observe the religious injunctions in preparation for the duty of Jihad awaiting them.”45 To do this, women must strengthen their own religious resolve by rejecting Westernizing influences and ideas and relying instead on Islamic principles as a moral compass.46

Alongside appropriating many of the PLO’s nationalist ideas, Hamas also stated in its charter that despite their ideological differences, cooperation with the PLO was essential to the


45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.
larger project of liberating Palestine due to their shared national bond and nationalist aspirations. Article 27 of the charter asserted that Hamas would join completely with the PLO, should the latter adopt Islam but, even without this precondition, the charter argues that cooperation with the PLO is desirable in order to avoid *fitna*, or social unrest that would only aid their common enemy.\(^{47}\)

Much of Hamas’ ideology also stems from another Palestinian Islamist group, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which was founded in Gaza in 1981. Like Hamas, Islamic Jihad also sought to establish a sovereign Palestinian state in all of the territory of historic Palestine, and understood the reassertion of Islam and Muslim values as an essential element to this mission. The movement also embraced armed resistance as the primary means of liberation of Palestine. However, unlike Hamas, Islamic Jihad held as the ultimate goal the establishment of a pan-Arab Muslim state throughout the Middle East.

At the start of the Intifada, Islamic Jihad materials described the uprising as originating from renewed Islamic piety brought on by both disillusionment with secular-nationalist leadership and the successes of Islamist movements throughout the region in the 1970s and 1980s.\(^{48}\) Islamic Jihad and Hamas stressed their closeness to one another as “complimentary” Islamic movements that emerged not as competitors, but as colleagues.\(^{49}\)

\(^{47}\) Ibid.


\(^{49}\) Ibid., 80 – 81.
Chapter 3 - Gendered Implications of Intifada Activism

Growing up in the atmosphere of legal, political and economic repression created by Israeli occupation, young Palestinians, in their teens and early twenties in 1987, likely saw mobilization against Israel as one of the few options available to them to change their conditions of possibility. Reinhart Koselleck articulated the connection between past experiences and future conditions of possibility in his book *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*. Koselleck argues against the notion of a single historical timeline marching in a standard, unitary direction from past to future. Instead, he embraces the concept of multiplicity of time, the idea that many different “times” can exist simultaneously, defined and determined by subjective individual experiences and points of reference. These experiential differences create different conceivable “horizons of expectation” for the future, as human beings imagine future possibilities by referencing memories of past experiences. For Koselleck, “historical time” exists in the space “between experience and expectation” and describes potential, imagined futures as informed by the experiences of the past. These potential futures, the chance for action, or of change, or continuity, are conditions of possibility.\(^5\) In the context of Israeli occupation, the action of revolt against Israel can be understood as an attempt to change the kind of future that could be expected under continued occupation; that is, a future that offered only further repression and increasingly poor conditions.

While Koselleck writes about different conditions of possibility within a larger argument about the study of history, his theses about multiple simultaneous conceptions of time, and the connection between past experiences and future expectations, can help explain the start of the

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Intifada, and the active and continued participation of young people in it. In her essay on the culture of martyrdom that developed among young people during the First Intifada, Linda M. Pitcher interviewed a number of young Palestinians, asking them what the uprising meant to them and why they participated. Many of her subjects expressed feelings of hopelessness and frustration under occupation, and cited these feelings as the catalyst for their participation in the revolt. For instance, she quotes one young man named Hasan from Gaza, who told her “Listen: When you lose everything, your homeland, your freedom, your right to move freely, when the universities are closed and you can't go out at night... What can you do?” Another informant, the brother of a young woman killed by the Israeli Defense Forces, asserted that his sister “felt humiliated” by life under occupation.\(^\text{51}\) According to B’Tselem, 20% of Palestinians killed during the First Intifada were children under seventeen years old.\(^\text{52}\) Extrapolating from this data to account for the deaths of older youths, in their later teens or twenties, and other types of violence, such as nonlethal physical assault, we could reasonably argue that the involvement of young people in the uprising was quite widespread.

The Intifada comprised many forms of protest and political action, which included both violent confrontations with Israeli forces in the form of rock throwing, and nonviolent means of protest, such as boycotts of Israeli goods and large scale strikes, led and enforced in large part by older teens and young adults. These young people were able to organize in such an efficient way due to the longstanding role student committees played in working with local communities within the Territories prior to the start of the Intifada. These student groups, organized through

\(^\text{51}\) Pitcher, “‘The Divine Impatience’,” 9, 27.

various universities and schools and, allied with particular nationalist organizations, were involved with community service initiatives within their local areas. One of the better known student groups affiliated with Fatah, al-Shabiba, worked primarily in refugee camps and urban areas and “helped the population deal with day-to-day problems” caused by the occupation, such as establishing “adult literacy courses, cleaned streets and cemeteries, and helped repair and expand homes in villages and refugee camps.” These activities helped pave the way for widespread cooperation with youth-driven Intifada leadership by giving young leaders experience dealing with the issues facing local population groups and by eroding the power of older community leaders, who had previously acted as go-betweens for their communities and Israeli authorities.

Among young men and boys taking part in the more violent aspects of the Intifada, stone throwing activities were organized along a hierarchy of age. In her study of rock throwing in the Intifada, Leila Hudson demonstrates that these activities were guided by a predetermined set of responsibilities for boys of different ages. She observed that stone-throwing was primarily carried out by male “teen-agers ranging from approximately thirteen to eighteen” while “younger children were always present beforehand, eager to serve in some secondary function—chanting, building blockades, fetching tires or gasoline.” This age hierarchy is supported by Daoud Kuttab in his article “A Profile of the Stonethrowers,” in which he reports based on his

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54 Ibid., 5 – 6.

interviews that seven-to-ten year olds were charged with finding tires and lighting them on fire, which was seen as the least dangerous part of the confrontation. The eleven-to-fourteen year old group was tasked with placing large stones and other objects in the street in order to stop traffic. This group also frequently used slingshots to fire small stones at Israeli patrols. The fifteen-to-nineteen year old group comprised “the veteran stone throwers” who “inflict the worst damage on passing cars” and are the “heart of the team,” consequently the most “sought after by Israelis.” The final group, youths over the age of nineteen, play a strategic role by taking “key positions” at elevated points to determine which vehicles and groups should be attacked, and which to let go.56

