ROUTLEDGE STUDIES ON THE ARAB–ISRAELI CONFLICT

Students and Resistance in Palestine

Books, guns and politics

Ido Zelkovitz

Students and Resistance in Palestine

Exploring the Palestinian student movement from an historical and sociological perspective, this book demonstrates how Palestinian national identity has been built in the absence of national institutions, whilst emphasizing the role of higher education as an agent of social change, capable of crystallizing patterns of national identity.

Focusing on the political and social activities of Palestinian students in two arenas – the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian diaspora – *Students and Resistance in Palestine* covers the period from 1952 to 2000. The book investigates the commonality of the goal of the respective movements in securing independence and the building of a sovereign Palestinian state, whilst simultaneously comparing their development, social tone and the differing challenges each movement faced.

Examining a plethora of sources including: Palestinian student magazines, PLO documents, Palestinian and Arabic news media, and archival records, to demonstrate how the Palestinian Student Movements became a major political player, this book is of interest to scholars and students of Palestinian History, Politics and the Arab–Israeli conflict.

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Acknowledgments

As I believe that academic knowledge should be accessible to all and that history may provide us with a serviceable blueprint, it is my fervent hope that this book will be useful for anyone wishing to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and who believes in the values of academic freedom.

This book, the result of a long period of academic research, based on in-depth study of first-hand sources in Arabic, is directed not only towards the academic community but also to the wider public. For this reason I decided to make the information more accessible in a few places by compromising on the use of scientific transliteration of Arabic to English (and to the original Hebrew). Key terms and names of places and people, familiar to the general public from the media, are written in their familiar forms. So, for example, I have chosen to write Intifada instead of انتفاضة *intifāḍah*, Barghouti instead of Al-Barghuthi, and Fedayeen instead of fidayyon. Likewise in the main text of the book I have adopted simplified spellings while in the notes I have chosen to maintain the original scientific transliterations. This has been to make the book more readable for the general public.

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Dr Ido Zelkovitz
Haifa, June 2014

Introduction

In the years that followed the Second World War, nearly all of the world's nations experienced changes in their institutional structures and relationships with other states. These developments called into question traditional mores for resolving public and personal problems, as well as the conventional assignment of authority for these practices.

Shifts in the social order opened avenues for the political participation of students, whose views had been previously discounted. Student activism is a commonplace historical fact, as old as the most ancient universities. It reached, however, unprecedented levels of intensity and import in its ability to affect the public agenda, especially of states in the thralls of revolutionary political, economic and social modernization.[1]

Students have been a key catalyst of social change since the great transitions in Germany and Austria in the second half of the nineteenth century. Likewise in Czarist Russia, students used the campus as a base of activity and were prominent promulgators of the revolutionary ideal. Especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when higher education was still largely inaccessible, students served as the principal agents for the dissemination of knowledge.

Early in the twentieth century, student movements became increasingly involved in national liberation struggles. In Imperial China, students played a significant role in the overthrow of the royal dynasty and in the acceleration of modernization. Throughout the Afro-Asian campaigns against colonialism, students played a central and instrumental part.[2]

As the twentieth century rolled on, public opinion tended to brand students as politically activist. But what distinguishes "student protest" from any other form of youth protest, we might ask? Does the acquisition of higher education engender in the student state of mind a thrust for deeper social involvement? Do campus amenities of unionizing and incorporation afford students an organizational advantage over the other reference groups of young people? Certainly the answers to these questions are case-specific and depend on circumstances.

One may detect in student struggles, on matters other than tuition, a springboard for inter-generational struggles over broader public concerns.

In a 1968 survey conducted at the peak of the student movement in France, 56 percent of the French public indicated displeasure with student involvement in the public sphere and political arena. Respondents maintained that student activism and other forms of claim making should be limited to academic matters only.[3]

Student activism has been characterized as possessing several socio-organizational traits:

1 The rank and file were principally comprised of youths in their late teens and early twenties.
2 Most students were members of unions that had offices or headquarters.
3 All such unions conducted group activities, most commonly mass demonstrations.
4 The leadership structure of these "movements" consisted of an exclusive circle of leading activists who determined the union's political agenda. At all times, the leadership was challenged to recruit and motivate enough supporters to succeed.
5 For universities and civil authorities, student activism posed a challenged to public order.[4]

The nature of the youth generation motivates its revolts against perceived social and moral injustice. In fact, students' organizational dexterity commonly afforded them greater power, relatively speaking, than that of workers' unions.[5]

Student movements emerged as politically organized unions during the 1930s. In this period, students began to organize in ever larger forums, reaching beyond campus to gain influence on the national stage. As students became more deeply involved, their activities morphed steadily into political struggles authorities were pained to hold in check. Their activism was coordinated with university administrators and demonstrations commonly took place on school grounds. But student movements were by no means contained; their activities targeted a public sphere well beyond the confines of the campus.[6]

To understand the power of student movements, it is necessary to examine two key concepts illustrating the unique status conferred upon and exercised by the universities: autonomy and academic freedom. These notions were embedded within the earliest universities of the Middle Ages. They reflect important aspects of the relationship between academic institutions and the authorities, which wielded both spiritual and temporal power. The sovereign was sworn to shelter the universities within their patronage, to uphold their jurisdictional autonomy, and to refrain from impinging upon their intellectual and institutional freedom. Hence universities were free to decide what to and to whom they would teach.

These principles are enshrined in the 1231 *Parens scientiarum* papal bull of Pope Gregory IX, known as the Magna Carta of Universities. The bull put an end to a two-year strike at the University of Paris, instigated by what had begun as a minor event in which feasting students became overly raucous in a

Latin Quarter tavern. Police had been reluctant to assert force, but were mobilized by the French premier, Regent Blanche of Castile. In the wake of excessive police brutality, all of the lecturers and students of the University of Paris departed the city. The pope's intervention put an end to the strike and codified relations between the university and France's various municipal, royal and ecclesiastical authorities. From then on, French sovereigns were obligated to the autonomy of the institutes of higher education.[7] The independence enjoyed by the universities thereby extended to the students, who comprise the core constituency on any campus.

By the pre-Renaissance era, rulers had realized the importance of universities to the process of nation-building. Though national identification of the fourteenth century did not equate with its posterity, students of various nations assembled in universities where teaching and research was conducted in Latin. Together, they constituted a geographically and politically mobile estate whose members rented their skills and services to monarchs and emperors throughout Europe. Recognizing that sworn fealty to a sovereign was considered a sacred oath, rulers were incentivized to sponsor universities in their purview as centers of political power. Students of the medieval age held concepts such as "fealty" and "deposition" – which implied loyalty to the suzerain – in no less esteem than concepts that, centuries later, national movements would sanctify as worth dying for on the battlefield.[8]

However, despite early precepts of autonomy and academic freedom that coalesced around universities in the Middle Ages, it is difficult to retrospectively discern many durable commonalities between their nature and function. With such variation among universities, it is hardly surprising that "student movements" reflect even greater diversity in their constitution and methods.

This great variance among student movements is due, in the first place, to the diversity of cultures and societies in which they operate around the world. In addition, relationships between universities and governments also vary with the multeity of state political configurations. Concerning the organizational structure and operation of the academic system itself, great diversity also exists between and within countries. Therein lies the difficulty in constructing a singular model for an analysis of relations between students, universities and the general public. On the other hand, microscopic investigations may prove equally limited in the drawing of encompassing conclusions.[9]

Student movements of the Middle East took a bit longer to ripen as politically apposite forces than their western counterparts. In the earlier decades of the twentieth century, their numbers were too few to acquire the political power of a mass movement. Yet at the conclusion of the Second World War, universities of the Arab world were poised for a great leap forward. By 1980, university graduates in the Arab world were estimated to number around 1.5 million.[10]

The authoritarian regimes of the Arab nations were well aware of the latent revolutionary potential of the young generation and considered student movements a risk to the public order. Employing customary surveillance,

these governments attempted to cultivate close relations with the heads of student movements. Already characteristically insecure, fierce competition between Egypt, Syria and Iraq over dominion of the Arab nation heightened sovereign anxiety over their tenuous status. At the same time, the advent of the cold war to the Middle East gave every authoritarian regime, irrespective of alliance, reason to fear any form of civil unrest. For their part, the Soviets sought a brand of political influence that could not be derived through economic and military intervention.

Despite the generally socialist tendencies of most Arab regimes, Soviet attempts to procure independent bases of influence raised suspicions. Indeed, students could serve as a springboard for political influence. In other parts of the developing world, left-wing student activism was primarily directed against nascent alignment with the United States and the West. Yet their objections did not translate by default to blind support of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) or its communist ideology.[11]

Moreover, student movements that initially defined themselves as the New Left were rapidly disillusioned with both communism and the Soviet Union. The conservative working classes were disinclined toward revolution and the USSR that proved impotent to liberate mankind from the evils of western capitalism. Rather, their repressive, bureaucratic systems compounded the subjugation of man.[12]

Despite their affinity with the slogans and parlance of socialism, student movements have always maintained their nationalist character. Indeed, national identity is a primary component of one's robustness. Political regimes of all colors were adept at playing on the nationalist proclivities of youths, winning students' emotional and ideological ardor.

In this context, ideology may be perceived as a tool of control. Ideologies channel and motivate individuals to act to their own ends with individuals operating as "subjects." But ideologies tend also to have "agendas," or independent sub-ideologies, which all come together under the umbrella of national doctrine. Thus the individual subject is rendered subordinate to the collective.[13]

On the national and political scene, the role of the university has grown gradually more central, especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the weakening of the religious impulse and increased professional specialization on campus.[14] In Europe, in particular after the First World War, universities served as important centers of knowledge, education and values, and played a significant role in the founding of nations.[15] As accumulated knowledge became an ever more integral component of national strength, these hubs became recipients of state budget allocations.

During the 1960s, some student movements protested this role of the universities. Inspired by the Berkeley student revolt, which unfolded between September 10, 1964, and January 4, 1965, after a university decision to limit the scope of sanctioned political activism on campus. Allegedly, the student movement at Berkeley had wrongly exploited the campus's "ex-territorial" status.

Interestingly, the greatest student revolts were initiated amidst affluence. This seems to stem from the combining of three factors over time:

1 *The mass democratization of education*: Since the conclusion of the Second World War, the higher education system had experienced massive influxes of students. Student populations in England and France, among others, more than doubled. Hence higher education had become accessible to additional classes and social groups. This often led to educational disparity between parents and their children, which deepened the gap in social awareness between them.
2 *The obsolescence of the wherefores of higher education*: Despite higher education's aim to qualify graduates for work in a technologically advanced world, it still perceived its role in the terms of humanism at the foundation of "liberal education." A university's intellectual expectations of its students were inordinately greater than those of the reality awaiting them beyond graduation.
3 *The extension of youth*: The novel extension of one's youth to 21 or 22 years was unique to the period following the Second World War. Whereas the majority of teenagers previously went off to work, this was now largely postponed. Ultimately, some 20 percent of 18–22 year olds did not work. These youngsters lived on campuses, whose dormitories often resembled barracks, with adult supervision. The cultural differences between these youths and their chaperones, augmented by the generational gap, often served a light trigger for rebellion.[16]

The student revolutions of the 1960s became a prominent and lasting feature of the West. "They were supported by intellectuals, and the CIA identified these restless youths as part of a worldwide phenomenon."[17] Though originating in western thinking and budding from western soils, revolutionary thinking was nonetheless integrated into the realities of developing countries. It would later return to its native lands, though metamorphosed and dressed in the exotic garb of "Castroism," "Maoism," "Neo-Trotskyism," and the like.

Universities as centers of political power in the Arab world

When considering the role of universities as centers of political and cultural power in the Arab world, one must accord highest honors to Egypt, as the first and most important cultural–academic center of the Arab world throughout the 1950s. The universities of Cairo underwent a process of stabilization during the early years of the Free Officers Regime, with President Jamal Abd Al-Nasir keenly aware of the power of student demonstrations. As the government stabilized, it endeavored to invest in its universities, which were heading toward nationalization. In 1955, the universities of Egypt saw the establishment of student unions, whose representatives headed the encompassing National Egyptian Student Association.[18]

The Egyptian state considered universities an apt tool for political socialization. Despite the warm slogans professing academic freedom, the state regularly intervened in the nomination of faculty and staff. Authorities maintained a physical presence at all universities, whose security departments were subordinate not to university administrators as is common in the West, but to the National Security Authority.[19]

Egypt was, in many ways, an early pioneer in the reshaping of the Arab world. Its universities served as an academic, organizational and conceptual model for universities emerging elsewhere in the region throughout the second half of the twentieth century.

Cairo and Beirut held similar attraction for many of the region's youths who yearned for higher education. Egyptian prestige had soared following Jamal Abd al-Nasir's thwarting of the joint French, British and Israeli attack in 1956. The president was seen in the Arab world as a symbol of resistance. Mohamed Berrada, the Moroccan writer who was studying in Egypt at that time, described the summer of 1956 as a once-in-a-lifetime period, with Jamal Abd al-Nasir as its pan-Arabism icon.

> The voice of Nasser – penetrating, gripping, challenging, and sincere – rang out with a spontaneity that came straight at people's emotions. Hearts surrendered to the rhythmic waves and magical tones, and blazed as he articulated deeply buried sentiments. Throats burned as they cheered the hero who has raised the country's head proud and high.[20]

After 1956, the nationalization of the Egyptian academic system accelerated. As part of the struggle for prestige in the Arab world, Egypt subsidized tuition for local students, fostering in them a sense of dependency. The state wanted to ensure that upon graduation these beneficiaries would be absorbed into Egypt's sprawling and bureaucratic labor system, a process that would help create a new middle class of public servants. In addition, Egypt flung open the gates of higher education to students across the Arab world.[21]

The decision to admit all international students derived from an impulse to indoctrinate internally within Egyptian society and externally, elsewhere in the Arab world. By accentuating its cultural superiority and making higher education available to all students, the state enlisted students to Egypt's causes and presented the nation as a paragon of inter-Arab progress.[22]

The Palestinian student movement congealed as the various Arab countries gradually developed their own attitudes toward local student movements. By the 1950s, Palestinian youths were uniquely positioned in comparison with their counterparts elsewhere in the Arab world.

The socio-political collapse brought on by the Nakba left Palestinians devoid of institutions of leadership or guidance. The formation of an all-Palestine government in the Gaza Strip after the war were intended by supporters of Mufti Hajj Amin al-Hussayni as a form of resistance to Jordanian annexation of the West Bank – a feat accomplished by Jordanian King Abdullah in 1950.

While Jordan's reign over the West Bank continued until June 1967, the all-Palestine government's scope of jurisdiction was limited to partial representation of the Palestinian nation within institutions of the Arab League. This representation withered until it lacked legitimacy altogether well before the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in May 1964.[23]

The lack of territorial footing, representative political bodies and nationally recognized leadership created a vacuum waiting to be filled. Palestinian university students constituted a nucleus – a seed of regeneration – for which the Palestinian national movement longed.

This movement played a principal role in formation of the Palestinian national identity after 1948, a mythos that developed under unique circumstances and which comprises a multiplicity of historical narratives. In the Palestinian context, this heterogeneity carries real significance, not merely in the rivalry between the major groupings of Zionist and Palestinian narratives, but in the fact that the Palestinian national vision itself contained myriad cross-currents and internal contradictions.[24]

Like other Arab national identities, the Palestinian national identity was a product of numerous ideologies. Its development can be seen in retrospect to have been influenced by several prominent Middle Eastern ideologies, including Arab nationalism, the Pan-Islamism and political Islam. In consideration of the development of the Palestinian national identity, one must also recognize the colonial parceling of the region into contemporary states, and the continuous struggle with the Zionist movement for dominion over the land.

The goal of this book

This book illuminates the character of the Palestinian student movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and throughout the Palestinian diaspora. The basic premise argues the existence of two separate movements, each with its own pace and social constitution. An analysis of this dichotomy is conducted through extensive research and archived testimony.

Despite their essential socio-political differences, the two movements operated within a unified cultural field toward a shared goal: national independence and the establishment of a sovereign state. These objectives often received vague interpretations and have been altered over time (between the years 1952 and 2000) in accordance with the individual political outlooks of various Palestinian factions.

In addition, this book investigates the role of higher education in the Palestinian political system. It focuses on the political role of the Palestinian universities and on their dialectics with the student population.

In this light, my intension is not to focus on a singular political discourse, but to analyze a variety of discourses and to link them to the daily life of the Palestinian student. Beyond the political sphere, this book attempts to examine the multifold issues Palestinian students had to deal with and the relationship between student and academic institution. This is carried out

under the guiding assumption that both student and university were integral to a society devoted to achieving liberation and self-determination.

Owing to the scarcity of research in this field, this book should naturally endeavor to shed new light on certain issues, most significantly, the history of the Palestinian student movement in the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The academic corpus on this subject is far from exhaustive and receives considerable attention in this book. Among other matters, this aspect of the research deals with issues of political socialization and includes an examination of cultural expression and of Palestinian students' daily challenges. Such issues are examined in the context of the Palestinian national struggle. In addition, the research provides insight into each of the parties that have operated in the Palestinian student arena. It examines their various ideological orientations and provides a semiotic analysis of the messages they sought to convey.

The book discusses the question of structuring identity in the absence of national institutions, as well as the role of higher education as an agent of social change and catalyst of national identity formation. The approach offers an innovative contribution to understanding the role of students within the Palestinian national movement. Concerning the tone, I have endeavored to heed the researcher Charles Tilly, who defined social history as the "effects of great changes on the lives of simple people."[25]

The book examines the contributions of Palestinian students to the construction of both nation and country along a timeline spanning 50 years. Their involvement in these processes is studied from the distinct perspectives of political discourse and practical activism in the public sphere.

For this reason, I undertake to illustrate the importance of higher education to the construction of Palestinian national identity. Primarily, I focus on the Palestinian discourse during the transformation from establishing a nation and institutional infrastructure in the diaspora, to the cooperative effort of constructing the Palestinian Authority in the territories, a representational form of state-building.

Research methods

The core of the present work uses the methods of the discipline of history. However, in order to examine select terms more closely and to clarify certain social processes, we find recourse in a strategically interdisciplinary approach.

In the spirit of Walter Benjamin, who claimed history's role is not to perpetuate the past, but to attempt its reconstruction, this book endeavors to expose Palestinian students' lost hope in their struggle for recognition and self-definition.[26]

Dealing with social processes entreats the researcher to rely on theories and concepts taken from the world of social sciences. While I remain loyal to my historical methodology and base my analysis on concrete texts, I attempt also to reach what Clifford Geertz termed a *thick description*. To Geertz, "cultural

analysis is not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning."[27] Moreover, the goal of the thick description is to draw out a semiotic interpretations of events. In addition, this work relies on insight from the Sociology of Knowledge. This is done in the interest of elucidating a socio-cultural state of affairs, cognizant that values and perspectives are based in social realities. Society is not merely a channel for relaying ideas, opinions, points of view and theoretical assessments, it is also a creator of the common sense which shapes its culture, molding the values that make its reality self-evident. This applies also to the treatment of the role of universities as a sub-sphere of the public arena, which shaped an ascendant generation of leaders.

Concerning the universities and their immediate surroundings, this research explores "the world of the living," a term that harkens back to Durkheim and the phenomenological sociology of Mead and Schutz. It is the world of daily life, the total realm of the personal experience, including the mental inventory of previous experience. It is a world often considered self-evident, wherein individuals strive to realize pragmatic goals. According to Habermas, the world of the living is the horizon of consciousness, which includes both the public and private spheres. In this dimension, Habermas emphasizes the media as a fashioner of identity. Our own figurative "world of the living" is herein comprised of the universities and political factions of student activists.[28]

Due to the uniqueness of this work, each period examined relies on a different type of source. The first sections derive mainly from primary source memoirs and necessarily receive due methodological emphasis. This type of literature can serve as a useful source for the reconstruction of a period's social atmosphere. Our reading dismisses the folly of singular "historical truth," illustrated by Uriel Dann's assertion that certain authors, biographers and historians in particular tend to portray their principal character in a favorable light.[29]

In addition, one must take into account that residing within the memory of any particular event are pieces of information about the narrator, his life, personality and worldview, and the society of which he is part. The particular narrated memory is a part of its owner's personal identity, but it concurrently shapes that identity. This point is worth noting because it holds valid for both collective and individual identities. In the collective, just as in the individual, a reciprocal interaction takes place between the memory and the immediate needs common to the collective. The collective memory of a shared past serves not only as a tool for describing historical occurrences, but also as a channel for delivering messages and expressing the beliefs, needs, distress and ambitions of the individuals who formed it.

That the discourse of the New Left prevalent among western revolutionaries fighting for social and governmental change in the 1960s did not trickle into the political language of the Palestinian student movement remains a question of great socio-economic interest. Though one may spy occasional adaptations of the lexicon,[30] it was adopted only in the vaguest use of

terminology such as "revolutionary action" and "armed struggle." The larger economic and social prisms of the original "student revolution" played no major part in Palestinian student thinking, parlance or the social reality of the time. Rather, evident connections revolved around the New Left's romanticism of guerrilla warfare in Algiers, Vietnam and Cuba. In accordance with Frantz Fanon's supposition of violence as a positive and instrumental force for achieving various goals, the New Left in effect took up the mantle of the Third World.[31]

Such perceptions of the New Left aligned with the elementary worldview of Fatah, the most prominent student faction in the Palestinian political arena from the mid-1960s until the end of the twentieth century. But unlike the leftist and communist fronts, Fatah recognized the importance of traditionalism in the determination of social behavior patterns. Moreover, the movement saw in religion a counterweight to the excesses of Marxism.

Yet the discourse of the New Left did play a significant role. Its inclusion in a comprehensive ideological frame of activism for the liberation of Palestine created a malleable political space for the Fatah-led student movement. It afforded them leeway to join other world movements and establish powerful ad-hoc coalitions in Europe, Latin America and the nations of Africa and Asia. These coalitions served as a tactical weapon in the diplomatic campaign carried out by the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS). Despite the organizational weakness typical of Palestinian constituencies, the GUPS happened upon the magical formula, whereby the individual could be absorbed into a wider social paradigm.

Contrary to similar organizations elsewhere, the GUPS did not use social class, ideology or religion as conditions for admission. Rather, it followed in the footsteps of Fatah, exalting the society's simplest common denominator: a willingness to fight. It was a wakeup call for a cognitive social shift meant to instill and sharpen a sense of critical politics within young Palestinians according to which, "*they* are the source of our problems."

The primacy of the GUPS made it a key representative of the Palestinian cause in the inter-Arab arena. Unlike other young players, the student movement was not under the control of a guiding, containing or repressive state benefactor. Rather, the movement acted as an independent entity forging an agenda for the youths of a refugee nation exiled from their homeland and longing for the solace of socio-economic viability.

Calling for a coming-of-age of a stateless nation, the GUPS expanded. It knew how to take full advantage of the exile and displacement of the Palestinian people. These feelings enabled the creation of more symbolic, nationalistic ways of life that took the place of traditional loyalty to clan and village. As was noted by the researcher Homi Bhabha, "The nation fills the void left in the uprooting of communities and kin."[32] But traditional ties did not evaporate completely. The collective memory of the refugee experience was channeled for the empowerment of the individual. Family bonds and regional relationships comprised the incubator within which a new national

and political identity was forged. From the beginning, patterns of nationalism were expressed in the lexicon of armed struggle. The essential vagueness of this appellation has hence required polishing, some reweaving of guiding threads, to undergird the scaffolding of its ideology.[33]

Student activism served as the meadow upon which the Palestinian political sphere matured, evidenced by the establishment of Fatah in 1959 and, later, by the formation of the PLO as a structure of national representation in 1964. This text analyzes the ideological dimensions and socio-political practices of the Palestinian student movements of both the diaspora and the occupied Palestinian territories. Through bequeathed transition and development, these movements raised successive generations of students who imagined for themselves a sphere of struggle in which they could continue to march. Amidst ever shifting geopolitical tides, student activism must be acknowledged as a cultural phenomenon that has profoundly influenced current events. Despite the distinct realities in which the student movements of the diaspora and occupied Palestinian territories operated, they remained motivated by a common mythos. Each honored the same martyrs and derived its political rituals from a shared political space.

Notes

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1 The rise of a new generation

Palestinian students and the experience of Nakba

"No one knew that this was our last day in Palestine, that this chaos would leave a gap in our soul. And we, the children, did not know that the memory of it was later to haunt the inner history of our whole generation",[1] writes Fawaz Turki, one of the young Palestinians who experienced the Nakba. Turki describes a key element which shaped his identity, while at the same time shedding light on the traumatic, formative experience of an entire generation. In order to understand the issue of Palestinian nationalism, one must heed a wide cross-section of Palestinian society in the aftermath of the watershed year of 1948; though not all Palestinians became refugees, the refugees had come to represent the Palestinian national issue at large. At the same time, inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip were feeling that despite remaining on their own land, their rights and claims upon it had been revoked.[2]

The War of 1948 left the Palestinian body politic in tatters and brought Palestinian political leadership to a standstill. The Palestinian tragedy was one of organizational, political and social devastation, which might have led to a crisis of identity. The younger Palestinian generation coped by adopting political identities that were wider and more comprehensive than the particular national identity (*wataniyya*). In this manner one may explain the proliferation of various groups and parties throughout the 1950s that perceived supra-national identities as a tactical means to expedite the liberation of Palestine. Under Jordanian rule and across the Arab world at large, Palestinians were prominent in the formation and leadership of political parties, including the likes of the *Qawmiyyun al-Arab* movement, the Communist Party, the Muslim Brothers and *Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami*. In 1969, in a retrospective conversation with *al-Tali'ah* editor Lutfi al-Khuli, Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf) described the 1950s as a period during which "we witnessed a peculiar phenomenon. One could rarely meet a Palestinian who was not a member of a party or political movement, from the extreme right to the radical left."[3]

The ascendance of the Palestinian student arena

The 1950s were a stormy period of identity and soul searching in which young Palestinian students felt they should do all within their means to prevent the

name of Palestine from sinking into oblivion.[4] To this end, the most active political body was the Palestinian Student Union in Egypt. Its action manifested in the development of social support networks, cultural activities and the inauguration of political associations based upon regional identity. Abu Iyad, when referring to the process of socialization he underwent as a student, demonstrates the matter clearly:

> My political education was at the time lacking. Being a student of philosophy, I was naturally somewhat familiar with Hegel, Marx and Lenin. I skipped from Michel Aflaq and Sayyid Qutb to adventure novels and detective stories … I immersed myself in the writings of Lenin, whose courage and essential optimism, even when living in exile, infused my spirit … yet I felt closer to Mau Tse-Tung, *whose sense of morality – so I felt – was closer to the spirit of Islam*, than the strict materialism of Lenin.[5]

Students comprised the natural candidate population to lead social change. In addition to their heightened politicization, the students were imbued with a strong desire to protest the injustice reflected in their experience of the Nakba in 1948. Feelings of inequality and alienation that enveloped the young refugees served as a catalyst for their activation. A deeper psychological understanding of the term "activism" is warranted, in the sense that it erases the sins and inadequacies of the past. Activism is perceived as a masculine endowment, a countermeasure to the passivity and sentimentality condemned in Arab political discourse.[6]

In terms of organization, the Palestinian students were aided first and foremost by their direct personal commitment, which manifested in member gatherings, demonstrations and acts of protest and defiance against oppressive regimes, whoever and wherever they were. The totalitarian nature of the Arab regimes at the time, in Egypt in particular, where the most significant core of Palestinian students resided, led such governments to attempt to contain student activities to social and cultural spheres alone.[7]

The first Palestinian student association was founded in Egypt in 1944, located in King Fuad University (the University of Cairo from 1952). Heading this association were Musa Dhib Abu-Ghosh alongside Fathi Balʾawi from al-Azhar University, whose students also joined.[8] Under Balʾawiʾs leadership, the University of Cairo Palestinian Student Association initiated widespread public activity, including the commemoration of important national Palestinian events, social gatherings during religious holidays, and general services to the Palestinian student public.[9]

In fact, up until the founding of Fatah and the crystallization of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Cairo student association was the only political body representing the Palestinian issue. Nevertheless, its members were well aware of the limits of their political power, diluted throughout the Palestinian diaspora, and an inability to establish centralized political

representation. The student association expressed the prevailing mood of the Palestinian generation that had grown up in the aftermath of the Nakba. Until 1952, the association was headed by the Muslim Brothers, whose primary political rivals were the Leftist Bloc and the Communists. In the elections held that year for the leadership of the Palestinian Student Association in the University of Cairo, an independent candidate, unaffiliated with a party promoting any form of supra-national identity, was elected for the first time. His name was Yasir Arafat.

Arafat, who claimed to be a distant relative of the Mufti Haj Amin al-Husayni, enrolled at King Fuad University in 1947 and commenced his studies of civil engineering. In 1948, he suspended his studies for a year and joined the Army of the Holy War (*Jaysh al-Jihad al-Muqadas*) led by ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Husayni.[10] Following the battles, Arafat returned to Cairo and continued his studies. His involvement with the Palestinian Student Association there marked the first stage of his political activism. From elections held shortly before the Free Officers Movement's military coup of 1952, Arafat headed the association until 1956.

From the outset, Arafat aimed high. He initiated a meeting with the new Egyptian president, Major General Muhammad Nagib, who was a known sympathizer of the Muslim Brothers movement. In this meeting, Arafat wanted to bring the problems facing Palestinian students in Egypt, together with the Palestinian issue at large, to the political agenda. He chose dramatic means. To emphasize solidarity between the Palestinians and Egyptians who had fought and died together in the war, a Palestinian delegation headed by Arafat presented to the Egyptian president, who had himself participated in the War of 1948, a petition written in blood. Arafat wanted to convey the message that the Egyptian government should not abandon the Palestinian issue.[11]

One might argue the Palestinian Student Association in the University of Cairo served as proving grounds for the senior leadership of Fatah. Arafat's vice president in the association between the years 1952 and 1956 was Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), who was then considered a member of the Muslim Brothers. Abu Iyad, who went by the name al-Ayyubi,[12] began his career as a student leader in 1951 and eventually succeeded Arafat as head of the Palestinian Student Association, a position he held until 1957. At the end of his tenure, Abu Iyad returned to the Gaza Strip to work as a teacher in the official education system, which was at that time subject to supervision of the Egyptian military regime.

The key to understanding the significance of the political power attributed to the Palestinian Student Association was the mental transformation directed by Arafat. The independent list of candidates under his purvue overcame partisan political indoctrination and focused on the issue of Palestinian identity and services for the student population. Arafat's list included candidates identified with the Muslim Brothers, in addition to Arab Nationalists, Baʾath party members, and independents. Nevertheless,

the general character of the party, Arafat included, was associated with the Muslim Brothers.[13]

Furthermore, Arafat drew his strength in the 1952 Student Association elections from an alliance with Salah Khalaf, also a known associate of the Muslim Brothers. Khalaf was the representative of some one hundred Palestinian student members of the brotherhood, and only after Arafat had given his word that the values and personnel of the Muslim Brothers were to be prioritized politically did Khalaf agree to the establishment of a unified Palestinian party.[14]

From Arafat's point of view it was a cunning political maneuver. One must bear in mind that, despite Arafat's affinity with the Muslim Brothers movement, many within its ranks opposed him on the grounds of his blood ties with Haj Amin al-Husayni. The Mufti of al-Quds was at the time considered by many young Palestinians, who yearned to dispel the haunting shadows of the Nakba, to be a negative figure.[15]

Arafat's compatriots in the leadership of the Cairo-based student association through the mid-1950s included Salim Al-Zaʾnun, Izat Awda, Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), Iyad al-Hamuri, Zuhayr al-ʾAlami, Hosni Zʿarab (Abu-Hussam), ʿAbd al-Fatah Hamud, Hussam Abu-Shaʾban and Nadim al-Nahawi.[16] Arafat, who positioned himself first amongst equals, assumed full control of the resources of the association while simultaneously developing private channels of communication with Arab world leaders – a move which earned him substantial criticism. To silence his critics, Arafat dispatched his associates (Salim al-Zaʾnun and Abu-Iyad, amongst others) to the offices of the Arab League. When they were stopped at the gates upon arrival, it was explained to them that Arafat was the only internationally recognized agent of the Palestinian students.[17]

The centralization of authority characterized Arafat's tenure as head of the student association. Arafat bolstered this centralistic approach with a personal network of relationships he had developed among various prime ministers, presidents, kings and other Arab League officials. Despite the fact that the student association maintained an executive body, Arafat took the bulk of the task upon himself and was portrayed as the driving force behind the student activities in Cairo throughout the first half of the 1950s.[18] Furthermore, Yasir Arafat expanded the activism of the Palestinian Student Association from the University of Cairo to all of the other universities in the bustling metropolis. Under his stewardship, the student association began to brand itself politically and was even awarded formal recognition by the Arab League and other Arab authorities as an "essential entity, being the largest popular Palestinian elected body."[19]

Arafat was aware of the potential gains of expanding the support base of the student association beyond the outskirts of urban Cairo. Under his leadership, the association reached out to establish various branches, such as the one in the University of Alexandria, frequented by Khalil al-Wazir (Abu-Jihad). Cooperation between the chapters in Cairo and Alexandria yielded the

publication of a joint mouthpiece, dubbed *sawt filastin* (the Voice of Palestine). Considered a major achievement for the association, Salim al-Zaʿnun claimed:

> The meaning of the fact that we had a newspaper of our own was that Arafat had produced yet another miracle. We knew that the Egyptian authorities did not favor us having an effective voice of our own … and that is exactly what the magazine was. Up until this very day, I have no idea how Arafat received the required permits from the authorities.[20]

Yasir Arafat himself maintained the Palestinians had perceived the publication as a vehicle for the clarion expression of their own voice. On account of its circulation, they were furthermore able to promote the formation of Palestinian student cells across the diaspora. Many graduates of the student association, especially those who were teachers in the Palestinian territories and diaspora, maintained contact with the leadership of the association and took advantage of selected essays published in *sawt filastin* in order to socialize their pupils and imbue them with national values. The success of this joint venture, together with the fact that Palestinian student associations had sprung up in Asyut, Beirut, Damascus and metropolitan Cairo, promoted an understanding that a broader framework, able to incorporate all Palestinian student activities, was now required.

Yasir Arafat followed the path drawn out by Fathi Balʾawi, and under his leadership the student association frequently celebrated national days of remembrance in gatherings and ceremonies. For instance, the national calendar commemorated such dates as the Balfour declaration of November 2, 1917, and the death of the venerated Palestinian military commander ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Husayni in April 1947, together with the Deir Yassin massacre of April 1948. Another day of remembrance engraved in the Palestinian "tree of commemoration" was May 15, the date upon which the state of Israel had been declared.[21]

In the aforementioned period, the Palestinian Student Association had nurtured the seedling of the Palestinian "tree of commemoration and national remembrance," so to speak, in the hope that its branches would one day bear fruit. The effort was promoted by means of holidays, national days of commemoration, canonization of prominent personages through the naming of public institutions, writing biographies and poetry, distribution of pictures and posters, and erecting obelisks and other monuments. In this manner, a full-fledged structure of remembrance came into being, taking form as a living memory in the hearts of Palestinians worldwide.

In 1955 the Palestinian Student Association was admitted as a member of the International Union of Students. Its crowning achievement, however, came in 1956, when it participated as an observer in the International Student Conference held in Warsaw. The association was represented by Yasir Arafat and Zuhayr al-ʾAlami, who were later to be amongst the founders of Fatah. Vice president of the association, Abu-Iyad, was denied permission to exit by

the Egyptian authorities on the grounds of being of "dangerous personality" to society.[22]

The Palestinian Student Association headed by Arafat continued to claim political achievements. The beginning of 1957 signified a change of guard in the leadership of the association; Yasir Arafat, Salah Khalaf, Faruk Qaddumi, al-Zaʿnun and their fellow associates had graduated and left Egypt, by and large in favor of employment in the developing Gulf States. They were succeeded by a new cadre, susceptible to the changes overwhelming the inter-Arab political scene, which was keen to adopt the values of Pan-Arabism. In the wake of Arafat's departure, elections held in 1957 yielded Baʾath activists and Muslim Brothers loyalists four seats each, joined in the executive committee also by one independent representative.

The Egyptian regime encouraged this changing of the guard. As part of the power struggles in the Arab geopolitical domain, in 1954, Egyptian President Gamal ʿAbd al Nasir admitted to Egyptian universities a large group of Palestinian students who had been expelled by the American University of Beirut and subsequently deported from Lebanon on the grounds of their political activity. The board of the American University of Beirut had strictly prohibited all forms of political activity on campus, so as to deprive the Lebanese security forces of any excuse to cross the threshold.[23] This vigorous group of Palestinian students was well organized politically, and saw in Nasir a patron. The prevailing atmosphere in Egypt, which painted the Muslim Brothers as the primary threat to the survival of the regime, ensured the Palestinian students would receive the financial backing of the Nasirist government, and it was simply a matter of time before the group had taken over the Palestinian Student Association in Cairo.

In 1958, the association became a full-fledged member of the International Union of Student Associations and participated in the International Student Conference held in Peking that same year. The significance of this achievement lay mainly in the revival of the name "Palestine" and its return to the geopolitical map. At the same time, it raised the Palestinian problem and agenda as was reflected in the views of the Palestinian youth in diaspora.[24]

The establishment of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS)

Encouraged by its success, the Palestinian Student Association in Cairo expanded its activities. In 1959, it launched an initiative which enraptured the various Palestinian student associations proliferating throughout Egypt, the Arab states and Europe and led to a general gathering of the Palestinian student associations in 1959, in which the foundation of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS) – *al-Itihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin* – was declared. The First Congress of the union was held on November 29, 1959, a symbolic date commemorating the United Nations endorsement of the partition of Palestine in 1947.[25]

The convention consisted of democratically elected representatives from the four most central Palestinian student associations, namely: Cairo, Alexandria, Beirut and Damascus. In addition, Palestinian student delegates from Asyut and from beyond the Arab region were also present as observers. The formation of an organizational infrastructure topped the agenda of the first conference and administrative issues – such as the lack of a constitution and procedures, structural problems, general admission and the regularization of the respective representative shares in the various institutions of the GUPS – were addressed.[26]

The Palestinian national awakening, the vanguards of which were the student associations, had occurred against the backdrop of the rise of Pan-Arabic nationalism and the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958. The Palestinian issue, which was a significant rhetorical and propaganda weapon in the political lexicon of the Arab state leaders, was transformed by the revival of a particular Palestinian national identity (*wataniyya*), which demanded a struggle "here and now." This shift led the two most significant leaders in the inter-Arab political scene, Gamal ʿAbd al-Nasir and Iraqi Prime Minister ʿAbd al-Karim Qasim, to call for the establishment of a "Palestinian Entity" or "Palestinian Republic." One must also note that the founding conference of the GUPS was also supported by the UAR. In this sense, the formation of the GUPS was an ingenious move, in which student activists took advantage of the favorable prevailing mood in the Arab world to advance the Palestinian issue.

The spirit of the late 1950s was characterized by calls for the formation of Palestinian bodies. The union between Egypt and Syria within the framework of the UAR had kindled Palestinian hope that an end to their problems was imminent. Against this background, branches of the Palestinian Student Association in Cairo and Alexandria established a joint committee and approached their counterparts in Beirut and Damascus, calling upon them to join a conference that would comprise

> the beginning of unity in the entire Palestinian student sector, for the sake of the restoration of the looted homeland, by strengthening the ties between Palestinian students and other student organizations, both Arab and foreign. In this manner all efforts of the Arab student movements for the sake of Palestine, and our joint path and struggle, will be coordinated.[27]

This idea gained a hearing both in Syria and in Egypt, which was delighted to host the conference in Cairo, where the majority of Palestinian students were enrolled.[28]

Furthermore, Egypt was also willing to accommodate the head office of the GUPS in Cairo. The opening of the Cairo office contradicted Egyptian law, as the international character of the union violated the terms of its registration within the Social Affairs Office. Yet Nasir disregarded this law and authorized the establishment of GUPS offices in Cairo, thus fostering the evolution of the Palestinian Student Association into a global organization.[29]

Rather than being a sort of trade union, the GUPS had from the outset leaned towards political activity. Key positions in the union's leadership were held by members of various parties ideologically affiliated with particular political circles and schools of thought across the Arab world. The short-lived era of the UAR was for Palestinian students a golden opportunity to strengthen ties between the central association in Cairo and its various, newly established offshoots elsewhere in Egypt, Damascus and Beirut.[30]

Yet the early path of the GUPS was far from rosy; despite its ambition to present an independent Palestinian platform, having been spread across various Arab states, by its very nature, the GUPS was vulnerable to the political influences of its host countries. One of the first challenges it faced was finding a unified lexicon with which to articulate articles of association and establish a common agenda and creed. The first conference of the General Union of Palestinian Students had indeed laid the organizational foundation, but despite attempts to present a unified Palestinian front, the various student organizations endorsed distinct agendas. Intending to create a unifying discourse, the formulation of the GUPS articles of association was in practice an act of establishing a new worldview. This is evident in the declaration of the establishment of the GUPS, which opens as follows:

> We, the Palestinian students, believe that:
>
> The popular democratic organization is the basis of a Palestinian revolution, which is the only path to complete liberation.
>
> The recognition of an independent Palestinian personality is the central pillar of support for the struggle of our people on the way to liberty.
>
> The Struggle of the Palestinian people is the path to unifying the Arab masses. The unity of the Arab public is the essential step toward liberation.
>
> It is the duty of every Palestinian student to undertake a pioneering role in the popular struggle.
>
> We therefore announce the establishment of a national association for the Palestinian students, which would form a central base for the Palestinian revolution. This association will work to promote the liberation of Palestine by all means permitted by the constitution which hereby follows.[31]

It is important to remember that GUPS was established during a period of Arab unity, and the disputes that plagued relations between Syria and Egypt had also seeped into the ranks of the student association office. Such differences also bore ramifications for the relationship between the GUPS and its state host Egypt. In the early stages of its existence, the GUPS was dominated by Ba'ath loyalists. Their control was further entrenched following the arrival of dozens of Ba'athist Palestinian student members, who had been granted entry into Egypt by Nasir after their expulsion from Iraq following the failed coup in Mosul in March 1959.[32]

The heretofore strained relationship between the GUPS Ba'thist leadership and the state of Egypt was further aggravated in the wake of the resignation of the UAR government in December 1959 and the ensuing deterioration of Egyptian–Syrian relations. The executive committee of the GUPS, then under the thumb of the Ba'thists, embarked on an independent policy, which contradicted the official Egyptian line. In an act of protest and defiance, the GUPS suspended its membership in the Arab Student Association, whose offices were also located in Cairo. The move sparked tension between the central executive committee and the various branches and offshoots of the GUPS, which attempted to dethrone the committee. Policy and leadership therefore topped the agenda of the union's Second Congress, held in Gaza between October 25 and November 2, 1962.[33]

Yet, in spite of the tensions and internal disagreements, the Arab Nationalists failed toppling the Ba'thist candidates, who claimed a majority not only in the executive committee, but in the administrative council as well. Regardless of the strife amongst the leaders, the Second Congress was to be remembered as "historic," in that its resolutions called for the official founding of a Palestinian entity, liberation army and organization.[34]

Yet notwithstanding the achievement of such "historic resolutions," tension within the GUPS leadership soared. The ability of the Ba'ath delegates to maintain their position of power following the Second Congress was a thorn in the side of the Egyptian government. Subsequently, the allies of the latter in the GUPS offices, namely the Arab Nationalists, launched a campaign within the administrative council, aimed at removing the Ba'thist members of the executive committee. The attempted coup was coordinated and backed by the government of Egypt, which expelled some of the executive committee Ba'thists from Cairo and denied other members of the administrative council permission to return to Egypt. In turn, the Ba'ath members of the administrative council gathered in Damascus and declared themselves the legitimate executive committee. At the same time, the Arab Nationalists overtook the GUPS offices in Egypt and established an executive committee of their own.

These accounts resulted in the first split of the GUPS leadership. Most of the union's branches extended their support to the temporary executive committee seated in Cairo, and in fact endorsed the "Anti-Ba'thist coup." The Arab Nationalists took the reins of control and in the Third Congress of the GUPS held in February 1964, their leadership was ratified *ex post facto*. The nationalists' control of the leadership of the GUPS was facilitated by alliances they had brokered with Fatah, whose strength lay in West Germany and Austria, and with a handful of independent candidates who drew support from GUPS offshoots in Port Said and Alexandria.[35]

The emergence of Fatah and the student movement

In the narrative of the evolution of Palestinian nationalism, it is commonly held that Fatah, which would eventually become the most significant and

influential organ of the national movement, was from its inception in 1959 and up until it claimed center stage in 1965, building itself underground, laying the organizational foundations for its emergence as a popular movement. These efforts were conducted in tandem with the forging of an ideology and the development of a political and military-operational agenda.[36] From the outset, the Fatah movement did not paint itself to be exclusive or elitist. As it prepared to emerge as a popular movement, Fatah singled out a generation of Palestinian youths as its key base of support. The movement was founded by a core group of individuals who had honed their political faculties on the training grounds of the GUPS leadership. As a youth movement, Fatah's leaders naturally maintained open communication with various segments of the GUPS top echelon. When Yasir Arafat concluded his studies, he had even established a sort of "graduate fraternity," dubbed "The Palestinian Graduates Committee in Cairo." Activities of the committee spanned a period of two years until Arafat's relocation to work in Kuwait.[37]

The questions that must be addressed are: what was the nature of these relations, and how did Fatah promote itself within the framework of the GUPS during that critical period of 1959–65? For Fatah, these were years of secrecy in which the movement grew underground. Fatah leaders, many of whom previously relied on the GUPS leadership, were subjected to persecution and arrest by an Egyptian regime that held the GUPS offices under its thumb. Fatah was compelled to caution when operating from within the GUPS. Precautions were redoubled following the deterioration of relations between Syria and Egypt amid Egyptian intelligence suspicions that Fatah was establishing ties with the regime's archrival, the Muslim Brothers movement.[38]

In order to root itself in the GUPS, Fatah took advantage of its influence in the Palestinian diaspora, first and foremost in West Germany and throughout Europe at large. In the 1960s, Europe had witnessed the formation of large communities of Palestinian laborers and students who drew hope from the ideology of armed struggle at the heart of Fatah's ideology. Fatah's main source of strength derived from its complete control of the Palestinian Students Confederation of Austria and West Germany. Key figures in the local leadership of the association included its chairman, Hani al-Hassan, as well as Hail ʿAbd al Hamid, ʿAbdallah Al-Afranji and Amin Al-Hindi. The confederation's publication *Al-Awda* served as its official mouthpiece and an important vehicle for the propagation of the concept of Armed Struggle.

Until the establishment of the Palestinian Student Union in West Germany, the Palestinian youth population lacked organizational infrastructure and coalesced only on the basis of small groups organized locally or loyal to particular ideologies. The alternative was to join the various organs of the Arab Nationalists, a Pan-Arabic movement which dominated the agenda of Nasir's protégés in the Cairo-based GUPS. The rapid accession of the Student Association in West Germany, which soon boasted thirteen branches, had drawn the attention of the GUPS leadership in Cairo. Their counterparts in Germany had prior organizational experience. Some, like Hail ʿAbd al-Hamid,

had played a role in establishing the Palestinian Labor Union, a body formally recognized by the German authorities.[39]

West Germany was highly valuable as a base of operation for the Palestinian Student Association by virtue of the large concentration of Palestinian students within its purvue. Furthermore, the physical abode of the Palestinian students and workers, who often shared accommodation, was fertile ground for organizing a movement.[40] Their living arrangements had fostered solidarity between roommates who shared a common history and mutual feelings of displacement. Harsh socio-economic conditions offered ample recruitment opportunities for the various organizations, whose intimacy on offer stood in stark contrast to the feelings of alienation Palestinian students and laborers felt outside the seclusion of their private sphere. Social and cultural activities provided a framework of belonging and a sense of community. In time, these were supplemented by paramilitary training.

This pattern of activity was in sync with the spirit of the Palestinian Student Association leadership in West Germany who belonged to Fatah and flew the banner of Armed Struggle as the primary mechanism of socialization for its members. The notion of Armed Struggle for the sake of self-determination and liberty was well received in the Palestinian public consciousness, as it empowered them to take their destiny into their own hands. This strategy, which had been developed by Fatah, served as a bridge between the multifarious approaches and mentalities prevailing in Palestinian society.

The concept of Armed Struggle was influenced by the doctrine of Frantz Fanon, a French psychiatrist and partisan of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN). Considered the leading theorist of the movement, in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon follows the national liberation struggles of the Third World. Fanon rationalizes the uninhibited use of violence in order to free oneself from the shackles of colonialism. Such violence was sanctified as a purifying drug that awakens the sense of freedom, a sensation obtained by means of sacrifice. According to Fanon, the process of decolonization always entails violence, the purpose of which is to replace one "species" of man with another.

Furthermore, Fanon claims that "Colonialism has made the same effort in these regions [the Arab world at large] to plant deep in the minds of the native population the idea that before the advent of colonialism, their history was one which was dominated by barbarism. The struggle for national liberty has been accompanied by a cultural phenomenon known by the name of the awakening of Islam."[41] Indeed, on account of the popular perception that religious piety is an indication of moral integrity, Islamic solidarity played a key role in recruiting new members to the association. Hani al-Hassan, head of the Palestinian Student Association in Germany, beyond his activities as a student politico, was wont to instill religious teachings in his fellow comrades. During a lesson held in 1959, he met and recruited Hail ʿAbd al-Hamid, one of the most prominent figures in the Palestinian Student Association and the GUPS at large, then a student in Frankfurt University.[42]

Frankfurt was a hub of political activity for both the Palestinian Student Association and Fatah. From his base in the city, chairman of the association in Germany, Hani al-Hasan, together with his close associate Hail ʿAbd al-Hamid, coordinated the activities of the association's branches nationwide. Walim Nasir, in charge of the military training for the student and worker cells,[43] was also stationed in Frankfurt, from where he was dispatched on various errands and missions. Another important figure in the political and military leadership of the association was ʿAbdallah al-Afranji, who resided in nearby Langen.[44] This group worked directly with the Palestinian student population in Austria, which was led and organized by yet another veteran of Fatah, Yahya Ashur (who was known more commonly by the name Hamdan).[45]

Acquired force, centralization and organizational efficiency were the secrets to the success of the Palestinian Student Association's base in Germany. The large and united concentration of students and workers comprised a political force to be reckoned with. The unity of the German association further enhanced its position in light of the political division between the Arab Nationalists, who wrested control of the GUPS offices in Cairo in 1962, and the Baʾathists, who had been sidelined to Damascus where they enjoyed Syrian protection and challenged the legality of the GUPS.[46] The key role in this power struggle played by the Palestinian Student Association in Germany branded the GUPS as a representative not only of the younger Palestinian generation, but also as a political force on the Palestinian stage at large. To assess the strength of the student organization in Germany, a delegation of the GUPS branch in Cairo, headed by chairman Taysir Qubbaʾa and deputy Said Camal, visited the association branches in Germany, which were in the control of Fatah.[47]

Changes in the GUPS leadership

Tensions were high in preparation for the Third General Assembly of the GUPS, to be held in Gaza on February 27, 1964. The central leadership, situated in Cairo and backed by the Egyptian regime, wanted to secure its control of the GUPS. To do so, and on account of the split with the Baʾath loyalists, it needed to demonstrate as wide and sweeping base of support as possible. Such appearances could be maintained only by garnering the support of the Arab and international student associations, and of the GUPS branches in Europe, which were by and large under Fatah's thumb.

In addition to the alliance the Arab Nationalists struck with Fatah and the "independent" delegates,[48] they sought to increase their leverage with international and pan-Arab support. One of those they approached was Nabil Shaʾth, Fatah member and then president of the Organization of Arab Students in the United States. The fact that GUPS solicited such an endorsement was indicative of the dire straits it faced. The Arab Students Association attempted to mediate between the Cairo and Damascus camps. It furthermore called for an emergency caucus of the Middle East and worldwide Arab

Student Association to address this matter, yet only two student associations responded positively.[49] Nabil Shaʾth, described by the Israeli Foreign Office as pro-Egyptian, enjoyed the reputation of a neutral seal bearer of Arab unity. His bipartisanship, claimed the Foreign Office, was bolstered by his participation in the convention having been conditional on the invitation of the Damascus faction.[50] The Damascus branch eventually sent seven delegates, armed with an official stamp of approval, to the convention. The delegates were granted the position of observers and as such were prevented the right to vote or to participate in the election of the various GUPS committees.[51]

The general assembly of the GUPS was stormy, and the heads of the diaspora branches took advantage of the opportunity to demonstrate their strength vis-à-vis the union's central authority in Cairo. The sum total of general assembly members was 107, but in practice only 90 members representing 25 offices attended the conference.[52] Of these, 21 delegates represented European offshoots.

The European delegates, first among them the German delegation of Fatah members, also endeavored to establish themselves in the central leadership seated in Cairo. The driving force behind the plan was Hail ʿAbd al Hamid, who had accumulated significant organizational experience in Germany and was personally acquainted with many of the student leaders in attendance at the conference, from both the Arab and European diasporas. Thanks to these ties, ʿAbd al Hamid weaved a patchwork of political alliances that enabled the election of Hani al-Hassan, chairman of the Student Association in Germany, as president of the conference. The German confederation delegates distributed amongst the participants copies of their mouthpiece *al-Awda*, to which was appended a sheet of paper with the following personal plea:

> My Brother Student,
> Our people need your knowledge – so study.
> Our people need you powers – so become organized.
> Our people need your enthusiasm – so be passionate.
> It is better that we march forward and die as martyrs than that you spin your heels and die.
> The path to victory – is the organization and the gun.
> Have you understood? Now take action.[53]

The closing note of the Third Congress was the unconditional acceptance of the leadership of the Arab Nationalists in Cairo. They had reached this position of strength by establishing various branches dominated by their leadership across the Arab diaspora. Their move was facilitated by the antipathy many young Palestinians, who believed Arab unity would be the harbinger of Palestinian liberation, felt towards the Baʾthist withdrawal from the UAR project with Egypt. The Arab Nationalists' tactical maneuver was further supported by a political alliance with Fatah members, who controlled many of the European offices and whose backing was requisite to the Arab

Nationalists' democratic majority.[54] Hence they were the chosen leadership of national unity and consensus.

The Fatah loyalists derived significant dividends of their own from this partnership; in demonstrating the full scope of their strength in the Third Congress, they had paved themselves a path to the central leadership of the GUPS in Cairo. On a strategic level, this was a major triumph for the movement, which in the early 1960s was invested in organizing itself and building its revolutionary capabilities. The man charged with the task of building the organizational infrastructure in Egypt was Hail ʿAbd al-Hamid, elected by the Third Congress as GUPS vice president in charge of publicity. His role often required him to be present in the Cairo offices of the GUPS, which were then considered a vibrant cultural center and the academic bastion of many young Palestinians who longed for Pan-Arabic unity.