Although girls and women rarely took direct part in stone throwing alongside male youths, the Intifada provided young women with opportunities for political engagement, both to challenge Israeli occupation and patriarchal social norms within Palestinian society. In many cases, these activities also put them into direct and dangerous contact with Israeli forces. One way in which young women participated in the Intifada was through Popular Committees, which sought both to organize collective action, such as strikes, and to mitigate the hardship of Israeli measures against the territories in response to the uprising. In an essay on women’s action in Popular Committees during the Intifada, an anonymous female activist writer describes her experiences in the Committees, noting that these women’s groups organized to alleviate the pressures of strikes and boycotts and school closures. The committees taught classes on “planting, plant propagation, food preservation, household organization, writing, medical care” to prepare women to help their families grow food to substitute for products they no longer had

access to. The women’s groups also held classes for children during school closures. Most women participated in the uprising in some way, even through relatively small tasks like knitting sweaters for people arrested in protests.\(^{57}\)

Palestinian women also took part in direct engagement with Israeli forces by mediating between Israeli soldiers and young Palestinian men. In her study of motherhood during the Intifada, Julie Peteet shows that one of the primary ways in which women participated in the Intifada, at great personal risk, was by intervening to prevent the young men from being arrested or beaten. One woman she interviewed would go down to the street whenever she heard an altercation between Israeli soldiers and the youths of her refugee camp and urge the soldiers to leave the young man alone by tugging “at the soldiers, exhorting and pleading with them to stop. Armed only with determination and their voices, they hurl insults that challenge the humanity of the occupier.”\(^ {58}\)

While young male stone throwers were the primary target of violence and arrest by Israeli forces during the Intifada, many girls and young women were also arrested and abused. In addition to the pain of a beating or the discomfort of prison detention, women also faced the possibility of sexual abuse in Israeli prisons. In her study of sexual harassment of adolescent Palestinian girls during the Intifada, Nadira Shalhoub Kevorkian interviews several young women who were the victims of rape and sexual harassment while in Israeli detention. She argues that the atmosphere of protest and activism prompted by the Intifada changed the meaning and implications of rape, at least during the early part of the Intifada. Traditional Arab notions of


\(^{58}\) Peteet, “Icons and Militants,” 122 – 123.
female sexuality put the onus of preventing rape on women. If a woman were raped, the prevailing assumption would be that she had done something to instigate the attack. For this reason, she argues, her group of informants was as traumatized by the threat of rape as they were by the actual act, primarily because under normal social conditions, being a rape victim is considered shameful and would lower a woman’s social standing.\textsuperscript{59} However, within the context of the early Intifada, rape and sexual harassment of Palestinian women by Israelis was somewhat reconfigured into service to the national struggle as an act of bravery and sacrifice on the part of the young female victims. Nevertheless, the terror of rape and sexual harassment “threatened the physical, social, and mental well-being of female adolescents.”\textsuperscript{60}

Intifada activism also provided a platform through which women could question and challenge patriarchal structures within Palestinian society. According to Samira Haj, this happened both individually and collectively. Many young women experienced a level of autonomy through their Intifada activism than they would normally experience, such as the freedom to interact with men, “unrestricted mobility and employment outside the home.” Collectively, the atmosphere of political engagement of the Intifada made it easier for female activists to call attention to women’s issues, “especially in regard to property rights (e.g., legal title to the land) and personal rights (e.g., the right to divorce).”\textsuperscript{61} For many female activists, therefore, the Intifada was thus endowed with possibility not only of liberation from Israeli


\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 176 – 177.

control, but also the hope that in whatever new order emerged from the Intifada, women might achieve greater autonomy and rights due to their obvious, active commitment to the national case.
Chapter 4 - Nationalist and Islamist Discourse on the Intifada

Both Palestinian nationalist organizations and Hamas recognized that the sudden outbreak of the Intifada represented a unique moment in the history of the Palestinian struggle. The civilian generated uprising, and the very active role of young people in the protests, created a special crisis situation for Israel, in which its normal military responses proved ineffective both to suppress the uprising and to retain sympathy for Israel. Consequently, a large portion of the press coverage and images of the uprising circulating internationally concerned the role of children and young adults. Particularly important were images and footage of Israeli soldiers violently attacking young people and children armed only with stones and other found objects. The uneven violence of these encounters brought harsh criticism to the Israeli government, by both the international community and by liberal Israelis who considered these tactics cruel and overblown, while at the same time creating sympathy toward the Palestinian cause.

Since its start, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict featured prominently in the international press. The reality of this international attention created the “powerful belief on both sides of this conflict that the struggle over the news media can be just as important as the battle on the ground.” That is, both Israelis and Palestinians were aware that “they are playing to an international audience and, as always, there is a major struggle over who should be cast as aggressor and who as victim.” Through the news media, each side could seek to portray itself as the true victim of the conflict and garner international support for its cause. For Israel, the main concern was “convincing its Western allies of the legitimacy of its actions, exerting effective damage control to reduce the exposure of the Israeli army's operations.” By contrast,

Palestinians have traditionally seen the international press as an equalizing force, one that could enable them to compensate for their material disadvantages in relation to Israel with sympathy and solidarity. The Intifada provided a perfect international public relations opportunity for the Palestinian resistance as images of young people confronting the IDF circulated in the press. “Footage showing Israeli soldiers using huge stones to crush the bones of two young Palestinians in handcuffs gained international support for the uprising” and effectively challenged the hitherto dominant narrative of Israeli victimhood.

In response to the images and reports of Israel military tactics in the Territories, the United Nations issued Resolution 43/21 in November 1988, which was supported by the majority of the General Assembly. In this resolution, the UN asserted that Israeli practice and policies related to the uprising constituted a human rights violation, and censured Israel in particular for “opening of fire by the Israeli army and settlers that result in the killing and wounding of defenceless Palestinian civilians, the beating and breaking of bones, the deportation of Palestinian civilians, the imposition of restrictive economic measures, the demolition of houses, collective punishment and detentions, as well as denial of access to the media.” The document went on to call for Israel to abide by Geneva Convention agreements and protect the Palestinian civilian population from violence and persecution.

These images also prompted a reappraisal of the occupation of Palestine by many Israelis. In the first place, the ongoing protest activity by Palestinians in the Territories despite the harsh

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64 Ibid., 3.

reactions of the IDF seemed to send a strong message to Israel that peace would not be possible under the status quo of occupation. The unrest in the Territories helped to create a sense among many Israelis that the West Bank and Gaza Strip were “zones of insecurity” that should be avoided, creating a greater consciousness of the “Green Line,” the pre-1967 border that separated Israel from its Arab neighbors. In short, for many Israelis, the Territories no longer truly felt like a part of their country. Beyond this new consciousness of the Green Line and a view of the Territories as something distinct from the rest of Israel, media images of Israeli military tactics against Palestinians created a sense among many Israelis that they were viewing the true and brutal nature of the occupation for the first time.\footnote{Tessler, \textit{A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict}, 708 – 711.} Taken together, the Intifada created a shift in Israeli public opinion towards greater support of territorial compromise and the possible establishment of some sort of independent Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories.\footnote{Ibid., 712 – 713.}

While UNLU and Hamas recognized the opportunity presented by the Intifada, they seem to have reacted to it in different ways. However, both approaches served to bring young male activists to the center of the uprising. For nationalist organizations, well-known internationally and well-established among Palestinians in the Territories and the diaspora, the Intifada created the opportunity to present themselves as the legitimate leadership of the uprising, and thus the true voice of the Palestinian national movement, both at home and abroad. This public relations opportunity was made especially powerful by the participation of young people, and in particular the activities of boys and male adolescents that were already circulating internationally. As such, the PLO and its affiliate organizations sought to empower young male activists on a discursive level, referencing and praising them in their public relations materials,
but seeking practical power for their own leadership both within the Palestinian community and internationally. By contrast, Hamas’ approach to the Intifada seems to have been much more locally orientated and focused on offering young male activists a greater sense of purpose to their activism as a Muslim religious obligation, as well as the practical authority to surveil local areas and actualize Hamas’ social program.

International press coverage of the Intifada presented nationalist organizations with the opportunity to position themselves as the true leaders of the uprising and as the sole legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people. Consequently, public relations materials issued by Palestinian nationalist organizations during the First Intifada had two main aims; to direct the protest activities of the Intifada within the Territories and to expand upon the imagery of young protestors already circulating internationally in order to grow support for both the uprising and for nationalist leadership.

Within the Territories, UNLU sought to bring the Intifada under its control through the publication of leaflets, or bayanat, which offered instructions for and organization to Intifada protest activities as well as a secular-nationalist thematic conceptualization of the uprising. During the first year of the Intifada, UNLU issued thirty-one leaflets, an average of two or three per month, which enjoyed circulation around the Territories. According to Shaul Mishal and Reuben Aharoni, the UNLU leaflets were quite effective in influencing Intifada activism; calling for boycotts, strikes, and marches as strategic tactics. The vast majority of these calls were for various forms of non-violent action, with only 8 of the 163 total bayanat calling for some kind of violence, mostly in the forms of “stone throwing and petrol bombs.” In Leaflet 24, for instance,


UNLU set the Intifada agenda for the summer of 1988, calling for particular protest activities on certain significant dates, such as “August 30 – General strike in solidarity with the deportees (deported from the Territories by Israel)” and “September 1 – On this day, the detainees will declare a hunger strike to protest their detention conditions.” Similarly, Leaflet 28 lists dates of planned protests through November 1988, declaring Israeli Election Day, November 1, 1988, “a general strike day.” This leaflet also orders all people to “take to the streets to celebrate the publication of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence” on November 15.

An analysis of the gendered language of the UNLU bayanat reveals the discursive centrality of the protest activity of young males, while women are mainly considered in relation to men, as their mothers and supporters. For instance, Leaflet 29 proclaims, “Let the mother of the martyr rejoice; she has lifted her voice twice; first on the day of her son’s death, and again on the day of the declaration of the state (of Palestine).” Similarly, Leaflet 5 refers to “Palestinian mothers, sisters, and daughters as ‘manabit,’ or the soil on which ‘manhood, respect, and dignity’ grow” and encourages women to work alongside their male relatives to liberate Palestine. In Leaflet 12, the success of the Intifada is credited to “the children and young men of the stones and Molotov cocktails” and “thousands of women who miscarried as a result of poison gas and tear gas grenades, and those women whose sons and husbands were thrown in the

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70 “Leaflet No. 24,” Speaking Stones, 122.

71 “Leaflet No. 28,” Speaking Stones, 144.

72 “Leaflet No. 29,” Speaking Stones, 146.

73 Massad, “Conceiving the Masculine,” 474 – 475.
Nazi prisons.” Thus, the UNLU leaflets endow men with the primary agency and initiative of the Intifada, while women are considered mainly through their role as mothers and caregivers of men. In this way, these communiqués reflect longstanding notions of gendered nationalism, in particular the idea of an active citizenship, conceived of as male, and a passive female nation, understood as a mother or lover. Female citizens, then, though encouraged to activism, are urged to do so through their relationships to men and through the childbearing capacities of their bodies, which does not actually or accurately reflect the full scope of female participation in the Intifada.