Emmanuel Sivan stresses that by the early 1960s, Pan-Arabism was perceivable as a somewhat abstract and artificial idea, imported from the West without being grounded in the local reality.[55] Therefore, nationalist particularism, combined with armed struggle, began to draw the attention of many young Palestinians. Overcoming the dependence on external political patronage resulted in Fatah's emergence as a magnet for young Palestinians across the non-Arab diaspora. Fatah now possessed a potent ideology which proferred an imminent call to action. This ideology was reflected in an imagined representation of everyday activities encouraging armed struggle.

As the movement's only representative in the nine-member committee, Hail ʿAbd al Hamid's inclusion in the executive committee of the GUPS was also regarded as an organizational achievement for Fatah. ʿAbd al-Hamid was considered to be a man of ample organizational competence and a talented recruiter, and he had received a mandate from the movement to build up the organization in Egypt and enlist new members. His predecessor, Abu-Muhammad, was associated with the Muslim Brothers and was not considered accessible by the public. ʿAbd al-Hamid's availability to the young Palestinian public and the administrative position he held in the GUPS were an ideal cover for his Fatah activism, and in the course of his tenure he recruited no fewer than twelve hundred students from the various districts. His talents did not escape the attention of PLO Chairman Ahmad al-Shuqayri, who paradoxically appointed him to a position in the popular recruitment department of the PLO. ʿAbd al-Hamid took advantage of the new appointment to further his recruitment of new members to Fatah, which at the time opposed the nascent PLO and Shuqayri in particular.[56]

The Third Congress of the GUPS, it follows, was a milestone in the development of the union. Strategically speaking, Fatah had taken advantage of the convention to leverage its position in the Palestinian public sphere. Furthermore, the GUPS leadership began paying attention to the importance of establishing ties with the Palestinian student activists in Europe, which could enhance its foreign relations and offer significant contributions in terms of organizational skills, publicity and even military recruitment. Historically, the

Third Congress was the scene in which GUPS made prominent its importance in the political arena. This congress was assembled shortly after the Arab League resolutions of September 1963, and prior to the Palestinian National Council convention in Jerusalem (May–June 1964), in which the PLO was founded. The congress, by its mere adjourning, had in fact brought into existence the Palestinian Entity discussed in the Arab League council and, in that it called for the establishment of a revolutionary body which would endorse the principle of Armed Struggle, was a catalyst for the foundation of the PLO.[57] The preface to the Third Congress resolution stipulated that:

1. Armed Revolution is the only path to a return to Palestine.
2. The leadership of the Palestinian Entity needs to be collective and built from the bottom up, and the revolutionary action should be based on principals rather than individuals.
3. Revolutionary democracy does not coincide with Political professionalism.
4. The Palestinian Entity must not belong or be subjected to any other organ, and neither should it become territorial (*iklimiyya*).
5. The Palestinian Entity needs to be established on revolutionary foundations and be appointed comprehensive military and political authority.[58]

In addition, the congress called upon the Palestinians to learn from the experience of other revolutionary peoples, first and foremost the Algerians, so as to increase their motivation. The conference claimed that the obligation to liberate Palestine stems from the Arab–Palestinian individual's feeling, and he must bare this responsibility. This call was accompanied by a detailed worked plan, which underlined the need for a popular organization of all the various sectors as a precondition to all forms of action. Furthermore, the conference also stipulated that the GUPS should assume a pioneering role in establishing that Palestinian Entity.[59] This call indicates the self-perceived importance of the GUPS in the eyes of its leaders and activists. These facts explain the special interest displayed by the Syrian and Egyptian authorities in the GUPS, and the intense struggles between their respective supporters in the union in the early 1960s.

Notes

1 Fawaz Turki, *Soul in Exile: Lives of a Palestinian Revolutionary* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988), pp. 17–18.
2 Abu Dawud, *Filastin min al-Quds ila Myunikh* [*Palestine from al-Quds to Munich*], (Beirut: Dar al-Nahr' lil Nashr, 1999), p. 27.
3 Quoted in Yehoshafat Harkabi, "Ha-falastinim me-tardema le-Hitorerot" [The Palestinians from Hibernation to Awakening], in *Ha-Tnu'a ha-Leumit ha-Falastinit – me-'Imut le-Hashlama?* [*The Palestinian National Movement: From Confrontation to Reconciliation?*], edited by B.Z. Keidar and Moshe Maoz (Tel Aviv: Misrad ha-Bitahon, 1997), p. 266.

4 Abu-Husam (Husni Salim Z'arab), *min Dhakirat al-Majd fi Harakat al-Tahrir al-Filastini "Fath" Tali'at al-Thawra al-Filastiniyya* [*Memories from the Glory Days: Fatah the Pioneer of the Palestinian Revolution*], (Khan Yunis, 2000), hereafter: Abu-Husam, *min Dhakirat al-Majd*, p. 22.
5 Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf), *Lelo Moledet: Sihot' im Eric Rouleau* [*Without a Homeland: Conversations with Eric Rolo*], (Jerusalem: Mifras, 1979), hereafter: Abu Iyad, *Without a Homeland*, p. 65.
6 Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Fatah ba-Astrategia ha-'Aravit* [*Fatah in the Arab Strategy*], (Tel-Aviv: Ma'arahot, 1969), p. 41.
7 Laurie Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution Building and the Search for State* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), hereafter: Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 64.
8 Bakr Abu Bakr, *al-Ittihad al-'Amm lil-Talabat Filastin*, undated, place of publication unknown.
9 Abu-Husam, *min Dhakirat al-Majd*, p. 20.
10 Fatah, *Asturat al-Nidal wa al-Jihad – Yasir Arafat* [*The Legened of Struggle and Jihad*], (Filastin: Manshurat Maktab al-T'abi'a wa al-Tanzim), p. 4.
11 The account of the writing of the petition is told by Salim Za'nun, which participated in its drafting. See: Alan Hart, *Arafat: A Political Biography* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1984), pp. 67–8.
12 Abu-Husam, *min Dhakirat al-Majd*, p. 22.
13 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 72.
14 Fatah, January 1, 2006.
15 Hart, *Arafat: A Political Biography*, p. 66.
16 Abu-Husam, *min Dhakrat al-Majd*, p. 23.
17 Fatah, January 1, 2006.
18 Hart, *Arafat: A Political Biography*, p. 67.
19 Moshe Shemesh, *mi-ha-Nakba la-Naksa – Darko shel Nasir le-Milhemet Sheshet ha-Yamim* [*From the Nakba to the Naksa – the Path of Nasir to the Six-Day War*], (Be'er-Sheva: Be'er Sheva University Press, 2004), hereafter: Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, p. 461.
20 Hart, *Arafat: A Political Biography*, p. 69.
21 Abu-Husam, *min Dhakrat al-Majd*, p. 22.
22 Abu Iyad, *Without a Homeland*, p. 48.
23 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 70.
24 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, p. 461.
25 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 72.
26 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, p. 461.
27 Musa Shahdi, "Hawl Tajribat al-Ittihad al-'Amm lil-Talabat Filastin", *Shu'un Filastiniyya*, November 5, 1971, p. 181.
28 Ibid.
29 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, pp. 71–2.
30 Cairo was also the location of the Arab Student Association.
31 *Al-Ittihad al-'Amm lil-Talabat Filastin*, *al-Dustur wa al-Nizam al-Dakhli*, undated, place of publication unknown, p. 2.
32 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 71.
33 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, p. 463.
34 Ibid.
35 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 71.
36 Fatah, *al-barnamaj al-Siyasi lil-Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastini Fath al-Mukadim ila al-Mua'tmar al-Sadis lil-Haraka* [*The Political Program of the Fatah Movement as presented to its 6th General Conference*], June 28, 2009, pp. 5–6.
37 *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, November 6, 2004.
38 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, pp. 284–6.

39 Ihsan Bakr, *Hadith fi Kartaj – Hail Abd Al-Hamid dima ʿAla Tariq al-Quds* (Misr: Matbʾat al-Aharam al-Tijariyya, 1992), hereafter: Bakr, *Hadith fi Kartaj*, p. 89.
40 Walim (William) Nasir, *Taghribat Bni Fath – Arbʾaun ʿAmmaʾn fi Mataʾha Fathawiyya* (Ramallah: Dar al-Shruq lil Nashr wa al-Tawziʾa, 2005), hereafter: Nasir, *Taghribat Bni Fatah*, p. 67.
41 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans: Farrington Constance (New York: Grove Press, 1968), p. 36.
42 Bakr, *Hadith fi Kartaj*, pp. 89–90.
43 Walim Nasir was controlled directly by Abu Jihad and Abu Sabri. Furthermore, he was assigned the responsibility for training the military cells of the Palestinian students in Germany by the central command of al-ʾAsifa, and was personally instructed by Abu Sabri.
44 Nasir, *Taghribat Bni Fatah*, pp. 67–8.
45 Yazid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement 1949–1993* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 87.
46 ʿImad Ghiyatha, *al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filistiniyya: al-Mumarisa wa al-Fʾaliyya* [*The Palestinian Student Movement: From Experience to Action*], (Ramallah: Muwatan al-Muwasasa a-Filistiniyya lil-Dirasa al-Dimakritiyya, 2000), p. 57.
47 Bakr, *Hadith fi Kartaʾj*, pp. 96–7.
48 The representatives of the PLO offices, who presumably did not belong to any movement or party, were dubbed "Independents." In actual fact, some of them were secretly associated with this framework or the other, usually the Fatah movement. An example for this is Fatah's control over the GUPS branch in Alexandria, headed by Abu Sabri, which could not at the time reveal his association with the movement on account of the complicated relations between Fatah, forged underground, and the Egyptian authorities. The same applies for the branch in Port Said.
49 Israeli State Archives, 2551 (6549/9 9/64–1/64), from: Avraham Avidar to: Ambassador/Envoy Washington, DC, Middle East, Research, Unnamed file on the issue of Students and Anti-Semitic materials, September 23, 1964.
50 Ibid.
51 Musa, "Hawl Tajribat al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin", p. 182.
52 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, p. 463.
53 Bakr, *Hadith fi Kartaj*, p. 91.
54 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 74.
55 Emmanuel Sivan, *Hitnagshut be-Toh ha-Islam* [*The Clash within Islam*], (Tel-Aviv: ʿAmm Oved), 2005, p. 140.
56 Bakr, *Hadith fi Kartaj*, pp. 93–4.
57 Ghada Hashem Talhami, *Palestine and Egyptian National Identity* (London: Praeger Publishers, 1992), p. 101.
58 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, pp. 463–4.
59 Ibid.

2 The GUPS and PLO – from struggle to accommodation

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in 1964 in the period between the third and fourth conferences of the GUPS. The ensuing power struggles between the GUPS and PLO during those formative years are a testament to the importance of the GUPS as a body politic. Throughout the parties' ongoing contest for political prestige, the PLO remained well aware of the strength of the student leadership. The PLO's first chairman, Ahmad al-Shuqayri, had encountered the full might of the GUPS as early as the 1950s, when he served as the Palestinian representative to the Arab League.[1]

Nevertheless, the GUPS leadership did not come out strongly against the establishment of a national liberation organization. Rather, initial criticism focused upon the latter's problematic social composition. The leadership of the PLO, an organization meant to rekindle Palestinian hope for a brighter future, was by and large drawn from the distinguished families of the traditional Palestinian elite. This irked many young Palestinians, who perceived such exaggerated social stratification as having been directly responsible for the defeat of 1948.

Furthermore, the GUPS had been the first Palestinian body to be formally recognized by various state benefactors and by the Arab League. At the time, the union was undergoing a process of rapid growth and had developed a sprawling external network. Al-Shuqayri's attempt to gain control over the union was a key driver of criticism from the GUPS leadership. These factors, compounded by intergenerational mistrust between the student leaders and the PLO directorship, gave way to overt public criticism and even denunciation of the PLO by the GUPS executive committee on June 18, 1964.[2]

The path to resolution and containment of the conflict simmering between the GUPS and PLO was further obscured by shifts in the Palestinian political arena. Likely, the most significant of these changes was Fatah's transformation from an underground movement into a formidable force in its own right, through its ideological manifestation of Armed Struggle. By committing itself to armed struggle, Fatah had brought about the realization of the GUPS's prior vision, translating into practice ideas to which many in the Palestinian political arena merely paid lip service.

One must bear in mind that, at the time, the GUPS was dominated by Nasir's Arab Nationalist protégés. That the PLO was established under the auspices of the Egyptian regime necessitated certain amity between the two sides. On the other hand, as an institution, the GUPS was ostensibly democratic, with some of its member factions, including Fatah, external to the PLO. Fatah had in fact mocked the establishment of the PLO, dubbing it "the daughter of the Arab League."[3] At the gathering of the GUPS administrative council on October 12, 1964, relations with the PLO topped the agenda.[4]

An official delegate of the PLO participated in this meeting and proposed commitments upon which a formal relationship between the parties might be built, including:

(a) The PLO would provide financial support to the GUPS;
(b) The PLO would not interfere with GUPS internal affairs;
(c) The PLO would refrain from presenting candidates for official GUPS positions and functions.

On the eve of the conference, a missive circulated by the GUPS pressed the need to integrate within the PLO, thus distancing itself from the myriad parties and ideological factions sprawling across the Palestinian political landscape. The GUPS even proclaimed the PLO as the sole, official and legitimate representative body of the Palestinian people will and declared itself one of the organization's central pillars. Nevertheless, it was also clarified that "even within this framework, in accordance with the principle aforementioned, the GUPS will preserve its character as a professional union."[5]

Yet despite self-proclamations painting the GUPS as a core of PLO strength, significant differences lingered between the two sides. The nascent PLO employed all means to curb GUPS independence. Communication between the PLO Popular Organizing committee members and GUPS Chairman Taysir Qubba'a[6] in February 1965 belied the PLO's draconian demands of the GUPS. Despite its pledge not to interfere with the internal affairs of the GUPS, correspondence reveals the PLO demanded that all scholarships offered to Palestinian students by the Arab states and other friendly countries were to be channeled through its own offices. In addition, the PLO expected to coordinate all requests pertaining to university student housing and dormitories. The subtext was clear: all of the GUPS's major activities were to be subjugated to the PLO Popular Organizing committee.[7] Nevertheless, in contrast to the rod, the PLO also proffered carrots of financial support.

Taysir Qubba'a rejected PLO demands and filed a handwritten list of reservations and amendments designed to preserve the independence of the GUPS in all issues having to do with students' daily lives (such as the management of scholarships and other student applications). "On the basis of the GUPS Executive Committee approval," Qubba'a claimed, "the amendments offered by the GUPS speak for themselves."[8]

As an independent Palestinian entity with its own organizational history, the PLO placed key import on subjugating the GUPS. In addition to its financial independence, the PLO acknowledged the substantial international network put in place by the GUPS. The aforementioned correspondence between members of the PLO Popular Organizing committee and GUPS Chairman Taysir Qubba'a had taken place barely a month in advance of the International Conference for Palestine. Delegations from 58 states participated in this groundbreaking event, held March 30, 1965, in Cairo. Preceded by a vigorous marketing campaign, the convention would be considered a political and publicity triumph. In addition to Palestinian students, various political and intellectual leaders from across the globe participated. Funded in large part by the Egyptian regime of Jamal Abd al-Nasir, the conference managed to generate new international interest in the Palestinian cause.[9]

Prior to the convention, the PLO attempted to buy off GUPS leaders, offering an additional 4,000 Egyptian pounds to the 6,000 already being paid in annual support. To their amazement, the offer was turned down,[10] the GUPS having considered the figure to be insultingly low. For the young GUPS leaders, the issue of financing the convention was a token of their struggle for independence and political esteem vis-à-vis the elite patriarchy of the PLO. At first, the GUPS turned to the ruler of Kuwait for support, who refused, as the emirate was already financing the PLO. Rebuffed, GUPS Deputy Chairman Said Kamal consulted Hail 'Abd al-Hamid, in charge of public relations. The mood was decisively pessimistic, yet 'Abd al-Hamid and Sharif al-Husayni[11] objected strongly the looming cancellation of the conference, offering instead to mobilize a popular fundraising campaign in Gaza. The GUPS accepted, as Said Kamal recalled:

> We dispatched a delegation to Gaza, comprised of Faisal al-Husayni[12] and Jihad Salamah (the son of Hassan Salamah), and instructed them to contact Haidar Abd al-Shafi and Jamal al-Surrani to host them. The delegation returned with a plastic bag filled with gold jewelry, rings and 15,000 Dinar. While they were in Gaza, we sent the Emir of Kuwait a missive that read, "The Palestinian students will not forget how you abandoned the Palestinian convention." Two weeks later, the Kuwaiti ambassador turned up suddenly upon our doorstep, offering a donation of 10,000 Australian pounds for the conference.[13]

With the short-lived honeymoon between the PLO and GUPS now over, the tug of war between the two parties intensified. The missive sent by the GUPS to the Palestinian National Council (PNC) on the eve of the latter's gathering in Cairo on May 31, 1965, testifies to the deterioration of relations between them.[14] In this letter, the GUPS positioned itself alongside Fatah and the Arab Nationalist movement (which remained in control of the GUPS) in opposition to the PLO. Under the pretense of setting forth a work plan for the convention, Fatah followed suit and filed a list of demands of the PNC.

The proposed plan championed armed struggle and was unabashed in slamming the PNC for its shortcomings regarding popular organizing.[15]

In its letter to the PNC, the GUPS acknowledged the role of the PLO as an umbrella organization for national struggle. Nevertheless, it lambasted the PLO for its handling of relations between the two institutions. Indignation regarding the funding of the International Convention for Palestine resurfaced. The GUPS emphasized that it had shouldered the full burden of organizing the conference with a limited budget of no more than 35,000 Egyptian pounds. The union complained of the lack of moral and financial support and slammed the PLO for its patronizing dismissal of the GUPS leadership. Furthermore, the missive alleged the PLO executive committee of fostering an intentionally negative attitude towards the GUPS, owing to fears that student leaders might in time succeed them in their official positions.[16]

The GUPS focused its criticism upon the PLO's inability to mobilize the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), and called for the establishment of a large Fedayeen militia. The GUPS claimed that as currently comprised the PLO lacked sufficient human capital to push the issue of popular organizing forward. In addition, the union argued, PLO officials did not warrant the lucrative salaries they had been awarded. Financial misappropriation, concluded the GUPS, had led to failures in both popular organizing and the building of military capabilities. The students were explicit in their condemnation of the favoritism and nepotism plaguing the PLO.[17]

GUPS criticism, directed first and foremost unto PLO Chairman Shuqayri, bespoke an intergenerational struggle within Palestinian society. As a leader, the GUPS loathed Shuqayri, whom they conceived as centralistic and overtly discriminatory toward factions that failed to toe the official line. Their criticism intensified amidst the controversy concerning funding of the International Conference for Palestine. Nevertheless, the GUPS did support the existence of the PLO framework itself. As early as 1962, the GUPS had been one of the only Palestinian bodies calling upon the Arab League to establish a Palestinian national liberation umbrella organization under which all Palestinian sectors, associations and ideological currents could be united.[18] The struggle between the GUPS and PLO revolved not around the PLO's right to exist, but rather the content of its actions.

The animosity persisted throughout 1965, up until the general meeting of the GUPS on December 22, 1965. In this conference, relations with the PLO topped the agenda. Earlier that year, the Sixth Convention of the GUPS executive council had brought the GUPS into official alignment with the PLO, steering the union away from the partisanship of conflicting ideological currents. The resolution was ratified in the executive council's seventh gathering, held July 11, 1965.[19]

The rising star of Fatah, in control of many of the GUPS offices in Europe, but at loggerheads with the union's Arab Nationalist leadership, portended a stormy Fifth GUPS Conference. As an organization, the GUPS itself was not immune to the shortcomings it had condemned in the PLO. In fact, the

GUPS was host to a vast array of factions and currents, some of which, like Fatah, were not officially associated with the PLO. With the GUPS heads in Cairo wary of Fatah's swift ascension in Europe, and following the GUPS German Confederation's establishment of its own coordination office, organizational disputes quickly surfaced.

Yet the principal bone of contention between Fatah and the GUPS in Cairo remained the call for Armed Struggle, inaugurated by Fatah on January 1, 1965. Whereas the GUPS leadership in Germany announced its support of Armed Struggle, the GUPS head office in Cairo withheld its endorsement of Fatah's military wing, *al-ʾAsifa*. The lack of support from the GUPS head office was rooted in Fatah's timing; its initiation of Armed Struggle did not square with the Arab Nationalists. In response, the German Confederation slammed the GUPS Cairo office in its journal, *al-Awda*, which had become the official mouthpiece of the Fatah movement.[20]

Tensions ran high throughout the Fourth Conference of the GUPS. Exacerbating enmity between Fatah and the Arab Nationalists, the PLO had broken its pledge and attempted a takeover of the GUPS with an aim to silence criticism and secure the reign of Shuqayri. Furthermore, the PLO highly regarded the international prestige of the GUPS and wanted to guarantee its service as the voice of the PLO. The PLO invested considerable effort in gaining control of the GUPS and promoted its candidates even prior to the convention itself. Efforts were focused on GUPS offices in the Arab states. To this end, the PLO granted the director of its Popular Organizing department power of attorney to participate in the conference and assist its allies on the ground.

The conference agenda was overshadowed by the deepening internal crisis in the GUPS leadership. Turmoil began with the discussion of the GUPS financial and organizational report, delivered by members of the departing executive committee.[21] According to Laurie Brand, the general assembly was handed two lists of candidates. The first consisted of PLO supporters and Fatah loyalists. The second was comprised of Arab Nationalists and independent candidates.[22] In retrospect, it is not clear which list featured the greater number of Fatah members, as the faction was in conflict with both the Arab Nationalist movement and the PLO. One must bear in mind that at the time Fatah was still an underground movement; many of its loyalists assumed official roles in the newly forged mechanisms of the PLO without identifying themselves as members. One such prominent figure was GUPS executive committee member and Vice President of Publicity Hail ʿAbd al-Hamid. Alongside his responsibilities with the GUPS, ʿAbd al-Hamid was in charge of establishing an infrastructure for Fatah in Egypt. He was also working for the Popular Organizing office of the PLO.[23]

The outcome of executive committee elections marked the overwhelming triumph of the PLO loyalists, who secured complete control over GUPS offices across all Egyptian campuses. Representatives of Palestinian students in Egypt comprised more than half of the conference delegates (79, in a total of 145).[24]

The PLO's growing power prompted significant consternation among the current GUPS leadership, the majority of whom were Arab Nationalists. To preserve their position of strength, they required a potent political alliance. Their most likely candidate turned out to be Fatah, which dominated the European offshoots of the GUPS – most notably in West Germany and Austria. Fatah's electoral powerbase also enabled it to have Hani al-Hassan elected as chairman of the conference.

Cracks in the conference's smooth veneer eventually began to show and division loomed near. The partnership between Hani al-Hassan and the Arab Nationalists allowed them to tamper with the articles of association and divert various resolutions in their favor. They accomplished this by raising doubts as to whether members of the outgoing executive committee were to be considered active conference members or merely observers. A referendum on this matter would constitute a vote of confidence concerning the achievements of the conference itself. According to regulations, the Arab Nationalists needed a two-thirds majority in order for the resolution to be accepted. As voting progressed, the GUPS leadership discerned the direction of the tide and resolved strategically to halt the vote at all cost. A brawl broke out after an Arab Nationalist from the Beirut office struck a member of the GUPS Cairo office from behind. With the council hall in chaos, Chairman Hani al-Hassan dissolved the gathering. Mediation efforts of Ahmad Sidqi al-Dajani[25] came to no avail. Al-Hassan, with the support of the Arab Nationalists, declined to reinstate the council, barring the re-entry of both Fatah and the Arab Nationalists. Three days after the outbreak of the commotion, Hani al-Hassan declared – in complete contradiction with the articles of association – that the conference was to be postponed indefinitely. In step, a large number of Arab Nationalists and Fatah delegates departed Cairo altogether, guaranteeing the prevention of a quorum of representatives to approve further council resolutions.[26]

The split in the GUPS conference sparked vociferous debate in the Arab press as both sides attempted to explain their own side of the story. Even the Ba'ath loyalists, spurred on by the Syrian regime, put their two cents in. Fatah, on the other hand, kept conspicuously mum. In time, disintegration of the GUPS was staved, after the heads of all factions agreed to appoint a temporary committee to regularize GUPS conduct and maintain the status quo until the commencement of the Fifth Conference.[27] Furthermore, the temporary committee obligated itself to agree upon a committee to succeed it within a year. The temporary committee included nine members from various universities – four from Cairo, three from Alexandria, one from Asyut and one from Beirut. Iyad al-Saraj was appointed committee chairman. The operational committee was subject to a supervisory body, which consisted of 20 members. On December 31, 1965, once the temporary committee had been appointed, the Fourth GUPS Council was officially dissolved, but the internal strife lingered on.[28]

The disagreements were temporarily resolved when, in February 1966, an elected committee was appointed to carry the GUPS through to the Fifth

General Conference, planned for December of that year. For administrative reasons, the meeting was later postponed to July 1967. The agreed upon executive committee was headed by Mahmoud Subhi, an independent candidate and supporter of Fatah. Selected as his deputy was Taysir Qubbaʾa, who was also in charge of foreign relations. Those remaining were either members of Fatah or independent candidates. Until the Fifth Conference, in other words, the GUPS had agreed to disagree.[29]

The strengthening of the Palestinian student core in Europe and the rise of the Armed Struggle

Fatah was encouraged by the outcome of the Fourth GUPS Congress, having strengthened its position in the union. The decision reached by the conference to expand its existing infrastructure and establish additional GUPS offices played into the hands of Fatah, which dominated the European offices, in particular in West Germany. Towards the end of 1966, the confederation of GUPS offices in Germany and Austria summoned members to a general meeting. The intention of the gathering, held in a youth hostel in Mainz near Frankfurt, was to strengthen ties between the leaderships of the various GUPS branches.[30]

The GUPS served Fatah not only as a political platform, but also as a vehicle for the recruitment and training of young members for Armed Struggle, upon which the movement had pinned its hopes. Through a process of political socialization, conducted by Taysir Qubbaʾa, together with a German-language public outreach campaign, the GUPS provided a considerable pool of new recruits for the military cadres of the various PLO factions – above all Fatah. Tellingly, many students perceived themselves as a kind of reserve corps of the Palestinian resistance.[31]

In each of the aspects mentioned, the GUPS operated at Fatah's discretion. The union's organizational capabilities put into service by Fatah were to play a significant role in its evolution. GUPS prestige was further boosted by the well-established confederation office and its alliances in the international arena.

A key priority of student leaders in the 1950s and 1960s was the construction of a Palestinian national consciousness. Their efforts were supported by various tools for socialization applied within and beyond the boundaries of Palestinian society. The student activists faced a twofold challenge: the forging of national awareness amongst Palestinian youngsters on the one hand, and the mobilization of public empathy, moral support and financial resources on the other. The GUPS, with its abundance of clamorous young activists, assumed a pioneering role in the promotion of this goal.

The confederation in Germany operated roughly along these guidelines. Internally, it carried out numerous conferences and lectures in Palestinian and Arab student hubs throughout West Germany. Amongst other goals, the meetings were aimed to recruit members and open additional GUPS offices across the country. Between 1962 and 1964, a total of 873 Arabic-language

lectures were conducted in GUPS offices, during various events on campuses and in other public locations throughout Germany. Furthermore, the confederation published two periodicals, *al-Ayyadin* and *al-Awda*, by means of which it disseminated its ideas and recruited new members to Fatah and the GUPS. All of these efforts took place prior to the initiation of Armed Struggle in 1965.[32]

The effort was complemented by a publicity campaign. Beginning in 1967, the Palestinian Confederation in Germany also began publishing a German-language periodical, with the aim of presenting the Palestinian resistance to the German-speaking public. The GUPS offices in Germany and Europe at large served as a platform for establishing connections with so-called "progressive" or "New Left" student movements, which came into power in the mid-1960s. The GUPS heads even initiated direct relations between leaders of these movements in Germany and the Palestinian revolutionary leadership.[33]

Discourse centered on the struggle against imperialism brought the Palestinian students in Europe and the New Left movements together in a newly forged alliance across European campuses. Taking advantage of this campaign, which was contributing to the process of national consciousness-building and promoted the name of Palestine on the political agenda, the GUPS leadership in Cairo conducted cultural events and issued joint public statements on behalf of the GUPS European offices and foreign organizations. Furthermore, the GUPS found common ground with other student associations representing national minority interests, such as the African Student Union in France and the Confederation of Iranian Students in Europe, which opposed the rule of the Shah.[34] Upon the establishment of relations, the secretary of the Iranian confederation visited Cairo and issued a joint statement with the local GUPS leadership in which both parties vowed to struggle in unison against global imperialism and reactionary regimes. In this public statement, they declared Israel a part of an "Imperialist–Zionist axis," in which the Persian Shah played a significant role. The manifesto also slammed the Jordanian regime for preventing Palestinians from realizing their national rights.[35]

The Arab Nationalists heralded the visit of the Iranian confederation secretary, which served to fortify their position in the GUPS leadership. The office of the Iranian confederation was located in the city of Kiel, Germany, and relations forged between the confederation and the Arab Nationalists enabled the latter to counter the dominance of Fatah in the German arena. Indeed, fearing its rising popularity amongst Palestinian students in Germany, the Arab Nationalists in Cairo sought ways to keep Fatah in check. In elections held during the general meeting of the GUPS in Germany and Austria, the GUPS in Cairo sent Arab Nationalists Taysir Qubba'a and Sayid Kamal to Mintz – at the expense of Fatah loyalist Hail 'Abd al-Hamid – to serve as observers. In the aftermath of the 1967 War, Sayid Kamal would leave the Arab Nationalists to join ranks with Fatah.[36]

The 1960s were characterized by widespread international activity on behalf of the GUPS. Under Arafat's tutelage in the 1950s, international

recognition was a feather in the Palestinian Student Association's cap. In the decade that followed, the Palestinians took their case further, branding themselves a key player in the international arena.

The GUPS's deep reservoir of international ties constituted a vital asset in its tug-of-war with the PLO over the dominance of the Palestinian domain. It also proved a source of competition between various parties within the GUPS. It is important to remember that the GUPS itself was comprised of a litany of ideological strains; even state-level players – part and parcel of the power struggles plaguing the inter-Arab arena – had their hands deep in the jar. In light of this, the GUPS developed a sophisticated political discourse to foster political alliances in accordance with the requisite terms of reference. That many of the GUPS members were bilingual further enhanced the union's faculties for sophisticated international public outreach.

The GUPS strived to establish centers of power beyond the confines of the Arab arena and the Palestinian diaspora in Europe. Such efforts were directed toward the Afro-Asian and Latin American domains, whose peoples had borne the full brunt of colonialism. The latter, in particular, comprised an axis around which a common discourse could be struck. The polarity of the cold war paved inroads of solidarity between the Palestinian movement and others who perceived themselves oppressed by the long arm of imperialism. Furthermore, the romantic discourse of the New Left and the doctrine of Frantz Fanon lent legitimacy to the Palestinian call to arms.

In Latin America, the GUPS found a loyal ally in the important and influential Cuban Student Union. An alliance was forged during the visit of a GUPS delegation to the fourth General Assembly of Latin American Students, held in Havana on August 11, 1966.[37] At the conclusion of the conference, the two sides announced their newly established alliance in a joint memorandum that underscored their mutual affinity in confronting imperialism in Northern America and the Middle East. Notably, despite tensions between the PLO and the GUPS, the latter insisted that international support manifest not only on the level of academics and student politics, but also through mobilization of public support for the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian cause.

In its struggle for international recognition, the GUPS launched a full-fledged assault against Zionism. In order to garner support, it attempted to portray the Zionist movement as a "racist and reactionary movement concentrated in Israel, which serves as a ground base for Imperialism." This proclamation was heralded by the Cuban Student Association, which demonstrated its solidarity by awarding scholarships to Palestinian students to study in Cuba. In addition, the Cuban association determined to demonstrate on May 15, the day Palestinians commemorate the Nakba.[38]

These and other decisions that followed were combined with the more comprehensive resolutions of the fourth General Assembly of Latin American Students in support of the Palestinian cause. Most of the conference's decisions on the Palestinian issue portrayed Israel as an agent of global

imperialism bolstered by the United States of America. The conference denigrated the handling of Fatah prisoner Mahmoud Hijazi and called for the foundation of a Palestinian state and the realization of the right of return.[39] In both political and publicity terms, the conference was to be considered an astonishing success; for the first time, the GUPS had established direct ties with student unions from across Latin America.[40]

In addition, as the GUPS continued its activities in Europe, it also deepened ties with student associations across Africa and Asia, epitomized by the aforementioned bond established with the African Student Union in France. Following detailed deliberations, the sides issued a joint public memorandum emphasizing the parties' likeminded political outlook and castigating imperialist aggression the world over, above all in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In great detail, the joint manifesto denounced imperialism and its Middle East proxy, listing grievances that were by and large political. The memorandum called for blocking Israel, which was acting on behalf of global imperialism, from interfering in the internal political issues of African states. The missive also called upon the world to prevent Israel from manufacturing nuclear arms and insisted on portraying the country as a racist state. In addition, they declared their support for the Armed Struggle of the Zimbabwean National Liberation Movement, which had revolted against the "fascist" government of Ian Smith and its supporters in Britain, the Angolan National Movement and the struggle of the Mozambique Liberation Front against Portuguese rule. These campaigns were bound together by right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and an endorsement of their armed struggle, implied by the call to release Mahmoud Hijazi, a Fatah military activist captured by Israel. Fatah attempted to draw worldwide attention to his case and hired Farjye, a French lawyer of Algerian descent, to defend Hijazi in court. Ultimately, Farjye was denied entry into Israel.[41]

In addition to grander politics, the memorandum did not shy from attending to the practical sphere of student politics. The African Student Union in France undertook to endorse the struggle of the GUPS, support the efforts of the Palestinian people to realize rights they had been denied, and side with the GUPS in its objection to the admission of the National Union of Israeli Students (NUIS) to the International Union of Students (IUS).[42]

Furthermore, the French union resolved to call upon all organizations opposed to imperialism to commemorate May 15 as a global day of support for the Palestinian cause. The GUPS, for its part, committed to call upon its offices and Palestinian partners to observe the occasion of January 17 as a day of worldwide support for the struggle of Africa. The memorandum signed off with a joint call for the immediate release of Mahmoud Hijazi.[43]

The political activity of the GUPS, bolstered by the rising star of Fatah, increased its influence in Palestinian student circles, in particular in the second half of the 1960s. GUPS public outreach and mobilization captured the imagination of young Palestinian students. The inherent alienation of studying in exile, together with a profound need for socio-cultural

frameworks, yielded recruiters for the revolution an attentive audience of Palestinian students.

Those were days of hopes for the Palestinians. The Fatah movement, which staked its future on Armed Struggle, made use of GUPS infrastructure to expand its ranks in Europe. Alongside their university studies, recruits underwent military training. Walim Nasir, under the cover of a student identity[44] and traveling with an assumed name,[45] was entrusted with military training operations in Germany. Nasir established various student cells across Germany, which trained with live ammunition and explosives. In spite of Fatah's domination of the Palestinian Student Confederation in Germany, in the years 1965–66 differences of opinions in the confederation occasionally surfaced. But it was the War of 1967 that would turn the tables for the Palestinian revolution and reshape the picture altogether.[46]

Israeli policy regarding the Palestinian students' political activities in Europe

In the momentum of the fourth conference in 1965, GUPS activity was on the rise. The GUPS had its most important achievement in 1966, during the IUS Conference held in Sofia. This conference was dominated by the GUPS delegation headed by Taysir Qubba'a and Sharif al-Husayni who brought a set of anti-Israeli resolutions to the agenda. The GUPS had full membership status in the IUS and wanted to use their power in the socialist student union to expel the NUIS (National Union of Israeli Students) from the association. In order to do so, the GUPS built a coalition with student unions from the developed countries. The Israeli delegation tried to establish contact with the Palestinian leadership, which rejected any attempts of creating dialogue. A couple of months later, at the pro-American International Student Conference held in Nairobi, Taysir Qubba'a of the GUPS sent a message to the NUIS chairman Edy Kaufman, suggesting he leave Jerusalem with his family whilst he still could, before it became occupied by the Palestinians. Qubba'a, who refused to create a direct dialogue with Kaufman, described this warning as a gesture, because of Kaufman's good personal character.[47]

The revival of Palestinian student activism in the spheres of politics, publicity and security caught the attention of the State of Israel.

In Europe, the GUPS's public relations campaign was bearing fruit. As the union accumulated power through the Palestinian student hubs across Europe, it began systematic attacks on Israel. Subsequently, reports on Arab student activities in Europe began surfacing in the Middle East department of the Israeli Foreign Office. Efforts to map these students by place of origin were complicated, as many Palestinians in Europe were using passports and travel documents from a multitude of Arab states.

Various Israeli state representatives sought to approach the Arab and Palestinian student leaders. Following a formal request, the Israeli State Attorney's Office addressed the issue and officially permitted such contacts:

> There is no overriding prohibition in the book of law that forbids Israeli citizens or residents to contact a citizen or resident of an Arab state. It depends upon the nature of such interaction, its purity of intention, and above all the individual approached. Obviously, there is always a danger that the person connected is a foreign agent, and the one who contacts him will be violating the State Security Act. There is no guarantee that such cases will not occur. Nevertheless, it seems the best defense for the Israeli party involved in such interaction would be that such contact is authorized by the head of the Israeli embassy or consulate concerned, or one of its employees particularly authorized to deal with such matters, and that proper reporting to the security authorities and their control will be applied.[48]

This decision invigorated the Foreign Office and encouraged it to monitor GUPS activities in Europe. Establishing ties with the student leaders in Europe was, at the embassy level, a strategic priority. The view was that "regular (and well organized) contact with Arab students can do [us] only well. These are the future leaders of the Arabs, and any investment in them, be it in the form of dialogue or simply friendly relations, will pay dividends in the future. This type of merit is accumulative, and can only be measured in the long term."[49]

Within the corridors of the Foreign Office, debates were waged regarding the best way to approach Arab students. The vigorous efforts of the GUPS presented a swath of difficulties to the Israeli student unions, which in their distress turned to the Foreign Office for assistance. Internal correspondence of the Foreign Office reveals that the issue had already been placed on their desks by the early 1960s. Yet budget limitations – not to mention the acute organizational difficulties implied – prevented employing someone to deal with the matter.[50]

The Palestinian student activism across the diaspora bothered not only the Israeli public relations machine, but also its security apparatus. The political and propaganda activities of the Palestinian students, together with their efforts to mobilize collectively, including for militant ends, drew the attention of both intelligence and political functionaries in Israel. Considering that no budget had been allocated for a permanent employee, state officials resorted to utilizing Israeli students to counterbalance Palestinian achievements. The Foreign Office compiled a pool of Israeli students who were dispatched to GUPS events and reported back to officials in their corresponding embassies and consulates. Impressions were compiled and then delivered to the Middle East Desk of the Foreign Office. Israeli embassies located in proximity to large student hubs, such as Paris, highly prioritized these surveillance efforts. Nevertheless, it was clear to all involved that the use of students for surveillance was at best a temporary solution, especially considering the security risks entailed. In a telegram classified "Top Secret," Foreign Office official in Paris, Yosef Hadas, writes:

> I hereby present a list of official reports compiled by Mr. Yaʾakov Meiron, Chairman of the Israeli Student Association in Paris, regarding his encounters with Arab students. I have delivered copies of these reports to Sami, and as one can easily understand, the activities of Israeli students amongst the Arabs students raise security aspects. I will not go into detail here, but I encourage you to make inquiries back home [in Israel] regarding the serious problems we had recently encountered. I have to admit that personally I have not devoted sufficient thought to this aspect. Therefore, I am extremely hesitant whether to renew and develop these efforts this forthcoming year, as the risks attached are by no means negligible. I think we can afford this matter only if we have a member of staff, who can dedicate his time and attention solely to this issue, so that he can supervise the activities and connections of our students on a daily basis. Otherwise, we will be putting ourselves at serious risk. Therefore, we need to consider whether the outcome is worth the dangers we will be facing. Considering that none of us [the current staff] can fully commit himself to this matter, I urge you to reconsider the entire issue, in consultation with the relevant parties, and inform us of your decision. It might be more advisable to focus on developing ties with the European and African organizations, while restricting contact with the Arab ones to the bare minimum.[51]

Mr. Gazit, head of the Foreign Office Middle East department, scribbled some notes on the copy of Yosef Hadas's letter, addressed to one Y. Nitzan. Gazit argues in his handwritten remarks that the author was not aware of the budgetary constraints when compiling the report, and therefore his claims are not an attempt to shake off responsibility and should be taken most seriously. "We should either devote serious effort to this matter, or cease altogether – it's outright dangerous," proclaimed Gazit.[52]

His words of caution stemmed from the fact that some of the Palestinian students were engaged not only in their studies and political activities, but also in military training and the intelligence gathering concerning Israeli officials. Walim Nasir, who had been entrusted to recruit and train activists amongst the Palestinian students and workers community, was eventually expelled from Germany. After a short stopover in Paris, Nasir made his way to Spain, where he joined forces with Salah Kaʾkabani. He continued his activities under the cover of his student identity, having enrolled to study Spanish in the University of Madrid.[53] The Palestinian movement followed similar modus operandi in France, where publicity kiosks on campus contributed also to the recruitment of activists, some of whom were assigned military functions.[54]

A representative example of the activities of Jewish students amongst their Arab adversaries can be found in the accounts of Israeli student Zvi Kahana, who was sent to cover a GUPS convention titled, according to Kahana's official report, "A meeting commemorating the anniversary of the occupation

of Palestine."[55] The activity was held under the auspices of the IUC, an international student organization seated in Prague.[56] The IUC telegram of support read as follows: "[We] fully support the just war against imperialism, and demand the restoration of the plundered [Palestinian] motherland."[57]

The gathering reveals something of the nature of the political struggle directed by the GUPS throughout the 1960s. As part of the Palestinian nation-building process and the struggle for self-determination, the Palestinians aspired for de facto recognition as a national entity. On the public relations front, their struggle mandated the broadest possible international support. To this end, the GUPS was a valuable tool; the fact that the GUPS operated in the academic domain awarded it access to notable intellectuals and members of the higher professions, including European lawyers and journalists who identified with its raison d'être. Recruiting such professionals to GUPS meetings helped garner the support of foreign officials and parties associated with the European New Left, the prevailing political trend of the 1960s. The GUPS wooed the support of these prominent figures, especially following the outbreak of Armed Struggle, so as to draw useful parallels between the Palestinian struggle and national liberation movements elsewhere in the world, first and foremost in Africa. By doing so, they hoped to shake off imagery branding the Palestinian guerrilla organizations as terrorists.

At the Paris convention, a panel comprised of the heads of the GUPS, the chairman of the Arab Student Union and his African counterpart was convened. Joining this political circle were Marxist Professor Maxime Rodinson, invited to apply an academic touch,[58] journalist Jlyman, representing the French Left, and an Arab reporter named Al-Z'aman.

The mission of the gathering was defined at the outset as "a will for a practical dialogue with the French Left" concerning an essentially political Palestinian cause. Seeking to allay accusations that the Palestinian struggle was anti-Semitic, the GUPS wanted instead to position itself as a national liberation movement akin to those found in Vietnam, Mongolia, Mozambique and South Africa. Garnering the support of the French intelligentsia was therefore crucial for the Palestinian students. In a speech, a lawyer by the name of Mayneville tried to address this issue. In his notes the Israeli student present at the convention, Zvi Kahana, highlighted that Mayneville did not once mention the word "Israel." In other words, claimed Kahana, Mayneville did not recognize Israel's right to exist.[59]

The convention underlined the desire of the academic French Left and its various spokespersons, all of whom rejected any pretense to be a representative voice, to relegate support of Armed Struggle and war as credible solutions to the conflict. The Arab side, on the other hand, exuded militancy, ardently presenting Israel as an aggressor and imperialist entity and manifesting in a vocal campaign for the release of Mahmoud Hijazi, a member of Fatah imprisoned by Israel.[60] Yet efforts to shed the GUPS's anti-Semitic image were somewhat undermined by the gaffe of journalist al- Z'aman, who let slip that "Zionism was committing war crimes that resemble those of the

Nazi regime." Nevertheless, al-Zʾaman continued to claim, "we reject anti-Semitism, and demand that the French Left reconsider the [Palestinian] problem and express its support of our just struggle."[61]

The resolutions reached during the conference were designed above all to promote the Palestinian publicity campaign in France. To this end, the Palestinian students agreed with the heads of the French, Arab and African student unions, to establish a shared platform. The parties to the conference resolved to:

- Reject any claim of Jewish legal rights over Palestine;
- Support the struggle against racial discrimination and support of national liberation movements;
- Denounce the crimes of the Nazis;[62]
- Present the Arab–Israeli conflict as a political problem;
- Suggest the assimilation of Jews in an Arab Palestinian state as a possible solution;
- Condemn the Jordanian government for curbing the activities of the Palestinian liberation organizations on its soil.[63]

These decisions bespoke a spirit characteristic of various other publicity activities conducted by the GUPS throughout the 1960s. When they had managed to recruit a core pool of activists, GUPS leaders concluded they needed to win over international public opinion. The strong presence of Palestinian students on campuses worldwide, together with their mastery of various foreign languages, was of great assistance in attaining such goals. The confederation of Palestinian students in Germany was especially diligent in its efforts to mobilize European support for its activities. After initial assessments that solidarity was negligible, the confederation formed a body to consolidate and organize proponents in order to generate active European student support of the Palestinian cause. This organ emerged first in West Germany, with branch offices erected in Hamburg, West Berlin, Bonn and Munich, and also in Austria, where Palestine Support Committees (PSCs, *lijan nasarat filastin*) were formed in Vienna and Graz. The successful establishment of such committees under these auspices presented an opportunity to further expand the confederation's activities, and additional committees soon mushroomed across England, Sweden, Italy, Belgium and Norway.[64]

The PSCs conducted their daily activities side by side with the GUPS activists. This proximity provided the touch of internationalism both groups had been aiming for. The inclusion of European students proved instrumental for the GUPS, as their presence drew the attention of the European media. The need to increase media exposure for the Palestinian cause was further stressed by concerns of the Palestinian students that their public events were not receiving the same level of coverage as those of their Jewish counterparts. Dr. Adnan al-ʿImad notes that the events of "Palestinian Week," financed in part by the Arab League, had not garnered even one-tenth of the coverage

awarded by the German media to a conference on the issue of Soviet Union Jews held in Brussels just two months earlier.[65]

Furthermore, collaboration between Palestinian and European demonstrators suggested broad solidarity with the Palestinian national cause. The Palestine Support Committees did not stop with idle intellectual discussion and cultural gatherings. Rather, they occupied a key role in protests staged by the GUPS in Munich, Frankfurt and Bonn against Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban's landmark 1970 visit to Germany.[66]

The GUPS was entrusted with the responsibility of organizing the PSCs in Germany. The committees were integrated within international cultural events initiated by the GUPS, and were heralded as the vanguard of a European youth movement in support of the struggle for Palestinians' rights vis-à-vis the Israeli and Zionist establishments in Europe.[67] The German confederation took advantage of the Palestine Support Committees to demonstrate its strength and leverage its political influence before its compatriots throughout the Arab diaspora and before the central GUPS office in Cairo. To secure its position and showcase the might of the PSCs, the confederation staged a general conference of the committees, titled "The First Conference of the Palestine Committees in Western Europe." This conference was held in Vienna under the auspices of the local GUPS office.[68]

From the book to the gun – the Palestinian student and the Armed Struggle

The stormy period of student activism between 1965 and 1966 indicated a general awakening of the Palestinian political arena, with a younger generation of students striving for socio-political change. Remnants of the struggles that plagued the Fourth Conference of the GUPS were yet to subside and the student leaders looked eagerly to the next gathering, scheduled for July 1967.[69] Bustling student activity in those years also belied the struggles for power playing out within the various Palestinian factions, amidst the inter-Arab leadership, and vis-à-vis the PLO.

The student enterprise also manifested in a spreading militant disposition and preparations for concrete action. Such calls became all the more vocal in light of geopolitical developments such as the US war in Vietnam, the Cuban revolution, the Algerian struggle for independence and the budding of national liberation movements across Africa. A GUPS initiative to establish summer paramilitary training camps dovetailed with the outbreak of Armed Struggle led by Fatah, yielding increased Palestinian student involvement in military activities. The waiting period preceding the 1967 War had spurred the imaginations of Palestinian students; the outbreak of hostilities presented a long-awaited opportunity to put words into action.

The 1967 War prompted many Palestinian students to join ranks with the Armed Struggle. In some cases, such as the Lebanese office led by As'ad Abd al-Rahman, Tawfiq Tirawi and Tawfiq al-Jabah, recruitment was initiated

by the GUPS.[70] The leader of the Lebanese branch drafted some 120 students, each of whom was transported to camps of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA, then the military wing of PLO) in Syria, where they received firearms training before being dispatched to Amman, in anticipation of battlefield deployment. As word reached their ears of the bitter Arab defeat, the majority of this Palestinian force dispersed, returning to school in Lebanon. As'ad 'Abd al-Rahman, also a member of Fatah, opted instead to infiltrate the West Bank and attempt to establish cells for military resistance there. Ultimately, these efforts met with failure; al-Rahman was captured by Israeli security forces just weeks after making his way across the Jordan River.[71]

The Lebanese branch was not the only GUPS office that readied itself to participate in the fight for Palestine. It was joined by the coordinating committee of the Palestinian Student Confederation in Germany, which dispatched an organized group of local Fatah activists, while simultaneously coordinating the arrival of Palestinian student reinforcements from elsewhere in Europe, such as Spain, Italy and Austria.[72] These groups of students reached paramilitary camps in Algiers, the training grounds of the Fatah

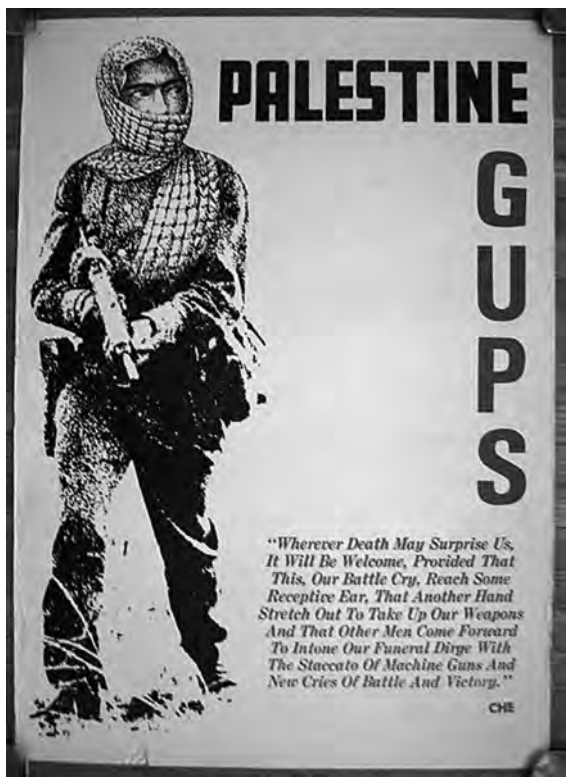

Figure 2.1 The GUPS and the Armed Struggle.[73]

loyalists. Logistics for the arrival of students and other volunteers from Europe were managed by Farouk al-Qaddumi (Abu Lutf), who was at the time in charge of coordinating activities of Fatah in Spain. In sum, the total number of students arriving from Europe to participate in the battle did not exceed 50.[74] Again, owing to the swift Israeli military triumph, students dispatched to the front were denied their hand in combat.

Like As'ad Abd al-Rahman, many of the GUPS activists crossed the Jordan River to engage Israel's armed forces as guerrillas. Israeli intelligence, however, was heavily invested in undermining Fatah's efforts to establish military cells in the West Bank, hence the majority of these infiltrators were detained shortly after their arrival to the territory. Amongst the more prominent activists arrested were GUPS German office leaders Abdallah al-Afranji and Walim Nasir from Frankfurt University, Ahmad Irshid from the University of Karlsruhe and Ghazi al-Husayni[75] from the University of Cologne.[76]

The number of student leaders captured validated Israeli concerns and intelligence gathered by its security establishment, which indicated that Palestinian students were undergoing military training. The Israeli military authorities, which in the wake of the 1967 War now had control of the West Bank, began attuning their senses to the very active role of students in the Palestinian armed struggle. The arrest of GUPS Deputy Chairman Taysir Qubba'a, who had infiltrated East Jerusalem after the war in order to establish resistance cells comprised of local schoolteachers, further underscored this reality.