The second main aspect of the nationalist response was a public relations campaign, designed to generate support for the Intifada both among Palestinians and the international community. One aspect of this public relations campaign was the production of political poster art for circulation within the Territories and abroad. These political posters accessed the popular images of young Palestinian male protesters already circulating in the press, often depicting images of young men, stones, slingshots, and stone-ravaged walls, accompanied by a slogan or message connecting the action of throwing a stone to the possibility of national freedom and independence. Using vivid colors and typically abstracted, graphic images, poster art represented a powerful and important visual representation of the Intifada and those people who took part in it. An analysis of these images demonstrates that these posters accessed certain set visual motifs, which developed symbolically into a kind of Intifada iconography that directly referenced Palestinian male youth and thereby endowed young male protestors with symbolic power as the main force of the uprising and Palestinian national aspirations. Concurrently, by issuing these images, Palestinian nationalist leadership claimed symbolic ownership of the activism of young

males, establishing themselves as the legitimate representatives of the Intifada and, therefore, the Palestinian people.

A survey of Palestinian nationalist poster art produced during the first Intifada reveals the use of several visual motifs, which repeat time and again. These visual motifs are images of stones or hands gripping stones, men holding stones, stone-riddled walls, and slingshots. These motifs referenced the street protests undertaken primarily by young Palestinian men and boys and, as such, became visually symbolic of male youth. The first motif, images of stones or hands gripping stones, repeats with special frequency in these posters. The PLO produced one such image, titled “The Intifada Continues,” in 1993 (Figure 1). This poster shows a hand gripping a stone emerging from a patterned field, which references the pattern of the keffiyeh, the traditional Bedouin head covering adopted as a Palestinian nationalist symbol during the Arab Revolt of the 1930s. Behind the hand, a nude male figure emerges, reaching toward the sky with both hands, grasping the Palestinian flag. Another poster, produced by The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Figure 2) shows a hand grasping a stone in the left foreground of the image. Set against a crisp blue sky, this hand seems poised to release the stone and let it fly like the other stones in the background of the image. Palestinian flags trail behind these rocks.

A third example of this motif can be seen in a poster, also produced by The Popular Front for the

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76 Rebecca Torstrick, *Culture and Customs of Israel* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004), 117.

Liberation of Palestine (Figure 3), which shows a stylized floral image, with keffiyeh petals and a stone pistil. The caption below reads “The Blossoms of Freedom.” Finally, a fourth example is an image produced by Fatah in 1989 for the second anniversary of the Intifada (Figure 4). Set against a visually threatening red background, and encircled by a barbed wire Star of David, a lone hand holds up a gray stone.

Another common motif featured in these artworks is a full-body depiction of young men holding or throwing stones. One poster produced by the PLO (Figure 5), for instance, shows a male figure holding a stone in his right hand, his face covered with the keffiyeh. The figure stands in front of a destroyed stone structure, crumbling except for its metal supports, to which a Palestinian flag is tied. The caption below reads “My home... in the shadow of your wreckage... I remain steadfast!” Another image (Figure 6), published by Fatah, shows a group of young men, wrapped in keffiyeh, holding up stones over a stylized background that includes the Palestinian flag. The caption reads, “Victory for the heroes of the stones.” A third example,

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produced by The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Figure 7)\(^{82}\) shows three male figures, heads wrapped in scarves and hands clutching stones, in a style referent to Picasso’s *Guernica*. The caption below reads “Defeat Fascism.”

Another motif is the stone-riddled wall, which shows the results of protest action, rather than the activity itself. For instance, one poster published by The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Figure 8)\(^{83}\) shows a young Palestinian man, his head wrapped in the keffiyeh, peaking out over a stone-riddled and blood splattered wall. Another example, published by the PLO (Figure 9)\(^{84}\) brings a blood-splattered wall to the far foreground. The stones in this image occupy all of the space of the image, with the exception of a small patch of blue sky at the top left.

A final motif one finds in these posters is the image of a slingshot. In the images that utilize this imagery, the slingshot is often represented on its own, but is sometimes shown alongside a stone or in the process of shooting a stone. One example of a poster accessing this motif is an image produced in 1989 for the twenty-fifth anniversary of Fatah (Figure 10).\(^{85}\) Here,


a slingshot and a Palestinian flag are shown held erect by a collection of gray stones. Another image, produced by Fatah, shows the Palestinian flag as a slingshot (Figure 11)\textsuperscript{86} with a caption reading “No voice stronger (higher) than the voice of the intifada.” A third example, found in a poster published by The Popular Front of the Liberation of Palestine (Figure 12)\textsuperscript{87} shows a hand holding a slingshot rising up from a collection of gray stones. The other hand appears in mid-motion, having just released the stone that moves across the canvas from right to left.

In drawing on imagery related to stones, these visual motifs were evocative of male youth and the role of young men and boys in the uprising. These motifs acted as shorthand symbols, meant to represent young Palestinian men, thereby placing young men at the symbolic center of not just the Intifada, but of a new Palestinian national movement that would be centered in the Territories. These iconographic images also played on and co-opted Israeli nationalist themes, in particular the story of David and Goliath, using this narrative for the Palestinian national cause. Finally, this iconography served a political purpose by symbolically connecting the street protests of primarily young men to nationalist organizations and their leadership.

Visual motives related to stones referenced the form of protest widely used by youth and associated with youth in the Palestinian popular mind. In addition, many poster images, such as Figures 8 and 9 also referenced the dangers youth faced from the Israeli Defense Forces while


throwing their stones. According to historian Avi Shlaim, Israeli Defense Forces responded to attacks with rocks and other debris with deadly force, using the “full panoply of crowd control measures” including beatings, “tear gas, water cannons, rubber bullets, and live ammunition.”

For young people involved in the Intifada, participation was thus a very dangerous endeavor, which often resulted in severe injury and death. In her article on young people in the Intifada, Linda M. Pitcher’s interviews with young, politically active Palestinians suggest how dangerous confronting Israeli forces could be. One of her young informants talked about how his ever-present fear of arrest by the Israeli Defense Forces left him always “looking over [his] shoulder”. Indeed, thousands of young Palestinians were arrested en masse during the Intifada and placed in detention in Israeli prisons. Other informants spoke with horror at some of the tactics used by Israeli forces to stifle protest, such as intentionally breaking bones. Additionally, many of her subjects had lost friends and family members to the Israeli Defense Forces during street protests. One young man recounted the death of his sister, who was shot by Israeli soldiers. In another interview, a woman talks about the death of her son, who was killed by Israeli soldiers in a case of mistaken identity. Indeed, by 1988 several hundred Palestinians had been killed by Israeli forces, many of them children under seventeen years old.

These images also evoke youth through their reference to the story of David and Goliath. In this story, the young David confronts the giant Goliath, killing him with a stone to the forehead. This theme is especially evident in images that include a slingshot, the weapon traditionally associated with David’s victory. This story is, in a sense, the ultimate tale of the


89 Pitcher, “‘The Divine Impatience’,” 9, 12 – 14, 27, 33.

90 B’Tselem, “Fatalities in First Intifada.”
power of cunning and daring male youth. Here, David, the future king of ancient Israel, is a simple young shepherd confronted with a much more powerful enemy he ultimately defeats with ingenuity and a simple weapon, the symbolic antecedent to the war of stones taking place during the Intifada. In addition to the images mentioned above, several posters directly reference this theme, for instance the Fatah poster “Daoud (David) wa Jaloot (Goliath)” (Figure 13). While this image does not contain any of the motifs mentioned earlier, it is also evocative of male youth through its representation of this ancient story. This image shows a boy, David, standing alongside a heavily armed Israeli Goliath. Here, David is represented as a very young boy, much shorter and smaller than his foe. Young David casually holds a slingshot and looks away, his facial expression one of confidence and cunning. By contrast, the heavily armored Israeli Goliath lifts his hand to his face in chagrin, appearing ridiculous next to his young foe.

In addition to referencing youth, this theme also co-opts the Israeli national myth, in which Israel is likened to David, doing battle against the many Goliaths looking to destroy it. According to Israeli historian Ilan Pappe, Israeli’s foundation as a state has been mythologized in the official Israeli historiography. In this historical narrative, the 1948 conflict between Israel, Palestinian Arabs, and neighboring Arab states represented a kind of “David and Goliath war” from which Israel emerged the winner. These poster images, which draw on this theme, make a statement about both the land and this traditional historical narrative. First, the physical space of modern-day Israel-Palestine is the same geographic setting as the story of David and Goliath,

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bringing the land question to the forefront in these images. Secondly, in referencing this story, which is religiously important to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, and symbolically important to the Israeli national myth, these posters mock Israel’s self-image, calling on this theme to instead represent the Palestinian cause.

These images also allowed nationalist organizations to symbolically claim this protest activity as its own, emanating from its leadership and direction. This claim was important not only within the Territories, but also for its international relations as it sought to capitalize politically on the events of the Intifada, which showed Israel and the world that Israel’s continued occupation of Palestinian territories was “not without significant costs from the viewpoint of the Jewish state.”

Consequently, the PLO sought to present a diplomatic peace plan, based on the events of the Intifada, which could induce Israel to agree to withdraw from the Territories. According to Mark Tessler, Palestinians “had shown serious interest in a two-state solution since the mid-1970s, and the PLO had since the 1982 Arab summit in Fez been officially committed to mutual recognition between Israel and a Palestinian state located in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital.” Throughout 1988, PLO leaders and associates made various statements in support of mutual recognition and a two-state solution, which were intended to convince Israel and the United States of its moderate stance and willingness to negotiate. In June 1988 Bassam Abu Sharif, a close political adviser of Yasser Arafat, published a statement calling for a two-state solution and for international guarantees to ensure peace. Another statement, by Faysal Husayni, head of the Arab Studies Society in Jerusalem and close associate of Arafat, also

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94 Ibid., 720.
promoted the idea of a two-state solution and laid out a detailed plan for the establishment of a Palestinian state, with Arafat as its president and leaders from the UNLU coalition as members of a legislative body. These attempts to initiate diplomatic talks on the basis of a two-state solution culminated in the November 1988 Declaration of Independence for the State of Palestine, issued by Arafat at the nineteenth session of the Palestinian National Council, the legislative branch of the PLO. Here, the PNC formally affirmed its desire to pursue a two-state solution, and also called for an international peace conference, for Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, for the settlement of the issue of Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war, and for UN guarantees of peace and security in the region.

The Declaration also reveals the PLO assertion that the events of the Intifada were the basis for a proposed peace settlement and the organization’s claim over those events as justification for its leadership. In the declaration, the PNC asserted that through the events of the Intifada, the Palestinian people affirmed their “deeply rooted national unity and their full adherence to the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the sole, legitimate representative of our people, all our people, wherever they congregate in our homeland or outside it” through “the participation of the Palestinian masses – their unions, their vocational organisations, their students, their workers, their farmers, their women, their merchants, their landlords, their artisans, their academics – in the intifada through its Unified National Command and the popular committees that were formed in the urban neighbourhoods, the villages, and the camps.” What is more, the “struggle of the children of the RPGs outside our homeland and the struggle of the

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95 Ibid., 722.

children of the sacred stones inside it blend into a single revolutionary melody,” which “have destroyed the illusion our people’s enemies have harboured that they can turn the occupation of Palestinian land into a permanent fait accompli and consign the Palestinian issue to oblivion.”

Thus, the Declaration argued that the chance for peace and the establishment of a Palestinian state was made possible through the events and activism of the Intifada, in particular the actions and deeds of the young men of the stones, which, in turn, was only possible through the longstanding leadership of the PLO, Palestinians’ sole legitimate representative. By the start of 1989, the PLO had begun tenuous talks with the United States based on the notion of a two-state solution.

For its part, Hamas seems to have taken a different approach to the Intifada, focusing more intently on local engagement of young male activists, rather than on international politics. Initially, many Palestinians were mistrustful of Hamas, as rumors circulated that they were being funded by Israel as a way to undermine nationalist leadership. Thus, Hamas cooperated with UNLU directives during the first year of the uprising, and only began to gain influence and power after the PLO began making overtures of peace and territorial compromise with Israel, which many Palestinians rejected and which Hamas staunchly opposed. Beginning in 1988, Hamas started competing with UNLU for control over day-to-day agenda of the Intifada. They issued rival bayanat, which described the protest activity of the Intifada, and the Palestinian

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97 Ibid.


struggle more broadly, in Islamic religious and historical terms and argued against any peace agreement that would include territorial compromise or recognition of Israel.