In the aftermath of the defeat of 1967, the GUPS loyalists perceived activism as their national duty, and made the arrest of the GUPS Deputy Chairman an affair of the public media. An international campaign calling for the release of Taysir Qubba'a was launched, stressing his functions in the GUPS and various international student political bodies. At the height of the campaign, the GUPS leadership wired a telegram to the UN General Secretary, demanding he guarantee the rights of their compatriot and assist in securing his release. To realize their mission, the GUPS attempted to mobilize a broad international political coalition through which political pressure could be applied on Israel.[77]

Notes

1 Abu Iyad, *Without a Homeland*, p. 74.
2 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 75.
3 Fatah's call was joined by activists of the Muslim Brothers and *Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami*. See: Khayr al-Din Abu al-Jabin, *Qissat hayati fi Filastin wa-al-Kuwayt* (Ramallah: Dar al-Shuruq, 2002), p. 330.
4 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World,* p. 75.
5 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, p. 465.
6 Taysir Qubba'a was at the time associated with the Arab Nationalist movement and served as chairman of the GUPS. Nowadays he is one of the prominent political leaders of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

7 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, p. 466.
8 Ibid., p. 467.
9 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World,* pp. 75–6.
10 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, p. 468.
11 Sharif al-Husayni was a senior GUPS activist and was also a member of the Arab Nationalist movement.
12 Faysal al-Husayni is a well-known figure in the Palestinian political scene. As a member of the renowned family of notables and a direct descendent of the legendary commander of "Jaysh al-Jihad al-Muqaddas", Abd al-Qadir Husayni, Faysal al-Husayni assumed a public career from a very young age. Husayni was one of the GUPS founders, and participated in the union's first conference in Cairo in 1959. At the time he studied at the universities of Baghdad and later Cairo; since he devoted most of his time to political activities, he graduated in the end. Eventually Faisal al-Husayni was awarded a Bachelor's degree by the Military College of Damascus in 1967. In the early 1960s Husayni joined the ranks of Fatah.
13 Bakr, *Hadith fi Karta'j*, p. 99.
14 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, p. 468.
15 See: "Barnamaj al-'Amal Aldhi Kadamtahu al-Qiyadah al-'Amma lil-Kuwat al-'Asifa ila al-Majlis al-Wattani al-Filastini 31 May 1965", in *Al-Wathayiq al-Arabiyya* (al-Jami'a al-Amirikiyya fi Bairut: Dayra al-Dirasat al-Siyasiyya wa al-Idara al-'Amah).
16 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, p. 468.
17 Ibid., p. 469.
18 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 74.
19 Musa, "Hawl Tajribat al-Ittihad al-'Amm lil-Tulaba Filastin", p. 184.
20 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, pp. 469–70.
21 Musa, "Hawl Tajribat al-Ittihad al-'Amm lil-Tulaba Filastin", p. 184.
22 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 76.
23 Bakr, *Hadith fi Karta'j*, pp. 93–4.
24 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, pp. 469–70.
25 Ahmad Sadki al-Dajani, was the head of the PLO Popular Organization committee, he was supposed to assume the role of an observer in this conference. In actual fact, he also coordinated the lobbying efforts of the PLO.
26 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, pp. 473–4.
27 Musa, "Hawl Tajribat al-Ittihad al-'Amm lil-Tulaba Filastin", p. 184.
28 Shemesh, *From the Nakba to the Naksa*, p. 475.
29 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World,* pp. 76–7.
30 Nasir, *Taghribat Bni Fatah*, p. 71.
31 Maha Ahmed Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt* (The American University in Cairo Press, 1986), p. 43.
32 Abdallah al-Afranji, "Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya wa-Nidhliha min Ajl Filasstin fi Iruba al-Ghrbiyya", *Shu'un Filastiniyya,* Ilul [September],no. 3 (1971), p. 261.
33 Ibid.
34 Barahan al-Dajani (ed.), *al-Kitab al-Sanawi lil-al-Qadiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-'am 1966* (Beirut: Manshurat Mu'assasat al-dirasat al-filastiniyya), p. 103.
35 Bayan Mushtarak Sadir 'an al-Ittihad al-'am lil-Tulaba Filastin wa-Kunfadraliyyat Talabat Iran, Cairo, July 2, 1966.
36 Nasir, *Taghribat Bni Fatah*, p. 71.
37 See: Bayan Mushtarak bayn al-Ittihad al-'Amm lil-Talabat Filastin wa al-Ittihad lil-Talabat al-Jam'ain fi Kuba, August 1966, in *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-'am 1966*, p. 379.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., p. 380.
40 Bayan Mushtarak bayn al-Ittihad al-'Amm lil-Tulaba Filastin wa Ittihad Talabat Afrika al-Sawda fi Fransa, in *al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-'am 1966*, pp. 136–7.

41 Ibid.
42 There were two student unions in the day of the Cold War, the International Union of Students (IUS) was a pro-Soviet organization set up in Prague. Its rival, the International Student Conference (ISC) had offices located l in Leiden (the Netherlands); this pro-American organization was created and funded by the CIA. The ISC disassembled after its connections with the CIA were exposed.
43 Ibid.
44 Walim Nasir was a registered student in the German-language studies preparatory program in Frankfurt University. Being admitted to German universities was a simple matter, and Hayil ʿAbd al-Hamid was also enrolled in Frankfurt University without actually attending studies. Instead, he focused his efforts on organizational activity and politicization. When ʿAbd al-Hamid was elected to the GUPS, and valid student documents were required, his comrades admitted him to studies in Germany and sent the required proof to Cairo.
45 Nasir, *Taghribat Bni Fath*, p. 71.
46 Al-Afranji, "Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya wa-Nidaliha min Ajl Filasstin fi Uruba al-Gharbiyya", p. 261.
47 Interview with Edy Kaufman, May 16, 2014.
48 Israeli State Archive (Jerusalem), Foreign Office, h'et3/4/3835. State Attorney's Office, Foreign Office Main Bureau, Head of the Middle East Department. August 22, 1966.
49 Israeli State Archive (Jerusalem), Foreign Office, h'et3/4/3835. Head of the Middle East Department to Mr. Y. Hadas, Israeli Embassy, Paris. January 15, 1967.
50 Israeli State Archive (Jerusalem), Foreign Office, h'et3/4/3835. Dr. Zakai to Mr. A. Primor. April 2, 1967.
51 Israeli State Archive (Jerusalem), Foreign Office, h'et3/4/3835. Y. Hadas, Paris, to Mr. Sh. Ben-Hayyim, Foreign Office (Copy: Mr. Gazit, Head of Middle East Department, the ambassador/envoy), Paris. May 19, 1966.
52 Ibid.
53 Nasir, *Taghribat Bni Fatah*, pp. 75–8.
54 The publicity stands were held out in the open. For instance, in 1968 the Fatah movement publicly operated a stand in the Sorbonne, and a "Social Zionist" stand sprang up in protest right across from it. See: Shlomo Avineri, *Tnuat ha-Mehaʾa be-Oniversitaot ba-Maʾarav ve-Hashlahoteihen al ha-Kibutzim ha-Yehudiyyim* [*The Protest Movement in Western Universities and Its Implications on the Local Jewish Communities*], (Hebrew University: The Institute for Contemporary Judaism/Sprinzak Section, Jerusalem, 1970), p. 26.
55 Israeli State Archive (Jerusalem), Foreign Office, h'et3/4/3835. (Gavriel Padon, Israeli Embassy in Paris, to: Middle East/Research/Publicity). June 7, 1966.
56 For more on this organization see: www.stud.uni-hannover.de/gruppen/ius/background.html
57 Israeli State Archive (Jerusalem), Foreign Office, h'et3/4/3835. (Gavriel Padon, Israeli Embassy in Paris, to: Middle East/Research/Publicity). June 7, 1966.
58 Rodinson was a renowned French Marxist historian. His most notable publication is a biography of the Prophet Muhammad, written from a sociological perspective. In the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Rodinson was known for his pro-Palestinian views.
59 Israeli State Archive (Jerusalem), Foreign Office, Het3/4/3835. (Gavriel Padon, Israeli Embassy in Paris, to: Middle East/Research/Publicity). June 7, 1966.
60 In 1966, the cause of Mahmoud Hijazi, the first Palestinian prisoner of the Fatah movement, featured in every international public announcement or manifesto of the GUPS. See for instance: Biyan Mashtarak bin al-Ittihad al-ʿAm lil-Tulaba Filastin wa al-Ittihad lil-Tulaba al-Jamʿain fi Kuba, Ab, August 1966, in *al-Wathayyaq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʿam 1966,* p. 379. See also: Biyan Mashtarak bin

al-Ittihad al-ʿAm la-Tulaba Filastin wa al-Ittihad Tulaba Afrika al-Sudaʾa fi Fransa, in *al-Watayyak al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʿam 1966*, pp. 136–7.
61 Ibid.
62 As part of the attempt to join forces with the Leftist bloc in France.
63 Israeli State Archive (Jerusalem), Foreign Office, h'et3/4/3835. (Gavriel Padon, Israeli Embassy in Paris, to: Middle East/Research/Publicity). June 7, 1966.
64 Al-Afranji, "Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya-wa-nidhliha min Ajl Filasstin fi Iruba al-Ghrbiyya", p. 262.
65 Adnan al-ʿImad "Usbuʿa Filastin al-ʿAlami: (5) Takrir min Almanyya al-Fidiraliyya", *Shuʾun Filastiniyya,* Ilul (September), 1971, p. 274.
66 Al-Afranji, "Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya-Nidhaliha min Ajl Filasstin fi Iruba al-Gharbiyya", p. 262.
67 Ibid.
68 Four committees from Italy, three from the Netherlands, four from France and two from Switzerland participated in the conference. In addition to the European parties, an Iranian committee was also present, as an observer. Additional committees that participated with observer status were the GUPS Vienna office committee, and a committee from the General Union of Arab Students (*al-Ittihad al-ʿam lil-Tulaba al-Arab*).
69 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World,* p. 76–7.
70 Bakr Abu Bakr, *al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin*, p. 5.
71 Ibid.
72 Al-Afranji, "Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya wa-Nidaliha min Ajl Filastin fi Iruba al-Gharbiyya", p. 261.
73 Poster from the Palestine Poster Project Archive. Dated to 1970.
74 Nasir, *Taghribat Bni Fatah*, p. 71.
75 Faysal al-Husayni's brother, Ghazi al-Husayni, settled in Amman after his release. Eventually he was drawn by the teachings and was considered one of the close associates of Khalil al-Wazir (Abu-Jihad) in Fatah's Western Command. Ghazi al-Husayni was considered a key figure in groups considered to be the Islamist factions within Fatah, which coordinated attacks in the early and mid-1980s.
76 Al-Afranji, "Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya-Nidaliha min Ajl Filastin fi Iruba al-Gharbiyya", p. 261.
77 *Al-Hurriyah*, January 8, 1968.

3 The politics of survival
The GUPS in times of crisis

The fifth general assembly of the GUPS: a political tipping point

The fifth GUPS convention was held in Amman between July 31 and August 3, 1969, in the wake of the 1967 War and the ensuing shock wave still traversing Palestinian society and the Arab world at large. The convention demonstrated the growth of the GUPS, which since its last general assembly had launched 26 new offices. Some 68 members (out of the 77 invited) participated in the conference.[1] Notwithstanding its expansion, the convention was dominated by the rapid ascent of the Fedayeen within the Palestinian National Movement. The centrality of the Armed Struggle, which manifested in a changing of the guard at the highest levels of the PLO, also influenced the GUPS leadership. The strained relationship between the GUPS and PLO that marked the years 1965–66 were succeeded by a profound sense of mutual support and camaraderie. This new condition was aided by a takeover of the PLO's institutions by the younger generation, spearheaded by Yasir Arafat and the Fatah movement, an unsurprising change considering Arafat and the new PLO leadership were GUPS alumni.[2]

The fifth general assembly demarcated a new era in the history of the GUPS, in which armed Palestinian factions would claim center stage. These parties were boosted by the relative success at the Battle of Karameh[3] of which several GUPS activists took part. Two such partisans, Ribhi Muhammad Husayn and Muhammad Samaro of the German confederation,[4] had arrived to reinforce the Fedayeen in the aftermath of the 1967 War. Their deaths at Karameh[5] only added to the glory and prestige of the GUPS.

Echoing developments within the ranks of the PLO leadership, Fatah consolidated control over the GUPS during the fifth conference, with six members elected to the 11-seat GUPS executive committee. The remaining seats were taken by a single representative from each of the remaining PLO factions (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine –PFLP; the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine – DFLP; Communists; Arab Front; and Palestinian Front). Furthermore, Fatah delegate Amin al-Hindi of the German confederation was elected GUPS chairman.[6] Amin al-Hindi later recalled the events that led to his election:

> I met Hayil Abd al-Hamid in Damascus in 1968, following the battle of Karameh. He was returning from military training in China. We agreed on the importance of reinstating the national GUPS conference. He said it wouldn't make sense for Taysir Qubba'a to be reelected as chair of the Executive Committee, considering that Muhammad Sabih had been faithfully appointed, and that there was no option but to hold a general assembly. Fatah was at the time flourishing and gaining momentum, Shukayri's star was waning, and the Popular Front (PFLP) had also opted for the armed struggle. I came down from Germany to Jordan and when the conference took place, the *shahid* Abu al-Hawl (Hayil Abd al-Hamid) labored exhaustively for me to be elected chairman. This was achieved in spite of the bitter struggle with our GUPS brothers from Cairo, who sought the role of chairman for themselves by virtue of their location.[7]

The opening speech of the conference in Amman was delivered by King Husayn[8] – a clear indication the Arab leaders recognized the political clout of the GUPS. As part of the inter-Arab power wrangling, the Arab Nationalists, who had dominated the GUPS in the 1960s, harshly criticized the "reactionary" Jordanian regime.[9] Being the young leader that he was, King Husayn was well aware of the vibrant student scene wedded to the Palestinian National Movement that had developed in his kingdom. Nevertheless, internal divisions within the Jordanian student movement were depleting its strength. Throughout the 1960s, and particularly as the decade drew to a close, the movement was split between *al-Itihad al-watani la-tulabat al-urdun* (Jabhat al-Nidal al-Tulabi) [National Union of Jordanian Students], associated with the PFLP and many of whose members joined the armed struggle in 1968,[10] and *al-Itihad al-'Amm li-tulabat al-urdun* [General Union of Jordanian Students], which, under the patronage of the PLO, had adopted a more pragmatic and moderate approach.[11]

The various student movements in Jordan had divided along ideological lines, but they occasionally overcame such differences to orchestrate joint activities. King Husayn was keenly aware of Palestinian involvement in these movements. Jordan's bitter defeat in the 1967 War obliged the regime to carry out certain measures of liberalization, so that the populace could let off steam. Accordingly, relative freedom of expression had been awarded to the student strata, so as to mitigate internal criticism leveled at the Jordanian monarchy.[12]

Against the backdrop of rising Palestinian nationalism and the emergence of a radical discourse among groups such as the PFLP and DFLP, King Husayn harbored fears of subversion and a possible loss of control of the West Bank. He therefore chose to address the opening session of the GUPS general assembly in Amman. The words he chose belie the underlying mood and dreary state of affairs:

> We will neither enable nor appease any effort aimed to create dissention in our society, on both banks [of the Jordan River]. And we shall not

> allow any rift to emerge under the wings or shadows of occupation … the goal we must invest in realizing is the restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people, which were abruptly snared. In order for us to realize this goal, we must remain united under one flag and one entity.[13]

In addition to the monarch's opening speech, Jordanian Prime Minister Abdʾ al-Munʿim al-Rifʾai was invited to deliver closing remarks to the assembly at the conclusion of the conference.[14]

In stark contrast to the heightened Jordanian presence, the absence of new PLO Chairman and former GUPS Cairo Office Chairman Yasir Arafat was most conspicuous.[15] In his stead, Arafat had sent the convention a telegram detailing a speech heavy with pathos, which underlined the prevailing political atmosphere and the centrality of the Armed Struggle to their worldview. In his missive, the PLO chairman stressed that the GUPS had been and would continue to be:

> the fertile revolutionary soil, from which we learned to rebel and unite, and from which we experienced the violent revolutionary struggle. Your union [the GUPS] should be proud of being the shower of rain that first spurred the revolution of our people in January 1965. It [the union] flourished with this blessing of rain and sustained its revolution, which is the source of its resoluteness … The policy derives from the power of the gun and your decisions and discussion should follow this truth: there is no dignity (*karameh*) for our people nor liberation for our lands, lest this faith pervade our souls.[16]

Arafat's blessing was a beacon for the conference, accompanied by an official letter by Fatah, in which the movement presented the GUPS with a summary of its political program. The letter was intended to illustrate the spirit of change that had engulfed the Palestinian arena at large and to pronounce that Fatah was now calling the shots as the executive arm of GUPS policy.

In its letter to the conference, Fatah outlined the movement's creed, which drawing from lessons of the past imagined a glamorous future. The letter sets forth an analysis of the Palestinian problem on various strategic levels. In geopolitical terms, the movement portrayed Israel as one of many American bases placed in the Arab domain by means of a political peace process. Fatah challenged this dialogue for the danger it posed to Palestinians' ability to realize basic national rights over their land. The letter also discussed internal developments in the Palestinian arena, stressing the importance of Armed Struggle and the need to maintain national unity. The letter named Fatah as the vanguard of the Palestinian armed struggle and presented the concept of Palestinian national particularism as the unifying ideological pillar. According to Fatah, "It is inconceivable that various Palestinian organizations be left out of the national council, just as it is inconceivable that they [the Palestinian organizations] present views that contradict the

Palestinian national covenant."[17] The letter signs off with a direct appeal to participants of the convention:

> Oh, Brothers,
>
> We are filled with a great hope that you will study and consider the reality we have placed at your doorstep. Success will be measured by your ability to maintain the unity of the revolution. We believe in your fundamental role regarding your problem, your country, your people and your revolution. This is because we consider you one of the central pillars of the Palestinian revolution.[18]

The GUPS welcomed the new leadership of the PLO with open arms; four articles of the concluding resolutions of the conference were devoted to the union's position regarding the PLO and its role. They called for:

1 Full support of the "new" PLO, which represents a national front that brings together the fighters and citizens of the brave Palestinian people.
2 Emphasis of the Palestinian revolution, in all fields, as part of the Arab and worldwide liberation movements.
3 Adherence to the National Palestinian Covenant.
4 Tactical application of all possible measures to increase representation of the GUPS in the Palestinian National Council (PNC).[19]

Its being held in the wake of the 1967 War deepened the political significance of the fifth general assembly of the GUPS.[20] The GUPS, which perceived itself not only a professional association but also a political association, devoted substantial time and effort in the calibration of its political agenda. In keeping with the spirit of the times, the GUPS was adamantly opposed to the establishment of a diminished Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip alone,[21] a concession they perceived as a betrayal of the dream to revive the whole of historical Palestine.

Furthermore, the GUPS defined its position regarding the nature of the Palestinian struggle and its demands of the supportive Arab front. On this matter, the student union adopted the views of Fatah, which called upon the Arab states to refrain from interfering with the agenda of the Palestinian revolution. The underlying assumption was that the Palestinians would reply in kind and abstain from political matters of the Arab states that hosted them. Nevertheless, since the GUPS believed the Palestinian revolution to be a catalyst for change throughout the Arab world, it also acknowledged the need to support the Arab Front and its public associations of students, workers and farmers in particular.[22]

In its fifth general assembly, the GUPS also sought to clarify relations with the international community. Successes on the geopolitical stage had encouraged the union's leadership to consider themselves pioneers of the Palestinian publicity front. Their mission, so they believed, was to instill in their people a renewed

national awareness. This sentiment was reinforced by the financial burden weighing upon the various offices of the GUPS throughout the Palestinian diaspora, which were largely dependent upon donations and membership fees.[23]

The modes in which they chose to reveal their worldview and political goals were a reflection also of the prevailing mood amongst a generation of Palestinian youth. Two items in the conference resolutions contextualize the Palestinian cause within the international community. The nature of struggle implied by the articles demonstrates their resolve:

1. [The GUPS] rejects outright all peaceful resolutions of the conflict discussed by the superpowers, which might bring an end to the Palestinian cause. The Palestinian revolution adheres to its legal right to liberate its land by force of arms in accordance with the laws and principals derived from the United Nations Charter.
2. The GUPS calls upon the socialist forces around the world to support the struggle of the Palestinian people. It calls also for the loyalists of socialism to endorse the strategy of the Palestinian revolution whose aim is the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state in all Palestinian territories (*Tarab*), free of racial or religious discrimination.[24]

Regarding the intra-Palestinian political arena, the GUPS elevated the policy of Armed Struggle to the bellwether of the Palestinian quest for self-determination. The small-scale organizations of Palestinian Fedayeen, flourishing in the wake of the 1967 War, and widespread disenchantment with Arab nationalism did not escape the attention of the Fatah-dominated GUPS leadership. Furthermore, the outcome of the war had further deepened an intergenerational rift between the young Palestinians, who branded themselves "the revolution generation" (*jil al-thawra*), and the preceding "Nakba generation." The issue of Armed Struggle, which soon became the nucleus around which a new Palestinian national consciousness was forged,[25] topped the agenda of the conference. A committee designated to address this issue denounced the splintering of factions and aligned itself with the new PLO leadership in demanding their consolidation under a unified command.[26]

The call for unification of the revolutionary cadres was driven by the political splits and power struggles that were likewise apparent in the student bodies. Despite its self-assigned role as a Palestinian "melting pot" and its attempts to bridge political differences by way of a cooperative framework intended to promote a unified discourse among Palestinian students, the GUPS faced significant logistical and organizational obstacles. In practice, the GUPS offices in the various Arab states were far from autonomous; they required the local student unions to serve as proxies in order to conduct activities in the hosting states.[27]

Despite the deepening of the Palestinian national consciousness after the 1967 War and the internalization of an ethos of Armed Struggle, internal

divisions within the Arab domain continued to influence the various camps within the GUPS. The embrace of Armed Struggle by new factions, some of which had sprung from the ranks of the Arab Nationalists and were characterized by a leftist worldview, demanded a reassessment. Some of the recently emerged organizations, such as the PFLP, were not instinctively keen to coordinate their military activities with the PLO. The factions' resistance presaged embarrassment for the Fatah-dominated PLO, which as the flag bearer of the Palestinian cause, had pledged it would not interfere with the internal affairs of the Arab states and would avoid indiscretion.

The July 1968 hijacking of El Al Flight 426 refuted this directive. Having sprung from the well of Pan-Arabism, the PFLP supported carrying out high-profile attacks that could deposit the Palestinian cause within the consciousness of the international community. The subsequent landing of the hijacked plane in Algiers irked the country's longtime allies, Fatah and the PLO. Following the PFLP stunt, Algiers found itself at the center of a global storm, subjected to the scrutiny of the West as a suspected sponsor of terrorism. Nevertheless, the GUPS office in Iraq proclaimed full support for the PFLP action and called for the aircraft to remain in the possession of PFLP as a spoil of war. The announcement signed off with heartfelt blessings from the "pioneers of our fighting people to the eternal revolution in our beloved Algiers."[28]

As the Algerian leadership came under fire in the international arena, the PLO found itself in a diplomatic quandary of its own. Despite having pledged absolute support for Armed Struggle, following Fatah's taking of the reins, the PLO had tempered its diplomatic approach, conditioning its implementation of "Entanglement Theory." Yet despite the PLO having declined to publicly condemn the hijacking of the Israeli airliner, it struggled to portray the action as an independent Palestinian move and absolve the Algerians of any involvement.[29]

On account of the PFLP's political agenda, which aimed to radically transform the Arab geopolitical order, the GUPS central leadership saw the need to establish a unified command for the Palestinian armed struggle. The union leadership therefore called for continuing the dialogue, in order to eventually bring the Popular Front under the thumb of the unified framework. The GUPS, claimed its leadership, was committed "to perform better so as to overcome obstacle".[30]

In spite of its deep involvement in political affairs, which stemmed from its self-appraisal as a body of influence and a central pillar of the Palestinian revolution, the GUPS did not neglect the Palestinian students themselves. The revolutionary role of the individual student was derived from the union's understanding that the intelligentsia plays a key role in any revolution. Therefore, the GUPS concluded its members should channel their national and regional sentiments first and foremost to the support of their homeland and Armed Struggle. Accordingly, in order to reinforce the role of the Palestinian student, who would fuel the revolution, the GUPS called for the following measures to be implemented:

a) Military training camps were to be established, especially during the period of summer break.
b) Communication with the paramilitary leadership was to be fostered in order to nurture students' revolutionary experience and facilitate their enlistment in active Armed Struggle.
c) GUPS members located outside of the Arab countries would be called upon to join forces with other local progressives sympathetic to the Palestinian revolution.
d) GUPS members in the Palestinian diaspora would be encouraged to cooperate with the progressive political forces in their host countries to counter official Zionist activities, lectures and movie screenings.
e) GUPS members in the diaspora would be requested to arrange their affairs such as to enable their participation in summer military training and armed struggle.
f) Coordination would be established with the Arab students and student unions to enable their participation in paramilitary training and combat.
g) Ties with other student associations were to be strengthened on the basis of their support of the Palestinian armed struggle.
h) Ties with GUPS offices abroad would be bolstered so as to collect all relevant political and military information to support the students in the discharge of their duties.
i) Branches in Western Europe would be called upon to strengthen their ties with the revolutionary left in Europe, the United States and other world powers, so that the GUPS might benefit from external outreach and garner greater international support for its cause.[31]

The resolutions of the fifth GUPS conference testify to its vitality and importance in the evolving power structure of the Palestinian National Movement. The conference attempted to bridge gaps between the various GUPS factions by establishing consensus around the ethos of Armed Struggle. Yet despite fences having been mended between the GUPS and the PLO, new fractures were appearing between Fatah, which had overtaken the GUPS and the PLO's other centers of power, and the various factions that proliferated in the wake of the 1967 War, first among them the PFLP.

Ironically, the fifth GUPS general assembly was held on Jordanian soil. Despite the prevailing logic of the time, which championed Jordan's proximity to the battlegrounds of Palestine, the Hashemite state would soon become anathema to the Palestinian cause. The tension within the Arab world, caught between the aspirations of Pan-Arab unity and the maintenance of existing frameworks, was part and parcel of the Palestinian problem.

The emergence of minor Palestinian factions in the wake of the 1967 War, whose paramilitary activities remained ungoverned, featured prominently on the agenda of the fifth GUPS conference. The GUPS denounced the autonomy of these organizations, which threatened Arab state sovereignty, and

insisted that all armed action be regulated under the supervision of the PLO. Furthermore, Fatah's takeover had encouraged the PLO to set aside its strategy of "entanglement" and adopt a more diplomatic stance.

The student community in Jordan harbored a sizable Palestinian population that had embraced the doctrine of revolution. The Jordanian student movement was simultaneously plagued with divisions, not only along the national Jordanian–Palestinian axis, but also along lines of ideology and partisanship.[32] Most prominent within this complex array were Fatah and the PFLP, both of which operated active student cells within Jordan. Such was their influence that these movements even controlled the Jordanian student associations beyond the borders of the Hashemite kingdom.

The PFLP, which in the name of the Palestinian revolution had opted to transform Amman into a second Hanoi, presented a political liability for Fatah, which had only just completed its takeover of the PLO and its public organs. Confronting the local authorities helped the PFLP to siphon popular support from the PLO, which had adopted a more conservative line and refrained from interfering with the internal affairs of the Jordanian state – a policy laid bare when Fatah loyalists attempted to thwart demonstrations against the Jordanian compulsory enlistment act of 1968 in the University of Jordan.[33]

Far-reaching support of the Palestinian revolution, which had enraptured throngs of Palestinian youths in Jordan, encouraged the Hashemite regime to adopt policies favorable to the Fedayeen. Yet as these armed movements gathered strength, they began to challenge the Jordanian regime. The radicalization of the Fedayeen dovetailed with high-profile attacks carried out by the PFLP, which on September 6, 1970, landed three hijacked foreign airliners in the Jordanian desert near the town of Zarka. The Hashemite regime's reaction eventually dragged Fatah into a cycle of violence that led to the fateful events of Black September.

In the fighting that ensued, droves of Palestinian students joined ranks with the resistance movement. They assumed active combat roles and many were killed in action.[34] In time, the monarchy gained the upper hand and the Fedayeen resistance camps were flushed from the Hashemite kingdom. It was a watershed moment for the student movement, which in its convention only a year prior had contemplated relocating its head office from Cairo to Amman.[35]

The severe blow delivered to the PLO through its confrontation with the Jordanian army brought with it strategic and organizational changes. While the GUPS headquarters remained in Cairo, the majority of the armed forces of Fatah and the other factions migrated from Jordan to Lebanon, via Syria. In the shadow of the Black September crisis of 1970, the GUPS needed to reconsider its modus operandi. Geopolitical shifts bore significant consequences for the relationship between the GUPS and the Jordanian regime, but also vis-à-vis the various student unions in Jordan and beyond, which had adopted the worldview of the Palestinian revolution and supported it throughout the events. Against this backdrop, the GUPS continued preparations for its sixth general assembly, to be held in Algiers.

Public diplomacy in times of crisis: the GUPS International Convention for Palestine in Amman, February 13, 1971

Inter-Arab developments, the bloody clashes of Black September and the destruction of the Palestinian National Movement's central pillars all bore political repercussions in the student arena. The brief honeymoon of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Fedayeen had come to an end. With its demise, the GUPS's dream of relocating its general headquarters from Cairo to Amman – a move designed to enhance its political fortunes – also died. The proximity of Amman to the West Bank was attractive to the vision of armed struggle supported by the Fedayeen, who under the leadership of Fatah, constituted the GUPS's dominant political power from 1968. To explore the feasibility of such a move, the GUPS conducted a series of highly significant political and cultural events in Amman. Apart from holding its sixth annual meeting there, Amman was also chosen as the location for its "International Convention for Palestine."

As a formative part of the GUPS's global public diplomacy initiative, the International Convention for Palestine in Amman was of the utmost political importance, a link in the chain of international relations stemming from the GUPS's first general assembly in Cairo in 1965.[36] The date and substance of the convention alluded to other commemorations, including the struggle of the Greek socialist forces against their government and the annual memorial of the Vietnamese struggle against the United States (September 2),[37] correlations designed to situate the Palestinian struggle within the panoply of legitimate national liberation struggles.

When asked about holding the convention in Amman, GUPS Vice Chairperson Muhammad al-Dajani responded:

> The Executive Committee has decided to hold the convention due to the importance of this type of gathering in such crucial a stage of our nation's armed struggle, and its purpose is to clarify the goals of this struggle and to convince wide international circles of its legitimacy. This is our response to the Zionists' attempts to belittle the Palestinian Revolution, and we would like to expand national support of the Palestinian cause and the involvement of the Arab nations, to the point of transforming the cause into a full-fledged national movement.

Al-Dajani added:

> The GUPS has decided to hold the convention in Amman, where the struggle takes place, in light of the crucial circumstances there, since we intend the convention to become the concrete response to the defeatists' claims. The convention will strengthen the Palestinian Revolution and our rejection of all political solutions. It will help us relay to the international community that the faith we hold in the pioneering leadership of our revolution leads us to reject such solutions.[38]

Figure 3.1 An invitation to GUPS's second International Conference for Palestine.[39]

GUPS's attempts at public diplomacy were also reflected in the opening remarks of PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat, whose speech revealed the extent of the conflict between the Palestinians and the Jordanian government. As he began, Arafat mentioned that the Jordanian authorities were not interested in the convention having been hosted in Amman and had done everything within their means to prevent it. Indeed, in the midst of this address, exchanges of gunfire between Jordanian authorities and various Palestinian groups could be heard in the background. Arafat took advantage of the convention to attack the regime directly, while preserving a distinction between the Jordanian people and their government:

> You have seen how the authorities have attacked the noble and brave, the patient and devoted denizens of Amman. This is the city where we convene today and these are the authorities that attempted to prevent our convening here. Perhaps this was one of the reasons for which they hastened [in their attack] to prevent this convention … but you are a part of the revolution, and you insisted this convention must take place. I and my comrades-in-arms feel proud that you are holding this convention here,

> despite the objections of the authorities, who are tightly bound to the American intelligence services. But you are protected by the machine guns of your revolutionary brothers. This convention was meant to be held elsewhere, at some aristocratic location in Amman, but the revolution is glad you chose to hold it here, under the welcome wing of your brotherhood. And again, I am glad to meet you once again in this place.[40]

Plans to move the GUPS's headquarters from Cairo to Amman derived from tensions that had surfaced between Palestinian students and the Egyptian authorities in Cairo. The GUPS, which considered its influence to extend far beyond the student political sphere, remained in close contact with the Egyptian Student Union. The turmoil that arose in Egypt following the 1967 War and the decision to prosecute a group of air force officers had caused an uproar on the streets of Egypt. The public was not opposed to the prosecution of the officers, but rather the lightness of their sentences, considering the country's remarkable defeat in the war. To the public, such insignificant penalties indicated their government was incompetent and, in certain aspects, corrupt. In response, the Egyptian Student Union, along with workers' groups, organized protest demonstrations on campuses.[41]

The GUPS joined ranks with the Egyptian Student Union and riots soon spilled over from the campuses to the street. It was the first time the GUPS had protested an official act of the Egyptian government and the authorities, greatly displeased by the Palestinian students' involvement in the provocations, responded with mass arrests of the protestors.[42]

GUPS's sixth annual convention, 1971, Algiers

In light of the unavenged blood of Black September and the Fedayeen's redeployment to their new home in Lebanon, the GUPS determined to conduct its sixth annual conference, entitled, "Amman's liberation is a step on the way to Palestine's liberation," in Algiers between July 30 and August 7, 1971.[43] Tellingly, another of the conference's politically significant titles read: "The Palestinian Student Movement Rejects All Solutions of Peace or Surrender."[44]

This conference included 84 participants from 70 individual GUPS branches, as well as the members of the executive committee and all past GUPS chairpersons. The convention was also host to important Arab academics such as the Palestinian Faiz Sayagh and Lebanese Clovis Maksoud, whose role was to provide critical perspectives which could justify the Palestinian national struggle historically and place it within the wide spectrum of national liberation movements against imperialism. Alongside these intellectuals were representatives from various Arab student organizations who had come to express their support and solidarity with the Palestinians. Designed to draw the widest possible attention of the public and media, many members of the international student association were invited. Most notably among

them were representatives from various Afro-Asian liberation movements, as well as 15 student delegations from the world of "liberal socialism."[45]

In light of the sweeping crisis facing the Palestinian National Movement, the convention's atmosphere was predictably stormy and the various assemblies were characterized by controversy. Extreme tension and pervasive disagreement led many to abandon the rubric of democracy. Many of the sessions were terminated in mid-course, various issues were removed from the agenda and several of the delegations failed even to state their positions.[46]

These limitations were issued, among other things, in light of the upcoming elections of GUPS's executive committee and general management. Fatah, which exerted effective control over the PLO, was aware of an evolving militancy among the leftist organizations. This trend had been exacerbated by the clashes in Jerash and Ajloun, during which the last pockets of Palestinian resistance in Jordan had been eliminated.

The leftist fronts sought revenge against the reactionary Jordanian government, something they viewed as a precondition for a successful Palestinian revolution, and objected to Fatah's policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the Arab states. In order to raise the widest public support, the leftist fronts utilized the GUPS branches that were available to them. As far as the leftist organizations were concerned, the students comprised a pivotal target because they were perceived as the most advanced group in support of "liberation and revolution and are devoted to the interests of their occupied homeland."[47] Nevertheless, Fatah resolved to maintain its eminence over the convention, which had drawn considerable attention from all of the Palestinian factions.

In order to emphasize its leadership of the Palestinian National Movement, Fatah appointed Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf), a prominent member and senior official in the PLO, to deliver the keynote address. Abu Iyad opened the proceedings by outlining a path meant to foster a spirit of mutual cooperation. In his speech, he stressed the need for reforms in the Palestinian National Movement and emphasized the importance of the student sector in this process.

Abu Iyad illustrated the proper political challenges of the Palestinian revolution. He emphasized the need to redirect from the ideological–philosophical stage to concrete action against the enemy on the battlefield. This enemy, according to Abu Iyad, was composed of the Zionist movement and the Jordanian regime, which represented the imperialistic interests of the United States in the Middle East. To face these challenges, Abu Iyad called for national unity among the different segments of the GUPS and for the formation of a binding set of principles that could enable future cooperation between members.[48] With special attention given to Ahmed Jibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–the General Command, Fatah attacked the factionalism of the leftist organizations, which it claimed was harming the interests of the Palestinian revolution.[49]

During the convention, the executive committee and the various committee chairs prevented the leftist organizations from passing certain decisions,

including a call to overthrow the Jordanian government. The monarchy, however, was severely criticized in the decisions of the convention.[50]

Though the leftist organizations protested the way in which the convention was managed, Fatah was nonetheless able to maintain its power over the proceedings. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–the General Command, which was the youngest Palestinian faction, issued a formal criticism of the outcomes in its journal, *Ila al-Imam*. They claimed that in these difficult hours, when the preservation of national unity is paramount, voices within the Palestinian National Movement were being silenced.[51]

The need to reform a Palestinian National Movement in serious crisis was voiced clearly during the sixth national conference. To unite the ranks, the GUPS had emphasized the principle of Armed Struggle, which served as the common denominator for all participating Palestinian factions. As it had done during its fifth convention in Algiers, the GUPS again formed a special committee dedicated to the issues of Armed Struggle and revolution. However, unlike the general convention in Amman on August 31, 1969, they had this time to reckon with a changed and increasingly complicated geopolitical reality.

The events of Black September and the costly confrontations with the Jordanian forces at Jerash and Ajloun in July 1971 left a deep impression on the Palestinian students, who had lost one of the Palestinian resistance movement's most important bastions of power. Simultaneously, the GUPS had to contend with the expansion of the Fedayeen, the splintering of new factions, and these novel groups' myriad inclinations – whether ideologically inherent or derived of an Arab-state sponsor – regarding the Palestinian issue.

The Committee for Armed Struggle and Revolution was one of the most esteemed at the convention and bore a potent political voice. Attempts were made to come to wide national consensus, with the committee's final report pertaining to the central issues of national unity and Armed Struggle, as well as the role of the Palestinian students therein.

The committee opened its report with a critical assessment of the practical achievements of the armed struggle since its previous convention. The criticism dealt primarily with the revolution's inability to recruit and unify the whole of the Palestinian people. In addition, committee members admitted an inability to formulate a national political agenda that could unite all of the revolutionary factions. They also complained about their failure to implement the decisions of the eighth Palestinian National Council. Taken together, the committee surmised, these factors had prevented the formation of a joint Palestinian–Jordanian front that could take part in Jordan's national liberation.[52]

The report also included special sections that defined the role of Palestinian students in the armed struggle. This reference was made to assign a special status to the contributions of the student sector. As the educated vanguard of the Palestinian people, the committee called upon the students to cultivate the flames of armed struggle they had helped ignite.[53]

The convention adopted the exemplary model of the Vietnamese for the recruitment and training of students for all modes of revolutionary violence. In accordance with the geopolitical tides, the committee also reiterated the recommendation of its predecessors in the fifth GUPS convention, stressing the need to support the Palestinian students of the occupied territories (the West Bank and Gaza Strip). Also underscored was the need to establish a supreme council comprising members of all the Palestinian national organizations tasked with the coordination and supervision of all military, diplomatic, media and political efforts. In conclusion, the committee endorsed the aforementioned steps as necessary to "leverage the role of our union in reconciling the goals of the Palestinian revolution and in embracing a constructive criticism that serves them."[54]

The very declaration of a need to mend fences in the student union specifically, and in the Palestinian struggle in general, indicated the existence of a brave internal discourse among participants regarding the condition of the Palestinian National Movement.[55] The convention did not shy away from this criticism and though admitting that such problems existed, insisted they could be overcome.

The GUPS published a summary report of the committee's decisions in its official journal, *Jabal Al-Zaytoun*. This report was formal in nature and included political statements beyond the specific resolutions of the conference, which emphasized the armed struggle as a central pillar of the Palestinian National Movement and its revolution. This report can be viewed as emblematic of a vivid political awareness among GUPS activists concerning the need for political support of their goals. Indeed, key political players from the local and international stages had been invited to the convention[56] and were granted observer status, an honor intended to evoke in them a commitment to forward the political ambitions of their Palestinian hosts.

In its general decisions, the GUPS was obliged to deal with questions of foreign policy. However, the depth of the crisis facing the Palestinian National Movement afforded only limited discussion of the internal political environments of the Arab states. Consequently, they restricted their focus to the Sudan, Morocco and the Arab Gulf, where new contests were unfolding between advocates of the socialist order and monarchies the GUPS perceived as reactionary.57

From the sixth conference's discussions: the link between the Jordanian and Palestinian student organizations

Because of the difficult conditions under which they were forced to operate, the committee dedicated a special section of its decisions to the Jordanian students. As articulated by the General Union of Jordanian Students, such conditions prevailed "in light of severe reactionary attacks by Western-affiliated authorities who forbid the renewal of student activities in Jordanian territories."[58] The GUPS enumerated the links between the General Union of Jordanian

Students and the Palestinian revolution, which they believed had spurred their persecution at the hands of the Jordanian authorities. In this context, the GUPS resolved that it would:

1. Completely and unconditionally support the radical Jordanian student forces, and call upon the Executive Committee to unite and cooperate with the Jordanian student union, and
2. Expose and shame the Hashemite monarchy for its attempts to fracture the Jordanian student union.[59]

In the early 1970s, substantial ties were established between the GUPS and the General Union of Jordanian Students. The Jordanian student union was divided into various organizations with centers of power and some funding stemming directly from the PLO. The task of revitalizing the General Union of Jordanian Students fell to the Palestinian factions, with the participation of both Palestinian and East Bank Jordanians.

The third convention of the General Union of Jordanian Students took place at Ayn al-Hilwa refugee camp near Sidon, on October 10, 1971, under the title "Toward a struggle for national, democratic rule in Jordan." Participants included Yasir Arafat, senior leaders of various resistance organizations[60] and activists from almost all of the Palestinian factions.[61] All sides agreed that the liberation of Palestinian lands lie in the continuation of armed struggle.[62]

The rapidly evolving affinity between the two student unions would prove quite effective. Joint statements concerning the political situation and the PLO's relationship with the Hashemite regime were characteristically militant and rejected all notions of reconciliation. Publishing in Palestinian political newspapers, the unions condemned attempts by Saudi Arabia to mediate between the PLO and the "house of Jordan." The various Palestinian factions, especially those from the left side of the political map, advocated a militant approach towards the regime. This approach was championed in particular by the PFLP, which in its journal, *al-Hadaf*, published a statement by GUPS and the General Union of Jordanian Students concerning the events at Jerash and Ajloun. Published as an open appeal to the students, their statement rejected all mediation between the Jordanian regime and the PLO and called on the students to overthrow the Jordanian regime. Contradicting Fatah's official stance, the unions characterized efforts to mediate as a plot against the Palestinian people's struggle.[63]

The pervasive militancy of the GUPS was indeed translated into action. Beyond vague conceptualization of the GUPS as an omnipresent reserve of PLO foot soldiers, GUPS chairperson Amin Al-Hindi, who had completed his term at the time of the sixth annual conference, endeavored to become an active role model. A founding member of Fatah and a leader of the German student confederation, Al-Hindi now decided to embark on a new career in Fatah's military wing, *Al-Asifa.* Having gained military training in

Germany and elsewhere, Al-Hindi commanded a terrorist cell whose mission was to hit an El Al airplane on approach to Rome airport by way of shoulder-launched missiles.

The first GUPS branch was established in Italy in 1971; the country was targeted as Palestinian students enjoyed relative freedom of movement there. The office worked closely with other Arab student unions, civil society groups and radical left-wing Italian political parties.[64] In addition, the GUPS had been given access to the resources of various other organizations, including Fatah's Waal al-Zʿatar, which disseminated propaganda on behalf of the group in Arabic, English and Italian.[65] The group's frenetic activity quickly captured the attention of the Israeli Foreign Ministry.[66]

The GUPS in a changing world

Threats to the Palestinian National Movement worsened throughout the early 1970s. The crisis, which was also evident in the student arena, was a product of internal events, such as the splitting off of various new factions, as well as external factors, including a rapid erosion of trust between the PLO and the Arab states.

Above it all hung the 1970 Rogers Peace Initiative, which attracted the ire of a GUPS that rejected any and all negotiated resolution of the conflict. According to the pervading ideology, no concessions could be made concerning the historic land of Palestine; any political recognition of the State of Israel would constitute a complete failure of the Palestinian National Movement to achieve its aims. The GUPS was incensed that Palestinian refugees alone warranted mention in the Rogers plan; Palestinian rights, let alone a state, were conspicuously absent. The GUPS therefore rejected it unequivocally, making clear its intention to continue to "carry our guns upon our shoulders, not for the sake of making war, but of making war for the sake of peace."[67]

In time, the young students' indefatigable zest for battle was to be tempered by defeat in the 1973 War and the military failures of the Palestinian resistance in the early part of that decade. Israel's military resilience – notwithstanding the tactical surprise and severe casualties inflicted by the militaries of Egypt and Syria in the war's opening foray – strengthened the sense that a military solution to the Palestinian issue was infeasible, and that Israel was not to prove a fading episode in the annals of the Middle East.

The GUPS and the Egyptian regime come to crisis

Reflecting upon the 1973 War and the lessons gleaned from their recent experience of armed struggle, the GUPS held its seventh annual convention during August 12–16, 1974. For the second year in a row, the event was held in Algiers, an indication of the deteriorating relationship between the Palestinian students and the Egyptian regime.

GUPS cooperation with the Egyptian Student Union, which had served to exacerbate its fall from favor with the regime, served also to seal a common fate for the two student groups in the eyes of a perturbed Egyptian government. Joint committees, founded after the failure of Egyptian authorities to halt the bloodshed of October 1970, reflected considerable popular support of the Palestinian issue on the streets of Egypt. Initially, the main source of support was found in the Engineering Faculty at the University of Cairo, where the "Palestinian Revolution Support Association" had been established. Some of the association's Egyptian members also visited refugee camps in Jordan and kept in personal touch with the heads of the Palestinian resistance groups.[68]

The joint committees launched their protests following the arrest of four members of the Black September organization[69] who had been detained in Egypt after assassinating Jordanian Prime Minister Wasfi al-Tal during his visit to Egypt in November 1971. In January 1972, the joint committees incited waves of violence spanning the various Egyptian campuses.[70]

The joint committees brought Egyptian students together with their counterparts in Fatah and the leftist Palestinian organizations. They built upon waves of unrest that had begun to swell in response to the policies of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Sadat had previously declared 1971 to be "a year of decisions" in the conflict with Israel, but in a speech to the Egyptian people in January 1972, he foundered on this call in favor of "no peace, no war" concerning the Suez Canal. The about-face sparked riots, spearheaded by Cairo and al-Azhar university students, which persisted into February. Placing blame for directing the riots upon the Palestinian resistance forces – Sadat, for instance, claimed that in Cairo alone 20,000 Palestinian students were directly culpable for the commotion there –[71] Egyptian authorities moved quickly to arrest many of them.[72]

But this was not to bring about an end to the student protests in Egypt. Palestinian students' political involvement in Egypt and their stance against the Jordanian regime was a source of much consternation for the new Egyptian president, who feared the riots could impair Egyptian relations with Jordan. Having been instructed to take harsh measures against the demonstrations, Sadat's security forces violently dispersed a GUPS assembly in March 1972. The students had assembled in front of the Jordanian embassy in protest of King Husayn's plan to confederate Jordan's east and west bank territories.[73]

Despite the regime's stated support of the Palestinian issue, clashes between the Egyptian forces and Palestinian students spilling across the streets of Cairo were perceived as a national security threat. Egyptian authorities, who discerned widespread public sympathy for the Palestinian issue, feared the violence might expand beyond the student sphere. Their sense of alarm was reinforced by the tendency of the Egyptian press to portray the Palestinian students as a social group struggling for legitimate rights.[74] Such a scenario put the government's internal stability at risk and called into question its inter-Arab loyalties.

Furthermore, the protests – and the assistance the Palestinians received from the Egyptian student support committees – were perceived as a challenge to the policy of a green and untested president. This perception obliged Sadat to assert his authority with force and vigor. The new Egyptian premier could ill afford oppositional demonstrations in the streets of Cairo, especially if they commanded moral authority in the Arab and Islamic domains.

To balance his iron-fisted approach toward the student protesters, Sadat sought to appease the PLO, offering harsh criticism of King Husayn's political plan. Beyond lip service, he honored the Palestinian National Council by attending its tenth annual convention in Cairo, in April 1972. On that occasion, Sadat formally and publicly condemned King Husayn's plan,[75] a move that helped to temporarily ease tensions between the GUPS and his regime.

In addition, Sadat's government implemented a revised version of the policy implemented by Jamal Abd al-Nasir in response to GUPS protests in the fall of 1970. Publication of the Rogers plan had sparked violent reactions by the Democratic Front and the Popular Front in Amman, which criticized al-Nasir in a series of anti-Egyptian demonstrations.[76] In response, the Egyptian government sought to divide and conquer the various Palestinian factions. Ultimately, it was Fatah that profited most from this policy as the group formally, if not always practically, adhered to its own policy of non-intervention concerning the internal affairs of the Arab states.

The Egyptian authorities focused their sights upon the Palestinian leftists, most of whom were suspected of collaborating with leftist elements of the Egyptian Student Union. The Egyptian authorities began expelling these activists from Egyptian universities and deporting them from Egyptian soil. A comprehensive range of scholarships and tuition exemptions had granted the Egyptian government control over the destinies of the Palestinian students and afforded the regime the prerogative to be rid of them.[77]

Notes

1 Musa, "Hawl Tajribat al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm al-Talabat Filastin", p. 184.
2 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 77.
3 The Battle of Karameh, March 21, 1968, between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Fatah Fedayeen with back-up of the Jordanian Army. This battle placed Palestinians back on the political map and inspired thousands of Palestinian youths to join Fatah. The Battle of Karameh was engraved in the collective Palestinian memory as a glorious victory, although it was nothing but survival against overwhelming odds.
4 Ribhi Muhammad was a student in the industrial college of Stuttgart. Muhammad Samaro was a student in the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences.
5 Al-Afranji, "Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya wa-Nidhaliha min Ajl Filasstin fi Iruba al-ʿGhrbiyya", p. 261.
6 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 58.
7 Bakr, *Hadith fi Kartaʾj*, pp. 93–4.
8 Musa, " Hawl Tajribat al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Tulaba Filastin ", p. 184.
9 See for instance: Biyan Mushtarak bin al-Ittihad al-ʿAmm lil-Talabat Filastin wa al-Ittihad lil-Talabat al-Jamʿain fi Kuba, Ab, August 1966, in *al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya*

al-Filastiniyya li-ʿam 1966, p. 379. See also: Biyan Mushtarak bin al-Ittihad al-ʿAmm la-Talabat Filastin wa al-Ittihad Talabat Afrika al-Sudaʾa fi Fransa, in *al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʿam 1966*, pp. 136–7.

10 Hanni Hurani, "al-Mukawama al-Filastiniyya wa al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya fi al-Urdun 1968–70", *Dirasat Arabiyya*, 12, Tishrin (October) 1972, p. 10.
11 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World,* p. 214.
12 Ibid.
13 Barahan al-Dajani (ed.), *al-Kitab al-Sanawi lil-Qadiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʿAmm 1966*, p. 83.
14 Ibid.
15 Musa, "Hawl Tajribat al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin ", p. 183.
16 Barahan al-Dajani (ed.), *al-Kitab al-Sanawi lil-Qadiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʿAmm 1966*, p. 83.
17 "Risalat Haraka al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastini ʿFathʾ ila al-Muatamar al-Watani al-Khamis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm li-Talabat Filastin", in *al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1969*, pp. 311–17.
18 Ibid., p. 317.
19 "Qararat al-Muatamar al-Watani al-Khamis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm li-Talabat Filastin", Amman, August 2, 1969, in *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1969*, p. 318.
20 Musa, "Hawl Tajribat al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin", pp. 183–4.
21 "Qararat al-Muatmar al-Watani al-Khamis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm li-Talabat Filastin", Amman, August 2, 1969, in *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1969*, p. 319.
22 Ibid.
23 The GUPS activists occasionally claimed that they felt they were the ones contributing financially to the GUPS, and not the other way around. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World,* pp. 79–80.
24 "Qararat al-Muatmar al-Watani al-Khamis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm la-Talabat Filastin", Amman, August 2, 1969, in *al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1969*, p. 321.
25 Matti Steinberg, *ʿOmdim le-Goralam – ha-Todaʾa ha-Leumit ha-Falestinit 1967–2007*, [*Rising to their Fate – The Palestinian National Consciousness 1967–2007*], (Tel-Aviv: Miskal, 2008), pp. 27–8.
26 "Qararat al-Muatamar al-Watani al-Khamis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm li-Talabat Filastin", Amman, August 2, 1969, in *al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1969*, p. 322.
27 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World,* pp. 78–9.
28 "Barakiyaa al-Itihd al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin, Farʾa al-Iraq, ila al-Rais Hawari Bumadin, Rais Majlas al-Thawra fi al-Jumhuriyya al-Dimakratiyya al-Shʾabiyya Hawl Hadath al-Istilaʾa ʿAla al-Taʾara al-Israiliyya". Baghdad, August 28, 1968, in *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1968*, p. 549.
29 "Bayan Munazamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyaa Hawl Hadith al-Istilaʾa ʿAla al-Tairah al-Tabiʾa lil-Sharikat El-ʾAl al-Israiliyya lil-Tayaran", Amman, August 28, 1968, in *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1968*, p. 549.
30 "Qirarat al-Muatmar al-Watani al-Khamis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin", Amman, August 2, 1969, in *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1969*, p. 322.
31 Ibid.
32 For more on the split within the Jordanian student movement (in Jordan, where in fact each political party had a student union of its own) and the difficulties in establishing a unifying student body in spite of the existence of a Palestinian student association (which was first controlled by Baʾath loyalists and gradually came under the control of the PLO), see: Samar Kharinu, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya*

al-Urduniyya – Tarikhiha wa-Tawaturha fi al-Urdun wa al-Kharij [*The Jordanian Student Movement: Its History and Development in Jordan and Beyond*], (Amman: the A-Urdun al-Jadid lil-Dirasat Center, 2000), pp. 45–90.

33 Hurani, "Al-*Muqawama* al-Filastiniyya wa al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya fi al-Urdun 1968–70", p. 10.

34 "Al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm li-Talabat al-Urdun, "Nidal al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Urduniyya wa-Manthamaʾah min Ajl Binaʾa wa-Hahdatiha wa-Tamthiliha al-Wattani al-Dimikrati", (place of publishing unknown, 1977), p. 16.

35 Fatah thought to relocate the GUPS headquarters to Amman to bring them closer to the battlegrounds of Palestine, hoping the Jordanian regime might afford them a freer hand. The plan did not materialize and instead Fatah opted to establish its own student union in Jordan under the moniker *Ittihad al-Talabat al-Difatayn* (The Student Union of the Two Banks). This body remained active until the conclusion of the Black September affair. Up until the clashes, the union provided general assistance to students, set up training camps, and conducted outreach amongst high school pupils. For more on this issue, see: Kharinu, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Urduniyya – Tarikhiha wa-Tawaturha fi al-Urdun wa al-Kharij*, p. 72.

36 For more on the 1965 Cairo-based International Palestine Convention, see: Bakr, *Hadith fi Kartaʾj*, p. 99.

37 Hadith Sahafi Hawl Nadwa Filastin al-ʿAlmiyya fi Amman, in *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1970,* p. 705.

38 Ibid.

39 Poster taken from the Palestine Poster Archive.

40 "Kalimat al-Sayd Yasir Arafat fi-Iftitah Nadwa Filastin al-ʿAlmiyya al-Thaniya", in *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1970*, p. 715.

41 Erlich, Hagai, "Studentim ve-Universitaot ba-Hayim ha-Politiyyim shel Mitzrayim me-Az Milhemet ha-Olam ha-Rishona" [Students and Universities in Egypt's Political Life since WWI.] *Hamizrah Ha-Hadash* (*The New East*), 1987, pp. 259–61.

42 Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, p. 44.

43 Sharif al-Husayni, "Al-Muatamar al-Watani al-Sadis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin (al-Jazair)", *Shuʾun Filastiniyya*, 5, Tishrin al-Thani (November) 1971, p. 307.

44 Musa, "Hawl Tajribat al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin", p. 184.

45 Al-Husayni, "Al-Muatmar al-Watani al-Sadis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin (al-Jazair)", p. 307.

46 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World,* p. 78.

47 "Bayan al-Tanzim al-Tulabi al-Tabiʿa lil al-Jabaha al-Shʿabiyya lil-Tahrir Filastin – al-Kiada al-ʿAmma Hawl al-Muatamar al-Sadis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin", *Ila al-Amam*, August 20, 1981.

48 Al-Husayni, "Al-Muatmar al-Watani al-Sadis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin (al-Jazair)", p. 308.