Whereas UNLU leaflets generally stressed the common nationalist aims and modern history of all Palestinians, Hamas instead framed the uprising in religious terms. Hamas materials referenced personalities and events from ancient Islamic history to argue for continued rebellion. Additionally, while UNLU leaflets stressed the commonalities of Muslims and Christians, Hamas materials used language specific to an Islamic context. For instance, in Hamas leaflet number 4, Hamas calls upon “our Muslim people on our soil purified with the blood of the Companions of the Prophet.” In several other leaflets, Hamas references *ribat*, Muslims who “settled in countryside during the period of the Muslims conquests to defend the borders,” beginning the communiqués by addressing “Muslims on the soil of the *ribat*” and imploring them to action to continue with protests in the name of Islam. Likewise, Hamas framed its opposition to compromise with Israel in its *bayanat* in Islamic terms, stating that renouncing any part of the land of Palestine would constitute “a concession of a principle and a recognition of the usurping murderers’ false claim to a land” and evidence of weakness of “Arab boldness or Muslim strength.” The only solution was the continued use of force.

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100 “Paper War,” *Speaking Stones*, 32.
101 “Leaflet No. 4,” *Speaking Stones*, 208.
102 “Paper War,” *Speaking Stones*, 32.
103 “Leaflet No. 6,” *Speaking Stones*, 211.
104 “Leaflet No. 28,” *Speaking Stones*, 239.
Hamas *bayanat* made fewer explicit mentions of women or of gendered views of the Intifada and the roles of men and women in the struggle, relying instead on religious Islamic references and imagery. However, a careful reading of Hamas leaflets show that Hamas saw the primary actors of the Intifada to be young men, and framed criticism of the nationalist leadership as a betrayal of both the Palestinian people generally and of these young male activists in particular. Leaflet 45, for instance, Hamas referred to “our sons the pupils” as “the beacons of knowledge, the way of integrity and light, the hopes of this nation” and implored students to organize their time so that, despite school closures, they may continue to study and learn and attend school whenever possible so that the schools “will continue to be natural hothouses for shaping the generations and building the nation and raising its sons on the basis of the knowledge, the morality, the nobility, and the manliness which God wanted the Islamic nation to possess.”

Elsewhere, Hamas leaflets called upon the “sons of our heroic Palestinian people” and “Brothers of Islam on the road to liberation.”

Additionally, Hamas’ criticism of the nationalist leadership was framed as a betrayal of these young male activists. In a “Special Leaflet” from November 1988, Hamas called on “our brothers… the members of the National Council” and criticized the nationalist leadership for considering a peace settlement with Israel, asking, “which of the martyrs authorized you? … which of the widows has approached you in supplication?” The Leaflet went on to condemn any negotiation or settlement with Israel as “a sword in the back of the children of the stones.”

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106 “Leaflet No. 45,” *Speaking Stones*, 263.


Likewise, another “Special Leaflet” from April 1990 was written from the perspective of a Hamas fighter held in an Israeli prison and criticizes the PLO and Fatah for their treatment of Hamas fighters in detention. The writer claimed that PLO and Fatah fighters and organizers in prison prevent Hamas fighters from accessing any of the small comforts the nationalist groups secure for their own people, such as “[activity within the framework of] the national, educational, sports, and other committees, and even the service committees” as well as “winter clothes… and writing utensils.” What is more, the writer accused nationalist detainees of “prohibiting some of the Muslim young people from delivering the Friday khutba (sermon),” while taking that privilege for themselves even though, the bayan claims, “some of the (nationalist) preachers of the khutba are not worshippers.”

Like UNLU, Hamas also sought to encourage, direct, and lay claim to the activism of young males, albeit in a slightly different way; by empowering young male activists to actualize Hamas’ program of social Islamization. In its charter, Hamas defined nationalism as “part and parcel of the religious faith,” merging the religious and the political, and maintained that the best way to fight the occupation is through a strengthening and revival of Islamic values in society, so that enemy forces cannot erode and weaken Muslim society and “confuse the thinking of Muslims, revile their heritage, discredit their ideals, to be followed by a military invasion.”

According to Gilles Kepel, Islamist movements frequently use laws and regulations related to women as a gauge with which to determine how Islamic a society is. For Islamist groups, these laws typically relate to personal status issues, such as divorce, child custody, and marriage, and

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111 “Hamas Charter (1988).”
women’s dress in public spaces. As such, visible symbols of Islamic female piety, especially the *hijab*, or headscarf, carry important social and political significance. Thus, calls by Islamist groups for society to become more pious and devout are often framed as calls for women to adopt Islamic dress, sometimes instituted into law, as in Iran under the Islamist regime there, and other times strongly encouraged through social pressure. For Hamas, the *hijab* is considered an integral part of Palestinian indigenous culture, and its adoption does not represent an imposition of Islamic dress on society, but rather a “restoration” of the headscarf to its traditional place. Said Khalid Meshal, head of the Hamas political bureau, explained Hamas’ position on the *hijab* in a 2009 interview, saying that Hamas “derives its vision from the people's culture and religion” and thus “features of religion in Gaza society are genuine and spontaneous; they have not been imposed by any authority other than the faith and conviction of the observant.” Nevertheless, Hamas has actively sought to promote the adoption of Islamic dress among women from its inception.