49 "Bayan al-Tanzim al-Tulabi al-Tabiʿa lil-Jabaha al-Shʿabiyya lil-Tahrir Filastin – al-Kiada al-ʿAmma Hawl al-Muatamar al-Sadis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin", *Ila al-Amam*, August 20, 1981.

50 "Aham Kararat al-Muatmar al-Sadis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin Kama Nashartuha Majala Jabal al-Zaytunʾ" in *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1971*, p. 686.

51 "Bayan al-Tanzim al-Tulabi al-Tabiʿa lil-Jabaha al-Shʿabiyya lil-Tahrir Filastin – al-Kiada al-ʿAmmaHawl al-Muatmar al-Sadis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin", *Ila al-Amam*, August 20, 1981.

52 "Kararat Lijnat al-Kifah al-Mussalah wa-Shaʾan al-Thawra althi Sadak ʿAliah al-Muatamar al-Sadis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin", in *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyyalil-ʾAmm 1971*, pp. 680–1.

53 Ibid.

54 "Qararat Lijnat al-Kifah al-Musslah wa-Shaʾan al-Thawra althi Sadak ʿAliaha al-Muatmar al-Sadis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin", in *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1971*, p. 682.
55 See for instance: "Bayan al-Tanzim al-Tulabi al-Tabiʿa lil-Jabaha al-Shʿabiyya lil-Tahrir Filastin – al-Qiada al-ʿAmma Hawl al-Muatmar al-Sadis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm li-Talabat Filastin", *Ila al-Amam*, August 20, 1981.
56 Al-Husayni, "Al-Muatmar al-Watani al-Sadis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm al-Talabat Filastin (al-Jazair)", p. 308.
57 "Aham Qirarat al-Muatmar al-Sadis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm li-Talabat Filastin Kama Nashartaha Majalat ʿJabal al-Zaytunʾ", in *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1971*, p. 686.
58 Ibid., p. 687.
59 Ibid.
60 Kharinu, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Urduniyya*, p. 57.
61 Convention participants included members of Fatah, the PFLP, the DFLP, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–the General Command, members of the Baʾath party, and supporters of Jamal Abd Al-Nasir.
62 "Al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat al-Urdun", *Nidal al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Urduniyya wa-Manthamaʾah min Ajl Binʾa wahdatiha wa-Tamthiiha lal-Wattani al-Dimikrati*, (place of publishing unknown, 1977), pp. 28–30.
63 See for example: "Bayan al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin wa al-Ittihad al-Amm li-Talabat al-Urdun Hawl Rafd ʿMabida al-Wastʾ", *Al-Hadaf*, December 11, 1971.
64 "Karaʾat al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin – Faraʾa Italiya – biunasabatna al-ʾAkad Muatamho al-Tulabi al-Awl", in *al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1971*, pp. 376–7.
65 Munir Shafiq, "Waal Zʾaytar Munathilan wa-Insanan", *Shuʾun Filastiniyya*, 15, Tishrin al-Thani (November) 1972, pp. 252–6.
66 In fact, GUPS was already active in various Italian cities as early as the mid-1960s. Their activity, as well as that of other Arab student unions, was cause for worry in the Israeli Foreign Ministry. Therefore, in the mid-1960s, an extensive survey was carried out of the central concentrations of Arab students, their major fields of study and their political organizations. See: Israeli State Archives, Foreign Ministry (Jerusalem), H3/4/3835. The counselor (Rome) to the research department (Rome). March 23, 1966.
67 "Janib min Bayan al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm li-Talabat Filastin fi al-Ittihad al-Sufyyati Birafad ʿKul Masharicʿa al-Tasfiyya wa al-Hulul al-Istislamiyyaʾ", in *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyyalil-ʾAmm 1970*, pp. 1087–8.
68 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World,* p. 81.
69 An alias of a terrorist cell that operated under Fatah sponsorship in two primary fields: assassination of senior government officials of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and terror attacks on Israeli targets in Europe.
70 Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, p. 45.
71 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World,* p. 82.
72 Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, p. 45.
73 Ibid.
74 Ghada Hashem Talhami, *Palestine in the Egyptian Press: From Al-Ahram to Al-Ahali* (New York: Lexington Books, 2007), p. 207.
75 *Al-Aharam*, April 7, 1972.
76 Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, p. 45.
77 IDF Archives 99/559/8, Avshalom Megidon to David Abriel, February 14, 1974.

4 Between Cairo and Beirut

The GUPS in the aftermath of the 1973 War

By holding its seventh conference in Algiers, a nation ascending in the Arab world to rival the revolutionary prestige of Egypt, the GUPS had signaled discontent and its growing rift with the regime in Cairo. Nevertheless, throughout the early 1970s, the head office of the GUPS would remain in the city.

The conference in Algiers was held amidst a difficult period. Terror attacks carried out by GUPS activists had resulted in the imposition of various constraints by the security services of several European states. In the wake of the massacre at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, the association's power base in Germany suffered a significant blow.[1] German authorities clamped down on Palestinian organizations, arresting and deporting several students involved in political activism. Their sense of persecution prompted the Palestinian students to seek out international solidarity by promoting the legitimacy of their struggle. Against this backdrop, during August 12–16, 1974, the GUPS commenced its seventh general assembly.

The hardships of the Palestinian national movement were accompanied by political developments in the internal Arab arena, most prominently the Arab Summit in Algiers, the conference of Islamic States, and the twelfth convention of the Palestinian National Council, at which Salah Khalaf unveiled his ten-point program. Khalaf was the first to suggest the establishment of a Palestinian state on whatever tract of land remained available, irrespective of the full liberation of Palestine.

Of the many participants at the seventh GUPS conference, the largest delegations hailed from Cairo (20 out of 30 eligible delegates), Iraq (14 delegates), Lebanon (9 delegates) and Damascus (8 delegates). Furthermore, the event drew the attendance of regional political players, including representatives from the International Union of Students, the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), and student unions from the Eastern Bloc, the Arab world, Cuba, Ireland and Italy.[2]

The impact of this substantial international presence extended far beyond the realm of student politics in that it lent worldwide legitimacy to the Palestinian national struggle. In light of the disappointing military defeat of the 1973 War and subsequent diplomatic initiatives (such as the Geneva

Conference and UN Security Council Resolution 338) that were incommensurate with the political vision of the Palestinian national movement, such validation was direly needed.[3]

Discussions of the seventh GUPS conference addressed a variety of topics. As was the custom of the GUPS, foreign relations were prioritized, including an expression of solidarity with the socialist-oriented revolutionary movements facing off with monarchies of the Middle East (namely in Oman, Bahrain, the Persian Gulf and Morocco). In addition, GUPS delegates also discussed the internal political situation of Lebanon, Iraq and other Arab republics.[4]

The situation of Palestinian students in Lebanon

Topping the agenda of the seventh GUPS conference was the situation of Palestinian students in Lebanese universities, first and foremost among them the American University in Beirut (AUB). Protesting an official announcement that tuition for the fall semester would be raised by 10 percent, student union chair Philip Mattar demanded stronger union representation in senate decision-making, administration and allocation of scholarships. In addition, Matar called for the establishment of a national body to supervise all of the institutions of higher education in Lebanon.[5] In May 1974, a strike was declared on the AUB campus, which led eventually to violent clashes with the Lebanese security forces. This strike was ended with "considerable property damage" and political slogans painted all over AUB campus walls.[6] By the end of the protests, 103 students – including 80 Palestinians – had been expelled.

The GUPS condemned the expulsion of the Palestinian students and slammed the Lebanese security forces for having forcefully stormed the campus. The crackdown and deportation of students was described by the GUPS as the opening barrage in a campaign to stamp out the Palestinian national movement in Lebanon.[7]

Nonetheless, despite its common sense of persecution, the Palestinian student movement failed to build a mechanism of national unity in the period of 1972 to 1975. Factional politics controlled the Palestinian domain in the Lebanese universities. There were some attempts to create a sphere that would lead into national unity between the Palestinian factions in the campus. The "free university" which was initiated in January 1971 after the Black September events in Jordan would fulfill this role. The Palestinian students created a challenge to the AUB administration. Their first course called "Revolutionary Change" had sessions such as "September events in Jordan" and the free university also wanted to supply "the strategic needs of the Palestinian revolution including everything from Hebrew to military strategy."[8]

Amid discussion of the broader political situation in the African and socialist domains, the attention of the GUPS was also called to a new issue: the situation of Palestinian students in the West Bank. In the early 1970s, Palestinian universities had been established despite the new Israeli military

regime. The emergence of student life in the West Bank demanded the attention of the GUPS, which responded by creating a framework for enlisting students and establishing offices in Palestinian universities.[9] Yet, due to Israeli interference, their efforts were to bear little fruit; in the early 1970s, Palestinian organizational infrastructure in the West Bank was ill-prepared to confront the challenges presented by the Israeli military apparatus.

The seventh GUPS conference also featured elections to the presidency, executive committee and administrative council of the GUPS. Yet again, Fatah managed to secure its grip over the union, with Sakhar Basiso elected chairman[10] and prominent party veterans such as Azam al-Ahmad, Ahmad Abd al-Razak and Nassir al-Qidwa appointed to key positions in the GUPS leadership. A new 27-member administrative council was also elected.[11]

Challenges in the wake of the 1973 War

In the Arab arena, Egypt remained a key player and host of the GUPS headquarters. The outcome of the 1973 War had restored public faith in the Egyptian regime. Anwar Sadat's willingness to wage war against Israel strengthened his position vis-à-vis the students and muted criticism over his earlier "no war, no peace" policy. Yet Sadat continued to take fire from the left wing, which continued to dominate the Egyptian student political scene in the early 1970s.[12]

The leftist elements of the Egyptian student movement maintained close operational ties with the GUPS. The parties' common solidarity for the Palestinian cause led to the increasingly conspicuous involvement of Palestinian students in events coordinated by the Egyptian students.[13] Their close cooperation was perceived as a thorn in the side of the Egyptian regime.

In the aftermath of the War of 1973, the Palestinian national movement faced new challenges. A multi-regional diplomatic effort set in motion by the ceasefire was altering the political discourse. In the new dialectic, each state prioritized its own particular interests. As far as the Palestinians were concerned, talk of political compromise demanded a new strategy. Suggestions of a Palestinian state on only part of historical Palestine contradicted the "all or nothing" approach that had thus far dominated the Palestinian national movement and played a key role in rebuilding Palestinian nationhood. Discussion of such options, which signaled a growing preference for a diplomatic, rather than military, solution spurred discord in the various branches of the GUPS.[14]

Political pressure flowing from the various peace initiatives were labeled a betrayal by the Palestinian resistance movement. Following the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, the Syrian invasion of Lebanon and Sadat's signing of the Sinai Interim Agreement with Israel (September 1975), fractures in the Palestinian political arena exacerbated the controversy among Palestinians regarding the best solution for their problem. As animosity between Palestinian students proliferated, ideologically motivated defections from one faction to another became increasingly commonplace.

Many Palestinian students began shying away from political identification and the public sphere. Mohamad Dajani Daoudi who served as the chairman of the AUB student council was one of them. Mohamad Dajani Daoudi was back then a member of Fatah, and started to feel that the movement cannot fulfill his vision. That was the moment he "divorced politics and married academia."[15] In light of Fatah's lack of ideological cohesiveness, it was soon awash in contradiction. Testifying to the extent of internal division among the Palestinian students, internal GUPS elections in Egypt were contested by two individual lists flying the Fatah banner.[16]

Egypt's novel proximity to the West also resulted in stricter domestic policy vis-à-vis local social institutions. On account of its historically strained relations with the Egyptian regime and its close ties with the Egyptian student movement – perceived by the authorities as a reason for concern – the GUPS was markedly vulnerable to this development. Upon the signing of the Sinai Interim Agreement and the withdrawal of military forces vis-à-vis Israel, Egypt began clamping down on GUPS centers of power. Egyptian authorities restricted the size of GUPS committees, primarily in Cairo, and imposed numerous sanctions on the organization's leadership.[17] Prominent GUPS leaders, singled out by Egyptian authorities as a threat to national security, were deported from the country. The two most prominent figures expelled on such grounds were GUPS Chairman Sakhar Basiso and his deputies, Azam al-Ahmad and Ahmad Abd al-Razak, who were also members of the executive committee.[18]

These steps were accompanied by additional measures, such as proscribing additional Palestinian enrollment in Egyptian universities and technical institutions, including Cairo University, the University of Ein al-Shams and al-Azhar University. Scholarships for existing Palestinian students were dropped, with students required to pay full tuition fees in foreign currency. The new restrictions were likewise applied to Palestinian students who held permanent resident status in Egypt. Gradually, the measures were intensified, until Palestinian students had been effectively, if unofficially, banned from higher education in Egypt.[19]

The new regulations disrupted operations at GUPS headquarters in Cairo. Between 1976 and 1977, the organization's freedom was so severely restricted that it conducted almost no political activity in the public sphere. Following Sadat's official visit to Jerusalem in 1977, all GUPS activities were officially outlawed by the Egyptian authorities.[20]

Bringing its longtime presence in Egypt to a close, the union's headquarters were promptly moved to Beirut. Once uprooted, the association would never again regain its former political strength; the heyday of the GUPS in Cairo had come to an end.

Nevertheless, the union continued to operate unofficially from PLO offices in Cairo up until the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1979, upon which the PLO cut off relations with Egypt. In spite of strict limitations on Palestinian student enrollment in Egyptian universities and the suspension of

official PLO relations with the state, by the end of 1979, there remained some 12,000 Palestinian students still pursuing higher education in the country.[21]

From the Egyptian point of view, the GUPS was a potent political liability capable of mass mobilization against the Egyptian regime. This assessment persisted into the reign of Husni Mubarak, despite a revival of the strategic political partnership between Egypt and the PLO. With the PLO reluctant to request a return of favor to the GUPS, the association remained unable to renew its activities in Egypt. Its offices, the former residence of the All-Palestine Government headed by Hajj Amin al-Husayni, remain vacant to this day.[22]

The GUPS – the Lebanese period

The shifting of the GUPS political center to Lebanon in the early 1970s required the Palestinian national movement to forge various political alliances in its new host country. Ostensibly, such covenants were to be bolstered by strong international alliances. To achieve this, Fatah's new policy called for "pointing the barrel of every gun towards the Zionist enemy."[23] With its headquarters now situated in Beirut, the faction deployed some 15,000–20,000 fighters across southern Lebanon.[24]

By the time the GUPS had established its new headquarters, the Palestinian national movement – replete with its myriad factions and organizations – was already well rooted in Lebanese soil. A characteristically heterogeneous Lebanon began to witness rising tensions between the country's various ethnic groups. In the mid-1970s, these pressures erupted into all-out civil war. The heads of the Palestinian national movement, having learned the lessons of the Black September catastrophe, sought to extricate themselves from internal Lebanese affairs. Yasir Arafat called for unity and inter-ethnic understanding among the Lebanese, whom he believed would come to support the Palestinian struggle. Central Committee member Khalid al-Hassan expressed similar sentiments, claiming in 1976 that, "Any flare-up in the territory of Lebanon is contrary to the interest of Lebanon and also [the interest of] the Palestinian revolution."[25]

Following the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war, the country's national arena was divided into two principal blocs: the Christian camp, comprising the Kataib Party (*Phalange*) and the Maronite militias, and the Leftist–Muslim camp. Fatah, failing to adhere to its own aspirations of neutrality, eventually joined ranks with the latter.[26] Their bond was made possible by Fatah's religious foundations and an ideological proximity between parties such as the ethnically Sunni and ideologically Nasserite Al-Murabitun and the PLO's leading leftist fronts. Fatah, whose supporters were mostly to be found in refugee camps and other Sunni areas, proved a natural ally. In addition to having long received logistical support, Fatah was historically reliant upon Sunni parties to spread its gospel in Lebanon.[27]

Thomas Freidman, then correspondent for the *New York Times* in Beirut, described Arafat as – for all intents and purposes – the mayor of the Sunni

district of West Beirut. The Sunni population invested their faith in the Fatah militiamen to protect them from the Christian phalange. Many donated money to Fatah and volunteered as fighters. Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) went so far as to declare that, "the road to Jerusalem passes through Jounieh."[28]

Commencing activities in Beirut, the GUPS found an abundance of Palestinian students in the universities of Beirut and offices of the PLO, most notably the publicity office in the Fakahani district of West Beirut.

The eighth GUPS conference, Lebanon, 1978

Following the relocation of its headquarters, the GUPS began preparing to hold its eighth general conference in Lebanon. Originally scheduled to take place in Tunis and later planned in Egypt, the conference had been delayed by two years. The obvious disruption of the closing of the GUPS head office in Cairo, strained relations between various Arab regimes and the PLO and a chaotic political situation in Lebanon combined to prevent the GUPS from meeting the formal deadlines enumerated in its protocols. Hence, the convention was to be held amid severe internal divisions and an ongoing civil war – tension worsened by reports of Sadat's visits to Jerusalem and ongoing negotiations between Israel and Egypt within the framework of the Camp David political process.[29]

At the time of the gathering, held during December 18–26, 1978, the GUPS was in crisis. In addition to ideological strife, students who perceived themselves the vanguard of the Palestinian revolution found themselves suddenly sidelined by political maneuvers in Egypt. And although Sadat's decision to engage with Israel had infuriated the Palestinian students, they could find no outlet for their anger. Many states in the Arab realm and beyond now considered Palestinian student demonstrations a risk to national security. As with the measures applied by the authorities in Egypt, Palestinian students were also being expelled in Syria and Greece on account of those countries' multitude disagreements with the PLO.[30]

The relocation of the union's headquarters and general conference to Beirut helped Fatah to further tighten its grip over the GUPS leadership. The faction enjoyed a broad and highly organized student infrastructure in Lebanon and from the mid-1970s had steadily expanded its military capability. Following the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war, the local GUPS office founded a military wing to protect Palestinian interests in the country. Yet the organ's fighters were exclusively Fatah loyalists. The faction's active participation in battle – and the resulting casualties it suffered – glorified the Armed Struggle mythos amongst young Palestinians and further entrenched Fatah's domination of the student arena. Among the more prominent casualties of the Palestinian student military wing were its commander and deputy-chair of the GUPS office in Lebanon, Sa'ad Jaradat, Amin al-Abdallah and Fahim al-Baghaothi.[31]

The slogan of the eighth GUPS conference neatly encapsulates the situation of the Palestinian students at the time: "By radicalizing our armed

struggle, by strengthening our national unity, by deepening the cohesion of our revolution with the Arab public and by stabilizing our alliances with the progressive forces worldwide, we will thwart the conspiracies [against us] and pursue the revolution until victory is achieved."[32]

The rise of the Islamic current – Kuwait as a test case

In addition to the challenges faced both externally and within the Palestinian arena, the GUPS had also to address a new phenomenon: the swelling currents of political Islam. The power struggles unfolding between the PLO factions headed by Fatah and the Muslim Brothers in the Kuwaiti GUPS office epitomized this development.[33]

A GUPS office was established concurrently with the foundation of the University of Kuwait. Even prior to the opening of the university, PLO ambassador to Kuwait Khayr al-Din al-Jabin, who was in charge of "popular organizing" (*al-tanzim al-shʿabi*) in the emirate, had been under pressure

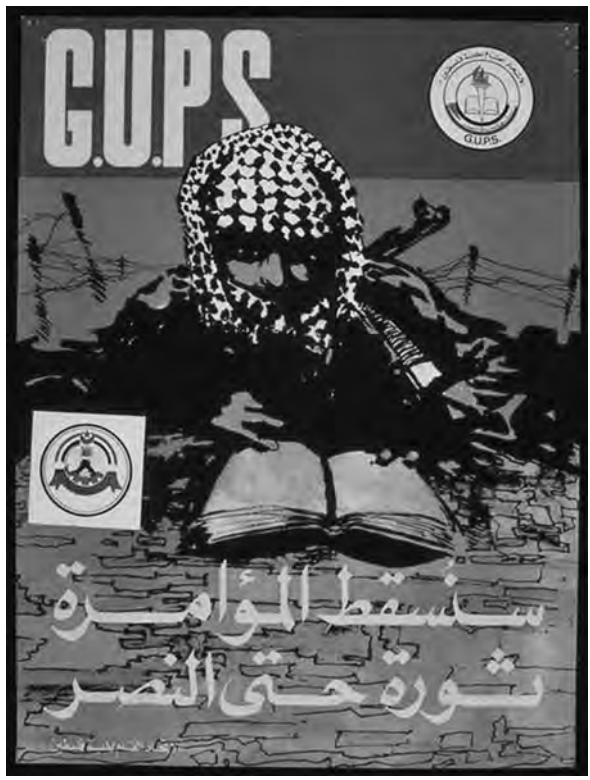

Figure 4.1 GUPS calls to stop the peace talks between Egypt and Israel: "We shall abolish the conspiracy – revolution until victory".[34]

to hold elections for the local Palestinian student association office. The objective, however, failed to materialize and a GUPS office was not opened in Kuwait until 1968.[35]

The GUPS office in Kuwait was a microcosm of the Palestinian political arena, which flourished in the aftermath of the 1967 War as the Fedayeen turned from the military to politics. Dominating the GUPS office in the University of Kuwait for only a year (1974), Fatah soon lost control of the union to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).[36]

In terms of internal organizational structure, the Palestinian students in the University of Kuwait were divided into political blocs associated with the various factions of the PLO. The GUPS did not restrict its actions to the political sphere alone, with some of its members occasionally suspending their studies to join ranks with the Palestinian revolutionaries.[37] This phenomenon was evident both during the events of Black September in Jordan (1970) and the Lebanese civil war (1975). Furthermore, the GUPS leadership occasionally published manifestos related to the Palestinian agenda and were keen to challenge regimes they perceived as hostile to the Palestinian cause. Such proclamations were frequently picked up by the local media in Kuwait.[38]

The various developments in the Palestinian arena, first and foremost the Lebanese civil war, permeated relations between the Palestinian community and the emirate. Aware of the ongoing radicalization of the young Palestinian population, the Kuwaiti government feared a potential spill over into the general population. In response, authorities banned all organized student activities on campus, which were fertile grounds for near daily quarrels between Palestinian students.[39] These tendencies were further aggravated when the Kuwaiti government, driven by a sense of solidarity, permitted the entry of dozens of Palestinian students expelled from the American University of Beirut following a wave student strikes and demonstration there in the years 1973–74.[40]

Following clashes between Kuwaiti students and the local authorities in 1978, The GUPS operational latitude in Kuwait was further restricted. Though the Kuwaiti student association was reinstated on campus upon expiration of the regulation prohibiting organized student activity, the ban on the GUPS remained intact. From a tiny room off-campus in the PLO office in Kuwait, the Palestinian students continued their political activism.[41]

In Kuwait, a core group of students who had not integrated within the PLO emerged. They were members of the Muslim Brothers and their strict religious observance led to a natural alliance with a religiously likeminded general union of Kuwaiti students. The Palestinian Islamic Bloc, led by Khalid Mishal, attempted several times to establish an independent list and contend for the leadership of the Kuwaiti GUPS office but, lacking support of an established political benefactor, their application was rejected time and again.[42]

At the time, most of the religiously observant young Muslims joined Fatah. Mishal and his associates remained outside the PLO's organizational mechanism and their exclusion enabled Fatah leaders to postpone elections for the office leadership. Internal disputes regarding the Palestinian political

platform led to tensions both within Fatah and between the various other factions of the PLO. In light of these circumstances, a new arrival to the Palestinian political arena was considered most unwelcome.

The Islamists challenged GUPS membership in the PLO, claiming that the student union was not representative of the entire Palestinian political spectrum. Affirming this point is Mishal's account of the developments in the GUPS office in Kuwait:

> After joining the university, my colleagues and I in the Islamic movement, on account of our commitment to the Palestinian national cause in its armed, political, and cultural dimensions, and on account of our religious commitments, began to feel the need for a specifically Palestinian experience. After all, we were a Palestinian Islamic movement, and we therefore concluded that this movement must have a role in the Palestinian struggle in all its dimensions. … Therefore, when our generation came to the Palestinian Islamic movement, it found that the movement did not have any recent direct experience in political activity or armed struggle on the ground. This created the need for us to have our own project, one that fused Islam and nationalism. In this context, our first experience was in the GUPS. In 1973 or 1974, before I had entered Kuwait University, members of the movement had already tried to contest the student elections, but the attempt was unsuccessful because of a number of complications. Later, after my colleagues and I analyzed that attempt, we advocated the movement for renewed participation in this sphere. In 1977, we took an executive decision to establish a list to contest the GUPS elections at Kuwait University. Every group that ran in GUPS elections did so as a list. Fatah had a list, the PFLP (or the left more broadly) had one, so we established our own list. Its basis was the Palestinian Islamic movement – the Muslim Brotherhood – but we operated under the name of Islamic Justice List [*qa'imat al-haq al-islamiyyah*], of which I was the head. We were supported by a number of independents and other sympathizers who were not members of the Brotherhood. This was 1977, when the political debate had been sharpened by Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, and when our colleagues in Fatah and the PFLP could advertise their role and activities in Lebanon as genuine experience and a proven record on the ground. We would exchange and debates in the university cafeteria, and since I was the head of our list, I was constantly engaged in the back-and-forth. Despite the fact that our list was new, we had a strong start. Unfortunately, as soon as it was realized that we were a realistic contender, elections were cancelled. It was as if they feared we would monopolize the GUPS, even though we were running for the first time.[43]

Mishal's Islamic list threatened the hegemony of Fatah. Furthermore, the Islamic Bloc in Kuwait was morally and financially supported by the general

union of Kuwaiti students. The rise of the Muslim Brothers in the country signified an impending global challenge to the nationalist current, which had thus far dominated the GUPS.[44]

Mishal further stressed the importance of the Palestinian student political arena in the late 1970s:

> Participation in elections and institutions, particularly unions and student organizations, was not part of the political culture of Palestinian Islamic organizations at that time. We had overcome this obstacle and decided to participate, but the elections were suspended and postponed until 1980. Various conditions were then placed on our participation, like recognizing this, that, or the other; I'm reminded of the conditions that are demanded of us today. We were asked to accept the PLO's 1974 ten-point program, for example, and other things I don't remember, but ultimately, the elections were postponed further. We waited, year in and year out, and concluded that we had been banned from participation, even though we were Palestinians to the marrow of our bones and our patriotism was beyond question.
>
> The GUPS is not the property of Fatah or the PFLP or any other organization, but a national union for every Palestinian student. But when my colleagues and I came to the conclusion that we had been barred from participating in our national union, we had no choice but to transform our electoral list into a league [*rabita*] operating outside the GUPS. So we established the Islamic League of Palestinian Students [*al-rabita al-islamiyyah lil-tulab filastin*].[45]

The first office of the Islamic League of Palestinian Students was established in Kuwait in 1980. The league operated independently, organizing a series of annual conferences. Yet it failed to provide meaningful services and did not succeed in drawing much popular support.[46] At its peak, the league counted no more than a few hundred members. Parallel to the establishment of the Kuwait office, Muslim Brothers loyalists began establishing various alternative student associations, namely in Great Britain (1979), the United States (1980), Germany (1981/2) and additional associations in Eastern Europe.[47] These would later comprise a backbone for Hamas activity in the Palestinian diaspora.

The GUPS discussed the rise of the Islamic Bloc, first and foremost in Kuwait, at length in its eighth conference and adjusted its policy to this challenge accordingly. Prior to the conference in 1978, the GUPS constitution had defined the union as "a pillar of the Palestinian revolution," but not explicitly as a pillar of the PLO. The GUPS thus amended its constitution to include the stipulation that all members "adhere to the Palestinian National Covenant and the goals of the Palestinian revolution."[48]

By subjugating GUPS membership to the Palestinian National Covenant, the GUPS conditioned membership upon adherence to the PLO. In that

members of the Islamic Bloc could not accept various elements of the constitution, such as its secular nature and semantics, the nature of the struggle it promoted and the PLO's exclusive role as the representative of the Palestinian national movement, this maneuver effectively precluded Islamist membership in the GUPS.[49]

In addition to issues stemming from the internal power struggle, the eighth conference of the GUPS also covered the geopolitical condition of the Palestinian cause. A political manifesto published shortly thereafter by the GUPS addressed the consequences of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, growing American involvement in the Middle East in the wake of the Sinai Interim Agreement and the frequent visits of US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to the region. The GUPS sought to co-opt regional approaches to management of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by emphasizing the uniqueness of the Palestinian national identity and fostering relations with Palestinians "inside" the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The GUPS feared an erosion of support for a single Palestinian state "from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea." Its manifesto therefore stressed the importance of electing PLO loyalists as mayors of West Bank and Gaza Strip municipalities.[50] Such a development, the GUPS insisted, would strengthen resistance against Zionist efforts to change political realities on the ground.[51]

Recognizing the importance of Palestinians "inside" also led the GUPS to initiate the commemoration of "Land Day" (*yom al-ard*)[52] in memory of protests against Israel's expropriation of Palestinian property in the Galilee. The importance of Land Day, the GUPS claimed, was to expand the scope of the Palestinian national struggle from the occupied Palestinian territories to a political community still dwelling within the boundaries of the Israeli state long after the 1948 War.[53]

In addition to stressing the importance of Land Day in the cultural and political unification of the Palestinian people, the GUPS emphasized the need to deepen the alliance between the Palestinian revolution and the Lebanese national forces. According to the GUPS, this coalition was needed to confront an approaching offensive by the imperialist powers, embodied by the pact between the Zionists, the Unites States and reactionary Arab regimes.[54] The GUPS maintained that the aggression would not differentiate between Lebanese and Palestinian blood, as demonstrated in the ʿAin al-Rummanah affair (April 1975).[55]

The reference to the ʿAin al-Rummanah incident was a testament to the volatile environment in which the GUPS was compelled to operate. The conference was held during a period of intensely strained Arab relations amidst attempts to renew discussions between the PLO and the Hashemite regime, and strengthening Syrian and Iraqi ties. In light of these developments, the GUPS strived to portray itself as a strong and stable political body. It bolstered this image by introducing a list of constitutional amendments and reforms, including an increase in the number of GUPS executive committee members from 9 to 11 and in administrative council seats from 27 to 33.[56]

In conjunction with a demand for ideological fealty to the Palestinian National Covenant, the reforms helped to further cement Fatah's control over the GUPS.

Notes

1 Bayan al-Amana al-ʿAmma lil-Ittihad al-ʿAmm lil-ʿUmal Filastin wa al-Hiya al-Tanfidiyya lil-Ittihad al-ʾam lil-Tulabat Filastin hawl al-Muʿamlah althi il-Kahah al-Filastiniyyun fi Almanyya al-Itahidiya, in: *al-Watayyaq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʿam 1972*, pp. 419–20.
2 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 62.
3 Bakr Abu Bakr, *al-Ittihad al-ʾam lil-Tulabat Filastin*, p. 5.
4 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 62.
5 Halim Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife: Student Preludes to the Civil War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), p. 178.
6 Betty S. Anderson, *The American University of Beirut: Arab Nationalism and Liberal Education* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), p. 180.
7 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 62.
8 Anderson, *The American University of Beirut*, p. 176.
9 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 63.
10 Following the signing of the Oslo Accords, Sakhar Basiso returned to the territories of the Palestinian Authority, and was appointed Governor of the Khan-Yunis district.
11 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 63.
12 For more on the leftist opposition vis-à-vis and ʿAbd al-Nasir and Sadat, see: Hisham al-Salamuni, *al-Jil althi waja Abd al-Nasar wa al-Sadat* (Madinat al-ʿAshar min Ramadan: Dar al-Kabaʾa lil-Tabiʿah wa al-Nashar wa al-Tawziah, 1999), pp. 143–287.
13 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World,* p. 78.
14 Ibid., p. 83; Matti Steinberg, *ʿOmdim le-Goralam*, p. 83.
15 Dahila Scheindlin, "When Modrate Islam meets Auschwitz", April 16, 2014, http://972mag.com/moderate-islam-meets-auschwitz/89744/
16 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World,* p. 83.
17 Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, p. 46.
18 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 64.
19 Dajani, *The Institutionalization of Palestinian Identity in Egypt*, p. 46.
20 Ibid.
21 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World,* p. 83.
22 Ibid., p.84.
23 Munir Shafiq, *Shahada wa-Masira,* p. 78.
24 Alexander Yonah, *Palestinian Secular Terrorism* (New York: Transnational Publishers, 2003), p. 3.
25 Saigh, *Al-Kifah al-Musalah wa al-Baht ʿan al-Dawla,* p. 520.
26 Yaacov Shimoni, *Leksikon Politi shel ha-Olam ha-ʿAravi* [*A Political Lexicon of the Arab World*], (Jerusalem: Keter, 1988), pp. 178–81.
27 Initially, the Fatah leaders took advantage of the "ʿUbad al-Rahman" Sunni fundamentalist society to spread the word of their doctrine. They took over the society's mouthpiece, *Al-Nida,* and renamed it *Filistinuna – Nida al-Hayat*. Some of the senior society members, including Zaqariyya al-Rahim, later joined the ranks of the PLO. See: Abu Fakhir, *Al-Harakka al-Wataniyya*, p. 29.
28 Friedman Thomas, *Mi-Beirut le-Yerushalayyim* [*From Beirut to Jerusalem*], (Tel-Aviv: Sifriyat Maariv, 1990), p. 111.

29 Bakr Abu Bakr, *al-Ittihad al-ʾam lil-Tulabat Filastin*, p. 4.
30 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 64.
31 Bakr Abu Bakr, *al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Tulabat Filastin*, p. 6.
32 Al-Atrash Johnny, *Tarikh al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, www.falestiny.com/news/208.
33 Kuwait was elected as a test case on account of its importance in the Palestinian political arena. Kuwait was the home of a formidable Palestinian community, whose roots stretch back to the mid-1930s. The Palestinian community in Kuwait enjoyed significant political freedom. The emergence of the Islamist current in Kuwait was led by Khalid Mishal, who took advantage of the strong platform he had built amongst Muslim Brothers, supporters of Palestinian origins, in order to establish Hamas's international infrastructure, following the foundation of the movement in early 1988.
34 This poster, designed by Adnan al-Sharif, is stored in the Palestine Poster Project.
35 Khayr al-Din al-Jabin, *Qisa Hayati fi Filastin wa al-Kuwait*, p. 343.
36 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 139.
37 Mouin Rabbani, "Khalid Mishal: The Making of a Palestinian Islamic Leader", Interviewed by Mouin Rabbani. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 37, 1 (Spring, 2008). pp. 59–73. (Hereinafter: Rabbani, "Khalid Mishal: The Making of a Palestinian Islamic Leader").
38 See for example: Bayan al-Ittihad al-ʿAm lil-Tulaba Filastin farʿa al-Kuwait, Hawl Hawadith al-Urdun. In: George Khouri Nassrallah (ed.), *al-Wathaiq al-Filastiniyya al-Arbiyya la-lʿAam 1971* (Beirut: Muassat al-Darasat al-Filastiniyya, 1974), pp. 254–5. See also: *al-Rai al-ʿAm* (Kuwait), April 2, 1971.
39 Rabbani, "Khalid Mishal: The Making of a Palestinian Islamic Leader", pp. 59–73.
40 For further elaboration on the major student demonstrations that rocked the Arab world see: Halim Barakat, *Lebanon in Strife: Student Preludes to the Civil War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), pp. 172–84.
41 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 140.
42 Ido Zelkovitz, "A Paradise Lost? The Rise and Fall of the Palestinian Community in Kuwait", *Middle Eastern Studies,* 50, 1, winter 2014, pp. 92–4.
43 Rabbani, "Khalid Mishal: The Making of a Palestinian Islamic Leader", pp. 64–5.
44 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 140.
45 Rabbani, "Khalid Mishal: The Making of a Palestinian Islamic Leader", p. 65.
46 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 141.
47 Rabbani, "Khalid Mishal: The Making of a Palestinian Islamic Leader", p. 66.
48 *Al-Ittihad al-ʾam la-Tulabat Filastin,* al-Dustur: al-Bab al-Thani al-ʿAdawiyya Madah 8, p. 7.
49 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 141.
50 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 65.
51 Ibid, pp. 64–5.
52 Land Day commemorates the violent clashes between the Arabs of the Galilee, protesting the expropriation of their land (mainly in the vicinity of Sakhnin) in favor of the "Judaization of the Galilee" and the Israeli police forces. On this day of remembrance a general strike is declared in the Arab sector in Israel, and the Arab minority stages demonstrations demanding equal rights. Land Day has also been adopted by the Palestinians beyond the Green Line, as a day in which the Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line identify with their land.
53 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 65.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid. The intention of this claim by the GUPS was to create a political spectacle which presented the Lebanese Phalange forces as part of an imperialistic front, working against Lebanese, Arab and Palestinian interests, The ʿAin al-Rummanah incident is considered to be the initial act of the Lebanese civil war: on April 13,

1975, Phalange forces safeguarding Pierre Jumayyil's inauguration of a new church in the village of ʿAin al-Rummanah feared he would be assassinated by the leftist Palestinian fronts. Armed Palestinians spotted by the Phalanges near the village refused the calls to stop, and in the exchange of fire that erupted three of Jumayyil's body guards and one Palestinian fighter were killed. Later on Phalange forces opened fire on a Palestinian vehicle carrying reinforcements, killing some 25 armed Palestinians.

56 Al-Atrash, *Tarikh al-Harakka al-Talabiyya al-Filastiniyya*.

5 The 1980s

Military challenges and paradigm shift

Following its eighth annual convention in 1978, the GUPS was compelled to deal with the deteriorating security situation in Lebanon. Interdenominational tensions and Fedayeen terrorism against Israel had radicalized the situation and led eventually to the outbreak of full-scale war. The GUPS set about preparing its members as active combatants. Hence the organization declared a comprehensive draft of its members, who considered themselves reserve soldiers of the Palestinian resistance.

Conscription meant that GUPS members would be forced to abandon their academic duties and devote themselves to training for the upcoming military campaign. Yet the GUPS did not neglect its social obligations. Despite the draft and allocation of the majority of its physical, emotional and organizational capital to the state of emergency, the GUPS still managed to provide enrollment fee waivers to 550 of its members at the Arab University of Beirut in 1980.[1]

The Lebanon War of 1982 was a culmination of a bellicosity between Israel and the Palestinian organizations that had intensified throughout the late 1970s. After a series of attacks by the PLO against Israel, open hostilities spilled over onto Lebanese soil. Israel sought to force a PLO withdrawal to beyond 40 kilometers of its northern border and to destroy the state-within-a-state that had been established in southern Lebanon. Through its cooperation with Maronite Christian forces, Israel played on the religious, denominational and confessional divisions of the various Lebanese factions.

In response to the comprehensive draft declared by the GUPS, some 5,000 students joined the PLO between the years 1980 and 1981, with significant numbers arriving from eastern Europe. To the 500 volunteers provided by the branch in Yugoslavia, the GUPS's local branch in Lebanon supplied an additional 700. Other prominent contributors included the Algerian (250 students), Indian (100 students) and Greek (150 students) branches.[2]

Despite the draft, students in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were exempted from service in Lebanon. Locally based Palestinian students were ordered to focus their struggle on remaining steadfast in Palestine. The GUPS granted special treatment to students who had returned from their studies in Europe and the neighboring Arab countries to fight in the war. Members of this

group, whom the GUPS considered its elite forces, were provided false aliases to conceal their identities from the Israeli security services.[3]

Ultimately, the war in Lebanon was devastating for the Palestinian National Movement. As the battles wore on, the PLO came to realize it had lost its primary center of power. With the Fakahani stronghold in Beirut ruined, PLO forces were driven out of the city and their offices left deserted and barren. In the wake of the PLO's political and military capitulation, Syria demanded a new puppet-ruler be appointed on its behalf, catalyzing the outbreak of a bloody Palestinian civil war.

Amidst its physical destruction and the ensuing political chaos, the PLO's public diplomacy infrastructure and cultural sphere completely collapsed. Its newspapers and political–academic journals were terminated. Though some of its publishing houses were relocated to Cyprus, the archives of its research institutes were looted.[4]

GUPS headquarters in Beirut were likewise decimated, a devastating blow after having relocated there from Cairo a mere five years prior. It had now to flee the long way to Tunis. In addition to the Palestinian national defeat, the GUPS was left to deal with the painful loss of scores of members who had been killed or taken captive. Their imposed exile from the theater of battle, alongside worsening internal Palestinian divisions and the eruption of inter-factional hostilities, wrought significant political challenges for the GUPS in the wake of the war of 1982.

The ninth general conference of the GUPS, Algiers, 1984

The best hope for the rehabilitation and political revival of the GUPS was its annual convention. The ninth general conference of the GUPS took place in Algiers between February 12 and 17, 1984. According to regulations, the convention was technically two years overdue, owing to recent events in Lebanon and the outcome of the 1982 war which ended with the total destruction of the PLO headquarters in Beirut including the GUPS offices.[5]

The ninth conference, which was held at a difficult and sensitive time for the Palestinian national movement, attracted significant political interest. The chairpersons of all the Palestinian organizations were present, as they sought to express solidarity with the younger generation and reassert their hold over the student sector. Fatah was represented by Yasir Arafat, Khalil Al Wazir (Abu-Jihad), Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), Hayil Abd Al-Hamid and Abu Mahir Ghnaim. Other participants included George Habash, chairperson of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Abd Al-Rahim Ahmad, a senior member of the Democratic Front and chairperson of the National Organizations department in the PLO.[6]

With representatives of three different PLO branches from across the globe attending, the GUPS was keen to demonstrate its capacities to the senior leadership. A handful of informal representatives were also allowed to participate as observers, among them a delegation from China. The genuine

agency of the GUPS was aptly expressed through its global deployment and extensive connections abroad. The participation of foreign student unions was critical; in the aftermath of the war and the fracturing of the Palestinian national movement, all factions within the GUPS desired the widest possible recognition. That need was greater on account of the Fatah Abu Musa uprising against Yasir Arafat in 1983. The Abu Musa uprising led to a split in the GUPS branches in North America. The support afforded to the GUPS by foreign student unions, especially those from non-Arab and unaligned countries, was also crucial to the PLO, which feared delegitimization as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

In all, 80 Arab and European foreign representatives participated, alongside dozens of Arab League and United Nation Youth Association representatives. The GUPS tried to garner western support as well and was able to recruit representatives of the Young Communist League of Norway, the Norwegian Student Organization, the Socialist Youth of Spain, and additional representatives from Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Greece and Great Britain.[7] Their presence testified to the organization's ability to establish active branches in all of these countries, which were a primary target of the PLO's Cold War era diplomatic efforts.

There was also a strategic need for the GUPS to exhibit its international credentials. On a larger scale, the outcome of the 1982 war had brought PLO decision-makers to the realization that they now needed to strengthen their grip over the Palestinian territories. This was due to a number of factors:

1. The PLO's withdrawal from Lebanon put the organization's leadership at a much greater distance from Palestinians residing in the occupied territories.
2. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, a new crop of young political leaders in closer contact to the Palestinian street had begun to emerge. Notably, this cadre – *Al Shakhsiat* (Personal Leadership) as it was commonly known – derived the lion's share of its power from connections with foreign-based leaders of the PLO.
3. PLO leaders were increasingly concerned with the various peace initiatives brought forth in the wake of the 1982 war. In particular, they feared a sudden and manipulative takeover of the Palestinian territories by the Hashemite regime in Jordan.

These fears, along with the deflection of attention to the Palestinian territories, were exacerbated by personal rifts that plagued the PLO leadership. The GUPS took notice. By the 1980s, the academic infrastructure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip had been reorganized and an active political and cultural scene had started to emerge.

The GUPS utilized its convention to strengthen its status as the only organization representing the entire Palestinian student body, irrespective of geographical location. The organization presented a telegram from the "Palestinian University and College Student Councils in the Occupied Territories,"

in which students affirmed that Palestinian universities and colleges were a haven for the mission and institutions of the PLO. To wit,

> The homeland student movement is an integral and continuous part of your organization's martial bodies … Long live the GUPS, the representative and leader of the student national struggle within our homeland and beyond.[8]

In accordance with this spirit, the ninth convention dealt mainly with internal conflicts within the Palestinian arena, though emphasizing the utmost importance of national unity. Their disagreements were born primarily of the tension between adherence to traditional values and the need for new political pragmatism.

One of the events that had stirred passions amongst the convention's younger participants was Chairperson Yasir Arafat's trip to Egypt, the gateway to the West. This visit came at a time of heated contention within Fatah stemming from the defection of a group of young colonels headed by Abu Musa in a challenge to Yasir Arafat's Syria-endorsed leadership. The visit troubled the Palestinian youth primarily in light of the various post-1982 peace initiatives, most prominently the Arab League's Fez Initiative and the Reagan Initiative. Arafat's mission to Cairo, which had been blacklisted by the PLO in response to the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty, spawned a wave of rumors concerning Arafat's willingness to enter political negotiations.[9] Rivalry with the Syrians, who had humiliated Arafat, Abu Jihad and their forces in Tripoli, further enflamed such suspicions.

GUPS's leadership, which was controlled by Fatah, rose quickly to defend the chairperson's visit to Egypt. Taking the lead was GUPS Chairperson Nasir Al-Qudwa, who, in addition to being a member of the Fatah leadership, also happened to be Arafat's nephew. With Arafat having clarified his motivations for the visit, the GUPS leadership concluded in its final statements of the convention that the trip had been a one-man mission in support of the Palestinian interest. The GUPS reiterated its objections to the various peace initiatives and clarified that the Fez Initiative, having originated abroad, did not reflect the will of the Palestinian public.[10] Furthermore, the GUPS stressed its loyalty to the Palestinian National Covenant and its commitment to the decisions of the sixteenth annual assembly of the Palestinian National Council. It consecrated the principle of independent decision-making and support of the Palestinian national cause within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.[11]

It is clear from decisions made in the ninth annual convention that the distinctive importance of the occupied Palestinian territories was gradually increasing. Such was reflected through discussions concerning the need to organize the students there and extend them political and moral support. Nevertheless, the relocation of the GUPS to Tunis along with the rest of the PLO bureaucracy had alienated the young leadership from the Palestinian street.

The PLO's only remaining outlet in its confrontation with Israel was to cultivate its connections with locally based student leaders. Exile had rendered the active direction of armed struggle far less tenable. Fatah, whose members still comprised a majority within the GUPS, considered external operations such as terror attacks against Israeli targets abroad as crossing a red line. Despite its outspoken objections to any peaceful resolution, in actuality the faction had begun seeking channels of communication with the West; a utopian liberation of historic Palestine through military force no longer seemed realistic.

With the Palestinian national movement in dire straits, the GUPS considered national unity a quintessential value. The internal strife sweeping the Palestinian arena did not bypass the GUPS, which loyally adhered to the Palestinian National Covenant and to the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. These positions, along with Fatah's near total control of the union's institutions, eventually led *Al-Sa'iqa* and the Popular Front to cede from the GUPS. This corresponded with the departure of various splinter groups from the PLO, including those who supported the Syrian call to dismiss Arafat from his post.

Due to the war in Lebanon, the GUPS's ninth conference was primarily concerned with intra-Palestinian affairs, including the ascension of a new generation to key positions in the organization. Alongside Chairperson Nasir Al-Qudwa, an administrative council of 33 members and a new executive committee were elected. Among the more prominent names added to the roster were Ruhi Fatuh and Hassan Asfur.[12]

The GUPS and the idiosyncratic rise of the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Changes taking place in the Middle Eastern geopolitical arena steered GUPS activities in new directions. As the West Bank and Gaza gained in importance, an active student leadership was beginning to emerge in the territories, which in addition to its political experience was seasoned in direct combat against Israel.

This aura of importance was intensified following the December 1987 outbreak of the Intifada, a popular uprising in the Palestinian territories that captured the attention of the international public. Among its prominent leaders were scores of students, on whom the Israeli Security Services kept a watchful eye. Many were sentenced in Israeli military courts for their part in the insurgency. Penalties ranged from house arrest and administrative detention to outright deportation from the occupied territories.[13]

The combative spirit embodied by the student leaders of the territories, especially those deported, earned them honorary positions in the various administrative bodies of the PLO and other Palestinian organizations. Their battlefield tenacity was exactly what the leadership of the GUPS lacked; the organization's ability to participate actively had slipped away. All that remained was the moral and material support it could still provide, alongside a public relations effort in service of the Intifada.

GUPS's tenth annual conference, Baghdad, 1990

The GUPS's growing influence in the occupied Palestinian territories was already reflected in its tenth annual convention, held in Baghdad between May 3 and 8, 1990. The motto of the assembly, held in memory of Abu-Jihad, proclaimed, "Through national unity and intensification of the armed struggle the Intifada shall grow; we shall retain our solidarity and fulfill our nation's obligation to establish an independent state led by the PLO."[14]

Thirty-three PLO activists deported from the territories by warrant of the Israeli military court were first-time participants in the convention.[15] Despite the lack of GUPS branches in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, their activities in the student arena afforded them a place at the table as full members.

At the conference, participants discussed the membership and holding of official positions by graduates who were no longer enrolled as students. The GUPS determined to allow their continued service by right of their experience, accumulated knowledge and essential "part in the national struggle." The decision was also reached in support of members who were no longer enrolled due to their deportation and the closure of the occupied territories. The policy was not necessarily novel; GUPS members who had completed their academic duties commonly went on to serve in the administrative bodies of the organization.[16]

The convention was attended by members of 39 individual GUPS branches. Beyond elections, the political agenda centered on the Intifada. Decisions adopted by the GUPS were concurrent with the PLO's fundamental positions as reflected in the concluding statements of the Palestinian National Council's ninth annual gathering. The GUPS adopted the PLO's peace initiative, a vague proposal calling for national unity to strengthen the Palestinian national movement and its armed struggle. In addition, the GUPS acknowledged the importance of its role in the intra-Palestinian conflict, especially concerning Fatah's *Shabiba* movement. The organization called for an enhancement of the infrastructure and democratic institutions in the territories and for a strengthening of the striking forces of the Unified National Command of the Intifada.[17] These latter bodies were not particularly known for their earnest pursuit of the democratic ideal.

As the GUPS lacked the means to contribute to the academic institutions of its members and thus had no influence therein, it instructed each of its branches abroad to establish support committees that could encourage regional solidarity with Palestinian students suffering beneath Israel's occupation. Branches were instructed to publish bulletins and organize tours to Palestinian universities to provide foreign students first-hand information concerning the grave situation of Palestinian higher education in the occupied territories. In addition, the GUPS instructed its foreign branches to extend all possible financial assistance to students from the occupied territories studying in their area.[18]

Effectively, the tenth annual conference of the GUPS was its last; an eleventh has never been held. Following the establishment of the Palestinian

Authority (PA), the organization's final stroke was a gathering of its administrative council in Gaza from June 9 to July 1, 1998. The gathering was held in memory of the late GUPS member Ibrahim Assad and was attended by the senior leadership of the Palestinian Authority, headed by Yasir Arafat.[19]

Among other things, the meeting of the administrative committee was designed to address changes to the Palestinian political structure. The establishment of the PA and its myriad institutions demanded the GUPS, which was an integral part of the PLO bureaucratic structure, readjust its activities to reflect the new reality.

Supporting this process was an ostensibly procedural adjustment to raise the number of administrative council members from 33 to 53. Yet the change cannot be considered solely administrative, as the newly elected members were in fact student council representatives from institutions of higher education in the occupied territories.[20]

It was also decided that the GUPS headquarters, which according to its constitution ought to reside in Jerusalem,[21] would be temporarily moved to Ramallah.[22] Dr. Ibrahim Kharisha was elected GUPS chairperson.

Like many of the popular institutions of the PLO, the GUPS fell into stagnation following the establishment of the PA. Political personnel no longer rotated and no further assemblies were convened. Yet individual GUPS offices remain active throughout the world. At the level of the local branches, formal elections are still held and political and cultural activities continue to take place.

From its very inception, the GUPS has been a major player in Palestinian politics. Beyond being a formal representative of the Palestinian cause in the international arena, the GUPS retained its own power and influence within the fragmented political structure of the PLO. Today, the GUPS has 15 representatives in the 765-member Palestinian National Council and the organization's chairperson retains a seat in the Central Committee of the PLO.[23]

The GUPS also reached impressive heights in the Arab and international student arenas. Its members were elected to senior positions of global student organizations, including chairperson of the Arab Student Association, vice chairperson of the Arab Youth Association, International Affairs Secretary at the International Union of Students (IUS) and Middle East Coordinator of the UN Youth and Student Organization. The GUPS is also a member of the International Socialist Youth Organization.[24]

The GUPS's widespread memberships in international associations and broad involvement in cultural–political activities contributed to a favorable worldwide presentation of the Palestinian issue and to the historical legitimacy of the Palestinian people. Yet, like other PLO organizations, the GUPS now dwells in a state of political stagnation. Since the establishment of the PA, its influence in the occupied Palestinian territories has diminished and its leadership has been politically and geographically dispersed.

In light of the crises facing the Palestinian political system, new voices calling for a political reinvigoration of the GUPS continue to emerge. The

GUPS retains a sophisticated international organizational infrastructure, considerable political experience and diverse operational connections.

Despite stagnation and a lack of centralized leadership, the GUPS continues to play a significant role in the lives of Palestinian students abroad. Its branches serve as a gathering place to initiate cultural activities and memorial events. From time to time, senior political activists on diplomatic missions from Fatah and other PLO organizations visit GUPS offices and hold lectures there. Yet the question of whether or not the GUPS can revive itself and restore its active role in the Palestinian political arena remains open.

It is important to consider the location of the GUPS headquarters: not in Jerusalem, where under the constitution they ought to be, but in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. More than a geographical location, it carried considerable political significance. Due to the segmentation of the Palestinian people, it seems that the GUPS, which had played a significant role in the formation of the Palestinian national identity, still faces an uphill path to the establishment of an independent state meaningfully connected to the Palestinian diaspora.

Notes

1 Bakr Abu Bakr, *al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin*, p. 7.
2 Students from Italy, Spain and Bulgaria were also recruited. In the Arab domain, student groups from Lebanon, Egypt and Syria also participated in combat and recruitment activities. See: Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 65.
3 Ibid., pp. 64–5.
4 During the prisoner exchange of 1985, known as the Jibril Agreement, some of the confiscated materials were returned to the PLO.
5 Bakr Abu Bakr, *al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin*, p. 4.
6 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 65.
7 Ibid., p. 66.
8 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 66.
9 Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State,* pp. 573–4.
10 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 67.
11 Ibid.
12 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 67.
13 For more on this issue see: Salih al-Razo, *Al-Tʾalim al-Aʾali fi al-Aradi al-Muhtalla* (Al-Khalil: Rabitat al-Jamʾayyin al-Khalil, Markaz al-Abhath, 1989), pp. 90–4.
14 Bakr Abu Bakr, *al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm la-Talabat Filastin*, p. 4.
15 Two of the prominent activists expelled from the territories who participated in the conference were Ibrahim Khrysha and Hussam Khadir.
16 Ghiyatha, *al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 67.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., pp. 68–9.
19 Bakr Abu Bakr, *al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin*, p. 7.
20 Ibid., p. 4.
21 *Al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin,* al-Dustur: al-Bab al-Awal, article 2a., p. 5.
22 Bakr Abu Bakr, *al-Ittihad al-ʾAmm la-Talabat Filastin*, p. 4.
23 Ibid., pp. 5–6.
24 Ibid., p. 4.