During the First Intifada, Hamas adopted a policy of social Islamization that encouraged women to adopt the *hijab* as both a statement of religious conviction and nationalist commitment and empowered young men to enforce this policy. According to Rema Hammami, under Hamas’ influence the *hijab* took on new meanings and significations in Palestine. She argues that while many Palestinian women had always worn a type of headscarf as a matter of tradition, the headscarf was generally a marker of age and social and regional background, rather than a

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political statement. By contrast, Hamas’ positions on female modesty during the Intifada created a social and political landscape that endowed female Islamic dress with a new, political meaning. It became a sign of resistance to the occupation, homogenized in a style of long overcoat known colloquially as “shari’a dress, which have no precedents in indigenous Palestinian dress,” and women from all social, economic, and age groups were encouraged to adopt it equally.\textsuperscript{114}

Hamas framed these calls for Islamic dress within a larger discourse of resistance and uprising, and relied upon young male activists, operating through informal neighborhood channels, to promote and enforce Islamic dress among women during the Intifada years. Graffiti with slogans such as “Daughter of Islam, abide by Shari’a Dress”\textsuperscript{115} and “Hamas Considers the Unveiled to be Collaborators with the Enemy”\textsuperscript{116} appeared on walls in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and groups of young men circulated in neighborhoods harassing and in some cases attacking uncovered women.\textsuperscript{117} Rema Hammami asserts that the social and political atmosphere of pressure to adopt Islamic dress created during the First Intifada had created a situation in which even those women most resistant to the headscarf had begun wearing it “in certain contexts, solely out of fear.” She describes one incident, related to her by a woman from a refugee camp in Gaza, in which she got into a fight with a gang of boys when she left the house


\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 25 – 26.


uncovered.\textsuperscript{118} Hamas thus provided young activists with a meaningful symbolic religious framework with which to understand the importance of their activism, as well as the authority to Islamize local areas.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 26.
Chapter 5 - Building a Masculine Intifada

The centrality of the activism of boys and young men in the discourse of Palestinian nationalist organizations and in the social policies of Hamas had three main consequences. First, the focus on male youth activism helped to shape participation in the Intifada into a masculine rite of passage from childhood into adulthood. Second, the shebab – young male activists – responded to their perceived importance to the uprising through increasingly violent confrontations with Israeli forces. Third, this focus on male activism problematized active and public female participation in the Intifada as a possible threat to the sustainability of the uprising, driving female activists out of the public space and masculinizing the Intifada itself.

While it is difficult if not impossible to quantitatively determine to what degree the importance of male youth activism in both Intifada discourse and policy influenced the actions and attitudes of young men themselves, Ian Hacking’s “Looping Effect” theory suggests that social groups – in this case, the shebab – are aware of the ideas circulating about them and respond to these ideas in a variety of ways. It is therefore possible that the steady images and imagery of shebab circulating in UNLU and Hamas bayanat and in UNLU posters, and the empowerment of young men by Hamas to Islamize their local areas, prompted changes in the shebab and how they thought of themselves and their activism. One piece of evidence to support this idea is the development of Intifada activism as a masculine rite of passage, marking the transition from boyhood to manhood. Several anthropological studies have reported on this phenomenon during the Intifada, arguing that to take part in Intifada activism was to assert one’s manhood and achieve the social standing of an adult man at a very young age. According to Leila Hudson, the Intifada developed into a “self-initiated test of manhood” in a society under occupation that provided few other outlets for boys to become men. Hudson notes that as boys
grew older, they took on greater responsibility in the protests and stone throwing, writing that “children who chanted slogans two years ago are throwing stones now, and the shabab who threw stones can now sell their labor in the so-called ‘slave-markets’ of Tel Aviv, safe in the knowledge that they are men.” Julie Peteet expands upon this dynamic, arguing that taking part in the violence of the Intifada, both as perpetrators and victims, represented an important rite of passage for young Palestinian males that transformed them socially from children to full men empowered by their communities with “responsibility for community affairs, mainly such tasks as mediation in disputes and participating in popular tribunals to try suspected collaborators,” all tasks that, traditionally, would fall to much older men.

Similarly, the prominence of poor and working class shebab also challenged traditional class relationships. While Intifada activism encompassed all segments of Palestinian society, those in the forefront of the movement were “subaltern male youths from the refugee camps, villages, and urban popular quarters,” and thus not from among the traditional urban political elite who would, under normal circumstances, have “striven for leadership.” Additionally, under Israeli occupation, many of these elites had acted as interlocutors between Israeli authorities and the local Palestinian population through various networks of patronage. Julie Peteet asserts that the bodily experiences of violence that served as a rite of passage for so many young men from poor and working class backgrounds was less commonly experienced by

119 Hudson, “Coming of Age in Occupied Palestine,” 112.


121 Ibid., 41.

122 Bucaille, Growing Up Palestinian, 43 – 44.
members of more privileged classes. Thus, within the context of the Intifada, these elites who had not been “credentialized by violence” became the objects of scorn by members of the lower classes who faced such violence every day.\textsuperscript{123}

The second piece of evidence to suggest that the shebab responded to their central place in the Intifada is the increasing violence on the part of the shebab during the final years of the uprising, particularly against alleged Palestinian collaborators with Israel. According to a report by Human Rights Watch, “an estimated 822 alleged collaborators died at the hands of other Palestinians between 1988 and April 1994.”\textsuperscript{124} Many of these were accused of collaboration with Israel not so much due to any actual proof of collaboration, but due to involvement in unsavory trades, such as prostitution and drugs, or due to longstanding personal vendettas. While difficult to qualify this type of violence, sources suggest that the primary source of violence against suspected collaborators was “less disciplined youth who assumed a larger role in the Intifada after more mature leaders were imprisoned.”\textsuperscript{125} This development suggests not only that the local organization and leadership that had been in place at the start of the Intifada had broken down over the course of the uprising, leaving space for younger and perhaps less politically mature activists to take their places, but also that younger boys had internalized a particularly violent interpretation of their national duty. What is more, the widespread understanding of Intifada

\textsuperscript{123} Peteet, “Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance,” 41.


activism as a form of male initiation into adulthood suggests that not just daring, cunning, and strength, but also violence, had become an important part of that masculine image.