6 The emergence of the Palestinian higher education system

The war of 1967 comprehensively transformed the geopolitical map of the Middle East. As far as Israel was concerned, the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip required in-depth consideration regarding how to provide the Palestinian civilian population with the requisite infrastructure for a normal life.

Israel's direct control over the Palestinians meant that it had also to manage and supervise the Palestinian educational system. Immediately following the occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967, Israel conducted a thorough examination of Palestinian education from the level of elementary schools to teachers' seminars.[1]

Up until 1967, a university-level educational system had not been established in the West Bank or Gaza Strip; Palestinians had been compelled to pursue higher education elsewhere. In consequence, the Israeli military authorities had to deal with exit and re-entry permit requests of students. Furthermore, Israel considered Palestinian students returning from abroad as a security risk, prompting the Israeli Ministry of Education to closely monitor the political activities of GUPS members abroad.

The security and political imperative to keep track of Palestinian students abroad intensified after the 1967 war, as GUPS leaders infiltrated the West Bank in order to establish underground military cells for the ongoing struggle against Israel. Many were captured, in particular those affiliated with Fatah. In addition, students who attempted to return to the territories via recognized border crossings were questioned about the political activities of their Palestinian acquaintances abroad.[2]

The occupation of the West Bank and extension of Israeli jurisdiction over the border crossings warranted a reevaluation of Israel's West Bank permit system. The local student population, who had no choice but to study abroad in Arab or European countries, required concrete solutions. Ultimately, thousands of Palestinian students were allowed to reunite with their families during summer break visitations. In 1968, such visitations were estimated at 15,000, though Palestinian students studying in Algeria, Iraq and Syria were denied permits for re-entry.[3]

Students returning to the West Bank also attracted the interest of Israeli politicians. Taking up the challenge was Member of Knesset Nissim Eli'ad

(Amsalem), who served as Secretary of the Arab Department of the Progressive Party and Secretary of the Arab Department of the Independent Liberal party, and who had often met with Arab students in international conventions.

Eli'ad met with a group of 90 Palestinian students from foreign universities, (12 female)[4] at the Israeli Parliament House, ostensibly to discuss Israeli–Arab relations. However, on the whole, the encounter disintegrated into political squabbling over old myths and the legitimacy of each side's own historical narrative. So went the report describing the meeting:

> As the tour began I was approached by an 18-year-old student from Nablus who asked me where he might find the topographical map illustrating the borders of the historical Land of Israel, which stretched from the the Nile to the Euphrates, a map that is so prominent in Arab propaganda. Some of the students sneered and called, "A fairytale!" At the time I refrained from responding, but after the visit to the Plenary and Reception halls I told him, "If this map was so widely popular as they tell you in the Arab propaganda, you could have easily spotted it on the walls of these halls. But you are free to roam the building and find it." Some of the students were familiar with Israel's national history. They stood for a long time next to Marc Chagall's pictures, and those familiar with them explained their significance to their friends. These explanations led to a discussion between the MK and the students, when one of the students got up and said, "In the Jewish ancient books it is written that the Jewish forefather, Abraham, came from Iraq. So, maybe you Jews wish to conquer Iraq as well, in the name of the same historic rights that serve to justify your living here?" Eli'ad answered, "The religious, cultural and national integration of the Jewish people takes place in the Land of Israel and in Jerusalem, and this is why we belong here, and not in Iraq." One of the students asked, "What would you say to a person who arrives at his friend's flat, forcefully breaks into it and throws his friend out!?" The answer was also given in the form of an allegory: "The old tenant was not kicked out; the new one merely occupied a few rooms in a building where there were many empty."[5]

The absence of an academic system within the Palestinian territories epitomized a broader phenomenon that characterized daily Palestinian life, where no independent forms of authority or government existed. The fundamental experience of the Nakba and the preceding self-destruction of the 1936–39 rebellion had affected the political and institutional formation of the Palestinian national movement. Even though the establishment of the PLO in 1964 was designed to provide an organizational response to this problem, in effect, the Palestinian political system was divided among various intergenerational groups and political factions, and was directly affected by Arab countries seeking to harness the Palestinian political question to benefit their own national agendas.

As direct Jordanian and Egyptian control over the West Bank and Gaza Strip came to an end, the Palestinian national movement was presented with new challenges. The war of 1967 had yielded significant shifts of power within the PLO, granting various Fedayeen forces, first and foremost Fatah, sweeping control over the organization. Fatah Chairperson Yasir Arafat was nominated as chairperson of the PLO during the fifth annual convention of the Palestinian National Council in 1969, a shift accentuated by particular semantic revisions to the Palestinian National Covenant.

Regarding developments within the West Bank and Gaza Strip, attempts by the Fedayeen to spark rebellion against the Israeli authorities met with failure. The Israeli Security Service aggressively quashed nascent underground militant cells in occupied territory.

The PLO's main challenge concerned gaining political support within the territories. In context, the PLO – still headquartered abroad – envisioned the complete liberation of Palestine via armed struggle. PLO calls for the Palestinian people to take responsibility for their own fate were being made from afar; within the occupied territories the PLO had little public influence. Until the PLO managed to fortify its position vis-à-vis the Arab and international communities, its position on the Palestinian street would be far from secure. Popular consensus was only gained following the Arab Annual Committee in Rabat in October 1974. At the summit, Arab proclamations of legitimacy strengthened the PLO's position among residents of the territories.[6]

The PLO was well aware of Israel's global strategic advantage. The wars of 1967 and 1973 had made it clear to the PLO and to the wider Arab world that Israel was not merely a fleeting phenomenon. This realization, along with the growing legitimacy of the PLO among Palestinians in the occupied territories, mandated an organizational realignment more in touch with reality. Politically, the PLO softened its core positions regarding the indivisibility of the Palestinian homeland and adopted a phased approach, which viewed the establishment of a Palestinian state within the West Bank and Gaza Strip as an intermediate goal. Abu Iyad presented the PLO's new ten-point plan in June 1974. Residents of the territories understood that their cause had been placed at the top of PLO priorities, which further strengthened their support of the organization.[7]

As political statements alone were insufficient, the PLO set quickly to putting words into action. Money that had begun flowing into the territories was earmarked for the establishment of institutes that could constitute a political infrastructure for a budding Palestinian state. Organizationally, the PLO supported the establishment of a Palestinian National Front, which for the first time would comprise a broad coalition to resist Israeli occupation via cooperative political struggle.[8]

The decision to form political-front organizations throughout the territories gradually gained popularity and sometimes even superseded the notion of the armed struggle. The sweeping victory of PLO candidates in municipal elections held throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1976 encouraged

the PLO to pursue this course of action. Through these election results, the PLO had demonstrated its power and influence to Jordan, which supported its own candidates, and proved that strong national sentiments were beginning to emerge among the majority of West Bank residents living under Israeli occupation.[9] In a political leaflet summarizing its eighth annual convention, the GUPS also emphasized the high number of PLO candidates elected mayor.[10]

The PLO wanted to fortify its position in the occupied territories in order to thwart any possible political alternative that might undermine its national legitimacy. Bolstering support for the organization required strengthening the new leadership and creating a network of institutes through which its proponents could operate.

Beyond establishing control over the municipal institutes, the PLO began to invest in the founding of educational bodies, in particular institutions of higher education. This decision, which also emphasized the establishment of youth and student organizations, was endorsed by the Palestinian National Council during its 13th convention in March 1977.[11]

The founding of the Palestinian system of higher education

Until 1967, Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip had a historically divided educational system. In the Gaza Strip, education primarily followed Egyptian standards. West Bank education, on the other hand, was based largely on the Jordanian system. Consequently, each region had its own textbooks and educational outlook. With the onset of the Israeli occupation in 1967, the duality persisted, with a simple and essentially negative difference: the Palestinian history and national identity were eliminated from textbooks[12] throughout the entirety of the educational system.

Institutions of higher education did not exist in the Gaza Strip and West Bank prior to the Israeli occupation. In accordance with international law, legislative authority in the territories was conferred to an Israeli military administration. Local legal systems continued to operate per Jordanian municipal law and were overridden, when deemed necessary, through the legal system of the Israeli military.[13]

The Palestinian population was compelled to rearrange their lives in accordance with the reality of the Israeli occupation. The educational system required a substantial upgrade. The detachment of the occupied Palestinian territories from the Arab world, alongside a perpetually rising number of high-school graduates, required new solutions.

The founding of universities within the Palestinian territories

By the 1970s, a system of higher education at the university level was beginning to develop within the Palestinian territories. Its development carried remarkable social significance. For the first time, higher education was no longer the sole province of the Palestinian socio-economic elite able to

venture throughout the Arab world. The local establishment of an infrastructure of higher education opened new doors of education and social mobility for rural youths and refugees, as well as for middle- and lower-middle-class denizens of the cities.[14]

The demand had come from the local population and can be explained as a street-level incarnation of social–institutional organizing. Institutes of higher education in the occupied territories had grown out of teachers' seminars, which often served as preparatory colleges.

The founding of the Palestinian universities was by no means simple. Power struggles between the local leadership in the territories and the PLO abroad complicated the effort. Local leaders were the principal advocates of new universities. Aziz Shihadah[15] had presented Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan a preliminary draft for the founding of an Arab university in the occupied territories as early as 1968; a year later he pushed for the upgrade of a teachers' college in Tulkarm to an extension of the University of Jordan. Both initiatives failed.[16]

The founding of universities stoked fears within the PLO that local leaders in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were consolidating civil and political influence. The organization hence attempted to frustrate such efforts in order to attain greater control over the new institutions. In an article published in its academic journal, *Shuun Filastiniyya*, which dealt with the process of founding Bethlehem University, the PLO expressed objections to the way in which Palestinian universities were being established. While carefully avoiding direct criticism of the initiative itself, which carried great national significance, the PLO admonished the Israeli occupier and the difficulties it continued to confer.[17] The Israelis were interested in supervising Palestinian higher education, the PLO claimed, in order to disperse these institutions throughout the West Bank and finalize the annexation of East Jerusalem as Israel's unified capital.[18]

Palestinian leaders in the West Bank and Gaza Strip faced an absurd reality, in which they were expected to restore order to local residents living under Israeli occupation. Such a mandate required them to cooperate directly with representatives of the military administration. David Farhi, Moshe Dayan's special advisor on the occupied territories, supported the development of local higher education as a way of securing normality for local residents. Nevertheless, he feared that such institutes could manifest as new bases of political power.[19]

Birzeit University, which received formal status in 1972, was the first university to be founded. Started as an elementary school for girls in 1924, Birzeit serves as a classic case study of the development of higher education in the occupied territories. Due to a Jordanian reluctance to develop a system of higher education in the West Bank, Birzeit developed first into a college. At the time the West Bank was occupied in 1967, the college was offering first- and second-year university-level courses. According to the university's own historical narrative, which describes its foundation as an active aspect of the Palestinian national struggle, Birzeit determined to become a university in

response to the impediments placed by the military administration upon Palestinian students who wished to study abroad. Accepted as a member of the Arab Student Association in 1976, the university's first class of students graduated the following year.[20]

Throughout the 1970s, other educational institutions followed suit. The second West Bank university to be founded was Bethlehem University, which received approval to offer university-level curriculum in 1973. Bethlehem University had emerged from the former Fryer College, established in 1893.[21] As the university opened its gates in 1973, no more than 112 students were enrolled.[22] Linked with the American Christian Mission, the college had a significant number of Christian students and an American priest serving as university president. To this day, the university maintains strong connections with the Vatican.

Interestingly, despite the university's Christian orientation, since the 1980s, an estimated two-thirds of its student body has been Muslim. The number is perhaps unsurprising when considering the steady outflux of Christians, who now constitute less than 3 percent of West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestinians.[23]

In 1971, the Shaykh Muhammad Al Jaʿabri College of Sharia Studies was founded. Upon opening its gates in 1971, the institution had a mere 43 registered students. In addition to its academic services, the college – which later evolved to become the University of Hebron – presented itself as a social institute for the promotion of higher education among women. Without the university, financial impediments, social conservatism and the traditionalist nature of the region would have prevented many local young women from acquiring a higher education.[24]

The fourth university to emerge in the West Bank during the 1970s was al-Najah National University. Founded as an elementary school in 1918, al-Najah received university accreditation in 1977. It is considered the largest Palestinian university in the West Bank, with 19,100 students currently enrolled.[25]

As it evolved into a university, al-Najah appended to its name the distinction, "national." Indeed, such affiliation was embedded within the institutions of higher education from the outset. At the graduation ceremony in 1985, al-Najah National University President Prof. Mundhar Salih communicated this sentiment vividly: "Since its foundation, al-Najah University has developed as a symbol of the Palestinian people's determination to strengthen its hold over its homeland."[26]

In addition to the four universities established in the West Bank during the 1970s,[27] an additional university was established in the Gaza Strip. In 1978, the Islamic University of Gaza was established with the help and academic guidance of al-Azhar University in Cairo. As per the Gaza urban sphere, the proposal to establish a university had already been made in 1963 under the Egyptian military administration. Yet primarily due to Palestinian students' ease of access to Egyptian universities, the proposal had not been carried out.[28] As of 1976 – two years prior to the founding of the university – 94.6 percent of Gaza Strip students still acquired higher education in Egypt.[29]

In addition to technological and scientific training, the Islamic University of Gaza also envisioned the promotion of Islamic values through higher education. From its inception, this champion of Islamic values received the generous support of the Gulf States. Such formidable contributions enabled the university to attract exceptional personnel with the highest salaries accorded to academic staff in the occupied territories at the time.[30]

As the sole provider of higher education in the Gaza Strip, the Islamic University of Gaza attracted considerable attention. Tensions concerning control over the university soon arose between the various political factions of the PLO, headed by Fatah, and the Muslim Brothers movement. These emotionally charged disagreements were not exclusive to the various student political cells, but also concerned staff appointments and led to the assassination of the Head of the Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Dr. Ismail Al Khatib. Dr. Al Khatib was murdered by Fatah operatives who demanded representation within the university's executive committee.[31] Eventually, the Islamic University of Gaza would come under the full control of the Muslim Brothers. Today, it is one of the Hamas movement's most important centers of political, intellectual and military power.

The Palestinian Council for Higher Education – administrative body or political council?

The newly founded Palestinian universities required an administrative infrastructure to manage their activities. This role was undertaken by the Palestinian Council for Higher Education, formed in 1972 to operate alongside the National Guidance Committee. The council, which received the blessing of the PLO, comprised 55 members whose goal was the founding of an Arab–Palestinian university in East Jerusalem. The council received its early funding from the PLO and was guided from the outset by the National Regulation Committee.[32]

The Council for Higher Education was a microcosm of the political struggles unfolding throughout Palestinian society. The battle for influence and power on the council was divided between the radical left, consisting of the communists and left wing, and the supporters of Fatah and Jordan, who embodied a more conservative social outlook. Tension between these groups was further intensified when during the Palestinian National Council's annual convention in 1977, the PLO determined to establish a Palestinian university in Jerusalem.[33]

The Palestinian leftists considered the Council for Higher Education an important tool in the struggle for shaping the visage of Palestinian society. To strengthen their position, the left-wingers arranged for their loyal supporter, Dr. Gabi Baramki – acting president of Birzeit University in lieu of the recently deported Dr. Hanna Nasir – to be elected as council chairperson.

In addition to this move, the Palestinian leftists attempted to further strengthen their hold by staffing the council with the heads of popular

cultural associations and regular educational institutions. A ridiculous situation was created, whereby a representative of a communist "philosophers' club" from East Jerusalem and Mrs. Samiha Khalil, chairperson of the Family Welfare Women's Association (considered to be a supporter of the Popular Front), received the same voting rights on the council as representatives of genuine institutions of higher education, such as al-Najah National University President Hikmat Al-Masri, and the representative of the Hebron Polytechnic Institute. From the perspective of the left-wing council heads, however, the "disadvantage" of the latter was their affiliation with the joint committee of Jordan and the PLO.[34]

The primary mission of the joint committee was to look after the welfare of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, yet among its capacities was the budgeting of universities.[35] This granted political leverage to the PLO and Jordan, which sought a conservative takeover of the Palestinian system of higher education. In collaboration with Jordan, the committee's control over funding allowed the PLO to alter the staffing configuration of the Palestinian Council for Higher Education.

Originally, the Palestinian Council for Higher Education was controlled by left-wing functionaries, who took advantage of their highly developed networks within the Palestinian territories and the sophisticated infrastructure of the Palestinian Communist Party developed during the period of Jordanian reign. This infrastructure, dubbed the "National Front," remained active after the war of 1967. With a semi-underground modus operandi, the National Front leaned heavily on the support of sectarian committees immediately after the occupation of the West Bank. Dismantled by Israel in 1969, the National Front renewed operations in the early 1970s in cooperation with PLO loyalists, though it remained firmly rooted in its leftist orientation.[36]

Left-wing control over the council was exercised in the purely political exclusion of representatives from the two Jerusalem-based religious colleges and the original Sharia College in Hebron. Beyond issues of social orientation, representatives of the religious colleges were considered emissaries of the Jordanian religious establishment. The inaugural council also conspicuously excluded Rashad al-Shawwa, mayor of the Gaza Strip's most populous city, and of Shaykh Muhammad Awad, chairperson of the Sharia Court of Appeals and, later, founder of al-Azhar University in Gaza.[37]

Essentially, the Palestinian Council for Higher Education had a limited academic mandate. Its fields of responsibility were contained to coordination between various academic institutes, founding of new universities and colleges and establishing libraries and research labs pending budget allocations. In addition, the Council for Higher Education was to coordinate local enrollment of Palestinian students with parallel organizations in other Arab countries.[38]

In effect, the council was primarily a political entity. Its greatest accomplishment was therefore having gained the recognition of the Arab Universities Association as the "ultimate National Institute responsible for matters of culture and education in the occupied territories."[39]

The Palestinian Council for Higher Education played a critical part in the institutional processes of Palestinian state-building. In this context, institutions of higher education in the West Bank and Gaza Strip affiliated to the council boosted its importance. The role of higher education was to provide academic training and further develop its physical and intellectual surroundings.[40]

The functional problems of the Palestinian Council for Higher Education derived mainly from the nature of the tasks it had taken upon itself, as well as from structural shortcomings that hindered its operation. The council was too wide and dispersed to operate effectively. Furthermore, the direct involvement of city mayors deflected the council decisions to the benefit of particular localities and its prior political obligations.

Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that because the council included members of various political organizations, politicians, heads of professional associations, civil society activists and academics, the Israeli authorities devoted considerable attention to its activities. More than a collection of Palestinian intellectuals and educators surmised that the Israeli authorities considered the council to be a kernel from which a Palestinian parliament might eventually germinate.[41]

The council's political potential was furthered by the addition of democratically elected city mayors to its ranks. This sharpened the various Palestinian factions' struggle for control. The mayors of Ramallah and Nablus, Karim Khalaf and Bassam Shaka'a, respectively, played a central role in the Palestinian Council for Higher Education, something the PLO highly resented. The great popularity received by these publicly elected mayors raised concern within the PLO, which feared the evolution of a new cadre of leaders with its own national agenda in the occupied territories. The principal mechanism through which the PLO could pressure the mayors, as well as newly developed institutes such as the Palestinian Council for Higher Education, was economic.

As most of the funding given to the National Regulation Committee and the Council for Higher Education originated with the PLO, West Bank Palestinian institutions were unable to secure fiscal independence. Economic pressure applied by the PLO granted it political prerogative over these institutes and their internal processes.

Ultimately, financial control proved key to the PLO takeover of the Palestinian Council for Higher Education. PLO leaders then faced the challenge of removing left-wing personnel from positions of power, a move that would enable them to dictate the agenda for higher education throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The PLO clarified its intentions by awarding the Palestinian Council of Higher Education a grant of one million Jordanian Dinars and to formally acknowledge its position as the body in charge of academic life in the territories.[42] This decision was reached after a Jordanian attempt to install its own council of higher education responsible for matters in the West Bank.[43]

Residents of the occupied territories did not consider formal recognition of the Palestinian Council of Higher Education a victory over the Palestinian

leadership abroad. Rather, it was seen as a political calculation of the PLO under Fatah and its Jordanian allies, with an eye to facilitate supervision of the council's activities through its finances. By controlling the council's budget, the heads of the joint committee realized they could appoint their people to key positions in the council and dictate an academic agenda more compatible with their own worldview. This containment strategy was designed to strike a suitable balance between external influence and the needs of the local Palestinian population in the territories.

The PLO and Jordan asserted complete control over the council's budget. The joint committee determined the mode of payment for the council's operating expenses and transferred other funds at its disposal directly to the recipient institutions. The message was clear: the Palestinian Council for Higher Education was subordinate to the joint committee and should cooperate fully. If it chose to do otherwise, the joint committee retained the prerogative to increase the autonomy and influence of the universities – at the expense of the council.[44]

The institutional structure and personnel of the Palestinian Council for Higher Education soon bore the mark of the joint committee's influence. Council President Gabi Baramki understood in no uncertain terms that he must abide by the demands of the joint committee. A reconfiguration of council personnel was a central goal for Fatah and its Jordanian benefactors, who loathed the radical left wing and its grip over civil society in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

As president of the council, Dr. Baramki felt the clouds hovering overhead. To secure his position, he made several trips to Amman for meetings with the heads of the joint committee. Yet attempts to circumvent his impending downfall were futile. Jordan did not turn a blind eye to his connections with the National Guidance Committee and would not forgive its severe criticism of King Husayns. Baramki was perhaps also a convenient target for the PLO, which was suspicious of his close ties with the National Guidance Committee. The reshaping of the Palestinian Council for Higher Education was thus complete; on October 13, 1980, it elected Bakaid Abd Al-Haq from al-Najah National University as its new president and dramatically shuffled the council staff. Added to the council ranks was Gaza City Mayor Rashad Al-Shawwa, representing the city's religious college, alongside a group of Gaza-based Fatah loyalists and representatives of other religious colleges. The move granted the joint committee control over the council and allowed it to dictate a more conservative worldview.[45]

For Jordan, however, shared control over the finances of the Palestinian Council for Higher Education was insufficient. In light of political developments such as the Palestinian national uprising, the Hashemite regime opted to tighten its influence over the West Bank's broader educational sphere. In 1979, the Jordanian government declared it would not recognize West Bank matriculation certificates unless they were certified in Jordan. In addition, Jordan established a new higher education council, composed of university

leaders from both banks of the Jordan River who sympathized with the Hashemite regime. In addition to the promotion of Jordanian interests in the West Bank universities, the new council seemed designed to constrain the PLO's influence over the Palestinian Council for Higher Education.[46]

In sum, the Jordanian monarchy acknowledged the importance of higher education to the socialization of the West Bank. It sought to maintain control over this process in order to contain and direct Palestinian cultural and organizational development in the West Bank. This desire was also reflected in the reorganization of the "Government Office of Occupied Territories" in the early 1980s. Responsibilities of the office's first appointed minister, Hassan Ibrahim, were expanded to include agriculture, diplomacy, municipal affairs, labor and Jerusalem-related issues.[47]

Higher education in the Palestinian territories and the Israeli administration

Within its cultural and political context, Palestinian education in general – and higher education in particular – received substantial attention from the Israeli administration. In the early 1970s, the Israelis conducted an extensive survey of the educational situation in the occupied territories, including the Sinai Peninsula. This survey examined the entire spectrum of education, from elementary schools to higher education. The survey also included comparative data pertaining to the pre-occupation period. The survey was conducted by educational officers of the military administration, in cooperation with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education. The Shiloah Institute at Tel Aviv University was responsible for data collation and analysis.[48]

An Israeli awareness of the importance of education in the development of national and political consciousness was revealed in correspondence between military administrators concerning the methods of the survey and the quality of information it might provide. Despite the survey's impressive scale, statistical data alone could not provide much political and national insight. This point was raised among decision-makers and the survey's architects were tasked by the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories to examine the national and cultural character of education in the territories (keeping in mind that Jordanian curriculum was still being utilized in the West Bank), the connections linking educational institutions and their religious affiliations.[49]

The importance the Israeli administration ascribed to education in the occupied territories derived from an awareness of the tension between the PLO, Jordan and leaders within the occupied territories regarding control of this system. Yet, in reality, practical supervision of this system lay in the hands of the military administration.

Among the goals of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories was the appointment of an Arabic Education Director in the West Bank. Though this decision was harshly criticized in West Bank Arabic-language

newspapers, it was hardly mentioned in the Jordanian press. Indeed, Jordan objected staunchly to such an appointment. One of the candidates, Dr. Abbas Al-Kurd, was summoned to Jordan and informed by the Jordanian Minister of Occupied Territories that whoever accepts such a role will have his Jordanian citizenship revoked and be declared a traitor.[50]

The Israelis' aim was stymied by fear of Jordanian sanctions, such as the withholding of teachers' salaries or refusal to recognize high school matriculation certificates, which would impair Palestinians' chances of being admitted to Arab universities abroad. Israel's understanding that this was a political dilemma, rather than a mere administrative setback, led it to postpone the plan.[51] Following a visit to Amman by Israel's favored candidate, Ibrahim Al-Kadri, and his subsequent refusal of the position, Israel realized that it would be impossible to appoint a director. Upon his return after having met with the Jordanian ministers of Education and the Occupied Territories, Al-Kadri issued a detailed response to the Israeli proposal. In a meeting with Shmuel Haham, the IDF officer in charge of the West Bank educational system, Al-Kadri enumerated the reasons for his refusal:

1. If he were to accept the position, he would be charged with treason;
2. He would furthermore be excommunicated by the Jordanian Ministry of Education, a measure that would prevent him from acting in the best interest of the educational system as local administrators would likely dismiss him;
3. He would lose all of his personal relationships and rights, including his pension, salary and friends.[52]

Despite these setbacks, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories continued its close scrutiny of the education system in the territories. To this end, it utilized the Chamber of Education, which had inherited the responsibilities of the Jordanian Ministry of Education.[53]

The Israeli administration's perception of the Palestinian universities

As the Palestinian universities were founded, the military administration needed to address itself to the question of how to handle them. To the IDF, the importance of higher education in building national consciousness was clear; from the outset, it perceived Palestinian universities as a hotbed of nationalism. By conducting cultural activities, such as the celebration of folklore, student councils of the various universities were nurturing the Palestinian national identity. Such activities were coordinated in cooperation with the various academic administrations. In the mid-1970s, the University of Bethlehem became the first university in the West Bank whose Palestinian folklore activities gained widespread public attention.[54]

The response of the Israeli administration was made clear by Capt. Ellis Shazar, who served as spokesperson for the Civil Administration in the West

Bank: "The Palestinian universities are not so much universities as they are institutes of political activism and part of the PLO's infrastructure."[55] Israel's attitude towards the academic system was at odds with its general approach, whereby it sought to maintain a normal way of life in the occupied territories, subject to the prevailing legal system.

In both administrative and legal terms, the Israeli establishment applied the same tactics to higher education that it applied to the broader education system in general, that is it kept the 1964 Jordanian law and derived regulations intact. The military administration sought legal paths to maintain control over the universities and the Jordanian law served this purpose. As Palestinian universities had not existed prior to 1967, military regulation no. 854 was issued by way of achieving control. This regulation, issued on August 6, 1980, was signed by Brigadier General Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, the Israeli commander of the Judea and Samaria region.

The measure was taken after it was determined by the Israeli authorities that campus activity, on both the institutional and student levels, facilitated the political evolution of the Palestinian national movement. In effect, military order no. 854 was designed to deny Palestinian universities all academic freedom, handing the civilian administration total control over Palestinian academia. Adaptations of the old Jordanian regulations provided Israeli authorities near absolute authority.[56]

Military regulation no. 854 facilitated Israeli intervention in almost every aspect of the universities, all the way down to the individual student level. Namely, the military education officer retained the prerogative to veto the admission of a particular student to any university. This sanction led to the expulsion of Palestinian university students on security grounds. Fatah's Shabiba movement claimed that this section of the regulation was paradoxical, as the same sanctions had been applied to Palestinian students seeking to study abroad in the neighboring Arab countries.[57]

Israeli interference in Palestinian academia was absolute. The Civil Administration, which inherited its authority from the Military Administration in 1981, maintained regulation no. 854 as well. Multi-party discussions were held to decide upon the required forms of supervision.

Enforcement of the regulation was administratively complex, due to a complex array of Israeli administrative jurisdictions and the myriad authorities responsible for daily communication with the Palestinian institutes. Such officials ranged from members of the planning committee – which derived its authority from the Jordanian construction laws and retained the power to approve or deny construction of new campuses or classrooms – to the censor, who was authorized to approve textbooks. In addition to this gaggle of officials, the Civil Administration also had a supervisor of universities and education systems. A glance into the Civil Administration protocol, "Birzeit University – Suggestion for supervision tactics – in continuing the educational platform discussion no. 143 from April 27th 1983," provides some interesting insight into the methods of subordinating the universities. This discussion,

attended by all principal military officials in the Birzeit area,[58] concluded in its final recommendations:

1. Censorship: According to warrant no. 50 [they] must receive a permit to bring in books. The Birzeit library is loaded with, among other items, hostile and inciting publications. For two years now the university has not requested any permits for books and has been importing them independently through various importers. Recommendation: Contact customs management and increase supervision and sample examinations of literature imported by Arab importers in Israel, and examine items not registered as Arabic-language literature. Also, request inspection of Arab and other foreign lecturers staying in the area who have entered Israel through the Ben Gurion Airport.
2. Hostile publications, including the university's calendar: Mr. Zion Gabai will conduct a sample inspection to ascertain where this material is being printed. Recommendation: Take action against the printers as per the warrant prohibiting publication of forbidden materials.
3. Lands: During the year 1982, the university purchased lands in the amount of 600,000 Dinar. This amount could be used to purchase approximately 500 acres. The university has issued several land registration requests in blocks no. 16 (the campus block), 17 and 18, including lots that are randomly spread across the area not connected with one another. Recommendation: Forbid land registration without the approval of the head of the planning chamber and only after he conducts an examination of specific plans submitted for scrutiny by the university concerning compatibility with the regional master plan.
4. University expenses: In the year 1982 expenses reached an amount of 1,076,193 Dinar, which is 99 percent of the amount written under "assistance in covering university expenses," and there was no detailed description of the expenses themselves. Recommendation: Require the Birzeit Board of Trustees Charitable Association submit a detailed description of all expenses to Mr. Nuri Nuriel, who oversees the charitable associations.
5. Currency admission permit: During the year the university received donations in the amount of 2,240,000 Dinar from various sources. Recommendation: Require the university to issue a request for currency admission into the territories through the charity supervisor, in accordance with the existing warrant.
6. Income tax deduction from hired workers: Today no tax deduction at source is being made for hired workers of the university. The university employs 165 lecturers, of whom 80 are foreign lecturers who do not teach in practice. Recommendation: Conduct tax deduction at source (this issue is already in progress).[59]

Examining these protocols, one can discern a Civil Administration that aimed to control all aspects of the Palestinian academic system. Non-compliance placed Palestinian universities in danger of an immediate shut-down by temporary provision of the Judea and Samaria Regional Commander or the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories.

Between academic freedom and military supervision: the Palestinian universities in the arena of national struggle

In practice, military order no. 854 was a political tool serving the military administration in its struggle against the Palestinian national movement, which was in turn transforming the campuses into West Bank and Gaza strongholds. Both students and lecturers took part in national activities. The Israeli security services, already well aware of student groups established within the PLO's political framework, paid close attention to organized activities among lecturers. For this reason, heads of Palestinian universities and other academic leaders were periodically summoned to the offices of the Civil Administration for meetings.

The hardship suffered by the lecturers and administrative staff of the Palestinian universities in dealing with the temporary provisions of the Civil Administration derived first and foremost from their own organizational weakness. This inferiority stemmed from their fear of direct confrontation with Palestinian university heads concerning their employment conditions. The faculty association at Birzeit, for example, required the help of the student union as it did not even have a university office in which to hold its activities. This assistance came when a handful of young Fatah ruffians commandeered an empty room that the lecturers then converted into an office. The establishment of the faculty association at Birzeit, headed in the early 1980s by Sari Nusseibeh, led to the establishment of a parallel organization at al-Najah National University.[60]

The Israeli administration's desire to supervise the academic faculties of the Palestinian universities led to disputes over the question of academic freedom. The Civil Administration required that foreign lecturers, first and foremost at Birzeit University, sign employment permit requests. These requests required their commitment to abstain from supporting or sympathizing with the PLO, lest the lecturers face deportation.[61]

Furthermore, the very criteria of "foreign lecturers" raised considerable resentment among academic staff at Birzeit University, as some of these lecturers were exiled Palestinians from neighboring Arab countries. Sari Nusseibeh proclaimed, "By branding them 'foreign,' the government means whoever was absent from his home in the West Bank in the course of the Israeli occupation, even those born and raised there who simply spent a summer holiday abroad in June of 1967."[62]

Though a poignant observation, even if there were a few cases that fell into this category, most of the lecturers from abroad were in fact foreign

nationals. This can be attested through a conversation between five foreign lecturers at Birzeit University: Liza Taraki, Hug Roy Harkurt, Peter Roy Heath, Fredrick Francois Part and Leiten St. John, and the Civil Administration's legal advisor, Lieutenant-Colonel Itzhak Axel. The lecturers had initiated this conversation after having received a letter from the governor of Ramallah instructing them to submit an employment permit request within seven days. It was made clear to them that if they refused to do so, their residence in the area would be deemed illegal and they would face deportation. The lecturers received warning from the governor after having already signed an employment permit request that differed from the original version drafted by Israeli Consultant on Arab Affairs, Prof. Menahem Milson.[63] Their alternative request omitted section 18, which concerned recognition and support of the PLO.[64]

In their conversation with the legal advisor, the lecturers explained that student pressure would make signing a request that includes section 18 difficult for them.[65] They protested that the military administration was unnecessarily involving them in political matters unrelated to research and teaching.[66]

The employment permit request was endorsed by Acting President Dr. Gabi Baramki.[67] As the senior administrator of Birzeit university, Baramki was placed under explicit threat that should he reject the demands of the Israeli administration, the university would be shut down. The university fell into line, despite the sustained opposition of the faculty and student council, who viewed such conciliation as political surrender.[68]

The five lecturers who refused to sign the unabridged employment permit request explained that they would not allow political tampering with their academic freedom. Yet they conceded that they had been trapped between a rock and a hard place. The Civil Administration was pressuring them into signing a request their own students could not abide. Israeli attorney Leah Zemel, who represented the lecturers, explained to the legal advisor of the Civil Administration, Itzhak Axel, that their noncompliance stemmed from the objections of students, who unequivocally refused to study under any lecturer that signed the request in its current form.[69]

In an attempt to attract international attention for their case, the lecturers solicited the American and British consuls in Jerusalem. Whereas the British consul filed a protest with the Israeli embassy in England, the Americans made it clear they would not intervene in Israel's internal affairs.[70]

Military intervention in the Palestinian academic sphere attracted global attention. The universal values comprising the foundation of the academia, principal among them the freedom of thought, collided with the complex political paradigm within which the Israeli–Palestinian conflict unfolded. The very existence of regulation no. 854 indicated the military administration's perceived need to deal with the expansion of Palestinian power bases by way of its academic infrastructure.

Sanctions imposed upon the Palestinian universities by the military administration garnered extensive media coverage, with responses issued

through international political channels. Due to the complexities of international academic relationships, the Israeli Minister of Science and Development requested the IDF keep it abreast of developments in the Palestinian academic sphere. As academic communities from across the world unleashed a deluge of complaints, the minister found himself woefully uninformed and under serious pressure to issue an immediate response.[71] Such pressure intensified throughout 1983, as campus tensions heated up in response to the 1982 war in Lebanon, the massacres at Sabra and Shatila, violent Palestinian civil conflict and internal divisions within Fatah.

The PLO responds

Safeguarding the academia was in the shared interest of the Civil Administration and the leaders of Palestinian universities. Yet university administrators, despite their desire to maintain a normal routine, were committed above all else to the Palestinian national interest. This was expressed through dialogue with student leaders of the various PLO factions and the Islamic Bloc. The student leadership, representing young intellectuals, often subscribed to views even more radical than those of the PLO leaders abroad. The student leaders' violent response to regulation no. 854 contrasted sharply with the docility of the PLO, whose diplomacy called upon lecturers to compromise on the issue of employment permit requests.

The PLO's position derived from a recognition that a normal routine was essential to the steadfastness (*Sumud*) of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Chairperson of the faculty organization at Birzeit university, Sari Nusseibeh, viewed the PLO's approach as a betrayal of its own principles. Yet the PLO had also to care for the deported lecturers, who demanded an outright revolt against regulation no. 854. When Nusseibeh went to Amman to present the views of the faculty organization and students to the PLO leadership, he discovered to his amazement that not only did the PLO object to the refusal to sign the requests, but so did the Jordanian security services. Nusseibeh returned to Amman on several occasions in order to persuade the PLO to alter its stance. In addition, Nusseibeh claimed that the lecturers' surrender would be equivalent to shutting the universities down, because they would cease to be centers of critical and humanistic thought.[72] Only after he had managed to win over the heart of Abu Jihad, did the PLO leadership begin to view their struggle in a more positive light.[73]

Regarding this change of position, Nusseibeh postulated that the distance and buffer mechanisms had prevented the PLO from applying effective pressure over the faculty organizations, thus enhancing the democratic spirit of the latter. Nusseibeh later proffered his organization's full support of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Notes

1 IDF Archives, 9/1338/98, Dov Shefi to Nathan Bar-Yaakov, October 7, 1973. See also: IDF Archives, 9/1338/98, Nathan Bar-Yaakov to Dov Shefi, July 19, 1973.
2 See for instance the story of Raja Shehadeh, *Strangers in the House: Coming of Age in Occupied Palestine* (Tel-Aviv: la-Miskal, 2004.), p. 3.
3 The numerical evaluations are derived from the article of A. Yossef, *Lamerhav*, undated, IDF Archives, 568/33/84.
4 See the report of Nahman Phabian, undated, source not supplied, IDF Archives, 569/33/84.
5 Ibid.
6 Steinberg, *ʿOmdim le-Goralam*, p. 170.
7 Ibid., p. 171.
8 Hillel Frisch, *Countdown to Statehood: Palestinian State Formation in the West Bank and Gaza* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 22.
9 Moshe Maoz, "Manhigut Falastinit ba-Gada ha-Maʾaravit, 1948–78" [Palestinian Leadership in the West Bank, 1948–78], *Ha-Tnuʾa ha-Leumit ha-Falastinit – me-ʾImut le-Hashlama?* [*The Palestinian National Movement: From Confrontation to Reconciliation?*], (eds.) B.Z. Keidar and Moshe Maoz (Tel-Aviv: Misrad ha-Bitahon, 1997), p. 235.
10 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 65.
11 Steinberg, *ʿOmdim le-Goralam*, p. 170.
12 Khalil Nakhla, *Mivne Maʾarehet ha-Hinuh ha-Falastinit* [*The Structure of the Palestinian Education System*], (Tel-Aviv: The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel-Aviv University, 2003), p. 3.
13 Efrayim Lavie, "Ha-Falastinim ba-Gada ha-Maʾaravit: Dfusey Hitargenut Politit Tahat Kibush u-be-Shilton Azmi" [The Palestinians in the West Bank: Patterns of Political Organization under Occupation and Self Rule], (Tel-Aviv University: PhD Dissertation, 2009), pp. 46–7.
14 Glen E. Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). p. 31.
15 A renowned Palestinian lawyer and human rights activist from Ramallah, the son of Salim Shihadah of Jaffa, who served as a judge during the British Mandate. Aziz Shihadah was assassinated in 1985.
16 Frisch, *Countdown to Statehood*, p. 59.
17 Ghatas Abu-Aytah, "Jamiʾat Bait Lahim, ma Laha wa-ma Aliha", *Shuʾun Filastiniyya*, 50, Tishrin al-Awal (Aktubar), 1975, p. 410.
18 Ibid.
19 Frisch, *Countdown to Statehood*, p. 60.
20 For a detailed history of the University of Birzeit, see: www.birzeit.edu/about_bzu/p/2542
21 Abu Aytah, "Jamiʾat Beit Lahem, ma Laha wa-ma Aliha", p. 410.
22 For a description of the milestones in the evolvement of the University of Bethlehem, see: www.bethlehem.edu/about/history.shtml
23 Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State*, p. 107.
24 For more see: Hebron University, "About the Founder and the University", www.hebron.edu/Hu/HU-Founder.htm
25 See al-Najah University website: www.najah.edu/page/2478
26 Anthony Thrall Sullivan, *Palestinian Universities Under Occupation* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press), p. 46.
27 During the 1980s and 1990s two additional universities were established in the West Bank: Al-Quds, and Al-Quds Al-Maftuha (the open university of Jerusalem).
28 Ibid.

29 Samir N. Anabtawi, *Palestinian Higher Education in the West Bank and Gaza: A Critical Assessment* (London: KPI, 1986), p. 44.
30 Sullivan, *Palestinian Universities Under Occupation*, p. 54.
31 Aviva Shabi, Roni Shaked, *Hamas: me-Emuna be-Allah le-Dereh ha-Teror* [*From Faith in Allah to the Path of Terror*], (Jerusalem: Keter, 1994), p. 74.
32 Moshe Maoz, *ha-Manhigut Falastinit ba-Gada ha-Maʾaravit* [*The Palestinian Leadership in the West Bank*], (Tel-Aviv: Reshafim, 1985), p. 179.
33 Inbari, *Meshulash ʿAl ha-Yarden,* pp. 131–2.
34 Ibid, p. 132.
35 Anabtawi, *Palestinian Higher Education in the West Bank and Gaza,* p. 28.
36 Maoz, *ha-Manhigut Falastinit ba-Gada ha-Maʾaravit*, p. 104.
37 Frisch, *Countdown to Statehood*, p. 69.
38 Anabtawi, *Palestinian Higher Education in the West Bank and Gaza,* pp. 27–8.
39 Frisch, *Countdown to Statehood*, p. 70.
40 Muhammad Hallaj, "The Mission of Palestinian Higher Education", Journal of Palestine Studies, 9(4), (Summer, 1980), p. 92.
41 Anabtawi, *Palestinian Higher Education in the West Bank and Gaza,* p. 26.
42 *Al-Quds*, February 21, 1980.
43 Frisch, *Countdown to Statehood*, p. 71.
44 Ibid., p. 72.
45 Inbari, *Meshulash ʿAl ha-Yarden,* p. 134.
46 Maoz, *ha-Manhigut Falastinit ba-Gada ha-Maʾaravit*, p. 183.
47 Ibid.
48 IDF Archives, 9/1338/98, Dov Shefi to Nathan Bar-Yaakov, October 7, 1973.
49 Ibid.
50 IDF Archives, 9/1338/98, Arie Shalev to Ministry of Defense/Coordination of Territories Activities/General Vardi, April 1974.
51 Ibid.
52 IDF Archives, 9/1338/98, Shmuel Haham to Mr. A. Tahun, April 11, 1974.
53 IDF Archives, 129/1938/94.
54 Abu-Aytah, "Jamiʾat Bait Lahim, ma Laha wa-ma ʿAliyha", p. 410.
55 Quoted in: Sullivan, *Palestinian Universities Under Occupation*, p. 54.
56 Sari Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country: A Palestinian Life* (Hebrew translation), (London: Halban Publishers), p. 141.
57 "Madha Iksad Bi-qarar 854", *Sawt al-Tulaba Majala Tasdiraha Harakat al-Shabiba al-Tulabiyya*, (Nablus: undated), p. 17.
58 The list of participants in this discussion is as follows: Lieutenant Colonel Yehuda Katz (Censor), Lieutenant Colonel Shefi David (Assistant Advisor on Arab Affairs), Lieutenant Commander Roni Gilo (Deputy Governor of Ramallah), Mrs. Hannah Steiner (Legal Advisor representative), Mr. Patael Yehezkel (Assistants Real Estate Registration Officer), Mr. Zion Gabbai (University and Education System Supervisor) and Mr. Nuri Nuriel (Charity and Welfare Association Supervisor).
59 IDF Archives, 43/1171/88, Yaakov Lavie to Charity and Welfare Association Supervisor office, Mr. Moskovitz (Head of the Planning Department), Assistants Real Estate Registration Officer, Yehuda Katz (Press and Media Censorship), Mr. Zion Gabai (University and Education System Supervisor), Head of Civil Administration, Deputy Head of Civil Administration, Governor of Ramallah, Legal Advisor, Advisor for Arab Affairs, Head of Planning and Development, Welfare officer, Education Officer, 100, 101, 102. June 15, 1983.
60 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country* (Hebrew translation), pp. 139–40.
61 IDF Archives, 44/1171/88, Alice Shazar to Governor of Ramallah, November 6, 1983.
62 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country* (Hebrew translation), p. 141.

63 IDF Archives, 44/1171/88, Itzhak Axel to Head of the Civil Administration, November 14, 1983.
64 Ibid.
65 The students in Birzeit University had indeed shut down the campus for three consecutive days (November 17–19, 1983), in protest of the demand that foreign lecturers sign article 18 of the work permit request. The strike opposed the imposing of work permits at large. See: IDF Archive, 44/1171/88, ʿAmar ʿAmar, Attn: The Advisor for Arab Affairs, West Bank Civil Administration, November 20, 1983.
66 IDF Archives, 44/1171/88, Itzhak Axel to Head of the Civil Administration, November 14, 1983.
67 Ibid.
68 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country* (Hebrew translation), p. 142.
69 IDF Archives, 44/1171/88, Itzhak Axel to Head of the Civil Administration, November 14, 1983.
70 Daʾas Abu-Kishak, *Dirasa fi al-Awdaʾ al-Tarbawiyya wa-al-Akadimiyya fi al-Ardi al-Muhtalla*, (place of publication not specified, Manshurat al-Wihda, 1983), p. 101.
71 IDF Archives, 43/1171/88, David Lev to Shalom Harari, June 13, 1983.
72 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country* (Hebrew translation), pp. 144–6.
73 Ibid., p. 146.

7 Between academic freedom and military supervision

The Palestinian universities and the national struggle

The dialogue with the Palestinian students and faculty association, together with the desire to maintain a robust academic lifestyle, meant that the universities' leadership had to juggle various political obstacles while proclaiming their joint national aspirations. Furthermore, the political crises within the Palestinian national movement also demanded the attention of Palestinian academic institutions.

On account of the stance it had adopted concerning foreign lecturers, which was perceived by the faculty association and student council as submissive, the Birzeit University management was compelled to respond on a national level. Hence, at the height of the foreign lecturers crisis, University Vice President Dr. Gabi Baramki held a press conference in which he expressed support for the PLO and Yasir Arafat, who were losing political ground in the wake of the events in northern Lebanon. The press conference was covered by the Israeli media and featured prominently in televised Israeli newscasts. Dr. Baramki conferred his speech against a backdrop of PLO flags and images of Yasir Arafat, rendering the act a political challenge in the eyes of the Israeli Civil Administration. Head of the Civil Administration Brigadier General Shlomo Eliya claimed:

> The participation of the media in this event indicates that the intention of the organizers is to go beyond the definition of an internal conference, and to make [the event] public, by means of the media, without demonstrators being required to physically leave the university grounds … undoubtedly, such a conference has inflammatory potential and might incite the youth to further disrupt public order. A further lapse of the situation in northern Lebanon and continuance of the battles between Fatah factions there might result in additional regional deterioration. Furthermore, other universities might also attempt to organize similar conferences, possibly of a more severe nature. In light of all this, we recommend that both parts of the university, that is the old and the new campuses, be shut down for a period of two months.[1]

The press conference held by Dr. Baramki led to the publication of a decree ordering the university's closure. This was not the first time such sanctions

were applied against the Berzeit University. In fact, Birzeit was the Palestinian university subjected to the largest number of such warrants. Between the years 1979 and 1988, it was shut down 14 times by the Israeli military authorities.[2] Four of these closures occurred in the period 1980–82, lasting more than eight months.[3]

The enforcement of military directive no. 854 brought the issue of academic freedom in Palestinian universities to the public agenda. The struggle over imposing the resolution at Birzeit occurred shortly after another similar incident, which resulted in the closing of the University of Bethlehem.

The Birzeit affair featured a sort of acquiescence between the students and university management, which had, on its own terms, mobilized to support the Palestinian national struggle. Concerning the University of Bethlehem, on the other hand, an intrinsic tension was evident between the student body and the university management. This tension eventually compelled the management to act in line with the students' national aspirations, leading also to its closure.

In the wake of events taking place during Palestinian Folklore Week, coordinated on campus by the student council between October 21 and 23, 1983, a closure warrant was issued to the University of Bethlehem. The exhibition highlighted popular themes and was intended for the general public.[4] At around 23:30 on the first day of the conference, a joint force of the IDF and the Israeli Police, backed by a military warrant, stormed onto the campus. Various exhibitions were confiscated, including Palestinian flags, political posters and banners, straw baskets, traditional Palestinian clothing, furniture and homemade foods. University administrators later claimed that the exhibition did not breach the customary rules of conduct vis-à-vis the Israeli military regime.[5] Yet some of the seized materials included posters of the Palestinian Leftist Bloc, considered as incitement. First and foremost, these lambasted the Israeli government for its efforts to establish the Village League to offset support of the PLO in the West Bank. Neither were the Muslim Brothers nor members of the Jordanian regime spared. Support of the PLO also appeared on a placard featuring a map of the region alongside the slogan: "Yes to the PLO, the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."[6]

Following the incident of the folklore exhibition, commander of the Israeli Civil Administration, Brigadier General Shlomo Eliya, summoned the heads of the university to a meeting. The University of Bethlehem was represented by President Dr. Sansur and Vice Chancellor Br. Thomas Scanlan. In addition to Brigadier General Eliya, the Civil Administration was also represented by the governor of Bethlehem and the administration's legal advisor. During the meeting, Brigadier General Eliya requested the university heads account for their inability to prevent the distribution of inciting materials during the exhibition.

Brother Thomas responded by claiming that given the influence of the universities within Israel on the students of the region, and the effect of the freedom of speech and expression in Israel on the local student population, there was little he could do. The placards, he claimed, were produced ad hoc

and therefore could not be inspected in advance, and in any case some 90 percent of the exhibition space was devoted to folklore and dancing. Furthermore, University President Dr. Sansur argued that the socio-economic problems of the lower income students had fanned the flames of unrest. He claimed that, in his opinion, these poor and embittered students were simply letting off steam and no harm had been done.[7]

Brigadier General Eliya then proclaimed that he held the university management unequivocally responsible for all of the students' actions and declared that in the future he would not hesitate to resort to drastic measures, including shutting the university down. In response, the vice chancellor reassured the military governor that such incidents would not be repeated and committed himself to prevent incitement.[8]

Following the meeting, the management of Beitlehem university was under the impression that the incident was over and done with. Return to normal university life, however, was short-lived; on October 27, 1983, the IDF conducted a series of arrests. Eighteen students were arrested and charged with leading a campaign of incitement on campus. Ten of the students, including all the women detained, were released the same day, after signing a commitment to appear at trial. That eight students remained under arrest, university administrators later claimed, was the catalyst behind the January 1, 1984, outburst of campus riots which would prove the most violent in three years.[9]

Following these events, Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, Brigadier General Binyamin Fuad Ben-Eliezer, ordered a 60-day closure of the university.[10] In response, the University of Bethlehem published an official public account of the events, which clarified the ramifications on the university's ability to function as an academic institution:

> The university cannot defend the violent demonstrations of its students and acknowledges the fact that individuals should be held accountable for their actions. Notwithstanding, the university has never, during the decade of its existence, witnessed such blatant provocation. This provocation was the outcome of a lack of judgment on behalf of the military authorities, who displayed a heavy hand in indicting student leaders for petty offenses … The University was punished with the longest closure in its history, and the blame should be cast on a lack of jurisdictional proportionality on behalf of the military authorities. Justice requires that the authorities in charge of the West Bank reconsider the situation and apportion blame and punishment in a more justified manner.[11]

Brigadier General Ben-Eliezer was determined to hold to his decision and defended his position in a letter to the *Jerusalem Post*. In addition to referring to the campus unrest, Ben-Eliezer posited an analysis of socio-political developments. He claimed, on the basis of his longstanding acquaintance with the University of Bethlehem (formerly Collège des Frères), that the institution was undergoing a process of Islamization. Even the Christian community of

Bethlehem, he argued, was being marginalized by various factions of the PLO, who had seized control of the student council and began threatening the administrative staff. Ben-Eliezer's claim of Islamization was strongly contradicted by Vice Chancellor Scanlan, who met the head of the Civil Administration on November 4, 1983. Br. Thomas took offense with this argument and asserted that the events on campus were the result of political, not religious, calculations. He requested a personal audience with Ben-Eliezer.[12]

Statistically speaking, the claim of Brigadier General Ben-Eliezer appears to be valid. An ethnic cross-section of the student population reveals that, despite the patronage of the Holy See, the institution had seen a sharp rise in the proportion of Muslim students.[13] These socio-demographic developments, Ben-Eliezer theorized, bore far-reaching political consequences.

The closure did in fact bear political ramifications. As a subsidiary of the Vatican whose academic development program was under the purvue of De La Salle College in Canada, global attention on the University of Bethlehem was predictably intensified. Apparently, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories was aware of potential consequences stemming from his decision to shut the university down. According to Ben-Eliezer:

> The decision to close the university was reached after prolonged discussions, which took into consideration the fact that its timing coincided with the UN General Assembly gathering and the imminent UNESCO convention. The decision also implied that the Catholic university would be closed during Christmas time. I was eventually convinced that the threat posed by the student population to the normative Bethlehem community warranted shock therapy.[14]

Following the decision of the Government Coordinator and the resulting media attention, a quartet meeting was convened between university heads Dr. Sansur and Br. Scanlan, and IDF officials Brigadier Generals Ben-Eliezer and Shlomo Eliya. The outcome was a decision to reopen the campus on December 5, 1983, abiding by the parties' mutual recognition of the importance of higher education, and a desire to enable students and lecturers to promptly address the requirements of the Fall and Spring semesters, such that the Summer semester would not be delayed. In order to allow the reopening of the campus, the Bethlehem University administration pledged its commitment to maintain order in the public sphere and acknowledged that disorderly conduct might entail further sanctions.[15]

The back-to-back closures of the universities in Bethlehem and Birzeit was an indication that the military authorities were resolved to implement the full might of military order no. 854. The other academic institutions in the West Bank, such as al-Najah University in Nablus, were also subjected to the consequences of this temporary order.

Al-Najah University also suffered from the military authorities' policy of closure, which was a form of collective punishment in response to student

activism. Following student upheaval on the first anniversary of the 1982 War, the university was handed a three-month closure order effective between June 4 and September 1, 1983. The disturbances were forcefully dispersed by IDF forces which stormed the campus and deployed riot control measures.[16] Furthermore, stipulations of military order no. 854 also affected faculty. University President Dr. Mundar Salah and Vice President Abd al-Rahman, as well as three deans – Taysir al-Kilani (Faculty of Education), Suliman Samadi (Faculty of Engineering) and Ali Saud Atiyya (Dean of Students) – were expelled by military authorities which refused to renew their residency permits.[17]

Academic development between tradition and nationalism

Palestinian universities were considered by the Israeli authorities as fomenting support for the Palestinian national movement. Notwithstanding their assessment, in actuality, Palestinian academic institutions suffered from structural problems that inhibited their effectiveness as agents of political change, alongside mounting difficulties in coordination and cooperation on the national level.[18]

If one examines how Palestinian universities were actually managed, it becomes apparent that these structural woes were compounded by the traditions, culture and social structure of Palestinian society. These findings are supported by an inquiry into the composition of the boards of trustees, arguably the most influential body in the administration and academic development of the universities, and likewise a compass determining each institution's national–political orientation. Such investigation reveals that the various boards of trustees consisted of prominent local figures and, as result, no cross-regional board was established in any of the universities. A convergence of national interests, it follows, was absent, and the development and promotion of an academic master plan at the national–political level, which superseded narrower local–regional interests, was likewise missing. The board of trustees of al-Najah University in Nablus, for instance, did not feature a single member who was not a resident of the city or its immediate rural environs. The same holds true for the universities of Bethlehem and Hebron. In Birzeit, the situation was much the same, to which it can be added that many of the trustees were related by kinship or various other family ties.

Furthermore, control over the boards of trustees was subjected to political struggles between the radical Leftist Bloc and its conservative Rightist counterpart. Nowhere was this more apparent in the early 1980s than at al-Najah. The university was founded by Hikmat al-Masri as an alternative to the powerbases of Nablus Mayor Bassam Shak'a. Al-Masri, the patriarch of a prominent and distinguished family characterized by a rightist–traditionalist approach, had hoped that by controlling an institution of higher education, he might better steer the education and socialization of the younger generation in accordance with his own worldview. Yet despite his domination of the board of trustees and the cash flows of the university, the charisma of Mayor Bassam

Shak'a and passionate sentiments of the leftist radicals of the Palestinian Rejection Front in the early 1980s constituted an enduring rivalry.[19]

Evolution amidst restrictions: the Palestinian universities in the 1980s

In spite of the difficulties posed by the Civil Administration and the structural weaknesses that undermined its efficacy, Palestinian higher education continued to evolve throughout the 1980s. Amidst flawed coordination between universities, new Palestinian colleges and universities nevertheless sprung up across the West Bank to meet the rising demand of the local population. Undoubtedly, the most important institution established in the second half of the 1980s was al-Quds University in Jerusalem. In its founding, some saw the crowning fulfillment of a PLO aspiration dating back to the 1970s.[20]

Al-Quds University is in reality a union of four colleges established in the late 1970s in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Owing to the very nature of three of these colleges – namely the Religious Studies College of Beit-Hanina, the Islamic Archeology Center in Sheikh-Jarrah and the Hind al-Husayni College for Women (also in Sheikh-Jarrah) – the university assumed an air of religious conservatism. These colleges were united with the Science and Technology campuses in al-Bira and Abu-Dis.[21]

Al-Quds University is the largest official Palestinian institution in Jerusalem. The university is by and large a microcosm of the Palestinian political landscape in Jerusalem, replete with imposed restrictions and exaggerated divisions. Furthermore, the mere existence of the university within the municipal purvue of Jerusalem tells the story of the duality that characterizes the lives of the Palestinian population within this domain.[22] This dualism is demonstrated by the geographical dispersion of the university itself. The university's administrative offices are located near the Rockefeller Museum, in the heart of East Jerusalem. Some of its buildings lie outside the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem and many of its students are prohibited from entering the city. Regarding this, choice of the name al-Quds was more than merely symbolic, al-Quds is the name for Jerusalem. Furthermore, the university's offshoots maintain the boundaries of a Jerusalem that predate the separation barrier and Israeli policy of closure.[23]

The 1980s were also formative years for the Palestinian Polytechnic University in Hebron. The polytechnic was established in 1978 at the initiative of local academics, as an institution offering diplomas in engineering; in 1991, it also began awarding Bachelor of Science degrees. Since its inception, the institution was a member of the Palestinian Council for Higher Education.[24]

Israeli access to Palestinian institutions of higher education posed unique obstacles to the development of a technical institute. Beyond the general approach deducted from military order no. 854, which treated Palestinian universities and colleges as breeding grounds of nationalism, the nature of disciplines studied in the polytechnic, the security backgrounds of the teachers and the academic administration at large were subjected to particular scrutiny.[25]

The Hebron Polytechnic displayed consistent hostility towards the Israeli establishment and, on occasion, ceased cooperation with the Civil Administration entirely. The appointment of the brother-in-law of Fahd al-Qawasmi, the former mayor of Hebron expelled by Israel on account of his endorsement of the PLO, as senior executive of the polytechnic, was likewise unwelcomed by Israeli authorities. As a result, applications essential to the academic development of the institution, such as requests for approval of curriculum and professional training for faculty abroad, were rejected time and again.[26] Furthermore, al-Najah National University's petition to establish a Faculty of Engineering was similarly denied by both the IDF Central Command Chief and the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, on security grounds.[27] Reasons behind the rejection were not elaborated, but the summary of a discussion held in the Civil Administration offices, in which the Civil Administration Commander participated, notes that on the matter of an Engineering Faculty at al-Najah: "[al-Najah National University] must be informed that for security reasons, the suggested location near the Beit-Ya'akov Prison and in proximity to a major [transportation] route is unacceptable. They must present an alternative plan within the framework of the existing campus."[28]

This remark is part and parcel of the Civil Administration's general policy to supervise and suppress the growth of the Palestinian higher educational system by confining its geographical expansion. In addition to the numerous bureaucratic requirements placed upon construction applications in the West Bank, regarding universities' requests to expand their campuses, matters were further complicated by the multifold considerations of various authorities involved. In addition, physical planning in and of itself required the approval of the legal advisor to the Civil Administration.

Restricting the spatial development of Palestinian higher education derived from a political outlook based on an assessment of universities' influence within the cultural–political sphere. This perception was demonstrated most clearly in a discussion concerning the detailed plan submitted by Birzeit University for the construction of a new campus. According to the head of the Civil Administration's economic department, the issue of a new Birzeit campus required the following questions be addressed: is there a diplomatic, political or academic interest in an expansion of the university? do the needs of the region necessitate an academic expansion? is the request based on academic or political motives? and will graduates find employment upon completion of their studies? In addition, argued the head of the economic department, the Civil Administration must consider whether the nexus of concerns and challenges can still be addressed, or is it being dragged along according to actions on-the-ground? Was the Civil Administration, he questioned, engaged in attempts to obstruct and interfere, or can it dictate a policy?[29]

In the discussion that followed, the head of the economic department questioned whether the development of institutions of higher education in the Palestinian territories was necessary, considering the existing proportion of

institutions per capita and limited employment opportunities awaiting graduates. His consideration of these factors led him to conclude that an expansion of Birzeit was not justified. Albeit, pragmatically speaking, he questioned the ability of the Civil Administration to prevent it. In terms of economic planning, his concern was that a lack of local employment opportunities, compounded by the economic downturn of the mid-1980s (which limited possibilities for employment in the Gulf States) and the slim chances of graduates being employed in Israel, would foment frustration among a qualified youth population. These graduates, he feared, would comprise a "significant contribution of highly aware, outspoken leadership elements to the cadres of the dissidents."[30]

As projections revealed no imminent improvement in regional employment prospects for graduates, the head of the economic department recommended the expansion of Birzeit and other universities be prohibited. His recommendation was colored by reservation, in which he claimed that "the key question is the extent to which we can influence this system, and I believe our prospects are not high."[31] This remark is indicative of the attention the Palestinian higher education system was starting to attract in official Israeli circles. The characterization of Palestinian campuses as incubators of Palestinian nationalism gathered momentum in the 1980s and prompted stormy public debate. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who served as the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations from 1984 to 1988, had claimed in the presence of the Security Council that the "PLO is investing all its efforts into undermining the academic goal of the universities and converting them into centers of incitement, radicalism and terror." His sentiments were backed in Israel by former President of Tel-Aviv University and head of the Israeli right-wing *Thiya* party Prof. Yuval Ne'eman, who advocated the closure of all Palestinian universities.[32]

In spite of the inconsistent policy towards the Palestinian universities, it seems the Israeli consensus was that the campuses were indeed the driving force behind the development of the PLO. This notion was echoed by then Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin in his meeting with the al-Najah University administrators on January 20, 1987.[33] Put into action on the ground, the Palestinian universities' offices, as well as the homes of senior Palestinian academics like Dr. Gabi Baramki, were searched for seditious or inflammatory materials. One such raid, conducted in late 1986 in Birzeit University, produced a plethora of confiscated documents, magazines, newspapers and learning materials.[34]

The military offensive against the Palestinian campuses was further escalated in the second half of 1987. On August 19, 1987, Israeli forces stormed the offices of the faculty and student association of al-Najah University. In addition, an atypical raid was carried out in Hebron against the Graduate Union office, which administered the local polytechnic. The incursion unfolded in broad daylight, with inhabitants confined to the building for over five hours. Books, research reports and official publications, together with the union's private documents, were confiscated.[35]

On top of these security encroachments, the Palestinian higher education system was also plagued by financial instability. Much of the Palestinian academic faculty did not receive regular wages, an issue that was addressed by the boards of trustees of the universities and the Palestinian Council for Higher Education. The uncertainty besieging the Palestinian economy throughout 1987 likewise took its toll on the universities and colleges, yet despite the political and economic difficulties, they attempted to maintain a façade of business-as-usual. The prominent Palestinian academic, Dr. Nabil Kassis, claimed that notwithstanding the hardship, the students and the academic community preferred to stay put and remain academically competitive. "The students," he claimed, "are excellent and the academic staff extremely talented. What we need is a stretch of peace and quiet."[36]

Eruption: the Palestinian campuses in the *Intifada*

Regardless of the views of the Israeli political leadership on this matter, the Palestinian campuses undoubtedly played a key role in mobilizing the general public following the outbreak of the first Intifada in December 1987. As the commotion unfolded, the Israeli defense apparatus was concerned that the universities would serve as staging posts for student movement activists. The campus of the Islamic University in Gaza, for instance, was a dominant force in the organized processions of the first day of demonstrations there, as were other campuses in the West Bank.

The students belonged to a younger generation suffering a variety of ailments. Their problems were further aggravated by the economic crisis, unemployment and an ongoing sense of humiliation fueled by the increased exposure to Israeli society.[37] Students, therefore, were the vanguards of ensuing violent clashes with the IDF forces. As the unrest intensified, the Civil Administration determined a series of direct sanctions against academic campuses and university administrations alike. Israel held the academic institutions directly responsible for the conduct of students and hence ordered the indefinite closure of all Palestinian campuses. The universities remained closed until the fall of 1991 – with the exception of the University of Birzeit, which remained closed until April 29, 1992 –[38] when the tumult of the Intifada had finally sufficiently withered.[39]

Sari Nusseibeh reveals that the University of Birzeit was prepared for the imposition of sanctions upon the outburst of an uprising:

> At Birzeit everyone was prepared for trouble: the soldiers showed up with their guns and riot gear, while we ordered ambulances, broke out the first aid kits and prepared the press releases. The army declared the campus a closed military area and surrounded it with its troops.[40]

In spite of the imposed closures, Palestinian universities sought to fulfill their national duties and academic calling. They resolved to preserve the scheduled

curriculum, albeit beyond the confines of the campus, in private residences and public meeting places, which would serve as alternative classrooms. The first experiment of this sort was held between July 1 and September 30, 1988. About 240 students participated in the program, some 80 percent of whom went on to complete their academic pursuits.[41]

Palestinian universities were required to reorganize their systems to accommodate the prevailing circumstances. Their adopted course combined shorter semesters and distance learning pedagogies adapted from the open universities. Acting President of Birzeit University Dr. Gabi Baramki later claimed that "the *Intifada* raised the awareness of the universities of the need to develop programs which would assist them in coping with the closures and punishments."[42]

The informal pedagogy was also adopted by the University of Bethlehem. In the course of the Intifada, the university incorporated off-campus teaching methodologies. During the summer semester of 1989, in addition to instruction in private homes, it also offered courses in a guesthouse, a hospital, three hotels, an infant health center and the facilities of the Catholic Church in Jerusalem. Yet compared to Birzeit University, the extent of academic activities was reduced. Most of the courses on offer were in the fields of the humanities and education, with limited instruction in the computative sciences, business administration and social studies.[43]

The need to conduct academic activities outside the campuses posed problems mainly for the computative science studies, as access to study and research laboratories was all but proscribed. It follows that the lion's share of non-formative classes was necessarily devoted to education, social studies and the arts.

The prevailing state of siege reinforced a sense of collective solidarity between the universities and the rest of Palestinian society. Many student leaders who were denied the opportunity to study assumed leadership roles in their local Popular Committees. Some even took part in the activities of the Unified National Command of the Intifada.[44] The heads of the Palestinian academic apparatus likewise considered themselves pioneers in the national struggle of the first Intifada.

Prevailing circumstances had also forced the heads of the Palestinian academic system to meet outside the perimeters of their universities. Despite the closure imposed on campus, the University of Birzeit decided to hold an international academic conference entitled, "Two Decades of Occupation: From Resistance to Uprising," planned as scheduled for May 25, 1988. On account of the events, the conference program was adapted to meet the demands of the hour and attract the crowds. Dr. Gabi Baramki maintained that it was his duty to insist the conference be held as scheduled, as part of the university's public and moral obligations. He even claimed that, "the military authorities never gave us an opportunity to shut ourselves in an ivory tower. We never perceived the university as secluded from the community which surrounds it."[45]

Notwithstanding the sense of obligation the universities had felt regarding the continuation of their academic activities, some voices from within the

academic establishment criticized the decision to conduct business as usual. Dr. Wali al-Dajani from the Univeristy of Bethlehem claimed that the continuation of academic activities, in particular through the informal teaching system, was playing into the hands of the Israelis. "While demonstrations against the lingering occupation on campus are banned, one can point to the continuation of studies so as to divert criticism from this fact [the closing of the campuses]."[46] This sort of criticism was based upon a deeply rooted feeling shared by many Palestinians that the Israelis were taking advantage of the informal education network established by the Palestinian academic apparatus in order to present to the world a falsified image of an ostensibly normative daily routine in the occupied territories. Indeed, the Israeli defense establishment enabled the non-formative studies of Palestinian universities to take place in an orderly manner and despite the fact that the authorities were informed about lessons being held; only rarely did they interfere. When the military establishment did opt to take action, headlines in the Israeli media followed directly, trumpeting the so-called "exposure" of illegal classrooms.[47]

Figure 7.1 A campaign in English advocating the reopening of Birzeit University, published in the PFLP mouthpiece.[48]

In the aftermath of the Intifada: al-Quds and al-Azhar

In the aftermath of the first Intifada, the higher education system in the Palestinian territories resumed its regular academic activities. It seems that the trial and error inherent in establishing a non-formal education system had helped develop the universities' organizational muscle and stability. In light of the difficult conditions they had managed to overcome, they were reinvigorated and filled with hope regarding their capabilities as academic institutions.

Nevertheless, the Intifada had dealt the Palestinian academy a mighty financial blow. With irregular student registration, universities could not rely on tuition fees, yet they still had to pay the wages of academic faculty and other employees. In addition, the economic crisis and dwindling contributions from the wealthy Gulf States, stemming from the PLO's endorsement of Iraq during the Gulf War, further eroded their coffers.[49]

The economic hardship also led to strained relations between the university administrations and their faculty and staff, who demanded the improved remuneration and cost-of-living allowances for which they were legally eligible. Despite a strong desire to get the system back on track, employees held fast to their rights and on October 7, 1991, organized a demonstration in front of the offices of the Palestinian Council for Higher Education in al-Bira, demanding enhanced terms of employment.[50]

Despite these difficulties, the Palestinian universities were determined not to let their development be undermined. The Intifada had instilled in the university managements a renewed sense of their national role. During the Intifada, the stone-throwing boy had become the image and symbol of the uprising. The university heads felt that the universities themselves should build upon that, by assuming a voice of certainty, able to call upon the international community for an end to Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. The face of Palestine was that of a boy, but its voice was the voice of the university.[51]

The establishment of new Palestinian universities in the early 1990s dovetailed with the fundamental political developments of the time. Negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians had rekindled hopes that major regional changes were imminent. The prevailing atmosphere drew many prominent academics to assume diplomatic roles in the negotiations[52] and become more involved in the political arena. In the wake of the difficult years of the Intifada, they strived to have a key role in the remodeling of Palestinian society.

Perhaps it was no coincidence that on the eve of the Madrid Conference, two new Palestinian universities were officially inaugurated: al-Quds Open University and al-Azhar University in Gaza, the second to be established in the Gaza Strip. These universities became celebrated national institutions, embodying the political aspirations of the PLO, or, more precisely, the voice of Fatah, which had begun to establish itself as a governing party following the signing of the Oslo Accords and Arafat's return to the West-Bank.

The momentum behind erecting new universities and further development of those already existing coincided with the rise of political Islam in the West Bank and Gaza. The latter process was most apparent in the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem and the rural areas. The PLO wished to leverage the campuses as springboards for furthering its political power, as demonstrated by the cases of al-Quds and al-Azhar universities. Al-Quds University, which was actually an association of four colleges in the areas of Jerusalem and al-Bira, was renowned as a stronghold of religious fundamentalism. Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, who was eventually appointed the president of al-Quds University in 1995, describes the early days of the university:

> I place "university" in quotes because the school was in fact a disconnected confederation of four separate colleges – a jumble of buildings, and a student body swarming with Hamas supporters … I also knew the Hamas students, at 90 percent of the student body, would resist me at every turn.[53]

Al-Azhar University in Gaza was founded in 1991 by virtue of a decision reached by PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat, and also enjoyed the support of the PLO, which raised significant funds on its behalf in the Gulf States.[54] Until that time, the Islamic University in Gaza City was the only university in the Gaza Strip. In the mid-1980s, the Muslim Brothers supporters had managed, by political means, to overtake the whole of the bureaucracy at the Islamic University of Gaza. The ensuing power struggle between the nationalists and the Islamic Bloc quickly turned violent, with those loyal to the Muslim Brothers eventually wresting complete control of the board of trustees, the academic faculty and the student council.

The PLO leadership, who were well aware of the importance of higher education in the political socialization of the coming generation, feared this development greatly. In response, the PLO opted to establish al-Azhar, an institution to rival the Islamic University, which would promote a national agenda. Al-Azhar prided itself as a national institution founded at the explicit directive of Yasir Arafat. Arafat's aim, according to current university President Dr. Jawad Ashour, was "to fulfill the aspirations of the Palestinian people for knowledge and national freedom."[55]

Activities conducted within al-Azhar University, which was part of a venture to build the institutions of a future state, identified and were in full compliance with the governing authorities and the spirit of PLO resolutions. The university had been designed to provide an educational, socio-political response to the takeover of the Islamic University of Gaza by Hamas loyalists. Accordingly, in February 1993, the university's public relations department set in motion the "First Palestinian Popular Heritage Exhibition." By promoting such activities, which featured both male and female students dressed in traditional garments,[56] al-Azhar University endeavored to establish a traditional yet lively cultural sphere to counteract the Islamist fundamentalist atmosphere fostered by the Islamic University of Gaza.

Political protest taking place on the al-Azhar campus followed the same path. For instance, a demonstration initiated by the student council against the carrying of firearms was apparently directed toward the phenomenon at large. Not only did the right of PLO factions' security personnel to carry arms remain unchallenged, it was supported. It follows that the target of the protest was actually Hamas loyalists in possession of illegal arms. The unauthorized carrying of firearms could well have led to armed clashes and chaos, which would jeopardize institutional and social efforts toward state-building epitomized by the Palestinian system of higher education.[57]

"The times they are changing": Palestinian higher education and the Oslo Accords

As the political process gained momentum, and subsequent to its apex – the signing of the Oslo Accords on September 13, 1993 – the Palestinian universities assumed pioneering roles in the process of state-building. In the wake of the agreements, some of the universities, which until that point were regarded as hotbeds of resistance, began dictating curricula that promoted political compromise. Although this trend was by no means all-encompassing nor necessarily the direct outcome of explicit policy, it was undergirded by substantial funds dispensed by the European Union, which provided Palestinian universities an annual $18 million for a period of five years.[58]

The attempt to generate an atmosphere of reconciliation was directed from above, as part of a political agenda promoted by the Palestinian Authority. In addition to the political activities of their national struggle, many university faculty members took part in the deliberations with the Israeli authorities. Some had accumulated many hours of discourse with Israeli officials through their roles as unofficial spokespersons of the PLO. Part of the PLO's inner circle, they were committed to play a significant role in the transformation of the political atmosphere, in service of an envisioned future promised by the Oslo Accords. Overt relations between the Palestinian universities and both academic and political authorities in Israel, albeit neither common nor continuous, began to surface. From a political point of view, most far reaching was al-Azhar University in Gaza, which officially hosted a delegation of some 40 Israeli members of the Peace Now movement.[59]

Yet not all Palestinian academic institutions followed suit. The process of reconciliation with Israel was not comprehensive and was based by and large on the personal initiatives of prominent Palestinian academic figures, rather than at the official behest of their institutions. This was due in part to the disappointment harbored by Palestinian academics, who had expected Israeli academic circles to publically denounce Israeli policies towards the Palestinian universities, or at least to demonstrate a greater level of support for their struggle to secure academic freedom and to keep Palestinian academic institutions open throughout the Intifada. No Israeli university had openly protested the Israeli policy of closure carried out against the Palestinian

campuses, notwithstanding the many unofficial initiatives of both lecturers and students in Israel, which had begun even prior to the prolonged closures of the first Intifada.

Following the signing of the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian universities came under the purvue and supervision of the newly established Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Within the context of state-building, the Palestinian universities had been assigned a key role by the ministry. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education also affected a pedagogical–nationalist tone within its mission statement and decreed that the ministry itself and the system of higher education at its disposal would act in accordance with Arafat's vision, underscored by the poet Mahmoud Darwish, who proclaimed, "The future begins with the ministry of education, without which our national project would not be realized."[60]

The institutionalization of the Palestinian Authority, as well as the formation of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, had paradoxically undermined the independent administration of the Palestinian universities. The various funds and financial contributions, which in the past had been given to the universities directly, were now channeled through the PA. As a result, university cash flows were stymied and direct relations between university heads and the Arab political echelon were suspended. At the expense of public benefit, including higher education, resources piped to the nascent Palestinian Authority were earmarked first and foremost for its own public and political reinforcement.[61]

The building of a state is a complex process that requires both financial capital and skilled human resources. The complete subjugation to the Palestinian Authority of the system that manufactures "human capital," so to speak, proved that the PLO was now both the sovereign and principal in defining the character of the coming state and the image of Palestinian society at large. A similar approach was adopted regarding the other constituents of Palestinian civil society.[62]

In the wake of Oslo, Palestinian universities channeled their energies into the preparation of development tools and training of human resources critical to the state-building initiative. The universities perceived themselves to be an integral part of the social apparatus surrounding them. Their main goal was to transform themselves from centers of political resistance to institutions focused on achievement and the building of a national infrastructure. This shift occurred not least because of a prevailing atmosphere amongst the Palestinians in which the vision of a sovereign nation had come within reach. Efforts of the academia to bring this vision to fruition endured amidst budgetary difficulties and an ebb and flow that characterized the implementation of the acclaimed accord between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The Palestinian universities continued to develop curricula designed to train the next generation to meet the requirements of the future Palestinian state. For instance, at Birzeit, a new department of journalism was established. In order to provide its students with practical experience in journalism

and public outreach, the department undertook publishing its own newspaper, *Al-Sahafi*. Al-Quds University founded a school of medicine, which focused primarily on the allied health professions, whereas the University of Bethlehem emphasized the development of tourism studies, which championed the development of a meaningful national resource and its associated local employment opportunities.

Both the spirit of the times and the role the universities had aspired to assume in the 1990s were well described by Sari Nusseibeh, President of al-Quds University:

> Meanwhile we are making progress at the university. I didn't think about it much at the time – working eighteen hours a day has a way of dominating the mind … changes in the curriculum were slowly beginning to bear some fruit. In 1997, two years after taking over, wandering around campus I felt the stirrings of an intellectual community among students and teachers, as well as the budding signs of a new culture of freedom of thought.[63]

The Palestinian higher education system stood alongside the Palestinian Authority in this process of state institution-building. While their cooperation deepened, at the same time, a process was unfolding that threatened the cohesion of the Palestinian academic strata. Many senior lecturers resigned their academic posts in favor of direct involvement in the political sphere or, alternatively, the various non-governmental organizations of the Palestinian civil society.[64] Such processes dovetailed with the economic crisis, which bore dire consequences for the universities. The allure of copious funds flowing into the Palestinian Authority drew the attention of many of the academic elite, who opted to improve their financial positions and consolidate political influence. Nevertheless, the academic institutions continued to absorb the droves of young Palestinians flocking to their campuses, training them in the service of the emerging nation. In this manner, the Palestinian universities fulfilled their raison d'être, which was to lead Palestinian society on the road to progress, transform the Palestinian collective consciousness and empower the local communities.

The path toward realization of that vision embarked upon by the Palestinian universities – which had in the three decades of their existence been transformed from centers of political resistance to pillars of the Palestinian state-building process – drew upon established channels of communication with the international community.[65] On one hand, the financial crises and loss of manpower to politics had indeed damaged the academic infrastructure of the universities. On the other hand, their vast experience in maintaining the academic apparatus in a perpetual state of uncertainty actually promoted their effectiveness and facilitated their adaptation to ever dynamic political and social circumstances.

Since their establishment in the 1970s, the Palestinian universities have evolved as a significant contributor to the Palestinian national identity. Though

they generate and pass along knowledge, they serve first and foremost as centers for the forging of identity. This national identity is further bolstered throughout the duration of one's study, in major part during informal time spent on campus. The ramparts, which envelop each of the Palestinian universities, extend to create separations in space and time. Within these campus walls, the prevailing hardship can be discussed in a more abstract manner. Yet political reality and academic contemplation are never too far apart; on the way to university and back, students confront these realities on a daily basis.

Physically safeguarded, the role of the campus in molding the image of society was enhanced. In the name of universal values, the Palestinian campuses created a protected space which enabled political thinking; a sphere both for the promotion of national struggle and the training of human capital requisite to building the Palestinian nation-state.

Notes

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50 Nikaba Madrasi wa-Muẓfi al-Jamaʿat wa al-Mʿahad al-Khasa farʿa Jamaʿa Bir-zeit, *al-Takrir al-Sanawi lil-dawra al-Nikabiyya lil-ʿam 1991–1992* (Ramallah: Bir-zeit), p. 29.
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52 For instance Hanan Ashrawi was the spokesperson of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid Conference, alongside Saib Arikat, at the time a senior lecturer at al-Najah University, who also assumed a key role.
53 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country*, pp. 382–5.

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56 Jamiʿat al-Azhar, *Akhbar al-Jamiʿa* (February 1994), p. 1.
57 Ibid., p. 8.
58 Bruhn, "Higher Education as Empowerment: The Case of Palestinian Universities", p. 1133.
59 Jamaʿa al-Azhar, *Akhbar al-Jami ʿa* (September 1998), p. 3.
60 The Ministry of Education and Higher Education, "the ministry", www.mohe.gov.ps/ENG/theministry.html
61 Bruhn, "Higher Education as Empowerment: The Case of Palestinian Universities", p. 1135.
62 Frisch, *Countdown to Statehood*, pp. 128–9.
63 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country*, p. 407.
64 Sari Nusseibeh, Hanan Ashrawi, Riyad al-Maliki, Saib Arikat and Ali al-Jarbawi all exemplify this widespread phenomenon. Many academics had at the time concluded that their occupation does not fit the economic and political status they desired. The civil society and the government service, which were well funded by the donor states, offered them an opportunity for upward social mobility.
65 Bruhn, "Higher Education as Empowerment: The Case of Palestinian Universities", p. 1135.

8 The Palestinian student movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

A socio-political account

Over three decades, cooperation with the international community had helped to transform Palestinian universities from centers of political resistance into major contributors toward the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Indeed, the economic crises and loss of manpower to political organizations had weakened the academic infrastructure of the universities. Yet their wealth of experience operating under conditions of uncertainty helped them to move forward at maximum capacity while continuously adjusting to fluctuating political and social conditions. Upon their establishment in the 1970s, the universities began producing nationalistic content according to their vision for national liberation. They considered themselves an integral part of the community and sought to affect both internal and external change in Palestinian society.

Working to introduce new concepts of progress to the Palestinian society, the universities considered themselves agents of change. External efforts were to prepare Palestinian society for independence. In this context, the universities considered themselves pioneers of the struggle for Palestinian self-determination.

At the forefront of the national struggle, their message of change was to be delivered by the thousands of students in higher education. As a potent human resource, the students were the manifestation of higher education and hence the ideal emissaries of change in the public sphere.

Vibrant student movements had long been established in neighboring Arab countries by the time institutions of higher education began to appear in the Palestinian territories. These movements had already achieved international diplomatic and political success, while also maintaining distinguished cooperation with the Palestinian armed struggle.

The Palestinian student movement abroad had fulfilled a principal role in the rehabilitation of Palestinian national identity in the wake of the Nakba. Thanks to the activism of their earlier days, many former student leaders were able to climb the social ladder and obtain influential positions, specifically as the Fedayeen seized control of the PLO following the catastrophe of 1967. Consequently, leaders of the Palestinian student movement abroad were targeted by the Israeli intelligence apparatus. Their identities were

well known and following the war of 1967, many had attempted to infiltrate the West Bank to form political and military cells on behalf of their organizations.[1]

By the early 1970s, a student movement in the Palestinian territories had finally begun to coalesce. Until then, Palestinians who had wanted to pursue higher education beyond the confines of teachers' seminars had been compelled to travel to universities in the neighboring Arab countries. The initial seed took the form of student cells under the purview of the communist movement, which boasted organizational capabilities superior to those of other political movements within the Palestinian arena. The communist movement relied on compact activist cells operating among high-school students, educators and merchants. Its weakness, however, lay in the secular atheism at the foundation of the communist ideal, which starkly contrasted the conservatism of Palestinian society.[2]

Palestinian students were paid special attention by the Israeli establishment. The youth, who had clashed with the Jordanian military across the West Bank following the Samua Incident in 1966, were considered radical instigators of street-level political protest who held no fear of the authorities.

From the moment their cells were formed, the communists endeavored toward their utopian vision of the future. The advantage held by the Palestinian Communist Party, beyond its organizational maturity and the lessons it had gleaned from its underground past, was rooted in its political affiliation with the Israeli Communist Party, *Rakah*. This association enabled the communists to exchange important information.

In this context, the Palestinian communists determined to reproduce *Rakah*'s "volunteer committees," which attempted to affect social change through public service. The Communist Party's volunteer labor committees maintained constant contact with their Israeli counterparts and, along with foreign volunteers – some of whom arrived from the Eastern Bloc – attracted many *Rakah* activists.[3]

Through student-led committees, the communists attempted to expand their base. They perceived such activities, which included land rehabilitation and tree planting, as an integral part of the national struggle connecting them with their homeland.

Dr. Ahmad Hamza al-Natsha, a communist leader from Hebron, described public service a vital resource in the struggle against Ariel Sharon's so-called "village leagues," which were firmly planted in the good graces of the Israeli government. Ibrahim Dakkak, a Communist Party leader and a member of the Higher Education Committee, considered the volunteer "labor committees" as:

> accurately expressing the national desire for a confrontation with the occupation policy. This is a realistic execution of the Palestinian people's struggle … the work regiments are regiments of social and national battle, and a fine and admirable example.[4]

The volunteer labor committees were characteristically hierarchical and geographically dispersed. Though female representation was essentially negligible, the labor committees are credited with having instigated high rates of socio-political activism among Palestinian students. Fatah, which took due notice of the communists, likewise established its own labor committees in the early 1980s. In 1982, the movement's magazine estimated a total of 6,500 activists in 97 individual communist work committees throughout the West Bank.[5]

The traditionalism of Palestinian society naturally resulted in a high birth rate. With improving health services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, youth populations began to expand. As a rule, the Palestinian leadership instilled a fighting national ethos in the younger generation; the mother and her womb were hence established as legitimate weapons in the battle for Palestinian liberation, with the younger generation expected to bring the confrontation to fruition. In this context, the pivotal role performed by GUPS members abroad in strengthening the Palestinian national identity served to inspire and challenge the student movement in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Owing to its geographical location, the student movement of the West Bank and Gaza Strip was faced by different challenges than those of GUPS members abroad. Unlike their international counterparts, daily scrutiny of the Israeli authorities limited the ability of Palestinian universities and students to publicly extol armed struggle as a mode of resistance. While the notion of a youth-led armed struggle stirred Palestinian national consciousness abroad, the student movement of the occupied territories was tasked with building the institutions requisite to the establishment of a Palestinian state.[6]

Emerging in the 1970s, the Palestinian student movement of the occupied territories acquired organized form only towards the end of the decade. In 1977, when student cells began to form within institutions of higher education, Palestinian students in the West Bank and Gaza Strip numbered a mere 6,150.[7]

As it evolved, the Palestinian student movement encountered significant structural obstacles. Its primary weakness lay in its divided nature. Decentralized activities were comprised of three central domains: the physical (that is, the geographical dispersal of its activities to specific campuses), political and social. The heads of the Palestinian student movement hoped to overcome these limitations by means of nationally inclined political activities.

In the late 1970s, the Palestinian student movement experienced a major leap forward. On March 13, 1977, at the annual convention of the Palestinian National Council, the PLO determined to invest more money in the occupied territories in order to increase its political influence there. New investments in the development of professional unions, local councils, civil society organizations and student cells were meant to foster a broad foundation for civic engagement that would work from the ground up to garner public support for the national agenda of the PLO and its members.[8]

The student movement's evolution into a leading political body, however, was contingent upon geopolitical developments concerning the Palestinian

cause. The Lebanese civil war, the Israeli–Egyptian peace treaties, the 1982 war and the defeat of the PLO on the Lebanese front had all contributed to the PLO's strategic preference of redeployment of its power centers to the occupied territories. The political ascension of the Palestinian student movement was an indication of the PLO's influence over the public sphere in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The rise of the Israeli right wing in the 1977 elections, Israel's consequent expansion of settlements, and the civil administration's rigidity concerning Palestinian academia in light of military order no. 854 eventually exerted enough street-level pressure to catalyze the formation of a young, energetic and aggressive leadership able to respond effectively to current events.[9]

Student activist leaders, who had directed the establishment of cells within Palestinian universities, relied on their organizational and administrative capabilities. In addition to such skills, the political movements also demanded that student leaders develop deep political consciousness enshrined in the doctrine of their faction. In addition, leaders were required to demonstrate command capabilities, personal charisma, leadership and awareness of revolutionary activities in support of the Palestinian cause.

In light of these requirements, the first group selected to lead the development of the student movement and in particular the establishment of the "Shabiba" – the student branch of Fatah – were ex-prisoners edified in command in Israeli prisons. While incarcerated, they had climbed the chain of command and acquired intimate knowledge of the movement's ideology and doctrine. Furthermore, prison had granted them an aura of patriotism and, in the eyes of their contemporaries, validated their leadership of the student movement.

The establishment of the Fatah student branch: the Shabiba movement

Fatah had been unfashionably late in establishing active student cells in the effort to instigate a mass movement. Rather, it was the Communist Party whose initiative led to the public formation of "left front" student activist cells.[10]

It should be noted that most of the leaders of the left-wing student cells were not in fact alumni of the Israeli penitentiary system. In other words, they had not undergone the same socialization processes as the "Shabiba" leaders, and were not publicly acknowledged as experienced veterans of the Palestinian national struggle. Rather, their most common distinction was rooted in their superior intellectual abilities.[11]

That Fatah's Shabiba leaders had been prisoners was compatible with the desires of the movement's foreign leaders. Fatah's diaspora-based leadership wanted political power in the occupied territories entrusted to mid-level activists, who would remain subject to the dictates of their international overseers. Hence the dummy might be prevented from rising against its maker in a conflict of interests. Most of the younger activists had been involved with

Fatah since they were 15 or 16 years of age. Not only had the Israeli prison granted them the legitimacy of national heroes, but it had equipped them with practical leadership skills. While incarcerated, activists represented Fatah vis-à-vis the Israeli prison authorities and played various roles within the movement's own organizational hierarchy.[12]

The mythos surrounding the core leadership of the "Shabiba" was reflected through the preferential treatment they received from lecturers. As a whole, the Palestinian society and its elite intelligentsia in particular were deeply committed to the Palestinian national struggle. The price the activists paid as prisoners afforded them honored status within the student leadership. Sari Nusseibeh, who served as a lecturer at Birzeit University during the late 1970s, aptly illustrated the spirit of the times in his examination of the student movement at the university:

> Shabiba, the Fatah youth movement, grew out of the student movement and quickly emerged as the most potent force in the occupied territories. One of its founders was Samir Sbihat. Samir had completed a five-year prison sentence before ending up in my logic class, where he couldn't sit still, constantly interrupted me, refused to take things at face value, even when they came from W.V.O Quine, and was in general the sort of student I loved having in class. Helped out by his self-confidence and prison credentials, he rose to the top of student council, but his ambitions, doubtlessly a by-product of sharing a cell for nine months with Marwan Barghouti – another charismatic figure, who in time would become the most powerful Palestinian leader of his generation – went far beyond Birzeit. He wanted to organize all the Fatah students in the West Bank and Gaza.[13]

Nusseibeh highlights the challenge faced by Palestinian student leaders: the creation of a centralized hierarchy, a critical task considering the geographic dispersal of student cells throughout the West Bank. Furthermore, due to centuries of clan politics, these student cells were culturally quite distinct.

This aspect played large in the student leaders' efforts to establish a central organization that could unite the various factions within a cohesive national framework. In addition to the ideological gaps regarding the sociocultural development of Palestinian society, divisions between the various factions abroad complicated matters considerably. This, without even discussing the battles over power and prestige in the various Palestinian student unions, which characterizes any political struggle over executive positions, resources and reputation.

Beyond earning them appreciation, incarceration was seen by the lecturers as contributing to the students' maturity. The process was widely recognized on campus. Sari Nusseibeh claimed that student ex-prisoners, whose incarceration had served them as a period of training and qualification, had in effect become teachers themselves.[14]

Roots of the Shabiba movement – launched in the 1980s – stem back to the decisions of a secret committee founded in 1978–79. Having begun their studies at Birzeit, a group of Fatah ex-prisoners established the "Fatah Regulation Committee." This they attempted to extend to other universities, such as in Bethlehem and Hebron, which also admitted ex-prisoners.[15]

The development and expansion of the Palestinian academic system had helped the Fatah movement disseminate its message and recruit new members to its ranks. Until the mid-1970s, Palestinian higher education had been centered within the Jerusalem–Ramallah geographic sphere. The spreading of Palestinian universities across the West Bank and Gaza Strip presented new opportunities for rural youth from the Nablus, Hebron and Bethlehem areas to pursue higher education.[16]

This geographical distribution also carried socio-economic significance. The door of Palestinian higher education had also been opened to members of the middle and lower socio-economic strata from the cities, and youths of the rural periphery and refugee camps. Such populations were indelibly conservative and did not relate to the progressive agenda of the left wing. It was Fatah's Shabiba that approached and united these students, providing them a conservative–national education more in sync with their traditional social mores.

The founding of the Shabiba was a significant catalyst for the development of the student movement within the occupied Palestinian territories, lending truculence to the entire struggle. The Shabiba trumpeted its affiliation with Fatah and the validity its executive branch afforded the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.[17]

This political patronage proved particularly valuable as the Israeli government attempted to divide and conquer the Palestinian population through the establishment of the aforementioned "village leagues" initiated by Ariel Sharon and designed by Professor Menachem Milson, who during the late 1970s served as the Arab Affairs Advisor to the West Bank military governor. The village leagues concept was based on an assumption that an alternative to the leadership of nationalist, PLO-affiliated mayors must be cultivated. Their replacements, the logic followed, would spring from the rural "silent masses," who were estimated by the military regime to comprise nearly two-thirds of the population.[18]

Ultimately, the village leagues failed to achieve Sharon's goals. The only association to acquire any modicum of political power was led by the charismatic Mustafa Dudin, who had served as minister of Labor and Welfare under King Husayn in 1970. Dudin's involvement earned him severe rebuke from the PLO. The remaining village leagues in the Ramallah, Bethlehem, Tulkarem and Nablus governorates were less successful. Despite the Israeli assistance and military protection, their leaders were branded as collaborators. In the end, the national cause trumped practical expediency.

With the exception of Dudin, village league leaders were perceived as third-rate bureaucrats. Moreover, continuous land confiscation by the Israeli government enraged local farmers and precluded any cooperation with the

village leagues. As collaborators, these leaders were perceived as indirectly responsible for the sweeping land appropriation.[19]

Beyond their problematic public image, the village leagues also faced off against the student youth, who organized volunteer labor committees in the rural areas. Fatah's Shabiba movement thereby consolidated its nationalist membership and expanded its grassroots power base.

Like the communists, Fatah established volunteer labor committees, which were known as *Lijan al-ʿAmal al-Ijtimʾai* (the social labor committees), in order to expand its own power base. Unlike the communists, Fatah – a conservative movement with respect for Islamic tradition – addressed itself to the widest socio-political common denominator and was not content with tree planting and land reclamation. The Shabiba also cleaned and renovated village cemeteries, mosques and other holy sites.[20]

Such activities were perceived by much of the public as a student-led nonviolent civil rebellion against the military regime – especially regulation no. 854 – and the Israeli-led village leagues. As Birzeit became a leading incubator for volunteer committees, Sari Nusseibeh harbored hopes the university might become a "Palestinian version of 1968 Berkley."[21] Volunteer committees had already begun to spring up at other universities and were earning political relevance even in the Nablus region.[22]

Beyond the social service, Fatah's leadership ascribed other tasks to the Shabiba as well. One of its more significant responsibilities was to recruit potential operatives from among the movement's members for underground paramilitary actions. This was assigned to ex-prisoners, who were among the movement's founders. In addition to relying on their keen perception, Shabiba recruiters also initiated sports competitions, such as track and soccer matches, in order to identify able-bodied candidates.[23]

The Shabiba movement was established in the universities at a major crossroads for the PLO and Fatah, which required them to make difficult decisions. On the heels of having been expelled by the Hashemite government from Jordan in September, 1970, the IDF dealt a serious follow-up blow to Fatah's paramilitary capability in the summer of 1982. The immediate consequence of which was a severely weakened ability to attack Israel from across the border. The most obvious alternative, therefore, was the development of operative cells in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Furthermore, the Israeli security services had proved quite effective in exposing nascent Palestinian militant squads, which contributed to an understanding that the movement ought to focus its activities on the public sphere. The Shabiba movement and its social labor committees were Fatah's flag bearers as far as such activities were concerned. In light of this, Fatah chose the university campus as the central arena for training its next generation of leaders. This was also compatible with directives from the movement's leadership abroad, which relegated the Shabiba to the lowest ranks and forbade independent decision making. Though most of the student leaders were veterans of the Israeli penitentiary system and effective field operatives, they were poor political leaders.[24]

However appropriate this assessment may have been at the time of the Shabiba's foundation, it did not jibe with the vision of the Fatah's Western Sector commanders who had accompanied the establishment of the movement. From within the Fatah's student population, a new leadership began to emerge, combining the organizational dogma learned in Israeli prisons with an academic aptitude and political experience garnered on campuses. They leveraged these competencies with a military legacy for which they had paid a price in Israeli prisons.

Together, these aspects fostered the emergence of new leaders within the occupied Palestinian territories in the early 1980s, among them veteran field commanders Mohammad Dahlan – leader of Fatah's student cell at the Islamic University of Gaza – and Marwan Barghouti – Shabiba chairperson and president of the Birzeit student council. Their deportation by the Israeli military administration upon the breaking of the first Intifada had facilitated their transition from grassroots student activists to influential leaders on the national stage. As such, they were assigned active roles within Fatah organizations in neighboring Arab states.

During the 1980s, the Shabiba evolved into a central pillar of the Palestinian student political sphere. It established centers of political activity and cultivated an influential national leadership. The edification of students, fostering a sense of belonging and direct affinity with the PLO, topped the Shabiba's agenda. Cardboard banners and student magazines were key in the promotion of such ideas. Through the pen and printing press, the Shabiba leadership aimed to shape the identity of Fatah's youth. Each of the myriad recruitment methods employed by the Shabiba stressed the educational and cultural foundations of the movement's political conduct.

While incorporating Islamic tradition, Fatah paid special attention to cultural tutelage in order to distinguish itself unequivocally from the Islamic Bloc, which, emerging in the early 1980s, had challenged Fatah on religious grounds in the rural arena. Their rivalry would prove markedly bitter; members of the Islamic Bloc were enraged by whomever they perceived as secular. Heated verbal exchanges spiraled rapidly to violence across the Palestinian campuses.[25]

Notwithstanding this contention, Fatah continued to foster a national consciousness-building that incorporated religion. Early on, the Shabiba initiated religious-affiliated cultural activities. The third Palestine Week, declared by the Shabiba at the campus of al-Najah National University in April 1981, was a faithful demonstration of this type. Fatah leaders dedicated Palestine Week activities to a fierce defense against "the Zionists' raging attack on our lands, holy places and national identity."[26]

In a program produced for that week, the Shabiba presented a cultural program designed to instill and sharpen the Palestinian national identity. Palestine Week consisted of eight exhibitions – Palestinian literature, traditional dress, art, works by prisoners, local horticulture, national industry, and a contest of Shabiba posters and national banners – with each day ascribed its

own theme. All of the exhibitions were to be accompanied by *dabka*, music, and presentations of a traditional Palestinian wedding and of the daily lives of Palestinian prisoners.[27]

The movement's student magazines aided the process of national education and socialization. In an attempt to combine its national and its political agenda, Fatah presented an ethos congruent with the desires and ambitions of the Palestinian people. This political tendency was expressed in the opening articles of the movement's magazines. *Fajr Al Shabiba*, for example, launched its April 1986 volume with the following words:

> Greeting, fellow Palestinians … All of Palestine … the esteemed and civilized members of Palestine … Palestine the homeland, the man and the identity.
>
> We address you in the first issue of your magazine, *Fajr Al Shabiba*, the voice of your hope and desire for a free and independent state … which cries for the sanctity of clinging to this land, to this Dome of the Rocks, to the wounded al-Aqsa mosque and its bleeding sores.[28]

Beyond a framework for the indoctrination of its members, the Shabiba movement also served as an informal educational network. As part of its educational activities, the movement distributed questionnaires designed to strengthen members' national identity and motivation. Subjects included the Arabic names of various cities and towns now within Israel, such as Netanya and Kiryat Shmona, as well as biographical information of senior Fatah and PLO members. The quizzes were designed to reinforce the bond between student activists and the movement's broader governing framework.

In this way, Fatah's student movement provided an added value to its members and a vehicle for reinforcing the members' political views. The Shabiba facilitated an expansion of students' focus from the immediate, personal sphere to the collective realization of the nation's luminescent potential. To further invigorate its members, the Hebron University branch offered a pecuniary prize to be raffled among solvers of the questionnaire.

Extensive Shabiba activities among Palestinian students were made possible by considerable budgetary allocations made by its benefactors abroad. Indeed, this financial link fostered dependence among activists in the territories upon the movement's foreign leadership, which would prove particularly useful in times of crisis. Fatah's financial investment allowed the Shabiba to become an executive branch through which it could address the whole of the Palestinian population. Students who had joined the movement on campuses were tapped as the forthcoming generation of grassroots leaders who, having concluded their education, would lead the Palestinian society at the behest of Fatah.[29]

Fatah also reaped rewards from investments in the student movement at the height of its crisis in Lebanon following the war of 1982. Intrafactional disputes threatened to compromise the integrity of Fatah's student branch.

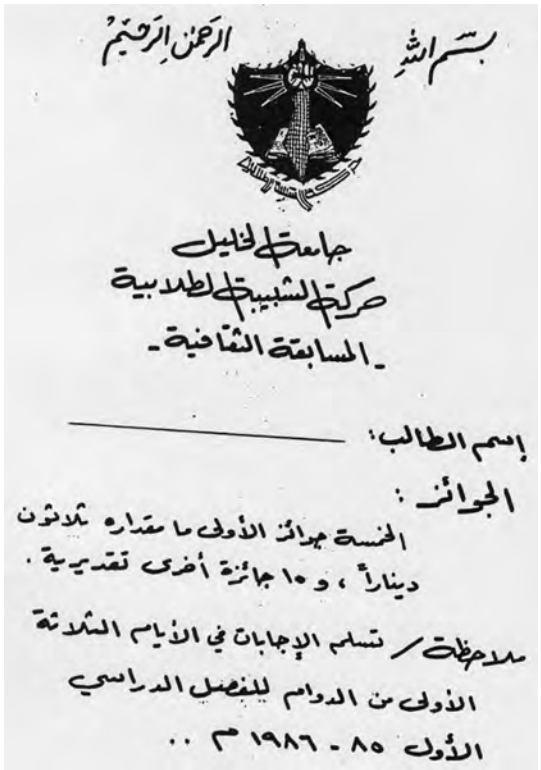

Figure 8.1 A national education questionnaire by the Shabiba movement, Hebron University, 1985.[30]

Yet despite the resignations of several Shabiba representatives who joined ranks with the Abu Musa faction, Fatah held its ground. In the elections of that year, Fatah won 855 of the votes in Birzeit, which constituted 44 percent of all votes.[31] Under the leadership of former cellmates Samir Sbihat and Marwan Barghouti, the movement's influence was rising on campus.[32]

Shabiba's platform accorded Fatah significance in the student sphere. From its establishment in the early 1980s until the breaking of the Intifada, the Shabiba had wrested control over of the majority of student councils throughout the West Bank, including Birzeit and al-Najah National University, the two most politically significant campuses in the territory.[33]

On the contrary, the Shabiba failed to gain a foothold in the student council of the Islamic University of Gaza, which remained wholly dominated by the Islamic Bloc (*al-Kutla al-Islamiyya*), the local representative of the Muslim Brothers. Eventually, the Islamic Bloc would become one of the central pillars of Hamas upon its own establishment as a full-fledged organization in 1988.[34]

Investment in Fatah's student movement and public service in lieu of militarism[35] had proven effective. The leadership of the Shabiba remained loyal to its overseers abroad, obeying orders and developing a fierce cadre of field leaders. The students even played a significant role in the "Committee for National Preparation": by 1984, a majority of the committee's West Bank members were drawn from the student activists.[36]

As a result of the PLO's overall strategy, the Shabiba flourished, with its public activities budget enabling the accumulation of vast political power. Between 1977 and 1985, it is estimated that the PLO had injected nearly a half-billion dollars (US) into the territories for this purpose.[37]

Student power found expression in the political arena. From the obscurity of university campuses, the Shabiba activists unveiled their intellectual prowess and national activism. They commemorated the national sacrifice of student activists killed in battle. The first *shahid* (martyr) to appear on the Birzeit University Shabiba commemoration board was Sharif al-Tibi, killed by Israeli security forces on November 21, 1984, following an off-campus Fatah rally in support of holding the Palestinian National Convention in Amman despite the withdrawal of the leftist fronts. Through a series of memorials and days of remembrance, al-Tibi was honored as the "Shahid of the independent national decision."[38]

As was the case with the Shabiba leadership in Balata Refugee Camp near Nablus, which devoted a substantial portion of its student magazines to its fallen members, the commemorations were part of a national socialization process[39] unfolding throughout the 1980s. Eulogies sentimentalized space and time, connecting the struggles waged locally and by Fatah and the GUPS abroad.[40]

The evolution of the left-wing student bloc in the Palestinian universities

The Palestinian left-wing bloc and the underground cells of the Communists, in particular, had the advantage of extensive organizational experience. They had begun accumulating such experience even prior to 1948, under the Jordanian regime,[41] which enabled its survival despite a widely unpalatable ideological doctrine. The self-same social obstacles had precluded the consolidation of a critical mass able to dominate the Palestinian political arena.

Despite its failure to become a mass movement, the left-wing bloc played a decisive role in the development of the Palestinian student movement. Left-wing loyalists, especially the members of the communist movement, were the first to appear on the Palestinian campuses in the early 1970s. With the Islamic Bloc yet to germinate and Fatah preoccupied with the arming of its military wing, the leftist factions consolidated control over the student councils.

The 1970s were the golden age of the Palestinian left. Unbound to the campuses, its public influence permeated the public sphere. Leftists asserted power in the Palestinian Council for Higher Education and maintained

close relationships with local mayors. Adherents enjoyed political advantage across Palestinian campuses throughout the 1970s. Most professors were either associated with the left or active members of the communist or other Marxist factions.[42]

Communist student cells, active in Birzeit and Bethlehem universities by 1972, led the initial student activities. The communist union, the "Student Association of the West Bank and Gaza Strip," featured numerous sectors including women, labor and other professional unions within the party.[43]

The communists, who dominated the student unions during the 1970s, wanted to extend their influence to the public sphere. This was to be accomplished through the volunteer committees they established. Fatah and the PFLP quickly followed suit. Beyond the volunteer contributions they made in rural areas, the communists also hoped such activities would empower them to expand the ranks of their movement. For this reason they wore badges with the symbol of the High Commission of the Communist Labor Corps and engraved the name of their factions on the walls of the houses they renovated and the trees they planted.[44]

Activities initiated by the labor committees also attracted foreign volunteers. Such support was politically significant, contributing to the international legitimacy of the Palestinian cause. Some of the more ideological volunteers thereafter became principal agents in the dissemination of Palestinian propaganda. They documented their impressions and cast the volunteer labor committees, especially those operating around Birzeit University, in the light of ideological struggle.[45]

Owing to their organizational experience, the expansion of the Palestinian universities in Birzeit and Bethlehem in the early 1970s allowed the communists to take full advantage of their political influence. The pluralism of Birzeit and Christian liberalism of Bethlehem allowed a discourse that enabled the communists to promote their political outlook. Although the communists dominated the student unions to that point, the founding of al-Najah National University in 1977 – an institution dominated by a conservative Islamic orientation – the scope of the difficulties facing the communist movement was laid bare.