Finally, this focus on male activism served to problematize the active and public participation of women in the Intifada. According to Amal Amireh, calls for women to veil during the Intifada represented a desire to re-empower young men in an exclusive role as active actors in the uprising. Amireh asserts that because the “front” of the Intifada was the home – the neighborhoods, streets, and houses of the Occupied Territories – and not some far off battle field, women were active participants in the movement, taking part in rallies, demonstrations, rock throwing, and boycotts alongside men. However, politically active women were at odds with the traditional image of the “Palestinian freedom fighter,” a strong male hero sacrificing his life for the homeland. Female activists were consequently problematized during the second stage of the Intifada as a possible weakness to the national movement in Palestine, particularly because they were imagined as sexually vulnerable. Stories about women working as double agents for Israel, using sex to recruit young Palestinian men as Israeli collaborators, circulated in Intifada discourse. Likewise, the threat of rape in Israeli prisons and detention centers was thought to leave women vulnerable to forced collaboration. Amireh argues that to protect the Intifada from collaboration, it became important to re-domesticate and re-feminize women through the headscarf.\(^{126}\) Although the hijab does not inherently prohibit or prevent women from being politically active, the concurrent empowerment of male activists to police public spaces created an unwelcome and threatening atmosphere in which women were attacked and harassed for their dress as well as for their known political allegiances.

Although not in favor of the hijab campaign and attacks on women, nationalist leadership took no steps to directly confront and end this program. UNLU Leaflet 43 looked to address the issue of the hijab in August 1989, after a series of well-publicized attacks on women earlier that summer, which consisted of attacks on bareheaded women and on covered women who were known to be very politically active. UNLU Leaflet 43 called for the end of attacks on women, calling such attacks “disputes” that “serve the enemy and his collaborators.” Soon after, “graffiti appeared on the walls in Gaza proclaiming: ‘Those caught throwing stones at women will be treated as collaborators,’ and ‘Women have a great role in the intifada and we must respect them.’” Nevertheless, despite this criticism of attacks on women, UNLU did not take any practical steps to prevent women from being accosted. According to Rema Hammami, many politically active women believed that UNLU avoided taking concrete action because it preferred to focus on maintaining the initiative in the “national consensus” while ignoring more divisive issues such as women’s rights and religion raised by the Islamists.\textsuperscript{127}

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

In total, the empowerment of young male activists both as the discursive heart of the Intifada and as agents of Hamas’ social policy transformed the Intifada itself into a symbolically masculine endeavor, one that defined and created manhood and increasingly excluded femininity, despite the very active involvement of women in all aspects of the uprising. At the same time, accessing the activism of young men enabled the nationalist and Islamist leaderships to lay claim on the Intifada and bolster their claims to speak for and lead the Palestinian people, claims that benefited both nationalist leaders and Hamas in the years following the end of the Intifada.

The Intifada ended on September 13, 1993 when the state of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) signed the Declaration of Principles of the Oslo Peace Accords. The Declaration of Principles established a framework through which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could eventually be resolved via a two-state solution. With the Oslo Accords, the PLO, under the direction of Yasser Arafat, recognized Israel’s right to exist and formally renounced terrorism, and Israel recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Israel agreed to deploy their troops away from Palestinian population centers, and grant Palestinians self-rule in certain areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A year later, the Gaza Jericho Agreement established the Palestinian Authority, the interim ruling body for Palestinian lands. Hamas strongly rejected the peace process, criticizing the secular nationalist PLO for compromising on Palestinian land and for acknowledging Israel’s right to exist.\footnote{128 Tessler, A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 755- 763, 818.} Although secular nationalist Fatah dominated the Palestinian Authority elections, surveys taken in Gaza and the West Bank in the 1990s and early 2000s indicate that support among Palestinians in the
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ocupied Territories for Hamas’ leadership remained quite high throughout this period. One
survey, conducted in October 1993, aiming to gauge how Palestinians would vote if elections
were held that day, determined that 13.3% of those surveyed would have voted for a Hamas-
affiliated candidate. Another poll held the following month, in November 1993, found that
14.6% of respondents would vote for a Hamas candidate. Another poll taken a year later, in
1994, shows that, although support for Hamas fell by around 3%, 10% of those surveyed would
support a Hamas candidate. While support for Fatah and other nationalist organizations
remained consistently much higher than support for Hamas during these years, the fact that
Hamas could become even the third or fourth most likely choice only a few years after its
founding speaks to the group’s legitimacy in the eyes of many people and its perceived ability to
lead. Support for Hamas continued to grow as Palestinians became frustrated by the peace
process and observed the ineptitude of the nationalist Palestinian Authority government in
comparison to the efficiency of Hamas-run Islamic social services in Gaza. This dissatisfaction
eventually boiled over in 2000 into a second uprising, the Al-Aqsa Intifada, which was set apart
from the first Intifada by both its increased violence—including numerous suicide bomb attacks–
and by the more prominent role of Hamas.

129 “Public Opinion Poll #2 - Palestinian Elections, October 5-10, 1993,” Palestinian Center for

130 “Public Opinion Poll #3 – Palestinian Elections, November 11, 1993,” Palestinian Center for

Many of the young men who had participated in the first Intifada as children and teenagers also participated in the second. According to Laetitia Bucaille, many shebab became particularly disenchanted with the new Palestinian Authority, which ushered in the reassertion of the modes of class and generational authority that had been up-ended and challenged by the prominence and importance of the shebab during the Intifada years. Traditional elites positioned their families for leadership roles in the new PA, and older and more established members of nationalist organizations assumed prominent positions, while the shebab were relocated to relatively low positions, if they found positions in the PA at all. Additionally, the PA took active steps to suppress protests by the shebab, who they saw as a potential threat to the political and social stability of the new regime, and the economic stability of the urban bourgeoisie, which was eager to return to business once the Intifada ended.132 According to Bucaille, these tensions and frustrations are at the heart of the increased violence and ferocity of the shebab during the Al-Aqsa Intifada, as men who thought themselves central to the formation of an independent Palestinian government sought to recapture and reclaim their relevance in a system that marginalized them after its founding. As one of her informants told her, “I spent fifteen years of my life behind bars, and here I am now,” working a lowly job with no sense of satisfaction or the material rewards deserved for a lifetime of sacrifice.133


133 Ibid., 120 – 123.


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