The Palestinian Communist Party's indelible link with *Rakah* bolstered the influence of its activists and affiliated labor committees on campus. A junction between the movements enabled an exchange of knowledge that greatly benefited the Palestinian Communist Party. In the early 1980s, the two organizations initiated joint labor camps. At a joint rally in Nazareth in 1980, the Communist Party estimated some 1,200 residents of the occupied territories present.[46] The organizations' affinity was further expressed through the promotion of Land Day, which the Palestinian Communist Party hoped would become a national holiday uniting the Palestinian opposition on both sides of the green line.[47]

Indeed the communists had inspired Fatah to establish its own labor committees. The founding of the Shabiba in the early 1980s, and of

competing left-wing cells such as those of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), significantly weakened the communist movement. Communist Party dominance of the Birzeit University and Bethlehem University student councils was not to return. For the Palestinian society, the 1980s constituted years of Islamification, with the Islamic Bloc joining Fatah as the most significant forces in the student arena. The communists, who had initially dubbed themselves the Progressive Student Association Bloc, forged political alliances with the leftist fronts to promote a stronger showing in student council elections. Nevertheless, as political tensions ran high, the alliance was abandoned in favor of cooperation with Fatah's Shabiba and an expression of loyalty to the PLO.[48]

Also characteristic of communist politics was the movement's uncompromising devotion to its governing philosophy. Unlike the PFLP and DFLP, the communists never established ad-hoc political alliances with members of the Islamic Bloc in response to the inconsistent political conduct of the PLO.

The beginning of the Popular Front's student activities

In the formative years of the Palestinian student movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Palestinian left dominated the public sphere. Among the Marxist–socialist movements following the pioneering example of the Communist Party, the PFLP was the most prominent. The Progressive Student Action Front, which began as the student branch of the PFLP, had its roots in a group of student supporters in the Bethlehem University in 1979.[49]

Like the communists, the PFLP also boasted a robust organizational infrastructure. A reincarnation of the Arab Nationalist movement, the PFLP inherited the cumulative expertise of a leading political movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Hard-earned experience garnered through the ideological crisis of pan-Arabism in the wake of 1967 was placed at the disposal of the young PFLP.

In 1979, the PFLP wrested control of the student council at Bethlehem University. The organization painted its rivalry with the communists, who had dominated the council since its inception, as a struggle between communism and a new left. The elections were an important reference point in the history of the Progressive Student Action Front. Despite the fact that the elections had taken place in Bethlehem, PFLP student activists enjoyed the support of their contemporaries at Birzeit and al-Najah, who arrived to assist local candidates and took an active role in the establishment of the front at Bethlehem University.[50]

The electoral success of the Progressive Student Action Front in Bethlehem led to the establishment of PFLP cells at Birzeit and al-Najah universities. In the early 1980s, the PFLP enjoyed a relative advantage at

Birzeit University due to the rooted support of the faculty; a majority of lecturers were either members of the PFLP or one of the other Marxist factions.[51] At the more conservative al-Najah, however, political opposition to the PFLP was formidable.

The PFLP established a student branch at al-Najah National University in 1982 and was immediately attacked by the Islamic Bloc. Friction between the movements was first and foremost ideological. The Islamic Bloc considered the secularism of the PFLP and Marxism in general as an affront to the dominion of God. Violence quickly broke out between the sides. Supporters of the PFLP considered the Islamic Bloc a "gang" and portrayed them as betraying the national interest and the PLO. They occasionally took things further, accusing the Islamists of collaboration with the Israeli security forces.[52]

The PFLP faced a twofold challenge. Not only was their ideology at odds with the traditional conservatism of the Palestinian society, but they also remained a minority within the PLO itself and lacked the popular support enjoyed by Fatah.

Friction between the political movements spilled over into the student arena. When faced with the choice, however, leaders of the Progressive Student Action Front attempted to form a coalition with Fatah in order to gain the upper hand in the ideological conflict they shared with the Islamic Bloc. Yet they reversed course with the Oslo Accords and the founding of the Palestinian Authority, forming the so-called "Rejection Front" in Damascus.[53]

Supporters of the PFLP tried to brand themselves within the student political sphere as promoting student interests. The challenge they faced was to garner a majority constituency by differentiating themselves from the rest of the PLO spectrum, with the communists and DFLP on the left and Fatah on the right.[54] Electoral success at the Bethlehem University fueled the PFLP's hope that they could indeed muster a majority.

As part of the socialization of its members, the PFLP published the "Progressive Magazine" (*Nashrat al-Takadum*). From 1984 to 1987, a uniform edition of the magazine was distributed monthly to all of the universities and colleges throughout the West Bank. On its pages, activists of the Progressive Student Action Front – who considered themselves an executive branch of the party – expressed their wholesale support of the PFLP. In addition, the monthly also featured regular references to students' everyday concerns, such as increasing enrollment fees and resentment of university closures by the IDF, as well as articles extolling the importance of democracy to the development of society.[55]

Yet the heyday of the PFLP was limited to the early 1980s. The party began to lose ground to the Shabiba movement, which was more compatible with Palestinian dominant culture – in particular, the traditionalism of the rural students. Alongside other leftist organizations, the PFLP also faced the fierce ideological onslaught of the Islamic Bloc. Every inch forward taken by the Islamists forced the further retreat of the New Left.

The student branch of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine

During the 1970s, student activities were among the most important political undertakings in the Palestinian arena. In this period, the DFLP – a faithful ally of Fatah within the PLO – had also begun breaking ground in Palestinian universities.

The DFLP had acquired its experience in student politics in neighboring Arab countries where its members also served as GUPS affiliates. Some were called upon to apply their knowledge of the neighboring Arab universities in the Palestinian territories. Ahmad Jabar, one of the DFLP's student leaders who had served in the Lebanese office of the GUPS, was asked by the DFLP to take the next obvious step. Upon graduation from the Arab University in Beirut in 1976, he was sent to train in recruitment and public activism in Moscow. Jabar later enrolled at the University of Bethlehem, where he studied from 1977 to 1982.[56]

At its second national convention in 1981, the DFLP dedicated significant discussion to student activities. The DFLP considered the student associations, whose leaderships had been democratically elected, an important pillar in the development of Palestinian civil society and a key to the infrastructure of a future Palestinian state. The DFLP was critical, however, of the squabbling of the various Palestinian factions. Weary of incessant declarations, they admonished the students' inability to establish a unified national leadership that could work hand in hand with the GUPS leadership abroad.[57] The DFLP's student faction – *Kutlat al-Wihda al-Tulabiyya* – had fewer members than their counterparts in the PFLP. Yet despite this quantitative disadvantage, the pragmatism of the DFLP student leaders would later enable their acquisition of key political positions.

The DFLP enacted realistic policy and participated in various coalitions, which placed it in positions of influence. *Kutlat al-Wihda*'s principal cells were based in the universities of Bethlehem and Birzeit. From there, the DFLP took regular part in student council coalitions and formed alliances both within the left wing, led by the PFLP, as well as with the Shabiba, thereby creating a National Bloc.[58]

For the DFLP, this political modus operandi was also the most logical. As Fatah's Shabiba and the Islamic Bloc grew stronger, the DFLP sensed the withdrawal of the public from the recently popular leftist ideologies. In the mid-1980s, the DFLP attempted to distinguish itself from other left-wing factions by running for the elections on its own ticket, rather than as part of a coalition. Ultimately, the strategy proved a tactical blunder. Competing with its own list at al-Najah National University in 1986, the DFLP received a paltry 90 of 3,312 votes cast.[59]

Further weakening the DFLP was the vacuum left behind by its charismatic leadership of the late 1970s.[60] To this was added the departure of Yasir Abd Rabbo and his Palestine Democratic Union (FIDA), who split from the DFLP upon the signing of the Oslo Accords.

The initiation of the Islamic Bloc's student activities

Throughout the 1970s, the Middle East underwent religious revival, peaking with the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. Iran hence emerged as the first modern state to be run according to Sharia law, a model that deeply affected the Palestinian society as well.

Universities, in which small groups of Muslim Brothers now operated, comprised a major hub for national religious awakening in the Palestinian territories. The universities' location influenced their curricula and the weight accorded to the study of Islam. While Bethlehem University remained within the purview of the Catholic Church and Birzeit University was historically run at the behest of the Christian Nasir family, in Jerusalem there existed colleges for Sharia instruction (later united within the al-Quds University complex). Likewise in Hebron and Gaza, where the Islamic University had been established, religious studies were a priority.

Cells of the Muslim Brothers operated alongside the various factions of the PLO throughout the West Bank and Gaza. Contrary to the situation abroad, where the PLO had managed to shut the Islamists out,[61] the Muslim Brothers played a central role in student government in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The immaturity of the student political sphere allowed the Muslim Brothers significant gains. From its foundation in 1979 until the present, the Muslim Brothers has dominated all of the student councils of the Islamic University of Gaza.

Their success was carried to the universities of the West Bank as well, and the Islamists attracted massive constituencies in the expansion of their power base. In student council elections at al-Najah National University in 1981, the Muslim Brothers won a remarkable landslide victory, thoroughly routing the incumbent coalition of left-wing organizations.

In the campaign, two religious coalitions ran against each other, with members of Fatah included in both. At the conclusion of elections on May 13, all of the council seats had been ceded to the Muslim Brothers. The left was now outside its recent positions of influence. Refusing to accept the outcome, leftists provoked clashes with the IDF, disrupting university business and highlighting the nationalism of their revolt. The chaos that followed forced management at al-Najah to terminate the 1981 school year early, nearly a month before the summer vacation.[62]

As the religious revival proliferated across each of the Palestinian campuses, the PLO came to see the expansion of the Islamic Bloc as a serious threat. Fatah, which still maintained the largest body of supporters within the campuses, was nominated to lead a national front against the Islamic Bloc. Through a coalition of all PLO factions, Fatah subsequently returned control of al-Najah's student council to the PLO in 1982. From 1984 until the outbreak of the first Intifada, Fatah maintained its grip over the university in Nablus. Notwithstanding such efforts, the Muslim Brothers remained a formidable opposition, consistently earning nearly a third of students' votes.[63]

From its very inception, the Islamic Bloc had clarity of purpose. As opposed to the various factions of the PLO, that quibbled about the character of a future Palestinian state, the Muslim Brothers knew exactly what they wanted. The power of the Muslim Brothers was rooted in faith as elucidated by the Quran, Sunna and Islamic traditions, which dictated adherents' daily habits in minute detail.

Despite its political rivalry with Fatah, at the beginning of their political journey the Islamic Bloc was keener to target the Palestinian left wing. The Leftist Bloc was politically weaker and its ideology was starkly juxtaposed with the political agenda of the Brothers.

In support of their cause against Fatah and the left, the Islamic Bloc distributed a magazine, *Al-Muntalak*, in which they addressed their rivals directly and illustrated their conceptual differences:

> We, as members of the Islamic Bloc at al-Najah University, as members of the Islamic Bloc residing on the occupied land, and as members of the Islamic stream in the region, declare: We would like the university's management and the democratic student council to understand that we will never derive our inspiration from the land itself, as we are linked to the sky … to the precious and divine heavens … we do not seek honor from anyone … we have the ability and capacity to act in the university however Islam shall guide us … we follow the way of those who remain true to their principles and look forward to death for Islam.[64]

Supporters of the Islamic Bloc did not shy away from violence in their attempts to dominate the Palestinian campuses and did not fear a clash with the nationalists. Despite the silence of the Islamic Bloc during the early 1980s concerning the struggle with Israel, verbal spats with the left commonly escalated into broad violence.

Sari Nusseibeh stated that despite its romanticism, the Muslim Brothers subscribed to armed violence as per Frantz Fanon, considering a restoration of Islamic Puritanism a precondition of redemption. An expansion of the Islamic Bloc was made possible thanks to an ever-increasing number of university students from rural areas. Concerning the Islamic Bloc's expansion at Birzeit University in the 1980s, Nusseibeh writes:

> In 1984 I noticed a change among some of my students. All the humiliations of their brief lives, tossed into a religious cauldron, had turned village boys, and sometimes girls, into implacable fanatics, hostile to the sort of liberty I was trying to teach them to love. It was the opposite of the prison interrogation: instead of self-liberation and identification with the humanity's finest intellectual fruits, ideological inebriation locked them into a narrow, unbending frame of mind. I feared that the Brotherhood could win over the masses – they were far better organized than Fatah, had the support of the military government, and were busy

setting up a social network to assist people whose lives had been shattered by the occupation.[65]

Historically, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact moment at which the Islamic Bloc began to operate in an organized fashion. However, this beginning is ascribed to Birzeit University, where, in 1978, the Muslim Brothers united "in order to sound their silenced voice." One year later, they contested the student council elections as the Islamic Action Bloc (*Kutlat al-Amal al-Islami*).[66]

The Islamic Bloc consistently worked to expand its circle of support. As they began feeling more politically stable by the mid-1980s, loyalists were compelled to come to terms with a new Palestinian national awareness sweeping over the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The PLO considered peace talks an opportunity to become involved in the political process. Upon the collapse of the negotiations between then Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres and King Husayn of Jordan – and the subsequent elimination of the Jordanian Option – nationalism gained particular momentum in the West Bank.

The failure of the talks prompted the PLO to allocate additional resources to the occupied territories. Fatah's Shabiba led the way, expanding outward from the campuses into the public sphere. It broadened its involvement in public service, including house renovations, street cleaning, olive picking and fighting illiteracy.[67]

Extensive sums of money strengthened the Shabiba's control over the Birzeit student council, which was considered the most important pillar of political power in the West Bank. The Palestinian press, including newspapers *al-Fajr* and *al-Quds*, covered the student council elections of 1985 extensively. In addition to its triumph at Birzeit, ample financial support and political fortuity likewise carried Fatah to victory in the Hebron student council elections, despite the university's status as a stronghold of the Islamic Bloc. The Shabiba, which ran as the "Shahid Fahd Qawasmi Bloc," took 50 percent of the vote to the 44 percent won by the Islamic Bloc.[68]

In response to an internal ideological conflict, the Muslim Brothers began adopting a more nationalist approach. Discontent with the movement's traditional adherence to *da'wah* and *tarbiyya* – Islamic proselytizing and education – a vibrant younger generation was pressing for open Jihad. This sentiment was even more pronounced in the Gaza Strip, where youth were abandoning the Muslim Brothers to join ranks with the nascent Islamic Jihad faction.[69] Established at the Islamic University of Gaza in 1982, the Islamic Jihad movement formed its first student cells under the banner *al-Jam'aa al-Islamiyya* in the mid-1980s. The movement served as an Islamic alternative to the Muslim Brothers, with which it differed in respect to its support of the Islamic revolution of Iran. Early support of the Islamic Jihad came primarily from the Gaza Strip, where the movement had been established.[70]

Despite the region's relative progressivism, the Muslim Brothers began to focus on *Tarbiyya* in the West Bank. The movement also embraced a more

nationalistic line of thinking, demonstrated by the addition of the map of Palestine to the symbols of the Islamic Bloc in West Bank universities.

The emblem of the Islamic Bloc at Birzeit University, for example, featured a clenched hand – representing the struggle for liberty – swinging from an open Koran across a map of undivided Palestine. The symbol was printed in the colors of the Palestinian flag on a parchment handed to the students upon their enrollment. The parchment's reverse side featured a poem calling for struggle over the lost Palestinian national identity. The Palestinian map also appeared in the symbols of the Islamic Bloc at al-Najah University, alongside a message to students: "If you take upon yourself to protect the Islamic nation, your Palestinian people and your homeland Palestine, the path is Jihad, under the flag of the Koran."[71]

In the emblem of the student council of the University of Gaza, the map of Palestine comprised a less imposing image. Rather, the principal symbol was the mosque of al-Aqsa, held aloft by two hands wrapped in a crescent moon above the open pages of the Koran.[72]

Furthermore, in its broader religious orientation, the Islamic Bloc gradually began incorporating elements of national identity. *Da'wah* and *Tarbiyya* were being slowly replaced by Jihad.

Figure 8.2 The emblem of the Islamic Bloc – Islamic University of Gaza.

When members of the Islamic Bloc resorted to violence in the mid-1980s, it primarily concerned matters of religion and morality or political power. *Al-Kutla al-Islamiyya* had tried to establish a social and political alternative to the PLO. Hence, despite their common ground with Fatah on questions of tradition and the role of religion in the public sphere, no political alliance was to be brokered between them.

Fatah and the Islamic Bloc competed head-on in all West Bank university elections,[73] with the various fronts of the left serving as a buffer between them. When DFLP loyalists realized they had to withdraw from the 1985 Hebron student council election to prevent splitting the PLO vote, they backed the Shabiba.[74]

The Islamic Bloc did not hesitate to use force to affect a shift in Palestinian society. Violence on campus was politically premeditated and, initially, directed towards the Leftist Bloc. Later, they would target nationalists at large.[75] The paradigm shift of the Islamic Bloc allowed its adherents to participate in the national struggle. Nationalism on campus, which swelled in the mid-1980s, led to serious friction with the IDF, which routinely blocked students' access to universities. The universities were thus transformed into arenas within which students frequently clashed with Israeli soldiers.

The supporters of the Islamic Bloc were the first of the Muslim Brothers to join these nationalistically oriented clashes with the IDF. Birzeit University again led the way, and was the location of an incident that would ignite riots on campuses across the West Bank. On December 4, 1986, the Birzeit student council organized a large protest in response to reports that the IDF was assisting the Shiite Amal militia against Palestinian factions in the refugee camps of southern Lebanon.

Hundreds of students marched towards the IDF blockade near Birzeit University. The ensuing riot claimed the lives of two 22-year-old students from Gaza: Jawad Abu-Salmiyya, a member of the Muslim Brothers from Khan Yunis, and Saib Diab, known around campus as a member of the Fatah Shabiba.[76] The glorification of these *Shuhada* (martyrs) led to conflict between loyalists of *al-Kutla al-Islamia* and the Shabiba, both of who claimed the students as members of their movements.[77]

The incident at Birzeit set the West Bank and Gaza alight. A three-day general strike was declared and the students' funerals deteriorated into a massive riot. The unrest spread throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip and yielded further casualties, among them Ramadan Zaitun, a 12-year-old boy from Balata Refugee Camp near Nablus.[78]

Anger in the streets could not be assuaged. Following three days of mourning in the West Bank, students of the University of Hebron, the polytechnic and al-Najah all joined the violence. The various student councils initiated processions and convened on their campuses, which were now encircled by the Israeli forces. Combustion was inevitable. Dozens – possibly hundreds – of students were arrested across the West Bank and Gaza Strip

and scores of youth protestors were injured.[79] Meanwhile, the Israelis swiftly placed the universities under closure.

The West Bank clashes stoked Israeli fears of an imminent, full-scale civil revolt. Pressure generated in light of the riots was so great that the Knesset began discussing motions of no-confidence in the government. Israeli forces moved quickly; within a fortnight, they had brutally suppressed the upheaval.

The spilling over of political protest from the campuses into the public sphere in 1986 was accompanied by an acute rise in violence. The participation of the Islamic Bloc in the December 1986 riots comprised their preparation for the Intifada, which would break out a year later. The adoption of a nationalist bent by *al-Kutla al-Islamiyya* and its corresponding shift away from passivism reflected the sentiment of the time. The established hegemony of Fatah and steady rise of the Islamic Jihad, which had been garnering support on Palestinian campuses since 1983, demanded a political response from the Muslim Brothers. The student movement of the occupied Palestinian territories was to play a significant role in the first days of the uprising, and the decision of the Islamic Bloc to join ranks with the National Bloc would significantly increase the overall intensity of the impending violence.

The student movement and the first Intifada

At the outset of the Intifada, the organizational experience and youthful exuberance of the students fanned the flames of violence on the streets of the West Bank. Alongside mosques, the universities were to become centers of organization and command. The Israeli administration naturally found it difficult to shut down mosques. In contrast with places of worship, the universities constituted far softer targets and were subsequently locked down by Israel as the riots begun. Yet the universities continued to serve as the backbone of the uprising, with students carrying the message of revolt to the cities, villages and refugee camps.

As the universities were shut down, activists of the various student factions returned to perform their roles in party. Members of the Shabiba returned home to Fatah, the Progressive Student Action Front loyalists joined the PFLP, and students of the Islamic Bloc shaped the emerging Hamas movement, a direct result of the uprising.

Despite the extended closure of the universities, the students transformed their accumulated knowledge into social activity. Their political and organizational experience enabled the students to assume active roles in the Joint National Headquarters, which was established by the PLO in order to steer the uprising. In addition, they were intensively involved in the "Shock Committees" responsible for confrontations with the IDF and in the public committees designed as an alternative to the Civil Administration of the Israeli occupation authority.[80]

The Joint National Headquarters benefited from the intellectual contributions of various lecturers and student political activists from Birzeit University.

Academics were ever present in the headquarters and cafeterias, and in the classrooms they argued and theorized about the unfolding reality on the streets.[81]

The Intifada comprehensively altered the daily routine in the occupied Palestinian territories. Universities and colleges were shut down and commerce was severely affected. The management of Birzeit University was prepared for this, aware that the Israeli authorities would consider the institution a hub of violence. On the first day of the uprising, the IDF blockaded the university. Faculty had arranged in advance for ambulances to park on campus in preparation for the riots. To Dr. Hannan Ashrawi, an English Literature lecturer and human rights activist at Birzeit University, the military submitted a list of suspected rioters to be turned over, lest the IDF storm the campus. As Dr. Sari Nusseibeh writes, the tension persisted until midnight, when the students were placed on buses and driven home. The next day, the campus was again placed under quarantine and the military announced the summary closure of the university. Fatah's Shabiba movement was outlawed and the head of the university's student council, Marwan Barghouti, was deported from the West Bank to Jordan.[82]

Student leaders and activists became prominent targets of the Israeli security forces, most evidently during the course of 1987. Even before the popular Intifada broke on December 9 of that year, it had been commonly referred to as the "year of the student Intifada." The student uprising had broken out on December 4, 1986, with the infamous incident at Birzeit, and continued with a series of confrontations yielding a growing number of casualties from the student sector. Yet these losses were certainly not limited to Birzeit. In Bethlehem, for instance, student Ashak Abu-Srur was killed by the IDF the following autumn.[83]

The characteristic unrest of 1987 also permeated the lower levels of Palestinian academia as droves of high school students poured into the streets to riot. The student population was to become suspect at large, with many students tracked down and sent into administrative detention. At the outbreak of the Intifada, prominent student activists were summarily deported from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[84]

Israeli forces responded to student involvement in riots by closing down Palestinian institutions of higher education. The campuses served as gathering places and points of departure for mass riots, and as centers of tactical instruction for upcoming clashes. This was also the case in the Gaza Strip, where the campus of the Islamic University served as the locus of student-initiated mass processions across the city.[85]

The closure of schools severely disrupted the daily routine in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Education in general – and higher education, in particular – was highly esteemed by the Palestinian society. Under sustained international pressure, Israel slowly reversed course regarding its closure of Palestinian high schools. The Joint National Headquarters called upon the Palestinian public to exercise the full extent of their influence over the international community to compel Israel to also reopen the universities.

Accounts of the violence of the Palestinian student movement, however, shielded Israel from having to change this policy. At the outset of the Intifada, only about 20 percent of arrested Palestinian youths were members of the student movement. A year into the uprising, this ratio had shot up to 80 percent.[86] Mass arrests of students reinforced the still vibrant connection between the student and prisoner movements. In effect, the movements were not only interconnected, but many personalities featured prominently on both lists.

The student movement's share of casualties during the first year of the Intifada was also very high, standing at about 31 percent of that year's total.[87] Unwilling to accept their closure, the universities attempted to establish alternative classrooms where the academic routine could be restored, to the extent possible, off campus.

Despite their ambition, the universities failed to accomplish this goal. The Intifada comprehensively terminated the work of the student councils. Student leaders and senior activists had become the primary targets of the Israeli military. Furthermore, the campus closures and resulting lack of delineated academic space prevented the students' political and social activities. By this stage, all of the activists had fully committed to the national struggle.

In this context, Bethlehem University's efforts to enable a normal routine for its student council members comprise a unique example. In addition to underground classes, the university determined to also hold student council elections. Held in the fall of 1989, Fatah won the positions of chair and treasurer, the communists took the vice presidency, and the PFLP was named council secretary.[88] These elections, however, were an exception to the rule. Voter turnout in these elections is also unknown.

The Intifada brought about significant changes in the student movement's modus operandi. The general draft during the uprising prompted the student cells, which were already political in nature, to focus increasingly on political recruitment, rather then on student activities. The arrest and deportation of so many prominent activists also weakened the student movement's public influence.[89]

As the Intifada came to a close and academic life was restored in the occupied territories, the Palestinian student movement found itself facing new challenges. These were to be met by a young leadership that had acquired its experience in the course of the uprising, a time of shattered conventions and collapse of the previous social order. The anarchy that had reigned in the streets would prove a serious detriment to the independent organizational capacities of the Palestinian student movement.

Notes

1 al-Afranji, "Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya wa-Nidaliha min Ajl Filastin fi Iruba al-Gharbiyya", p. 261.
2 Cohen, *Miflagot ba-Gada ha-Ma'aravit*, pp. 12–65.

3 IDF Archives, 38/1172/88, The Volunteer Labor Committees and their Activities in the West Bank: A Special Report, September 28, 1982.
4 Ibid.
5 *Al-Taliʾa*, August 12, 1982.
6 Majdi al-Maliki (ed.), *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya wa-Muhimmat al-Marhala – Tajarib wa-ara* (Ramallah: Muwatan al-Muwassa al-Filastiniyya lil-Darasat al-Dimakritiyya, 2000), pp. 10–11.
7 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 88.
8 Steinberg, *ʿOmdim le-Goralam*, p. 171.
9 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, pp. 88–9.
10 The PFLP cell was named *Kutlat al-ʿAmal al-Tulabi*, whereas the DFLP formation was dubbed *Kutlat al-Wihda al-Tulabiyya.*
11 Many of the student leaders associated with the Communists and the "Fronts," such as Basam Sulhi, Ali al-Jarbawi and Walid Salim, later assumed senior positions in the Palestinian academic sphere. They were arrested only after becoming openly engaged in political activities.
12 Frisch, *Countdown to Statehood,* p. 52.
13 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country*, p. 150.
14 Ibid., pp. 150, 159–60.
15 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 132.
16 Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State*, p. 31.
17 Raid Raduan, Ahmad al-Abawini, "Dawr Harakat al-Shabiba fi Iʿadah Tafʿil al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya", in Al-Maliki (ed.) *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya wa-Muhimmat al-Marhala – Tajarib wa-ara*, p. 121.
18 Moshe Maoz, "Manhigut Falastinit ba-Gada ha-Maʾaravit, 1948–78", p. 210.
19 Ibid., p. 211.
20 IDF Archives, 38/1172/88, The Volunteer Labor Committees and their Activities in the West Bank: A Special Report, September 28, 1982.
21 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country*, p. 150.
22 IDF Archives, 38/1172/88, The Volunteer Labor Committees and their Activities in the West Bank: A Special Report, September 28, 1982.
23 This is the backdrop against which the al-Najah Soccer team was founded. See: IDF Archives, 38/1172/88, The Volunteer Labor Committees and their Activities in the West Bank: A Special Report, September 28, 1982.
24 Frisch, *Countdown to Statehood*, p. 53.
25 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country*, p. 150.
26 Harakat al-Shabiba al-Tulabiyya Jamiʿat al-Najah al-Wataniyya, *Usbuʿa Filastin* (Place and date of publication unknown), p. 2.
27 Ibid., pp. 3–5.
28 *Fajr al-Shabiba* (Iyar 1986), p. 2.
29 Raduwan, Abawini, "Dawr Harakat al-Shabiba fi Iʿadat Tafʿil al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya", p. 121.
30 The questionnaire is in the possession of the author.
31 *Al-Fajr*, December 21, 1983.
32 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country*, p. 167.
33 Actually, by the time of the first Intifada, the Shabiba had gained absolute control over almost all student councils in the West Bank. The sole exception was the University of Hebron, where the Islamic Bloc took over in the 1986 academic year elections. See: Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 131.
34 Generally speaking, the Fatah members were systematically excluded from positions of power in the Islamic University of Gaza throughout the 1980s, notwithstanding the board of trustees. At the front of the bitter Shabiba struggle vis-à-vis the Islamic Bloc in Gaza were Muhamad Dahlan and his deputy Ahmad Nassar. Their activities

on behalf of the Shabiba led to their expulsion following the outbreak of the Intifada in December 1987.

35 It is noteworthy that the concept of Armed Struggle still stood at the ideological core of Fatah, and many students were recruited for covert activities on behalf of the movement. Nevertheless, the decision to develop a strategy of open public struggle, spearheaded by the Shabiba and its voluntary committee, won preference over the expansion of the military cells which conducted military activities. One of the considerations leading to this shift in emphasis was the success of the Israeli Security Services in exposing such military cells.
36 Frisch, *Countdown to Statehood,* p. 53.
37 Yaʾari, Schiff, *Intifada*, p. 185.
38 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 137.
39 Yaʾari, Schiff, *Intifada*, p. 56.
40 See for instance the commemoration section of the mouthpieces *Fajr al-Shabiba* for the *shahid* Haidar Dawud Abdallah (who also went by the name Abdallah Younis). Abdallah Yunis was expelled from the West Bank after having been imprisoned three times in Israeli prisons, and later joined the Fatah military apparatus in Beirut. In the wake of the 1982 Lebanon War, he was sent to study in Havana, where he soon became a central figure in the Fatah and GUPS leadership. Abdallah Yunis was killed in the Israeli air strike of the PLO compound in Tunis on October 1, 1985. See: *Fajr al-Shabiba* (Iyar 1986), pp. 6–8.
41 Cohen, *Miflagot ba-Gada ha-Maʾaravit*, pp. 12–65.
42 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country*, p. 121.
43 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 88.
44 IDF Archives, 38/1172/88, The Volunteer Labor Committees and their Activities in the West Bank: A Special Report, September 28, 1982.
45 See for instance the following collection: Manfred Ropschtiz (ed.) *Volunteers for Palestine Papers 1977–1980* (Kefar Shemaryahu: Key Miftah Publishers).
46 IDF Archives, 38/1172/88, The Volunteer Labor Committees and their Activities in the West Bank: A Special Report, September 28, 1982.
47 *Al-Taliʾa*, August 12, 1982.
48 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 134.
49 Ibid., p. 107.
50 Ibid., p. 108.
51 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country*, p. 121.
52 Abu-Kishak, *Dirasa fi al-Awdaʾ al-Tarbawiyya wa-al-Akadimiyya fi al-Ardi al-Muhtalla,* pp. 104–5.
53 For more on this issue see Chapter 9.
54 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 109.
55 Ibid., p. 110.
56 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 109.
57 Al-Jabha al-Dimakritiyya li-Tahrir Filastin, Al-Takrir al-Nizari wa al-Siyyasi wa al-Tanzimi: "Al-Muatamar al-Wattani al-ʿAmm al-Thani" (Beirut: Dar Ibn-Khaldun, 1981), pp. 382–3.
58 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 112.
59 Ibid., p. 113.
60 *Kutlat al-Wihda* was founded after the local DFLP leadership, operating under the framework of the Democratic Youth Organization, had already established itself. Seasoned activists such as Ahmad Jabar, who arrived from Beirut to Bethlehem, Riyad al-ʿAtari of al-Najah University and Samaʿan Khouri, Nazmi Jʿabah and Ribhi al-ʿAruri from the University of Birzeit, were often subjected to questioning and detainment by the Israeli security apparatus. Consequently, the relatively small number of DFLP activists and supporters hampered the development of an alternative leadership. Nevertheless, it was also the elitist nature of the DFLP members

and their ideological differences that prevented the front from transforming itself into a fully fledged movement of the masses.

61 Khalid Mishal, "The Making of a Palestinian Islamic Leader", p. 66.
62 Inbari, *Meshulash ʿAl ha-Yarden,* p. 144.
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9 The Palestinian student movement between two Intifadas

The Palestinian student movement renewed activity on campus at a significant turning point in the history of Palestinian politics. At the end of the first Gulf War, as the Intifada tapered to its conclusion, campuses began to reopen across the Palestinian territories. Yet, as academic life returned to routine, the student movement altered its character and methodologies.

The novel subjugation of the world to the dictates of a single superpower propelled a shift in consciousness within the Palestinian national movement. Yasir Arafat had paid a heavy price for having stood by Saddam Husayn. The Palestinian national movement now found itself battered and bruised. The Gulf States considered Arafat *persona non grata* and funds from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia ceased flowing into the accounts of the PLO.

Such geopolitical changes prompted the PLO to reassess. It needed to reposition itself closer to the western bloc under the leadership of the United States. This forward movement was enabled through a revitalized peace process within the new world order championed by the United Stated and its allies in the Middle East.

These political developments, which came to a head in Madrid in October 1991 with the opening of the Oslo channel, stirred things up in the student arena. After three years of paralysis between 1988 and 1991, the whole of the student movement set forth on a new path.

In the wake of the Intifada, campus political life carried forward with the trends set in motion during the uprising. Most of the student activists, who had been recruited directly to their governing factions, now acted on their party's behalf on campus. Politics took precedent over student life.

In addition, the administrative bodies of the student factions underwent their own metamorphoses. During the Intifada, scores of student leaders had been sentenced for extended periods and many were deported from the West Bank. New leaders were needed, but they lacked experience in social activism. Typically, they gained operational and tactical experience through the organizations with which they were affiliated during the Intifada.

The PLO's entry into a peace process paved with uncertainty embarrassed its leftist fronts. On this new journey, Fatah was joined by members of the Palestinian Communist Party and FIDA[1] which had defected from the DFLP.

This same political configuration was reproduced on campus. Political questions on the national scene comprised the principal concern of the student cells. Macro-level developments were reflected within the student arena and created opportunities for the forging of coalitions that heretofore seemed impossible.

With a rejuvenation of academic life, the legitimacy of political negotiations and the recognition of Israel became central questions among student activists. Embarrassingly, many of the Palestinian negotiators were teachers who had become formal representatives of the PLO.[2]

Palestinian students found themselves unprepared for the swift launch of the Oslo process and consequent formation of the Palestinian Authority. Pressures on party recruitment and debate concerning the recognition of Israel eventually split the Palestinian national stream, a harmful development for Fatah's youth movement. With the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the Shabiba was now considered a direct extension of the ruling party, a decidedly detrimental political affiliation.[3]

Parallel to the weakening of Fatah, adherents of the Islamic Bloc who – alongside their rejection of a political settlement – had set a clear social agenda in accordance with Sharia law, managed to preserve and even enhance their own position. This trend played out across the university campuses, including Birzeit.

The advent of the Muslim Brothers to the national struggle provided a legitimacy they had lacked in student elections of the 1980s. Hamas, which invested significant resources in buttressing *da'wah* (the preparation of hearts), diverted large sums of money to support the activities of *al-Kutla al-Islamiyya* in the various universities. Funds flowed through charity foundations, most prominently, *al-Sulh* association from al-Bireh, a fiscal conduit for Islamic charitable foundations operating abroad.[4]

The influx of financial resources provided a significant boost to the operational capacities of the Islamic Bloc. Additional funds were key in the recruitment of new members into the university political cells. Newly arrived activists lodged in shared dormitories provided for by the political apparatus. Such arrangements were common to both Hamas and Fatah.[5] In certain universities, Fatah activists enjoyed prioritized enrollment despite their comparatively poor *tawjihi* (matriculation exams) scores. Indeed, political affiliation was their key to higher education.[6]

Competition for the next generation of Palestinian youth was increasingly central to a campus political sphere ever more devoted to partisan ideology and affiliation. Concerning the political struggle that characterized campus life throughout the 1990s, Hamas maintained a relative advantage. Beyond its radical Islamic platform and the religious offer to the youth, Hamas took an active role in Palestinian Authority politics, boycotting both municipal and parliamentary elections through the 1990s. A comparison of pamphlets disseminated by members of the Islamic Bloc and the Shabiba – in terms of size, quality of paper and topical variety – attests to the efforts the Islamic Bloc invested in campus activity, and its financial leverage.

The campus as the social foundry of the Palestinian society

Hamas positioned itself as an alternative to the ruling regime, with political and religious activism at the top of its agenda. Rather than concentrate on the public volunteerism that had characterized the Palestinian student movement under Fatah and its left wing predecessors throughout the 1980s, the Islamic Bloc promoted its social agenda through campus activity. In the struggle that ensued – over the very character of Palestinian society – Hamas and the Islamic Bloc would invest major resources.

Within the universities, the Islamic Bloc sponsored alternative councils designed to support its social and political agendas. These included, inter alia, committees for culture, academics and sport. Activities were carried out with complete separation of the sexes, as dictated by the strict interpretation of Islamic law. Under the control of the Islamists – from the student council to the board of directors – the campus of the Islamic University of Gaza was completely divided by gender. As with the university's classrooms and laboratories, Hamas's strict division of men and women extended also to the segregation of student councils.[7]

The Islamic Bloc considered shaping the image and status of women to be a starting point for widespread social change. Due to the patriarchic structure of the Palestinian society and the prevalence of traditional religious education (especially in the villages and refugee camps), the Islamic Bloc believed it could operate freely and garner wider public support through the issue of the status of women.

The Islamists' dissemination of pamphlets tailored for women was politically advantageous concerning this demographic on campus. Despite being addressed to both sexes, the political pamphlets of the nationalist streams were generally perceived to appeal to a male audience. In addition, most of the content that appeared in these leaflets had been composed by men; the voices of female activists went largely unheard.[8]

The women's committees of the Islamic Bloc led many cultural activities designed to recruit female students, but these efforts were even more significant within the framework of the *da'wah*. Speaking directly to its audience, women's publications conveyed the message of the cultural sphere to which female Palestinian students had arrived.

In settings comprised exclusively of women, such as in Gaza's Islamic University and the Hind al-Husayni Educational College in al-Shaykh Jarah, East Jerusalem (which later became a part of the larger campus of al-Quds University), the work of the Islamic Bloc was easier.

Through the written word, female activists of the Islamic Bloc promoted their model of the socio-political woman. This personal appeal, which targeted a shared feminine emotionality, embellished quotations from the Quran and Hadith in order to connect between the spiritual and corporeal.

Women's journals portrayed the woman in accordance with Islamic tradition. Articles were unsigned by their authors, save a number that were initialed.

Most dealt with issues pertaining to the family, morality and the role of women in the Islamic space.

Special emphasis was placed on *tarbiyya* (education). From the earliest riotous days of the Intifada, in which young girls had confronted IDF soldiers alongside their male counterparts, Hamas had portrayed women as a catalyst of change.[9]

The Muslim Brothers was apprehensive about challenging segregation of the sexes and campaigned in support of the *hijab* within the overall Islamification of the Palestinian society. Many from Fatah, particularly in Gaza and the refugee camps, likewise advocated the *hijab* and other aspects of Islamic tradition as integral and legitimate expressions of their culture. Only after a number of women were attacked for refusing to wear *hijab* did Fatah take a stand against Hamas.[10]

Conservative dress in the interest of protecting women was also central in the female student journals of the Islamic Bloc. These authors, however, were distinctly more cordial. Women of the Islamic Bloc embodied *da'wah* according to the social environment. At Bethlehem University, for instance, new members were not immediately asked to wear *hijab*; in the natural bolstering of their faith, new activists were allowed to gradually internalize the Islamic dress code.[11] Cultural activities, accompanied by articles imbued with lessons from the Quran and Sunna, further complemented this strengthening of belief (*al-Qaida*).[12]

Though established in response to the Muslim Brothers's takeover of the Islamic University in Gaza, the Fatah-affiliated al-Azhar University likewise

Figure 9.1 The female realm in the Islamic University of Gaza.

mandated strict Islamic dress code for female students.[14] Such trends, however, were not common in the universities of the West Bank.

Differences between the West Bank and Gaza Strip deepened upon the conclusion of the Intifada. In addition to the impact of geographic isolation, rural and urban student populations and competing Jordanian and Egyptian influences, Israel forbade Gaza's youth from studying in West Bank universities. This policy had emerged in the mid-1980s as a core principle of the Israeli Civil Administration.[15] Universities' attempts to fight it through conferences and cooperation with civil society were in vain;[16] power was firmly rooted in the hands of the Israeli establishment.

The heads of the nationalist currents in universities throughout the West Bank disapproved of the Islamists' investments in the recruitment and motivation of women. *Shayikhs* recruited women by targeting their sense of conscience while male activists coerced gender relations according to strict Islamic mores.

The noteworthy power accumulated by the Islamic Bloc in the 1990s encouraged their use of force to ensure social compliance. This phenomenon characterized their activism on campuses throughout the West Bank, especially when they felt pushed into the corner by a young Palestinian Authority that had marked them out as the opposition.

At al-Quds University, under the academic leadership of Sari Nusseibeh, the status of women spurred open conflict between loyalists of the competing political movements. Clashes between Hamas and Fatah erupted after members of the Islamic Bloc intruded into a cultural event of the Shabiba, which included a gender-integrated *dabka* circle. Said Nusseibeh of the events:

> The dispute began after the Fatah students organized a folk dance in which women participated. For the Hamas students, mixed dancing was such a grievous contravention of Islamic law that they hung posters calling the women whores. This was too much for the Fatah activists, and they began tearing down the posters. The Hamas students attacked the Fatah students, who struck back.
>
> I was in my office when I got an urgent call. A fight had broken out between Fatah and Hamas students. It was alarming news because a feud between the factions could have gone anywhere; shooting, vandalizing buildings, mayhem. A violent clash on campus would have attracted Israeli soldiers, whose presence would have inevitably brought flying rocks. The entire chain of events – violence, soldiers, rocks, rubber bullets – was so predictable that I stepped in at once to prevent the escalation. The last thing that I wanted was to give the authorities an excuse to shut down the university.
>
> I asked the people involved to come into my office. They had hardly sat down when the recriminations started. … The Hamas students continued to insist upon their rights to enforce the morality of the Ayatollah

Khomeini, and their Fatah opponents stood by their moral right to stop them, and to swing back if hit.

Eventually I'd had enough. By the next morning, I threatened, either the students must resolve their dispute and apologize or I would suspend them. Morning came and they were all as unyielding as before. I suspended all the Hamas people. Adel, the Fatah leader who had defended the women on campus, got off with a warning. Later I hired him to come to work with me.[17]

Hamas and Fatah in a battle to lead the student movement

Due to the Hamas boycott of the Palestinian Authority until the municipal elections of 2005, student council elections amounted to a litmus test for the influence of Hamas in the Palestinian arena. Through student council elections, the party aspired to establish itself as a genuine political alternative to Fatah.

Renewal of academic life after the first Gulf War and the Oslo process led to a clear split within the Palestinian student movement. The major campus players were now divided between supporters and opponents of political settlement.[18]

Fatah's Shabiba was compelled to accommodate the zeitgeist. Most of the movement's activists who had been wanted in the course of the Intifada now had to adopt more politically palatable modes of conduct.

With Fatah at the helm of the newly established Palestinian Authority, the Shabiba was perceived as the government's operational wing. But the uncertainty surrounding political negotiations harmed the Shabiba's work with the youth. Its identification as an integral part of the formal ruling system in the Palestinian territory, which did not shy away from the use of force, weakened Fatah's standing in student politics. Resulting tensions within the Shabiba led to several defections among its members.[19]

The Shabiba attempted to overcome such political challenges by waving various flags on campus. Most prominently, Shabiba presented itself as a democratic movement that called for the preservation of student political independence, free of external intervention and the subordination of basic freedoms by the Palestinian Authority.[20]

The defense of democratic values became fixed in Shabiba's discourse after its first defeat in the student council election at Birzeit University in the 1993–94 academic year. This election campaign received considerable attention. Shabiba, under the name "*Kutlat al-Quds and al-Dawla*," ran against Hamas, which had formed an ad-hoc partnership with the PFLP under the title "*Kutlat al-Quds Awalan*."

After a tense campaign, the election – held November 24, 1993 – saw participation rates of 94 percent: 2,573 out of 2,736 students had actualized their right to vote.[21] Despite the university's attempt to present a democratic agenda, some rejected the results according to protocol. Controversy centered

around 43 disqualified ballots. Nevertheless, these votes would not have changed the outcome; the Islamic Bloc candidate received over 70 percent of the votes. University President Hanna Nasir, who confirmed the winners in the midst of the dispute, was himself attacked and his car burned.[22] Despite the violence, President Nasir emphasized the political nature of the process, trumpeting Birzeit as a "*manbar* (platform) of freedom for the full spectrum of views comprising the Palestinian national arena."[23]

Despite being personally injured – a matter that had harmed the whole institution – Nasir decided against sanctioning the losing party, identified as having burned his car. Instead, in the announcement published to students following the events, the president took a reserved approach, seeking to maintain the democratic order.[24]

In light of Fatah's first electoral defeat since having taken control of the student council of Birzeit – Palestine's most politically important campus – members of the Shabiba published a new student magazine. *Sawt al-Shabiba* was defined as a cultural, political and social magazine and the voice of Fatah on campus.

Figure 9.2 The front page of the first issue of *Sawt al-Shabiba*: Fatah's magazine at Birzeit University.[25]

The first issue of *Sawt al-Shabiba* focused on the movement's loss in the student council elections at Birzeit. In the magazine, Fatah members interviewed movement veterans and their political opponents. Heads of the university were also asked to provide political analysis of the results. University President Hanna Nasir, whose car was burned on the day of the election after he announced the victory of the Hamas-led coalition, argued that the balance of power had not shifted. Fatah, he asserted, remained the largest and strongest political force on campus. In addition, Nasir congratulated Fatah's Shabiba for having passed the baton in an orderly fashion and for the democratic spirit they embodied after the results had been announced.[26]

Fatah's loss took place after ten consecutive years of rule over Birzeit's student council and was taken by the movement's activists as a serious crisis. Losing the elections at Birzeit, the single most important center for student politics, reflected poorly upon the party on other campuses across the West Bank.

The political fracturing that followed the signing of the Oslo Accords yielded a new a political coalition of the Islamic and leftist blocs. A paradoxical situation emerged whereby despite the nationalist stream of the PLO having won the elections, Hamas now reigned over the student councils. Such was outcome of a continuous demonstration of power by the Islamic Bloc in university elections since 1992. Despite having abstained from parliamentary elections throughout the 1990s, Islamist dominion over student politics clearly demonstrated the political clout of Hamas on the national stage.[27]

Partnering with the Islamic Bloc damaged the Palestinian left, who traded their social principles for political influence. From the renewal of the campus elections, the left had failed to gain a foothold in student politics. Nonetheless, the leftist parties had managed – despite their steeply declining power – to influence the makeup of the council.

Fatah, aware of its relative vulnerability as identified with the ruling party, readied itself for a battle on Palestinian campuses. The transformation of Shabiba from a quasi-underground student movement to a political force calling for the strengthening of state institutions was evident in its conduct and publications. In contrast to Fatah's magazines in the 1980s, in which articles were often unsigned by their authors, Shabiba journals from the 1990s gave full credit to every contributor.[28]

As the discourse of the student movement became increasingly political, Fatah adapted its language to the locality of each university – a tactical response to the strengthening of the Islamic Bloc on various Palestinian campuses. Despite the movement's promotion of democratic principles, at the Universities of Hebron and al-Azhar, Fatah's magazines featured palpably religious language.

It is important to note that the Shabiba journals throughout the West Bank were all published under the name, *Sawt al-Shabiba*. Indeed, despite their varied contents, the consistent title demonstrates an effort to create a unified identification with the movement and its values. Discrepancies were

understood in light of well-known social and political differences between regions of the West Bank. This was all the more true concerning the cultural, social and political distinctions between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Shabiba's attempts to forge a unified discourse is also significant given a Palestinian society imbued with tension. The various shades of discourse within the journals attest to manifold spaces of operation. More importantly, they attest to the socializing ideals that the movement aspired to instill within its supporters.

The Shabiba invested considerable effort in strengthening its position on campus. The strengthening of the Islamic Bloc and its subsequent takeover of the student councils was made possible by the electoral map. In light of public attacks on Fatah members stemming from the party's role within a Palestinian Authority that had consented to yield vast tracks of Palestinian land – as well as the formidable alliance between the Islamic and leftist blocs – the movement required a sophisticated political response.

The Shabiba opted for a twofold strategy. First, it highlighted that through the Oslo process, the Palestinian predicament had been delivered to the forefront of the international arena. The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Yasir Arafat substantiated the movement's assertions in this regard.[29]

Second, the Shabiba stressed Fatah's revolutionary credentials and exploits of its martyrs, thereby bridging past, present and an imagined future. Fatah's martyrs, particularly those with paramilitary background, filled the pages of Shabiba journals as celebrated models of personal and national sacrifice. This memorialization stood in contrast at times to Fatah's broader aspirations to forge a new reality based on the principle of a two-state solution. This was critical as Hamas continued to challenge Fatah's historical role as the creator and leader of the Armed Struggle. The Shabiba fought this battle in the cultural realm primarily with the weapons of language. In an essay published under the title, "The Will of the *Shuhada* (martyrs)," Shabiba activist Nizar Kartush from Hebron University replied to Hamas's claims that Fatah had lost its way:

> I write to you in letters of blood and agonies of freedom, and I will turn the language of Fatah international. / I will make my words hand grenades, shout and explode like a bullet. / We will reject oxygen and prefer death. / Who said we call for life in this world? / First let him ask about all the deposits we made to the bank of sacrifice, there he will meet / Abu Jihad, Abu Iyad, al-Zarʾini and al-Maghibiyya … / I might have to use a stone and gun / but to him who said we want Jericho and not the nation and identity / we say that the road to Jerusalem does not pass through Iran and Syria. / The road to Jerusalem continues by means of Jericho and Gaza by means of the Shuhada bridge all the way to Tiberia. / Jerusalem as Abu Amar taught us in the oukal in the kaffiyah. / Jerusalem is the source of all Semitic religions, and it will stay the goal on the way to achieve national unity.[30]

Identification with the Palestinian Authority hurt the Shabiba movement. Youth antagonism worsened, due not only to the political debate but also to the fact that the Palestinian Authority had taken a number of steps to hinder public criticism of it.

On campus, the Palestinian Authority was present in the establishment of security mechanisms dubbed "*amn al-jami'a*" (university security). This body was to become a sort of private security authority, but in reality was subordinate to the Palestinian Authority and its preventive security mechanism. That most of its agents were known Fatah activists – some also Shabiba graduates – created a serious image problem that harmed Shabiba's status among its student audience. In a opinion poll of Palestinian students in 1995, only 21.6 percent identified the Palestinian Authority as a body that functions for the benefit of the general public; 36.5 percent stated the work of the Palestinian Authority lacks any positive attributes.[31]

Repression at the hands of the Palestinian Authority extended onto the campuses. On March 30, 1996, security forces of the Palestinian Authority raided al-Najah, leading to student riots throughout the Palestinian territory.[32]

The Shabiba could not ignore the infringement on academic freedom. Despite their reliance on Fatah, Shabiba activists were committed to student protest and solidarity. They reacted to the events at al-Najah with a massive student demonstration centered at Birzeit University. Students marched from campus towards the parliament. Members from all political segments participated. In front of the offices of the National Assembly, demonstrators were supposed to meet their peers from other universities including al-Najah, Bethlehem and al-Quds.[33]

The march took place on March 3, 1996. As the demonstrators reached the parliament, clerks approached with news that the head of the Palestinian Authority was willing to meet with them. In the meeting, student representatives discussed academic freedom and delivered their petition. Arafat, recognizing the importance of the students, agreed that reforms were needed to safeguard student freedoms.[34]

The events at al-Najah had provoked outrage. Palestinian students had expected a total overhaul of the campus environment in light of the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and withdrawal of the Israeli military from major city centers. Instead, Palestinian Authority security forces had stormed campuses, collected information and detained long lines of political opponents. Among the detainees were the heads of the Hamas and Islamic Jihad student cells. Arrests took place both on campus and in the student dormitories, such as at Birzeit in the aftermath of the 1996 student demonstration.[35]

Despite Arafat's assurances to the student leaders, the Palestinian Authority continued its policy of administrative detention. After a hunger strike failed to resolve their grievances, students realized that as members of the opposition they would need allies outside the political domain to secure either their release or their rights as detainees. The Birzeit student council, which

was under Hamas leadership in 1996, was unable to help the detainees through calls for a public confrontation of the Palestinian Authority.[36]

The students sought aid from the universities, which considered the issue of detainees and prisoners central. Released prisoners were granted priority admission and detainees received support throughout the course of their studies. In an internal publication of Birzeit University faculty, students and other interested parties published a list of detained students, including the dates of arrest and status of incarceration.[37]

In light of the detention of students, myriad centers were established by the universities to deal with the multifaceted issue of human rights. Arrested students of the opposition appealed jointly with their universities in support of human rights.

Birzeit University – many of whose faculty were involved in negotiations with Israel during the Oslo years and who afterward became part and parcel of the Palestinian Authority – at the same time was both steadfastly committed to its students and an integral part of the establishment. The university had no wish to challenge the new government. Nonetheless, it remained obligated to its students, who had surpassed the faculty and administrative workers' unions to become the single most influential body within the university.[38]

Through its human rights center, the management of the university had raised its voice whenever a student, teacher or clerk was arrested by the Israeli security forces. The center now protested the detention of students Adi Ziyada, Muhammad Barloushi and Mustafa Atari by the Palestinian Authority. The protest centered on the lack of due process, which enabled extensive detention and harmed the principles of freedom and democracy upon which they aspired to build an independent Palestinian state.[39]

With the Shabiba paying a price for its identification with the ruling party, tension between the activists was high. Despite disagreements between leaders of the movement at Birzeit University, the student council – under the direction of the Shabiba – led the demonstration on March 3, 1996, against the Palestinian Authority's systemic violations of student liberty.[40]

Prior to the events at al-Najah University in the mid-1990s, the political conundrum of Fatah's youth led to a discussion of the role of democracy in Palestinian society and the nature of the relationship between Fatah, the Shabiba and the Palestinian Authority. The Shabiba considered democracy a foundational principle that needed to be rooted among its young members. In a 1995 commemorative issue of *Sawt al-Shabiba* published at al-Najah University, democracy was described as the "primary condition for success," embodied in the foundation of an independent Palestinian state.[41]

Alongside their concern for the democratic ideal, Shabiba members remained preoccupied with their place within Fatah and the Palestinian Authority. Despite their independent positions, which manifested in the large student march from Birzeit University to the parliament in 1996, many members of the Shabiba at Birzeit and al-Najah universities were in fact employees of the Palestinian Authority. Shabiba youth served as clerks in

government offices and as functionaries in the various security mechanisms, especially the preventive security and intelligence services.[42]

Amidst the peace process of the second half of the 1990s, identification with the authorities amplified political affiliations and the contest between parties in the universities. That many Shabiba members were also employees of the government hurt the movement, particularly in light of ever more public accusations of governmental corruption and politically motivated violations of human rights. Even the substantial funds channeled to the Shabiba throughout the Oslo period could not ameliorate the impact of these allegations.[43]

Fatah's reputation for leadership of the armed struggle, which had yielded a significant increase in power in the 1980s, was likewise hurt. Armed Fatah youth were increasingly identified as security personnel enforcing order in the Palestinian public sphere through subordination of the opposition with excessive and undemocratic force.

The political rise of the Islamic Bloc in the student arena

Amidst the dispute between political compromise and armed resistance, members of the Islamic Bloc presented themselves as the heirs apparent of the armed struggle against Israel. Against the image of corruption overtaking the Palestinian Authority, Hamas presented its socio-political alternative, which the Islamic Bloc of the universities carried forth in the public sphere.

Members of the Islamic Bloc at Hebron University dared to consider their 1995 electoral victory as a popular mandate for their platform. In an open letter, they pointed out the blunders of the "Oslo gang" and called them to adopt the position of the Islamic Bloc in accordance with the will of the people.[44]

The Islamic student movement considered itself the front line of Hamas's effort to overtake the Palestinian political arena. The young Palestinian Authority was aware of Hamas's public activities on campus. As an alternative to the ruling student councils, Hamas formed its own cultural committees holding political and cultural events, which were a boon to its recruitment of new members.

With the help of the preventive security forces (*al Amn al Wiqa'i*), the Palestinian Authority began tracking the Islamic Bloc. A sprawling surveillance network, comprised of sympathetic students and teachers, was established to keep a close eye on campus activists. Surveillance was tight, with the preventive security headquarters at Birzeit issuing daily and monthly reports on Islamic Bloc activities. But as the material piled up, it became apparent that the preventive security authority had little stomach for a direct confrontation. In accordance with Arafat's own policy, unwarranted altercations with the opposition concerning security were to be avoided.[45]

The Islamic Bloc operated with consistent loyalty to the Muslim Brothers and its principle of *da'wah*. As early as the 1990s, members of the Islamic Bloc were diligently constructing an Islamic Palestinian narrative grounded in

resistance, armed struggle and religious devotion. The cultural committees of the Islamic Bloc were key to the construction of an Islamic national memory. With their heritage from the Muslim Brothers they constructed a new mythos of sacrifice to complement and rival the assemblage of Fatah martyrs who had died for national liberation. Hence the movement elevated the likes of Imad ʿAql and Yahya Ayyash, who would become among the most celebrated individuals on the Palestinian street. Evoking the memory of Yahya Ayyash, a former student of electrical engineering at Birzeit University – as well as other martyrs who had been drafted as students into Hamas's armed wing, the *Izz al-din al-Qassam* Brigades – proved effective in eliciting student empathy for the movement.[46]

The militant discourse of the Islamic Bloc appealed to the student youth as a political alternative to the Palestinian Authority in the early 1990s. "Al-Amir" Mustafa Al-Lidawi, the head of the Islamic Bloc at Birzeit University, had been among the deportees of Marj al-Zuhur.[47] Seven additional members of the Birzeit Islamic Bloc had been deported alongside him. Yet such punishments did not deter Hamas, whose adherents continued to recruit students to its political and military wings.

Seminal to recruitment were the announcements and student journals distributed on campus wherein Hamas articulated its vision and a path for its realization. Students, for example, proclaimed at Birzeit in 1993:

> To you the glory, the mighty cavalry of *Izz al-din al-Qassam* / to you the glory, thine brigades … / from the furnace of hell erupt volcanoes of rage./ that is the inferno from which springs of freedom merge into rivers of blood … / that is the source of fire, blood and iron, the fedayyun making their way to the death of martyrs (the shuhada) … / their skulls become casings of bullets and provoke the enemy's loathing … / thou who pull the trigger, who drive the carts of fire, continue their path unceasingly, for the people are behind you … / this is the truth of the just war, this is the path for those who seek freedom and independence.[48]

In support of education as a tool of social development, Hamas invested significant resources in the student activities of the Islamic Bloc. Within this view, Hamas admonished the PLO for the educational strikes of the first Intifada, considering them harmful to the social fabric and national interest of the Palestinian people.[49]

With faith in students at the forefront of the Palestinian cultural revolution, Hamas dedicated considerable effort in student recruitment. The movement's charitable organizations were mobilized, raising funds for scholarships. Activists of the Islamic Bloc also collected money wherever solidarity could be found, near al-Aqsa mosque during Friday prayers, for instance.[50]

Money was a central factor in the competition to win hearts on Palestinian campuses. Directing resources to the student arena enabled Hamas to develop a range of activities, including the publication of journals. To attract

attention, Hamas journals at Birzeit and other universities were printed on colorful chrome paper, which attested to their significance in the recruitment and socialization of the young generation.

Hamas's journals also comprised an important tool on the political front, engendering the social and political changes they sought. In these pages, the struggle between Fatah and Hamas unfolded, the written word a weapon in the battle for the Palestinian arena.

In trying to create a social and political alternative, members of the Islamic Bloc cultivated a militant image and branded Hamas as the legitimate heir of the armed struggle for Palestinian liberation. This was promoted through the obfuscation of Fatah's historical role as the leading proponent of armed struggle, presenting it now as defeated and hollow. Such was aptly reflected in an article disseminated at Birzeit University entitled, "The day I was a Shabiba member."

In another article appearing at Birzeit, members of the Islamic Bloc addressed students through the persona of suicide bomber Sharif al-Khalil, who carried out an attack on Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem on September 4, 1997.[51] In al-Sharif's own voice, Hamas told the story of a student who had begun his studies in the faculty of engineering and then transferred to economics. In opposition to the surrender and compromise of Fatah, of which he was a member during his first days on campus, al-Sharif chose instead the path of martyrdom. He was recruited to the Islamic Bloc and joined its military wing, the *Izz al-din al-Qassam* Brigades.

The inability of the Palestinian Authority to envision new political horizons and its foot-dragging in negotiations with Israel strengthened Hamas among youth who had still not enjoyed the fruits of the political process. Amidst the ongoing fracturing of the various branches of the PLO, Hamas steadily preserved and increased its power on campus.

In contrast to the PLO, the lucid ideology of Hamas contributed to a strong support base in the universities. Hamas also engaged in periodic collaboration with the "*al-Jami'a Al-Islamiyya*" cell of the Islamic Jihad. In light of the rapid polarization of national politics, this tactical cooperation served to enhance the standing of radical religious candidates in student elections.[52]

Nonetheless, it often seemed as if the Islamic spirit that had enveloped Hamas might also harm the movement. Elements identifying with the Salafi tradition began to operate on campuses and did not abide the political institutionalization of Hamas within the universities. In taking over the student councils, Hamas was obliged to cooperate with university administrators and maintain positive professional relationships with various functionaries of the Ministry of Education.

The Salafists, who often operated under the banner of the Islamic Liberation Party, stood against such normalization, portraying it as a rejection of the Islamic state – "the khalifate" – in favor of a Palestinian nation state. Members of the Islamic Liberation Party were infuriated that Hamas had begun to incorporate within the institutions of local governance

established within the purview of the Palestinian Authority.[53] The Islamic Jihad had taken a similar religious stand against the formation of a Palestinian state within the framework of the Oslo Accords.[54]

Yet despite their political attacks, Liberation Party members were unable to offer a viable public alternative to Hamas. The movement concentrated its efforts on *da'wah*, but took no active role in jihad. Party members dismissed nationalism as a western import designed to weaken the foundations of the Islamic world. The de-facto absence of militarism and disavowal of the Palestinian national identity limited the Salafis' popular appeal.[55]

The passivity of the student branch of the Islamic Liberation Party (*Kutlat al-Wa'i*) was intended to engender an internal shift of consciousness that would lead to the restoration of the Islamic khalif as a political form. Hence, Islamic opposition to Hamas on campus was ineffective. Members of the Islamic Bloc took full advantage of Hamas's public profile. In the face of attacks from the Islamic Liberation Party, Hamas formed clever political alliances with Islamic Jihad on campus. The *da'wah* was thus promoted on campus, rebuffing religious criticism. The parties' alliance also manifested in the combination of a joint list for student elections and in the formation of student government coalitions.[56]

Members of the Islamic Bloc fully exploited the fact that Islam had become a central pillar in the everyday lives of ordinary Palestinians. In retrospect, members of the Muslim Brothers also controlled the administrative council of the first Palestinian student association in Cairo.[57] Yasir Arafat had only seized control after complementing Palestinian nationalism with a strong religious sentiment. He was aware of Islam's compelling mythos and forged his alliance with the Muslim Brothers in Cairo in order to disseminate the message of nationalism to the devout masses. It was from this student association that Fatah eventually emerged.

Starting with the first Intifada, members of the Islamic Bloc had begun to infuse the Muslim Brothers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with nationalist content. The transformation from the phase of *da'wah* to political and military action leveraged the standing of Hamas as a social and political alternative to Fatah in the mid-1990s.

In the youth of the Islamic Bloc, Hamas saw the seeds of future leadership and invested extensively in training them. Many of these young activists would eventually reach key positions in the leadership of Hamas and drive its success in municipal elections in 2005 and parliamentary elections in 2006. Among those who would figure prominently in Palestinian politics were Ismail Haniyah, Munir al-Masri and Sami al-Zuhari. Alongside its role in the development of political leadership, the Islamic Bloc stood out in its ability to recruit activists for its military wing, most famously the engineer Yahya Ayyash and former head of the Islamic Bloc at Birzeit University Muhammad Shritah.

The involvement of the Islamic Bloc in paramilitary activity gave its members the reputation they needed to spur recruitment and effective campaigning

at the various universities. In stark contrast with the Palestinian Authority, which had failed to articulate a clear political vision, the new prestige of the Islamic Bloc was grounded in notions of jihad and colored by national struggle.

Towards the end of the 1990s and the impending outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising, or al-Aqsa Intifada, Hamas and the Islamic Bloc managed to gain control over the majority of student councils. In addition to its total domination of the Islamic University of Gaza, Hamas's conservative image helped it take control of the student councils at the universities of Birzeit and Hebron.

Taking advantage of ideologically driven political instability, Hamas imposed strict party discipline, leveraging the trend toward conservatism to broaden its activity among the youth. The movement invested considerably in first-year students, accompanying them from the process of registration. Their initiative paid dividends. A study of student council elections at Birzeit and al-Najah conducted by the Palestinian Center for Research indicated that among freshman students the Islamic Bloc had built a substantial lead over Fatah and the leftist opposition.[58]

The growing religious conservatism of Palestinian nationalism led al-Quds University President Sari Nusseibeh to challenge the Islamification of the university. At the outset of his term, Nusseibeh estimated that 90 percent of students supported Hamas.[59] This rise in Hamas's political influence on campus compelled Fatah to react. In contrast to Egypt, where in 1979 the government had forbidden radical student opposition to the peace agreement with Israel,[60] the Palestinian Authority gave the Islamic Bloc substantial latitude on Palestinian campuses.

Shabiba's crisis, which stemmed from its affiliation with the ruling party, compelled it to promote a discourse more in line with current trends. This also helped mitigate criticism of Fatah, which claimed to be fighting for democratic values within the Palestinian Authority. Among young members of the Shabiba, joining the ranks of the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus had taken the place of armed struggle against Israel, heretofore the movement's trademark. The popularity of Hamas's militant discourse, complemented by the exploits of the *Izz al-din al-Qassam* Brigades in contempt of the Oslo Accords, compelled Fatah to up the ante.

The violence encouraged by Hamas accordingly influenced members of the Shabiba; in the summer of 1996, they headed in droves to the front lines of riots against Israeli excavations around the Western Wall. Some in the security forces even took part in armed clashes, confrontations that would exact a heavy toll on the student partisans.

With the deadlock of the political process, Hamas's campus influence grew stronger. To win students over, Fatah would have to articulate a more combative agenda, supported by public rallies featuring the burning models of settlements, detonated buses and the exaltation of the movement's martyr heritage.[61]

Of course, such rituals stood in contrast to other activities in which Fatah participated, such as the People to People programs that facilitated direct

exchange between Israeli and Palestinian students. Escalating its combativeness, the Shabiba called for continued struggle against Israel and contested the commonly held assumption that with regards to negotiations, time was in Israel's favor.[62]

The militant student discourse towards the end of the 1990s set the stage for the next round of violence. Indeed, the youths now in charge of the universities were both socially and politically distinct from the generation at the helm of the first Intifada.

Most of the students had come of age in the midst of a political process in which Israel had disengaged from the Palestinian economy. Many had no direct contact with Israelis, save those in military fatigues. This generation's formative years saw the end of the first Intifada and the conclusion of the Gulf War. The Middle East peace negotiations that followed had been crowned with the signing of the Oslo Accords and the founding of the Palestinian Authority.

These youths, who took part as children in the first Intifada – an uprising that had ushered an era of burgeoning hope for Palestinian independence – had reached a dead end. Supporters of the Islamic Bloc believed that through jihad, they could remake the social and political landscape of the Palestinian society. Among the Shabiba were some who believed that armed struggle and political negotiations could not exist alongside one another. The stage had been set for a renewal of violence that would envelop a new generation. On September 28, 2000, the al-Aqsa Intifada was set in motion.

Notes

1 The FIDA Party, headed by Yasir Abd Rabbo, broke from the DFLP on account of the latter's Leninist–Marxist worldview and support of Armed Struggle as a means of resolving the Palestinian question. The split was triggered by the differences between Abd Rabbo and DFLP leader Naif Hawatmah regarding the October 1991 Madrid Conference.
2 Namely, amongst others, Hanan Ashrawi, Saib Arikat, Sari Nusseibeh and Riyad Malki.
3 Abawini, Raduan, "Dawr Harakat al-Shabiba fi Iʿadat Tafʿil al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya", p. 121.
4 The Israeli Intelligence and Heritage Commemoration Center, "Shahid and Suicide Culture in Territory Universities", www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/html/final/sp/sib3_10_03/hp.htm#a
5 See: *Adwa an al-Intihabat* (Jamaʾat Khalil: Iyar 1997), pp. 15, 19. This was the single issue of a *al-Kutla al-Islamiyya* mouthpiece in the University of Hebron ever to be published.
6 Loren D. Lybbarger, *Identity and Religion In Palestine: The Struggle between Islamism and Secularism in the Occupied Territories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 153.
7 Thanassis Cambians, "Hamas U.", *The Boston Globe*, February 28, 2010. www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2010/02/28/hamas_u/
8 See for instance: *Sawt al-Shabiba*, *Sawt al-ʿAsifa*, *Fajr al-Shabiba* and other Fatah student publications.
9 Yaʾari, Schiff, *Intifada*, pp. 121–2.

10 Rema Hammami, "From Immodesty to Collaboration: Hamas, the Women's Movement, and National Identity in the Intifada", in Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (eds), *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 194–210.
11 Lybbarger, *Identity and Religion In Palestine*, p. 157.
12 See for instance the Hamas publications for women, such as *al-Sirat* and *al-Bashir*, circulated across Palestinian campuses.
13 Heidi Levine/Sipa Press.
14 *Sawt al-Jamiʾa*, May 28, 1996, p. 1.
15 IDF Archives, 44/1171/88, Shlomo Politis, to Head of Civil Administration, November 7, 1983. The IDF Central Command pressed for imposing limitations on the movement of students from Gaza to the West Bank and vice versa. See: IDF Archives, 44/1171/88, Head of Civil Adminstration (West Bank) Chief of Staff, Attn: Governors of Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron *et al*., September 22, 1983. At the time of this correspondence, some 200 students from Gaza were studying in al-Najah. The Governor of Nablus, after having consulted with the security services, responded that the latter recommended that there was no justification in terms of security needs for pursuing such course of action. The saga points to the fact that the policy was dictated by the Chief of the Central Command. See: IDF Archives, 44/1171/88, Deputy Governer of the Nablus district to Head of Civil Administration Office, September 25, 1983.
16 *Sawt al-Jamiʾa,* March 26, 1996, p. 4.
17 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country*, p. 413.
18 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filistiniyya*, p. 151.
19 ʿAbawini, Raduan, "Dawr Harakat al-Shabiba fi Iʿadat Tafʾil al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya", p. 122.
20 Ibid., p. 123.
21 Jamiʾat Birzeit, *al-Nashra al-Dakhaliyya*, al-ʾAdad al-Sabʾa wa al-ʾAsrun (Nisan 1994), p. 3.
22 Ibid., p. 4.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 From the author's private collection.
26 *Sawt al-Shabiba* (Jamiʾat Birzeit), al-ʿAdad al-Awal (Kanun al-Thani, 1994), p. 3.
27 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filistiniyya,* pp. 158–61.
28 This observation is made most apparent in comparing the *Fajr al-Shabiba* mouthpiece issues published in the 1980s with the *Sawt al-Shabiba* issues published in Birtzeit throughout the 1990s.
29 *Sawt al-Shabiba* (Jamiʾat al-Khalil), undated, p. 1. This publication was published by Fatah in the University of Hebron during the mid-1990s.
30 Ibid.
31 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filistiniyya*, p. 161.
32 Ibrahim Khrisha, "Dawr al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya fi al-Ardi al-Filistiniyya wa-ʾAlakatiha mʾa al-Sulta wa al-Ahzab Bʾad Oslo", in Majdi al-Maliki (ed.), *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya wa-Muhimmat al-Marhala – Tajarib wa-ara* (Ramallah: Mowatin-al Muʾasasa al-Filastiniyya li-dirasat al-dimikratiyya, 2000), p. 101.
33 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filistiniyya*, p. 165.
34 Ibrahim Khrisha, "Dawr al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya fi al-Ardi al-Filistiniyya wa-ʾAlakatiha mʾa al-Sulta wa al-Ahzab Bʾad Oslo", p. 101.
35 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filistiniyya*, p. 166.
36 See statement by the Birzeit University Student Council, "Biyan Sadir ʿAn Majlis al-Tulaba ba-Tarikh 7/11/1996", in: Jamiʾat Birzeit, *Al-Nashra al-Ialamiyya*, Al-ʾAdad al-Sabʾa wa al-ʾAshrun (Shabt 1997), p. 28.

37 See for instance: Jamiʾat Birzeit, *al-Nashra al-Dakhaliyya*, al-ʾAdad al-Sabʾa wa al-ʾAshrun (Nisan 1994), pp. 24–5; Jamiʾat Birzeit, *Al-Nashra al-Dakhaliyya*, Al-ʾAdad al-Sabʾa wa al-ʾAsrun (Haziran 1994), p. 28.
38 "Shahid and Suicide Culture in Territory Universities."
39 Jamiʾat Birzeit, *Al-Nashra al-Aʾalamiyya*, Al-ʾAdad al-Sabʾa wa al-ʾAsrun (Shabt 1997), p. 28.
40 Abawini, Raduan, "Dawr Harakat al-Shabiba fi Iʿadat Tafʿil al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya", p. 121.
41 *Sawt al-Shabiba* (al-Najah), January 1, 1995, p. 20. This issue was published on Fatah's anniversary, and the Shabiba members highlighted the fact that it was published in the State of Palestine (*Dawlat Filastin*).
42 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filistiniyya*, p. 169.
43 Ihab Al Jariri, "The Palestinian Student Movement After Oslo", *Palestine–Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture* 6, 4 (1999/2000), p. 34.
44 Al-Adwa (Iyar 1997), p. 1.
45 "Shahid and Suicide Culture in Territory Universities."
46 See: "Shahid and Suicide Culture in Territory Universities", appendixes A, B.
47 On December 16, 1992, the Israeli government headed by Itzhak Rabin decided to expel 415 Hamas activists to Marj al-Zuhur, north of the Israeli Security Zone in Southern Lebanon. The expulsion followed the kidnaping and assassination of an Israeli border police officer by a Hamas cell. The list of deportees consisted of members of both the military wing and the political arm of the movement.
48 Hamas poster dated October 6, 1993, Birzeit University. Captured at the Preventive Security office in the town of Birzeit, available online at: The Israeli Intelligence and Heritage Commemoration Center, www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/html/final/sp/sib3_10_03/b.htm
49 Yaʾari, Schiff, *Intifada*, p. 241.
50 *Al-Minbar* (Majala Dawriyya Isdraha Majlis Ittihad al-Talabat Kuliyyat al-Handasa wa-al-Tiknolojiya al-Khalil), ʿAdad al-Rabiʿa (Adar, 1998), p. 3.
51 Five Israelis were killed in this bombing.
52 Ghiyatha, *al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filistiniyya*, p. 162.
53 *Al-Ukab*, Al-ʿAdad al-Rabiʿa (Elul, 1994), pp. 3–4.
54 See for instance, *al-Risala* (Nashra usbuiyya Tasdarah al-Jamiaʾ al-Islamiyya fi al-Watan al-Muhtall), al-ʾAdad al-Talith, May 20, 1994, pp. 2–3. The discourse vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority was typical of the Islamic Jihad student publications throughout the second half of the 1990s. See Islamic Jihad mouthpieces *al-Risala* and *Sawt al-Jamiʾa al-Islamiyya*.
55 *Al-ʿUkab*, Al-ʿAdad al-Rabiʿa (Elul, 1994), pp. 3–4.
56 For instance, the Islamic Bloc and the Islamic Jihad student movement, dubbed *Al-Jamaʾa Al-Islamiyya*, formed a joint list in the elections at al-Najah, Birzeit and Hebron. The motivation of this partnership was to avoid votes being lost, although it also signals Islamic Jihad's recognition of its weakness as a mass movement. It is worth mentioning that Islamic Jihad perceived itself as an elitist movement, and was not initially designed to appeal to the masses. See, for instance, on the triumph of the joint list in the al-Najah University elections of 1997: *Sawt al-Jamiʾa* December 28, 1997, p. 4.
57 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 72.
58 Farhat Asʾad, "Waqʾia al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya wa-Muhimmat al-Marhala al-Jadida Bʾad Oslo", p. 83.
59 Nusseibeh, *Once Upon a Country*, p. 303.
60 Farhat Asʾad, "Wakʾa al-Haraka al-Talabiyya al-Filastiniyya wa-Muhimmat al-Marhala al-Jadida Bʾad Oslo", p. 82.
61 "Shahid and Suicide Culture in Terittory Universities."
62 *Sawt al-ʿAsifa* (Birzeit), Al-ʿAdad al-Awal (Kanun al-Thani 1994), p. 11.

Summary

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Palestinian student movement played a central role in shaping the political map and re-establishing the Palestinian national identity in the post-Nakba era. The principal challenge facing the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS) was organizational and political. Gathering a majority of Palestinian students under a common organizational roof in the 1950s and early 1960s was not only challenging from an administrative perspective, it had social and political implications as well.

Students enjoyed free speech on campus, a safe space not afflicted by the daily trials of their society. Yet they remained in perpetual correspondence with the public. On campuses, the students of the Palestinian diaspora began to speak out. The physical distance from their homeland and lack of functioning political organizations encouraged these students to form a movement that would become politically prominent and serve as a model for society.

The student movement's political activities forged a common national identity among an entire generation of youths whose childhood had been shaped by the Nakba. Through social and political activism, this young egeneration of Palestinians began to recover from a sense of defeat that had haunted them since 1948. In 1952, Yasir Arafat promoted the principle of "self-reliance" as the head of the Palestinian Student Union in Cairo. From this crucible emerged both the GUPS and Fatah, respectively established in Kuwait and in Cairo in 1959.

The political activism of the student movement marked the beginning of a process of national awakening among Palestinian students. From 1948 until the establishment of the PLO, the GUPS comprised the single most important representative political body of the Palestinian people and served as a political proving ground for an emerging cadre of Palestinian youth leaders.

Student activism set the tone for a particular perception of Palestinian national identity. Coping with their status as a national community deprived of sovereignty, young Palestinians tended to identify with supranational ideologies in the 1950s and 1960s. Through their activism, students were the first to attempt a change of this perception. It should be noted, however, that the Palestinian national movement continued to contain various supranational components, including Pan-Arabic and Pan-Islamic ideologies.

As the students endeavored to express a particular brand of Palestinian political representation, the GUPS set out to establish international coalitions to promote its standing in the international political arena. This recognition earned the GUPS access to Arab monarchs and presidents as the formal representatives of the Palestinian cause.

It is no wonder then that at the annual conference of the GUPS in 1962, a call was issued for the establishment of a cross-sector, popular representative organization that would comprise a framework for continuing the Palestinian national struggle. Two years later and with the support of the Arab League, the Palestinian Liberation Organization came into being. The PLO and GUPS enjoyed only the briefest of honeymoons. After the PLO tried to subordinate the GUPS and negate its independence, the two sides embarked on a long struggle for political power.

The GUPS was not a classical professional organization. In fact, most of its activities were political in nature, focused on a revival of the Palestinian national identity. In the aftermath of the cultural and political ruin of the 1948 war, the PLO sought to inject new substance into the Palestinian identity.

In addition to its call for Palestinian political reform, the GUPS cultivated the value of armed struggle. Fatah, which had grown out of the Palestinian Student Union in Cairo during the 1950s, upheld the doctrine of armed struggle, through which students hoped to manifest the same type of socio-cognitive change they had seen in Egypt. The doctrine of armed struggle had been influenced by the exploits of Frantz Fanon, a French psychiatrist who had crossed the lines to join the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN).

Fanon was considered this movement's philosopher. His book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, dealt with national liberation struggles in the Third World. Fanon sanctified the use of uninhibited violence in the overthrow of colonialism. He described such violence as a purifying drug that instills a sense of freedom in human beings, something he claimed could only be achieved through sacrifice. According to Fanon, decolonization would always be a violent phenomenon whose purpose was the replacement of one "type" of people with another.[1]

The principle of armed struggle served as a tool for motivating the younger generation to encourage intergenerational identification. The cleansing of the past and creation of a new generation was central to GUPS activism. Within this framework, many GUPS members played an active role in the armed struggle in association with various Palestinian factions, particularly Fatah.[2] The GUPS established camps for intensive military training during the universities' summer holiday. The young students of the diaspora thus considered themselves a reserve battalion of the Palestinian revolution.

The reputation of the GUPS was at the same time leveraged in the forging of international political coalitions. The spirit of the time enabled the GUPS to ally themselves with streams of the New Left, which considered themselves a united front in the fight against global imperialism.

In this coalition, the GUPS fulfilled a key role as the flag bearer of the Palestinian national cause in the international diplomatic arena. No other organization was positioned to take up the challenge of Palestinian diplomatic relations. Through its cultural activities, the GUPS had worked to shape the character of Palestinian nationalism. To do so, the organization initiated academic conferences and published a journal, which it circulated among its members and potential supporters.

Promotion of the Palestinian cause through such channels was critical. The organization's web of international and Arab connections afforded it global prestige and practical influence with Arab leaders abroad.

Its considerable political power and esteemed representation of Palestinian youths placed the GUPS at the center of the contest among the multifold factions of the PLO. Control over GUPS institutions meant control over budgets, seats of power and an ability to recruit and motivate new members, not only within the GUPS but to the various other factions as well.

Beyond expanding the political awareness of its young members and introducing them to armed struggle, the activism of the GUPS served as a socio-economic springboard. The considerable experience and myriad political connections they accumulated enabled many young GUPS activists to continue on in the public sphere. Many turned to politics and diplomacy, while others took the route of armed struggle.[3]

The social mobility that the GUPS afforded led many of its members to leading positions in the PLO, especially after 1969, when the factions of a new generation took over the organization and instilled in it a spirit of armed struggle.

That many PLO functionaries after the 1969 revolution were ex-student leaders strengthened the bond between the PLO and GUPS. This relationship was doubly beneficial, as leaders of the PLO were well aware of the GUPS's significant political power and diverse political connections within the international and Arab arenas.

The young PLO leadership, comprised of senior Fedayeen, were more directly in touch with the street than their predecessors, who belonged to the respectable families of an old social order associated with defeat in the 1948 war.

The intimate familiarity of the new PLO leadership concerning the organizational capacities of the GUPS strengthened the relationship between the two organizations. PLO leaders made a point of attending the general conferences of the GUPS and Fatah, the most powerful organization within the PLO, secured key positions for itself in the GUPS administration.[4] The branches of the GUPS comprised a path to political dominance and, in practical terms, provided Fatah scores of recruitment centers for its own movement.

PLO leaders took care to foster partnerships with GUPS members, especially in times of crisis. The relationship between the two organizations was hierarchical, since the GUPS had been subordinated to the PLO's popular

organizations department. Yet PLO leaders treated GUPS activists with respect. As far as the Palestinian political system was concerned, the GUPS was a battlefield that mirrored the struggle for power among the various Palestinian factions within the PLO.

Dominance over the leadership and branches of the GUPS entailed both ideological and financial gains. Through its local branches, the Palestinian factions were able to socialize a younger generation and imbue in these activists their particular political agendas and organizational systems.

The considerable political significance of the GUPS attracted to its annual conventions not only Palestinian functionaries, but also Arab regional and international players. International recognition was one of the GUPS's most important assets in its far-flung political confrontation with the Zionist movement. To this end, the GUPS leveraged its branches abroad, especially those in South Germany, France and Latin America.[5]

From the time of its inception until the Fedayeen took control of the PLO leadership, the GUPS made every effort to bring about a changed Palestinian society. Its members were active both politically and militarily, participating in training camps during their summer vacations from university.[6] Such activities were even more prevalent in times of crisis and military confrontation.

As an integral part of the PLO, the GUPS had to contend with the numerous obstacles encountered by the Palestinian movements during the second half of the twentieth century. Moreover, the inter-Arab power struggles and the Arab world's wars with Israel not only caused repeated postponement of GUPS annual conventions, but also forced the relocation of its executive committee. In 1977, the peace process between Israel and Egypt compelled the movement to relocate its headquarters from Cairo to the Fakhani borough of Beirut alongside the PLO management.[7] When the PLO deserted Beirut in the wake of the 1982 Lebanon war, GUPS offices were likewise moved to Tunisia.

The devastation of that war and the relocation of GUPS's headquarters to Tunisia attracted significant attention to the movement's ninth annual convention, held in Algiers between February 12 and 17, 1984. Along with senior Palestinian leaders, representatives of myriad international organizations and student movements also participated in the convention. After the devastating blow to the Palestinian movement during the 1982 war and in light of Palestinian infighting within the refugee camps of Beirut, their presence held great significance for the GUPS leadership.[8]

The ninth annual GUPS conference reflected the rising significance of the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which came at the expense of the institutions of the PLO's Arab diaspora. This trend emerged in the 1970s and was also reflected in the PLO's formal decision to allocate extensive resources to the civil arena in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[9]

The rise in importance of the occupied Palestinian territories occurred amidst a crisis shared by all of the foreign-based institutions of the PLO.

In its conferences, the GUPS began to attribute increasing significance to student activism in the West Bank during the early 1970s.

The student movement in the occupied territories began to coalesce with the founding of Palestinian universities in the early 1970s. These institutions contributed to a novel intellectual nationalism. As a human resource produced by the universities, students by the thousand were expected to reflect the changing nature of the Palestinian national struggle. They took up the mantle of change sweeping Palestinian society, a product of social involvement and political experience aided by academic experience acquired on campus.

In this context, it is important to mention that Palestinian universities considered themselves an integral component of the society in which they operated and spurned seclusion in ivory towers. They took upon themselves the important role of constructing the Palestinian national identity and laid the ground for the establishment of a Palestinian state. Israel took notice and in 1974 charged Birzeit University President Dr. Hanna Nasir with nationalistic activism and deported him from the West Bank. Later, the Israeli military authority formulated measures of supervision and control over the Palestinian academic system in the form of military order no. 854, which granted the Civil Administration unfettered access to the academic system.

Military order no. 854 was designed to deprive Palestinian universities of their academic freedom and allow the Israeli administration full control over their activities. The order provided the Israelis unlimited access to the inner workings of Palestinian academia, including supervision of its infrastructure and academic content, as well as the power to expel students suspected of security violations.

The Israeli administration's approach towards the Palestinian academic system was formulated strategically. The like treatment of students and faculty galvanized solidarity between these groups. They joined forces and rebelled against the military order together, an indication of their organizational weakness. As far as the student movement was concerned, fighting against military order no. 854 allowed it to develop the international political and diplomatic experience it lacked.

The student movement of the occupied territories, like its counterpart in the Arab diaspora, mirrored the political activism of the various Palestinian factions. The principal difference between the student scene of the occupied territories and the GUPS at large was the conspicuous activism in the occupied territories of the Muslim Brothers, which had been strategically excluded from the GUPS abroad.[10]

The student movement in the occupied territories formed amidst pressing need, distinct from the conditions that led to the establishment of the GUPS in the Arab diaspora. The challenges and political situation particular to each also affected the organizational modus operandi and political perceptions of these groups. The common denominator, however, remained their shared struggle for the Palestinian cause.

The Palestinian society suffered various organizational weaknesses. Direct control of the Israeli military over life in the territories, enforced through the Civil Administration, prevented the student movement of the occupied territories from forming a national student association that could unite all of the university student councils. The situation, unique to the student movement of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, also precluded its membership in the GUPS. Despite the latter's identification with the student scene emerging in the occupied territories, this movement lacked representation in GUPS institutions. Its sole representatives were student leaders who had been deported from the West Bank and appointed to positions within the GUPS on individual merit.

In addition to geographical separation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the question of political representation further complicated the formation of a national student association in these territories.

As in the GUPS, the student cells of the occupied territories were essentially political and relied on the patronage of their respective national movements. Ideological conflict led to struggles for power and complicated the formation of a unified, national-level parent organization. Such conflict unfolded concurrently and under the direct influence of the struggles for national leadership within the PLO. These only intensified in the wake of the various geopolitical crises that enveloped the Palestinian cause. Political division, exacerbated in the occupied territories by the Muslim Brothers, precluded the consolidation of a national student union.

On top of these obstacles, such a student union was inimical to the Israeli authorities, which, via military order no. 854, held firm control over the whole of the Palestinian academic system.

The student movement of the West Bank and Gaza Strip considered itself to be at the forefront of the Palestinian struggle for national self-determination. In addition to its political activism, which aimed to socialize young students on campus, the student movement promoted its vision of social change off-campus as well. Its methods were based on volunteer social programs that would strengthen the bond between the students and the various sectors of Palestinian society. Initiated first by the communist movement, Fatah followed suit and extended the sphere of volunteerism via its own work committees throughout the early 1980s.

The PLO's decision to initiate a volunteer program of public works indicated a change of mindset after the 1982 war. Its military weakness and geographical isolation from the front lines of confrontation with Israel demanded a different approach. The decision to increase civic activism among the local population in the territories aimed to bolster their loyalty to the PLO. This step was also designed to weaken the growing support of prominent political figures in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Though loyal to the PLO, the organization's foreign-based leaders sought to prevent such figures from consolidating an alternative national leadership. Allocations for public activities created a useful dependency and helped to recruit a subsequent generation into the folds of the PLO.

Students comprised the ideal target audience for promoting social works. In contrast to the ethos of armed struggle that had served as the GUPS's ideological center of gravity and helped it recruit a generation of Palestinian youths in the 1960s, the volunteer programs reflected a changed political reality.

Conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip made it very difficult for students to carry out the spirit of armed struggle. They were under the strict supervision of the Israeli administration, as well as their own security services. Despite their ambition to effect social change, their efforts morphed into a certain brand of militancy. The heads of the student movement in the occupied territories were directly affiliated with the armed wings of the various Palestinian factions, especially Fatah. The Fatah-affiliated leaders of the student movement had taken up their positions after having served prison sentences in Israel for participation in militant activities.[11]

Incarceration in Israel proved a defining experience for the student leaders, especially those affiliated with Fatah, who dominated the student movement in the early 1980s. Prison served as a classroom where they acquired organizational and leadership abilities they would later employ in the establishment of student cells across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The prisoners issue also occupied a key position on the student movement agenda. Among other things, the student associations endeavored to secure staff positions for ex-prisoners and to facilitate their enrollment into the various universities.[12]

Prison life was given voice in exhibitions initiated by the student unions and the great significance of prisoners to the Palestinian society was reflected throughout the academic and political spheres. The Palestinian universities formed human rights centers to deal with the prisoners issue, publishing the names of students incarcerated by Israel.[13]

The student movement of the occupied territories reached its peak in the mid-1980s. Beyond effecting change and creating a new generation of local leaders advocating on behalf of the PLO in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, throughout this period, student council elections were perceived by the Palestinian public and Israeli administration alike as a litmus test for the popularity of the PLO and its various factions. Elections received wide attention and were a key topic of journalistic concern in the territories.

The student movement's political experience made it a greenhouse for future political leaders. While many of the leaders of the student movement were persecuted by the Israeli administration, the Israeli security services branded the most prominent as a threat to national security. They were frequently placed under administrative detention and subject to a range of sanctions.[14] Young leaders such as Marwan Barghouti and Mohammed Dahlan were even deported from the West Bank and Gaza Strip and absorbed in the PLO institutions of the Arab diaspora.

As the student movement of the occupied territories ascended, the GUPS waned. The struggle against Israel carried out by Palestinian students in the West Bank and Gaza Strip earned them an aura of prestige. The popular struggle for national liberation trumpeted in the international campaigns

of the various PLO factions was simultaneously painted as a struggle for academic freedom.

The stormy political atmosphere of the 1980s, in addition to an economic crisis unfolding for all sectors and economic classes of Palestinian society, set the stage for the outbreak of the December 1987 Intifada. Many of the youths and students who led the initial riots considered them a continuation of the 1986 student Intifada. The Israeli Authorities responded with disruptions to the academic routine, ordering the closure of the universities it claimed served as rallying points for mass demonstrations.

Closing down the universities had a tremendous effect on the activities of the student movement. Many of its leaders were arrested, administratively detained and deported. Along with the daily routine, the shutdown interrupted the social democratization promoted by the students. As part of such processes, student council elections served as an exemplary model. Despite the challenges, Palestinian universities endeavored to continue functioning throughout the stormy days of the Intifada. Classes were convened in private apartments, civil society offices and even hotels. Yet the physical and social impact of the Intifada prevented the student unions from functioning properly. The student council elections were suspended. The University of Bethlehem was unique in that it managed to hold student council elections, in which Fatah won a majority. During the Intifada, scores of students dropped out of school and joined the popular committees administering public activities throughout the rural West Bank. Many enlisted with the military arms of Fatah or other factions.

Palestinian academia remained in a state of suspension throughout the Intifada. When university life was finally restored at the beginning of 1991, the student political sphere came roaring back to life. Yet the post-Intifada routine was markedly different. The Palestinian public was beaten, with continuous struggle having taken a major economic toll. A new world order and the launching of a formal peace process with the Madrid convention in October 1991 brought about new currents of hope. Students were optimistic that the Palestinian state for which they had been fighting would come to fruition. Hence they took it upon themselves to introduce the public to the values of democracy and serve as agents of social change.

The signing of the Oslo Accords and establishment of the Palestinian Authority serves as an important point of reference in the history of the student movement of the occupied Palestinian territories. The Oslo Accords brought about major changes in the student movement, bringing about the split into two principal factions: those who supported the agreement and those who stood against it.

On campus, this split brought some strange bedfellows together in opposition: Hamas and the New Left. This unlikely bond was established through a shared rejection of any political compromise with Israel, an approach at odds with the socio-economic worldviews of both groups. These were the same platforms over which the various student factions had fought bitterly throughout the 1980s until the outbreak of the Intifada. At the forefront of

the opposition to the peace process, the Islamic Bloc led the confrontation with Fatah's student wing, the Shabiba. With the exception of the Islamic University of Gaza, Fatah had retained complete control over the Palestinian campuses in the 1980s. The founding of the Palestinian Authority, of which Fatah was considered the exclusive governing party, harmed the party's credibility among students.

Fatah's political affiliation with the Palestinian Authority decimated popular support of its Shabiba movement. Allegations of corruption, human rights violations and governmental incompetence, which had been nominally reserved for Fatah as the governing movement, were now directed also toward the Shabiba movement. Many of its members also served as officials in the new Palestinian Authority, in particular within its multifold security mechanisms. Politically, Fatah was not especially well organized and it suffered internal schisms concerning its relationship with its student branch and the Shabiba movement's attitude towards peace and compromise with Israel.

In stark contrast to the ideological crisis facing Fatah, its political rival, Hamas, presented a cogent political agenda: relentless armed struggle and rejection of political compromise. Armed with the religious edict that the entirety of Palestine is an Islamic trust over which negotiations are morally forbidden, Hamas set out as the new champion of armed struggle against Israel. Through this important political maneuver, Hamas sought to harness the Palestinian collective memory of armed struggle, a tool of national identity formation originally forged by the Fatah movement.

Hamas considered its student arm, the Islamic Bloc, to be a forerunner in bringing about socio-political change. The movement envisioned an Islamic state over the entire land of Mandatory Palestine. That Hamas was not part of the PLO's administrative structure legitimized its vigorous opposition to the Oslo Accords. It was joined in this move by the Islamic Jihad movement.

Hamas's objection of the Oslo Accords was rooted in UN Resolutions 242 and 338, which effectively recognized Israel's right to exist. Though its rejection of the treaty prevented Hamas from participating in national elections in 1996, the movement's exclusion from parliament did not preclude political and civic activism. On campus, the Islamic Bloc was at the forefront of such political involvement. Through religious indoctrination, Hamas attempted to socialize a generation of youths and the formation of a new political worldview. The effort was prominent on the movement's agenda and Hamas allocated significant resources to this end. To undermine the nascent Palestinian Authority, Hamas even formed an alliance with the PFLP, a move that would have been inconceivable a decade earlier.

Allocations to support recruitment included benefits for activists, such as reimbursement of tuition and dorm fees. Hamas's journals were colorful and of better quality than those of Fatah and the movement dedicated itself to conquering Birzeit University, the beating heart of Palestinian student politics. Hamas understood well that such a move would bear long-term national resonance.

Campus activities of the Islamic Bloc were characterized by a militancy that bridged the Palestinian national struggle with the values embodied by religious jihad. In contrast to the Palestinian Authority, which had caved in to international pressure and surrendered the historic land of Palestine, Hamas tried to appropriate the ethos of armed struggle and emphasized resistance. The Islamic Bloc erected a tree of National Religious Martyrdom and emphasized the role of the students. At its center was Yahya Ayyash, a graduate of the Faculty of Engineering at Birzeit University and an icon of resistance among the young generation.

The infrastructure of the Islamic Bloc served as a recruitment mechanism for Hamas's military arm, the *Izz al-Din al-Qassam* Brigades. The Palestinian security services were well aware of this and placed the Islamic Bloc under close scrutiny. In time of trouble, the security services even took preventive measures, raiding campuses and dormitories to make arrests. In the eyes of the public, these moves only harmed Fatah and the Palestinian Authority, as storming these protected zones violated the sanctity of academic freedom and human rights. Such acts empowered Hamas to present itself to the public as the standard bearer of the armed struggle and smear the security forces of Fatah as operating on behalf of foreign interests. Hence confrontations between loyalists of Fatah and Hamas were common on campus.

The Shabiba movement defended itself as a guardian of the young Palestinian democracy, promoting those values requisite to a strong and healthy society. Leaders of the Shabiba often confronted the Palestinian Authority when they felt academic freedoms were being jeopardized. The pretense of democracy allowed Fatah Shabiba activists to swallow their pride and concede their loss in the student council elections of the mid-1990s.

The struggle between Fatah and Hamas painted on-campus student activism entirely political. The social activities that had characterized the student movement of the early 1980s were almost completely forgotten. This detachment from the community, alongside the development of state institutions and a sprawling network of civil society organizations, weakened the Palestinian student movement.

This movement would not regain its strength of the 1980s. Persistent questions on the political front frustrated the consolidation of a parent organization to unite the various branches of the student movement. In Area A, Palestinians asserted a new kind of sovereignty, while in and around the central cities and in the countryside, Israel continued to dominate in the military and civil domains.

Incessant political infighting between the various factions also interfered with the establishment of such a parent organization. On the surface, it seemed that partisanship was primarily party-based. Party affiliation superseded the national interest and development of a civilian infrastructure needed for the establishment of the Palestinian state.

The student movement's fall from grace continued unabated through the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada. As it had done during the first Intifada, the student movement again devoted itself to the battle against Israel. The core

difference, however, was that academic activities at the universities continued undisturbed, as the universities were not shut down for extended periods by the Israeli Civil Administration. The routine on campus in the cities, on the other hand, indeed fell victim to the tide of violence and multifold blockades put in place to isolate Palestinian urban centers from the rural zones.

Recruited to the struggle, many members of the Shabiba led riots in the streets and as members of the security forces took part in armed exchanges between the Palestinian Authority and the IDF. Though the Intifada ultimately enhanced the popularity of Hamas owing to the movement's political obstinacy and the prestige garnered through suicide attacks deep in Israeli territory, Fatah, paradoxically, lost the greatest number of members to the violent clashes. Among the scores of Fatah members killed, many were from the Shabiba.

Despite their best intentions, conditions on the ground did not allow the student movement to remain external to the international political game and to exemplify a different and more decent political approach. The lack of democracy in the public sphere and the preeminence of party affiliation did not afford the students an opportunity to present the general public with viable socio-political alternatives.

The struggle for political hegemony permeated the campuses and preoccupied the student cells more with political administration and less with social activities. This tendency deterred some students from fully joining the activities of their movements, despite high voter turnout to student council elections even after the signing of the Oslo Accords.

Hamas's takeover of the Gaza Strip had ramifications for the student political sphere as well. Student elections are no longer freely held in the coastal territory. Members of the Shabiba have been placed under strict scrutiny and face a range of sanctions. For example, on the memorial day of Yasir Arafat, a date of considerable national significance in the Palestinian society, the Shabiba branch at al-Azhar University is prohibited from holding public ceremonies on university grounds.

Long considered a Fatah stronghold, al-Azhar University has been a favored target of Hamas, after June 2007. Attacks on the university, which is located next to the Islamic University in Gaza, serve to bolster support among members of the university's Islamic Bloc.[15] Notably, before Hamas consolidated internal political control in Gaza, the Islamic Bloc boycotted al-Azhar University student council elections along with members of the Islamic Jihad and the PFLP. In those elections, the last to be held prior to Hamas's takeover, voter turnout reached 61 percent, with Fatah winning an overwhelming majority of seats.[16]

Under Hamas, the safe spaces that had existed on Gaza university campuses ceased to exist. Hamas gun men frequently break onto campuses and disrupt activities of the Shabiba movement. Though the Shabiba movement is required to obtain the approval of the dean of students in order to hold events on campus, Hamas security forces ultimately determine which activities will be permitted. When the Shabiba movement attempted to commemorate the

memory of Abu-Jihad at al-Aqsa University, a memorial also prohibited by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the approval of the dean of students did not prevent Hamas from forcefully dispersing the gathering. Security forces stormed the campus and several arrests were made.[17]

Hamas's consolidation of control in the Gaza Strip likewise shifted the balance of power in the West Bank. In the second half of the 1990s, Hamas dominated most of the West Bank student councils. Following the upheaval in the Gaza Strip, however, Fatah declared open war against the political influence of Hamas in the West Bank, extending its crackdown well into the student sphere. In the effort to restrain Hamas, resources were poured into student council elections and, as a result, the vast majority of West Bank student councils are now dominated by the Shabiba movement. Campaigns were hotly contested and especially in the central campuses of Birzeit and al-Najah elections were tight. Voting rates regularly topped 80 percent.

As a testimony to the worsening political tensions between Fatah and Hamas and the deepening ideological gaps between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Hamas boycotted student council elections at Birzeit, al-Najah and Bethlehem universities in 2009–10. The movement rationalized its move in light of the ongoing political persecution of the Islamic Bloc and frequent arrests of its members, thereby undermining the democratic legitimacy of the elections.

Despite Hamas's abstention, student election voter turnout remained high in 2009, with 58 percent of the electorate casting a ballot at Birzeit,[18] 57 percent at al-Najah[19] and 74 percent at Bethlehem University.[20]

Political boycotts, in addition to the ever-growing involvement of their host movements, indicate that Palestinian student factions have become players in the wider political contest for hegemony in the Palestinian society. Hence, the student movement is now controlled by larger forces in the public political sphere and is no longer the independent champion of social change. From the time of its establishment at the end of the 1970s, the student movement has lost much of its influence in the public sphere. The founding of the Palestinian Authority and its manifold bureaucratic mechanisms, the development of civil society organizations and the political crisis that has enveloped the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the January 2006 elections have all contributed to the steady decline of the student movement in the occupied Palestinian territories.

In retrospect, one could observe that the Palestinian student arena developed in two distinct geographical spheres along individual timelines. Its roots trace back to the establishment of student associations in Egypt and Damascus in the early 1950s, and their unification under the GUPS in 1959.

As a leading force for change, the GUPS operated within the political-organizational void left as a result of the 1948 war. The organization's activities were a wakeup call for a Palestinian society desperately searching for a shred of hope. A lack of Palestinian political infrastructure gave the GUPS and its vast cadre of student activists geographically dispersed power and direct access to the decision makers of the Arab world. Concurrent with the establishment of Fatah, whose founders were the heads of the Cairo-based Palestinian student

association, this new awakening served as a catalyst for the establishment of the PLO in 1964 as the sole recognized representative of the Palestinian people.

Throughout the Arab diaspora, the GUPS worked diligently to shape an emerging Palestinian national consciousness, recruiting youths to the political and military struggle waged by the Palestinian factions. Though the GUPS waged its own power struggles against the founding of the PLO, its future was assured as the Fedayeen stepped into leadership in 1969. From this point forward, the GUPS was destined to serve as one of the key political wings of the PLO.

In the occupied Palestinian territories, the student movement developed without any direct connection with the GUPS. Facing different challenges, the spirit of the time compelled student leaders of the West Bank and Gaza Strip not to cultivate cultural values, but to find ways to deal with the everyday difficulties of life under occupation. In light of the strict supervision imposed on campus activism and the academic system as a whole, student leaders of the 1980s set aside their dreams of armed struggle to focus on social change. Their volunteerism yielded national legitimacy and public support far beyond the confines of campus. Such public works also promoted the importance of higher education to social development. As students, they had contributed to the wellbeing of the general public, a tangible outcome of investments made on campus.

Operating as a political spearhead, the Palestinian student movement wielded tremendous political power in the West Bank and Gaza Strip – right up until the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. Also distinguishing the political scene of the occupied Palestinian territories was the high profile activity of the Muslim Brothers, which had been banned from the GUPS under the pretext of its rejection of the PLO.

Effectively, the Oslo Accords caused an ideological split within the Palestinian student movement, a development that highlights the proximity of the student movement and the PLO. Moreover, it likewise reflected a divergence in Palestinian society, the tension therein between national identity and religious devotion, and the dialectic between them.

Along a 50-year timeline, one can say of the Palestinian student movement both in the Arab diaspora and in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that there have been two distinct movements with markedly different pace, social constitution and challenges. Despite the political and social differences between them, these movements operated within a shared cultural space. They worked to achieve a common purpose: full independence and the founding of a sovereign Palestinian state. Having received inconsistent and ambiguous interpretation, these objectives have been gradually altered by the various political and social agendas of the myriad Palestinian factions.

Notes

1 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans: Farrington Constance (New York: Grove Press, 1968), p. 36.
2 Al-Afranji, "Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya wa-Nidhliha min Ajl Filasstin fi Iruba al-Ghrbiyya", p. 261.
3 The GUPS doubtlessly served as the political training ground for Palestinian students. The first generation of Palestinian political leaders originating from the GUPS included, amongst others, PLO and Fatah chairman Yasir Arafat, Fatah Central Committee member Hanni al-Hasan, Palestinian Authority minister Azam al-Ahmad and Ruhi al-Fatuh, formerly the Speaker of the Palestinian parliament. The second generation of senior GUPS alumni includes Nasir al-Qudwa, formerly the PLO permanent observer at the United Nations, PA minister Hasan Asfur, Arab League secretary assistant and formerly PLO representative in Egypt, Said Kamal. The GUPS activities enabled these leaders, who later formed the PLO top echelon, to accumulate political and organizational knowledge and experience. Furthermore, GUPS training facilitated social mobility, most notably for members of the refugee clans, who harnessed their political activity to improve their socio-economical standings.
4 Fatah took over the GUPS apparatus and secured its majority there. Thereafter, the GUPS offices served as recruitment centers for Fatah activities in the diaspora. Key Fatah leaders frequented the GUPS gatherings, having acknowledged the leverage of student politics first hand. Fatah was actually established by a core group of GUPS alumni in Cairo, headed by Yasir Arafat, and Arafat himself frequently attended the GUPS conferences. See: Kilamat al-Sayd Yasir Arafat fi Iftatah Nadwa Filastin al-ʾAlamiyya al-Thaniyya, in: *Al-Wathaiq al-Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya lil-ʾAmm 1970*, p. 715; Husayni, "al-Muatamar al-Watani al-Sadis lil-Ittihad al-ʾAmm lil-Talabat Filastin (al-Jazair)", p. 308.
5 As part of their international activities, the GUPS office initiated the establishment of support committees (dubbed: *Lijan Nasrat Filastin* – committees in support of Palestine), to assist them in presenting their case to the local target audience. The participants in these committees were members of the local population.
6 Al-Afranji, "Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya wa-Nidhliha min Ajl Filasstin fi Iruba al-Ghrbiyya", p. 261.
7 Friedman, *Mi-Beirut le-Yerushalayyim* [*From Beirut to Jerusalem*], p. 111.
8 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, p. 65.
9 Steinberg, *ʿOmdim le-Goralam*, p. 171.
10 Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, p. 140.
11 Ghiyatha, *Al-Haraka al-Tulabiyya al-Filastiniyya*, pp. 131–5.
12 *Al-Awdah*, February 2, 1986.
13 See for instance the publications of Birzeit University: "Jamiʾat Birzeit, *Al-Nashra al-Dakhaliyya*, Al-ʾAdad al-Sabʾa wa al-ʾAshrun (Nisan 1994), pp. 24–5; Jamiʾat Birzeit, *Al-Nashra al-Dakhaliyya*, Al-ʾAdad al-Sabʾa wa al-ʾAsrun (Haziran 1994), p. 28.
14 For more on this issue see: al-Zaro, *Al-Taʿlim al-ʾAli fi al-Aradi al-Muhtalla*, pp. 90–4.
15 "Hamas Taktaham al-Azhar bi-Ghaza wa-Takhtatap Talabat Warshahan Bamuad Harakoho Sarb Midrasin", www.fateh-voice.com/vb//showthread.php?t=43064
16 Filastin al-An, "Al-Ghas wa-al-Tawzir Ghalab ʿAla Intikhibat Majlis Tulab Jamiʾat al-Azhar", paltimes.net/arabic/read.php?news_id=65388
17 "Biyan Sadar ʿAn Munazamat al-Shabiba al-Fatahawiyya bi-Khusus ahdath Jamiʾat al-Aqsa", April 22, 2010. www.palvoice.com/forums/showthread.php?t=250222

18 See: "Intiakhabat Majlis Tulaba Jamiʾa Bir Zeit", http://redeagle.ahlamontada.com/montada-f33/topic-t20947.htm
19 See: "Harakat Fatah Tafoz fi Intakhabat Majlis Talabat al-Najah", http://news.maktoob.com/article/5757200
20 See: "Fuz Kutlat al-Quds wa al-Awda al-Tabiʾa lil-Fatah fi Intakhabat Majlis Talabat Jamiʾat Bit-Laham fi 22 Makaʾdan", www.y-adab.net/vb/showthread.php?t=15656

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